**RURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This Rural Impact Assessment has been prepared on a proposal to discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale Primary School and Melvich Primary School.

The Assessment is current prior to public consultation but may be amended in the light of comments received during the course of that consultation.

**Details of Consultation To Be Carried Out:**

The Proposal will be the subject of statutory consultation from under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the following will be consulted:

(i) Parents of pupils in the catchment area of Kinbrace Primary School; parents of pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School, including parents of pre-school pupils;

(ii) Pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School and Altnaharra Primary School; Farr High School and Golspie High School;

(iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;

(v) The Parent Councils of Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School.

(vi) Staff of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and of Farr and Golspie High Schools.

(vii) Trade Union representatives;

(viii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 5 schools;

(ix) Education Scotland;

(x) Local Youth Convenor.

The proposal document will also be advertised in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

A public meeting will be held in Kinbrace on 22 June 2016. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

**What the change will mean in rural communities**

Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since the summer of 2013. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.

The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Kinbrace to Helmsdale, a distance of 17.3 miles.

Kinbrace School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 1. Were Kinbrace School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be; 2016-17 – 4; 2017-18 – 4; 2018-19 – 5; 2019-20 - 5.

The Highland Council believes that educational benefits arise when schools have a sufficient number of children to allow pupils to work collaboratively and participate in team sports and wider activities; and where there are age appropriate peer groups of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.

At present Helmsdale Primary School has a pupil roll of less than 50% of the school’s capacity. The school is comfortably able to accommodate the pupils from Inverasdale and no adverse effects for Helmsdale Primary or Melvich Primary are expected to arise. On the contrary, including the pupils from Kinbrace within the Helmsdale catchment will help to maintain a healthy roll at Helmsdale, and potentially this could also be true for Melvich Primary.

**How will people in rural communities be affected?**

Accessibility of service – since the “mothballing” of Kinbrace Primary School pupils of

P1-7 age from the Kinbrace catchment have been provided with free school

transport to Helmsdale Primary School. The “mothballing” has meant reduced

accessibility of service for parents of pre-school children, who are required to

transport their children to Helmsdale. There are presently 2 pre-school children

within the Kinbrace catchment.

Conversely, attending the larger nursery at Helmsdale provides pre-school pupils

with greater opportunities to interact with other children of their own age, and

therefore with enhanced opportunities for learning through play. This is also a

benefit to the children from Helmsdale, itself a rural village.

It is also recognised that pupils from Kinbrace itself have less opportunity to walk or

cycle to school than when Kinbrace School was in operation, and that there is

occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to or from school

during the school day. That said, it must also be acknowledged that the Kinbrace

catchment itself covers a wide area, and even if the school were open not every

pupil from the catchment would have the opportunity to walk or cycle to school.

Travel time to the service – The maximum additional travel time for school pupils to Helmsdale is 28 minutes (17.1 miles) (source: Google Maps).

Cost to access the service – Parents of children aged 3 and 4 years will have additional costs if they wish to access pre-school education, in comparison to where Kinbrace Primary was re-opened.

**Economic impact** – when the school ceased to operate in 2013, there were some negative impacts in respect of the loss of part-time employment opportunities such as school clerical and cleaning staff.

**Partner service delivery –** the concentration of service in Helmsdale provides opportunities for improved partner service delivery to children, through reduced duplication of work and time spent travelling, and reduced costs. Since the change has in practical terms already been implemented, there is no need to consult other partners.

**Other options or adjustments**

The above do not apply in the circumstances of a change already implemented for practical purposes.