

# Ness Castle Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes

## Microsoft Teams

16 February 2022 at 6:30 pm

<b>In Attendance</b>	
<b>Councillors</b> Cllr Alasdair Christie (Chair) Cllr Ron MacWilliam	AC RMW
<b>Parent Council Representatives</b> Martin Fitzgerald, Inverness Royal Academy Parent Council Amanda Forbes, Holm Parent Council Donna Grant, Lochardil Parent Council	MF AF DG
<b>Community Representatives</b> Gail Beveridge, Holm Community Council Murray McCheyne, Holm Community Council Scott McRoberts, Resident	GB MMC SMR
<b>Holm Primary</b> Janine Webb, Acting Head Teacher	JW
<b>Lochardil Primary</b> Audrey Kellacher, Head Teacher, Lochardil Primary	AK
<b>Highland Council Representatives</b> Robert Campbell, Estates Strategy Manager Craig Conon, Head Teacher Dorothy Gibb, Principal Estates Officer Ian Graham, Road Safety Officer Evelyn Miller, Cleaning & FM Manager Sue Neild, Catering Services Manager Alan Paul, Estates Officer Fiona Sangster, Estates Co-ordinator Liz Scott, ELC Commissioner Fiona Shearer, Area Care & Learning Manager Gordon Stewart, Education Adviser	RC CC DG IG EM SN AP FSa LS FS GS
<b>Kier Construction</b> Steven McRoberts Finlay Niven	StMR FN
<b>Apologies</b> Andrew Martin, Holm Parent Council Helen Mudie, Principal Teacher	AM HM

<b>1. WELCOME</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>AC welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.</li></ul>	<b>ACTION</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AC mentioned the recent press coverage regarding the toilets at the new school and noted that this would be a matter for the school to address and was not something for stakeholder group discussion.</li> <li>• CC noted that he and FS had anticipated this issue being raised at the Head Teacher's online video Meet and Greet Event arranged for parents and had met with the wider team to review the design and consider the layout ahead of the meeting.</li> <li>• Design work had already commenced on an improved layout to provide flexibility in how the school manages the toilet facilities to meet the needs of all pupils. As well as some unallocated toilet areas, there would be separate areas for boys and girls.</li> <li>• SMR had been asked to bring this up at the meeting and suggested that it would be helpful for parents to know what the process for consultation on this would be and also the time frame involved as some parents were not able to decide on where to enrol their children without knowing more.</li> <li>• CC to share next steps with parents.</li> <li>• MF shared that he had consulted 9 or 10 female pupils at IRA on the toilet issue.</li> <li>• The most frequently used toilets by girls at IRA are the upper floor toilets. The reasons given were the lack of cleanliness of the shared toilets and feeling uncomfortable with boys being close by. Privacy is important to the girls.</li> <li>• AC asked FS to take this up with the Head Teacher at IRA.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CC</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FS</b></p>
<p><b>2. Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• StMR noted that it was evident when walking past the site that the build was not as far along as it should be.</li> <li>• Kier have encountered delays in materials and resources, mainly due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.</li> <li>• Kier had anticipated this and so have already applied for permission for weekend working and have also sourced finishing trades locally to avoid any delays later on.</li> <li>• After consulting with THC, Kier have rescheduled the programme and realigned the supply chain. They are now more confident that they can deliver the building for the start of the new session.</li> <li>• FN shared further information on site progress.</li> <li>• Weather has caused some delays with brickwork but again a local brickworker has been sourced and with a good weather window this will progress.</li> <li>• Internal partition contractors are now on site, curtain walling and window frames are 95% complete on the ground floor and will be complete on the upper floor by the end of next week.</li> <li>• Glazing will begin early in March.</li> <li>• The first planned weekend working was due to happen this weekend but this has been postponed until next weekend due to the forecasted storms.</li> <li>• RC noted that with projects of this size risk management and contingency planning is always considered and THC have been working with Kier on this.</li> <li>• Progress will continue to be monitored over the next few weeks and a more detailed update will be given at the next stakeholder meeting, along with any proposals for contingency plans that are deemed necessary.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kier were right to warn us of their concerns at this stage. Stakeholders should be assured that the new school will be established and operating at the start of the new session.</li> <li>• MMC wanted to share a suggestion he had put to FN on weekend working that the residents are kept informed ahead of any weekend working and were given details on what work was to be carried out.</li> <li>• Good engagement would show that consideration and respect was being given to neighbours and residents.</li> <li>• RC and DG shared a fly through video of the school building. CC had shared the video with parents at the Meet and Greet meeting and it had been positively received.</li> <li>• DG, AP and FS have been working on loose furniture requirements for the new school and will be working closely with CC on this.</li> <li>• As noted at the December meeting we were progressing removal of the oak and beech trees. We now have costs and so the trees will be felled imminently ahead of the bird nesting season which, due to the relatively mild winter, may begin earlier than the norm.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IG reported that the travel survey had launched this morning and that there had been 64 responses already.</li> <li>• All responders so far live within 1 to 2 miles of the school and 95% of them have indicated that they will be walking to school which is an excellent indication of interest in active travel.</li> <li>• IG will report further at the next meeting.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Transition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FS noted that CC has now been in post for two weeks and has fitted a lot in to this time.</li> <li>• The post of Depute Head Teacher will be advertised shortly and an appointment should be made by Easter.</li> <li>• Staffing allocations will be looked at across all schools but the IRA ASG (associated school group) will take priority to get an idea of numbers and the impact on other schools.</li> <li>• Workforce planning will be looking at probationer allocation. It is good to get a balance of newly qualified and experienced teachers at a school.</li> <li>• Enrolment numbers were not as high as expected but this may change.</li> <li>• CC has visited Lochardil and Holm Primaries already and hopes to get out to other schools in the ASG soon.</li> <li>• CC noted that the school now has a website and twitter account to raise the profile.</li> <li>• Approximately 90 parents had joined the Meet and Greet meeting, along with a few children who have given CC requests for football, rugby, basketball and planting to be available at the new school.</li> <li>• Four names for the school have been suggested – Ness Castle, Ness, Darochville and Torbreck Primary, with Darochville being an historic local name.</li> <li>• The name will be decided in March.</li> <li>• Uniform is also now being discussed and there is to be a competition to design a school badge.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans to set up an interim parent council are in place and to date nine people have expressed an interest.</li> <li>• An AGM to establish a formal parent council will be held when the school is operational.</li> <li>• CC noted that a community member would be welcome if anyone on the stakeholder group could suggest someone who might be interested.</li> <li>• SMR asked if it would be possible to confirm the deadline for parents who wish their children to remain at their current school to submit placing requests so that the school could share this in their next newsletter.</li> <li>• SMR felt that some parents were waiting on information on breakfast/after school clubs before making a decision.</li> <li>• FS confirmed that the deadline for placing requests is 15 March in order to allow THC to plan for staffing etc.</li> <li>• It should be noted however, that placing requests can still be submitted after that date.</li> <li>• FS noted that breakfast club and after school clubs were discussed at the Meet and Greet meeting.</li> <li>• Questionnaires are to be distributed to determine if there is a demand for breakfast/after school club at the new school to assess viability.</li> <li>• FS and CC will ensure that this is done promptly to allow parents to decide for 15 March.</li> <li>• JW noted that she had 48 pupils from the new school catchment wishing to stay at Holm Primary but felt that with clarity on some issues at the new school that might change.</li> </ul>	<b>FS/CC</b>
<p><b>4. COMMUNITY BENEFITS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• StMR – LMN was unable to attend this meeting but will prepare report on proposals for next meeting.</li> </ul>	<b>LMN</b>
<p><b>5. AOCB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMR asked when the amended layout plans for the building would be available.</li> <li>• AC suggested that FS and CC can feed back to parents on this and possibly share the plans on the school website.</li> <li>• SMR asked if the school opening hours had been decided or if parents would be consulted on this.</li> <li>• FS noted that the school day will be similar to other schools in the ASG but that this will be discussed with CC and consideration would be given to issues such as parents collecting ELC or younger pupils on a shorter day to siblings which can be a concern for parents.</li> <li>• SMR expressed thanks to CC, FS and Claire MacKenzie for arranging the Meet and Greet meeting and for CC's efforts to engage with the community so far.</li> <li>• MMC asked if the layout changes would need to be lodged with planning.</li> <li>• RC noted that Planning Permission would not be required but an amendment to the Building Warrant may be required.</li> <li>• Updated plans will be shared with stakeholders as soon as they are available.</li> </ul>	<b>FS/CC</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MMC asked if there was any further information available on the bus service to tie in with school times.</li><li>• IG did not have any further information but will try and get some for the next meeting.</li></ul>	<b>IG</b>
<p><b>6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 23 March 2022 Wednesday at 6.30 pm via Microsoft Teams.</li></ul>	