

Note of an Informal Discussion at a Meeting of Spean Bridge PS Parent Council – 7 May 2019

Only about 8 or 9 parents attended, but they were mainly from Roy Bridge and there was a definite view from those attending that the school should re-open. One parent said he had moved into the village the very day the school was mothballed and that he was appalled this had happened.

The arguments advanced against closure were:

- Parents wanted their children to be able to walk to school.
- The village had lost its shop and Post Office and losing the school would be “another nail in the coffin”.
- There were enough children in Roy Bridge to make a school viable.
- Future housing developments in Spean would make SBPS overcrowded.
- Roy Bridge PS could be used as additional accommodation for Spean Bridge PS, to cope with the overcrowding the parents were predicting. Classes could be split by stage, with nursery/infants at Spean and upper stages pupils at Roy Bridge

In respect of the third point above, I commented that Roy Bridge had been mothballed because parents had chosen to move to Spean. Parents expressed the view that this had happened because there had not been a EM nursery at Roy Bridge (there had been a partner centre GM nursery, which has now also closed). Once children went to the nursery at Spean and had made friends there, parents were reluctant to take them out of Spean for P1. I responded by advising that it would be more difficult for Roy Bridge to re-open with an EM nursery. That would be an addition to what was there before, rather than just a re-opening of the existing provision. We would need to look at whether there was sufficient accommodation for the purpose, as well as at the educational issues. (We are however obliged by the legislation to look at all viable alternatives to closure).

Cllr. Henderson added that, as we now had Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, it was very unlikely we would open a GM nursery at Roy Bridge.

On the fifth point above, I suggested that sending children from Spean Bridge to attend school in Roy Bridge might meet with considerable opposition in Spean itself.

Two parents expressed the view that we should not have allowed placing requests to Spean. I advised of the legal position around placing requests.

One parent from Spean spoke up against re-opening Roy Bridge, on the grounds this would overstretch the HT, who would be given a third school to manage. I added that if Spean were to lose 30 pupils to RBPS, then SBPS would drop a class. Parents from Spean Bridge had a legitimate interest in the issue.

A complaint was made about the lack of maintenance of the accommodation at RBPS. It was suggested that THC were deliberately allowing the buildings to deteriorate so as present the community with the argument that re-opening the

school would require too much investment. I commented that THC had limited resources and that a mothballed school was not as high a priority as an operational school. However, I undertook to pass on the complaint about lack of maintenance.

It was suggested that THC had not given sufficient publicity to the meeting. I explained that this was merely an exploratory meeting and of what the process would be if a closure proposal were advanced. I also advised that I have offered to attend the CC meeting scheduled for 4 June.

Cllr. Thompson asked whether there was a view in the community that the RBPS buildings might be used as a community hub. Parents said the building could be used whilst it was mothballed, but they still wanted it to re-open.

Ian Jackson

9 May 2019