

Mr Ian Jackson
Education Officer
Highland Council

30th April 2024

Dear Mr Jackson,

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Duror & Kentallen Community Council wishes to object strongly to the proposed closure of Duror Primary School.

Whilst we recognise that the anticipated roll of 2 pupils for the 2024/25 year is low, the parents of those pupils (and indeed the pupils themselves) are more than happy with the situation and are adamant that their children are receiving an excellent education. In addition, there are currently 8 pre-school age children in the area, and the Community Council believe that there is a good chance that the school roll will increase in future, as it has done in the past. In recent weeks a toddler group has been set up which meets for the first time in early May and it is hoped that this could lead to some form of pre-school class in future.

Since Covid, the opportunity for remote working has become more popular and feasible in the area and we have noticed an increase in the number of young families choosing to live here, resulting in a very cosmopolitan and eclectic community. Our community has always had a strong bond with the school and, as one of few amenities in the village, it has been pivotal in attracting families to come and live in the area in recent years. Should the school close, a huge part of the attractiveness of the area to families would be taken away.

The rural environment surrounding the school is unique and, we believe, is capable of adding substantial educational benefits to pupils of Duror Primary School and potentially the other schools in the cluster. We do not feel that sufficient weight has been given to this opportunity in the closure proposal.

The completion of the Caledonia Way through the community in recent years allows children to walk or cycle to school. Closing the school would require them to be driven to the schools further afield, which would be contrary to the Highland Council policy to encourage more walking and cycling and less reliability on vehicle transport.

In addition, with the current Scottish Government focus on how to halt rural depopulation, it is strongly felt that by removing the school it is not only the children who will be affected but the whole community. Closure would have a negative impact on the growth and sustainability of this vibrant community.

Finally we have some concerns regarding the paperwork that has been issued regarding the proposed closure of the school. Discrepancies include:

Appendix A page 5, 3:4

"There has never been a pre-school class."

There was, for a brief time, a pre-school/nursery provided within the school in 1998. This was replaced by a private nursery that ran in the village hall for many years.

Appendix A page 6, 3:5

"Registered Capacity 25"

We believe that from 1991-2001 the school roll exceeded 25 apart from one year (1999) when there was a drop.

Appendix A page 6, 3:5

"Building stated as poor condition. Category C"

In the summary of the Condition Survey which we have been sent, it clearly states that all 3 blocks in the school are Category B: "Satisfactory – Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration." So why has the building condition now been declared as Category C?

Furthermore – this survey was carried out in 2013 and 2018 and may be well out of date and therefore should not be considered in any decision making.

"Educational Suitability stated as Category C"

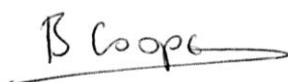
This Assessment was carried out in 2016. This is clearly outdated and should not be considered in any decision making.

Appendix A page 11,14:2

States that *"staff (teaching, clerical and cleaning) will be eligible for redeployment"* but in Appendix D, row 6, it states that *"there will be a saving in support staff costs."* These statements contradict each other.

Duror and Kentallen Community Council hope that you will give the views of the community proper consideration in this matter. The community would be very happy to work with Highland Council in any way we can in order to facilitate keeping the school open.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Becky Coope', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Becky Coope
Chair Duror & Kentallen Community Council