

**Note of an Informal Meeting with Parents at Duror PS – 1 November 2023**

**From:** Ian Jackson (Resources) <[ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk)>

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**To:** Anne MacPherson (Resources) <[Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk)>; Mhairi MacDonald (Area Education West) <[Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk)>; Hayley Brown (Primary and ELC) <[Hayley.Brown@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Hayley.Brown@highland.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Sarah Fanet (Councillor) <[Sarah.Fanet.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Fanet.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Angus MacDonald (Councillor) <[Angus.MacDonald.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Angus.MacDonald.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Thomas MacLennan (Councillor)

<[thomas.maclennan.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.maclennan.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Kate Willis (Councillor)

<[kate.willis.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:kate.willis.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Dot Ferguson (Community Support & Ward Management)

<[Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk)>; Malcolm McGregor (Duror & Glencoe & St Bride's & Ballachulish)

<[Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk)>; Jean MacKinnon (Workforce Planning)

<[Jean.MacKinnon@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Jean.MacKinnon@highland.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Future of Duror Primary School

Further to recent discussions, I met with the parents and staff of Duror PS yesterday afternoon. Malcolm McGregor, HT, also attended as did Katie Russell, PT for the cluster.

The upshot of the meeting is that parents did not agree that Duror PS should be mothballed in the summer of 2024. They felt strongly that the school should remain open.

I explained that the anticipated roll for August was two pupils, and that we didn't feel a roll of that size was sustainable. I commented on some of the educational disadvantages.

Parents countered that their children had "the best of both worlds" in that they had the benefits (as they saw it) of the small numbers at Duror, but that collaborative learning, socialisation, team sports etc were available through the fact they travelled regularly to other schools in the cluster. Obviously I didn't agree but ultimately the parents had their opinions.

One parent asked for a nursery class to be created at Duror Primary, and argued that the lack of a nursery was one reason why the school roll was so low. I advised that realistically there was no chance of an EY class being created.

I was also asked why the Council had not invested in a new school for South Lochaber, which would allow the 4 current schools to be merged into a new build. Reference was made to the "new" schools built for Kinlochleven and in Fort William. I acknowledged that the suggestion for a 4-school merger had been discussed for more than 20 years, but that the Council simply did not have the capital funding to realise such a project, at least not in the foreseeable future. Parents commented that they and the wider community would only agree to the closure of Duror where that was balanced by the offer of investment into the local community – i.e., a new school to replace the 4 current schools.

I think the parents were conscious that if they agreed to mothballing, that was the effective end of Duror School, and they did not wish that decision to fall on their shoulders. They commented there were pre-school children in the community, and that their parents would want to have a say on the future of the school, as would the wider community.

I advised that, given parental views, we would not mothball the school, but that we might proceed to a formal closure consultation. A paper might be taken to a future education Committee, (February?) and that the process would take about a year to complete. We would not however,

close the school mid-session. So, if the process were completed in the spring of 2025, the school would close at the end of that session - the summer of 2025. I assured parents the consultation process for closure did not mean a decision to close had already been taken.

Future action would be for discussion within the Council.