

Caledonian Economics



Putting our children's education first

SUSTAINABLE
SCHOOL ESTATE
REVIEW

The Highland Council

**Portree High School Associated Schools Group
Dunvegan and North West Skye
Sustainable School Estate Review**

12 May 2014

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

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1.2 Context

The primary purpose of any school is to provide a context for the delivery of education in which staff and pupils alike are enabled to work in an appropriate environment giving all pupils the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. A child only gets one chance at education, and parents, school staff and the local authority have a duty to ensure that whatever their location, pupils do not miss out on opportunities and activities which other children across Scotland may take for granted.

Studies carried out under the Sustainable School Estate Review (SSER) seek to identify ideas and developments to improve the sustainability of the school estate. This means targeting investment where it will deliver the maximum educational benefits to the greatest number of pupils, and dealing with the poorest buildings (in terms of the nationally defined classifications of Condition and Suitability¹).

1.3 This study

As part of the Sustainable School Estate Review (SSER), the Council asked CalEc to carry out a review of the school estate in the Portree High School Associated Schools Group (ASG) to identify any potential reconfiguration ideas that have the potential to confer educational benefits compared to the *'status quo'* position.

The tests against which the initial options would be considered were:

1. Are there any remote isolated locations where a school will need to be located ("red lined") so long as demand exists?
2. Are there any opportunities to change the configuration of primary schools to:
 - a) combine existing smaller schools to create viable, sustainable Primary Hub schools of three or more classes? Previous work carried out as part of SSER identified this being the ideal minimum size for a primary school;
 - b) separate GM and EM provision, allowing appropriately sized centres to be created where 'total Gaelic immersion' seems an entirely reasonable option?;

¹ Details can be found in "Core Facts Building our Future: Scotland's School Estate" published by the

3. Are there any opportunities to create a 1000 pupil secondary, this having been identified in previous studies as being the optimum size for a secondary school, or to create a 3-18 campus?

In addition, and in line with Council and national policy, consideration would be given to targeting investment in school facilities so that it benefits as many pupils as possible in terms of school Condition and Suitability.

1.4 Initial List of Ideas

CalEc visited each school and met with each Head Teacher in late 2012 and held discussions with Highland Council Officers as a first step in identifying options to consider.

A briefing paper summarising the findings of the initial data gathering stage for all Skye was presented in December 2013² which suggested that the following ideas should be explored in more detail:

1. implement minor changes to the boundaries around Kilmuir Primary School and its contiguous school catchment zones to reduce pressure on Kilmuir, together with enhancements to the facilities at Kilmuir;
2. seek opportunities to enhance the facilities at Broadford Primary School in partnership with other services/agencies;
3. consider building a new “North West Skye Primary School” in the vicinity of Dunvegan Primary School which could replace the existing Dunvegan and Knockbreck Primary Schools, and all or part³ of the catchments of Edinbane and Struan Primary Schools.

An initial long list of options for the schools in North West Skye evolved during this phase and, for the reasons explained in Section 7, the idea of the new “North West Skye Primary School” was subjected to more detailed scrutiny.

This report takes the findings of the initial review on to the next stage, and considers what specific educational benefits might accrue if this reconfiguration were to be implemented compared to the educational benefits associated with the “*status quo*”. It also considers what community impacts might need to be taken into account.

The specific educational benefits were identified during a workshop held in Portree on 6 February 2014. The workshop was facilitated by CalEc, and was attended by five Head Teachers who know the area well, and with experience of teaching in schools of a range of sizes in Scotland and overseas.

² SSER_Portree_ASG_-_Briefing_Paper_(issued 11 Dec)

³ communities will be involved in deciding the zoning

All have spoken with respect of the efforts taken by those managing and teaching in schools to meet the individual needs of every pupil, regardless of school size and location.

An earlier workshop was held with a group of Head Teachers from the Highlands in May 2012 to explore educational benefits relating to school size in a generic context⁴. That workshop found that there are a number of key points which, when they are reached can make a fundamental difference to the way in which a school functions, and which open up an array of additional possibilities for learning, teaching, and meeting the needs of pupils. Our discussions with Head Teachers across Scotland in workshops and other conversations corroborate the findings of the May 2012 workshop, and the participants in this February 2014 workshop also supported that view.

1.5 Statutory Consultation

When considering reconfiguring, closing or amalgamating schools the Council is obliged to carry out a statutory consultation under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The Act requires a council to identify clearly the “educational benefits” which will be delivered as a result of the proposals being approved.

At that stage it will not be enough to say that the new arrangement will confer educational benefits simply because the roll will be larger, or indeed because they will be delivered in a new-build school. Rather the council is required to identify quite specifically what the relative benefits will be.

This report is not part of a statutory consultation although it may be used to inform a future decision whether or not to carry out a statutory consultation, and may form part of the supporting evidence used in a statutory consultation.

⁴ Educational Benefits Analysis Report - Size (final)

2 Details of Existing Schools

2.1 Primary School Condition and Suitability Ratings

Government guidance defines four levels of rating for each of Condition and Suitability. These are calculated periodically using the methodology prescribed in that guidance which involves the examination of a wide range of factors which, taken together contribute to an overall assessment.

The overall Condition Ratings are defined as:

- **A: Good** – Performing well and operating efficiently
- **B: Satisfactory** – Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration,
- **C: Poor** – Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately
- **D: Bad** – Economic life expired and/or risk of failure.

The overall Suitability Ratings are defined as:

- **A: Good** – Performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities)
- **B: Satisfactory** – Performing well but with minor problems (the school buildings and grounds generally support the delivery of services to children and communities)
- **C: Poor** – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (the school buildings and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)
- **D: Bad** – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (the school buildings seriously impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)

It follows that the Council should target investment in the school estate so as to address situations where buildings are ‘Poor’ or ‘Bad’ as defined above, and to ensure that as many pupils as possible are educated in buildings that are ‘Good’ or ‘Satisfactory’.

Suitability and Condition ratings for the schools as assessed by Highland Council following government guidelines are shown below.

Figure 2-1 – PRIMARY SCHOOLS, CONDITION AND SUITABILITY⁵

	Condition	Suitability
Carbost	C (B)	B
Dunvegan	C	B
Edinbane	C	C
Knockbreck	C (B)	C
Macdiarmid	B	B
Struan	C	B

⁵ Condition and Suitability ratings as published in the Scottish Government Core Facts, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/4199>

Condition rating were reassessed by the Council during 2013/14 and where the ratings have changed they are shown in brackets in the above table. This indicates that from the schools listed above the poorest primary school buildings in terms of Suitability are Edinbane and Knockbreck, and in terms of Condition are Dunvegan, Edinbane and Struan.

2.2 Assumptions Regarding Housing development

The published school roll forecasts are based on certain assumptions regarding the rate and extent of housing development in the catchments. Details are provided on the Council website at

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/highlandfactsandfigures/schoolrollforecasts.htm>

3 Roll Forecasts – Primary Schools

3.1 Rolls and Class Configuration

The forecasts in this report are based on the September 2013 pupil census. The most recently available rolls and class breakdown are shown below in Figure 3-1. There have been some pupil movements in the intervening period so in a small number of cases there are minor differences in the totals shown below in Figure 3-1 and the numbers shown in the subsequent graphs. Where there has been movement the 2013 census-based figures are shown below in brackets in the 'Total' column. There may have been further changes since the table was produced.

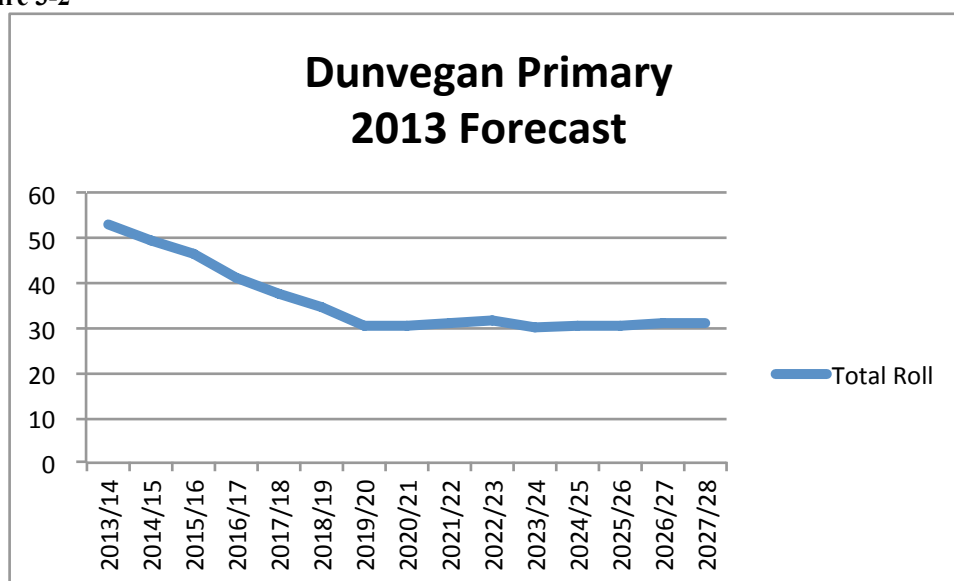
Figure 3-1

	EM1	EM2	EM3	EM4	EM5	EM6	EM7	GM1	GM2	GM3	GM4	GM5	GM6	GM7	TOTAL
Carbost	3	6	4	3	5	8	3								32
Dunvegan	3	7	5	7	4	5	6	2	1	2	0	5	2	2	51 (53)
Edinbane	1	0	0	2	0	3	0								6
Knockbreck	0	0	0	1	1	1	1								4 (3)
Macdiarmid	6	6	11	10	11	5	3								52
Struan	1	0	0	1	0	1	3								6

3.2 Dunvegan Primary School

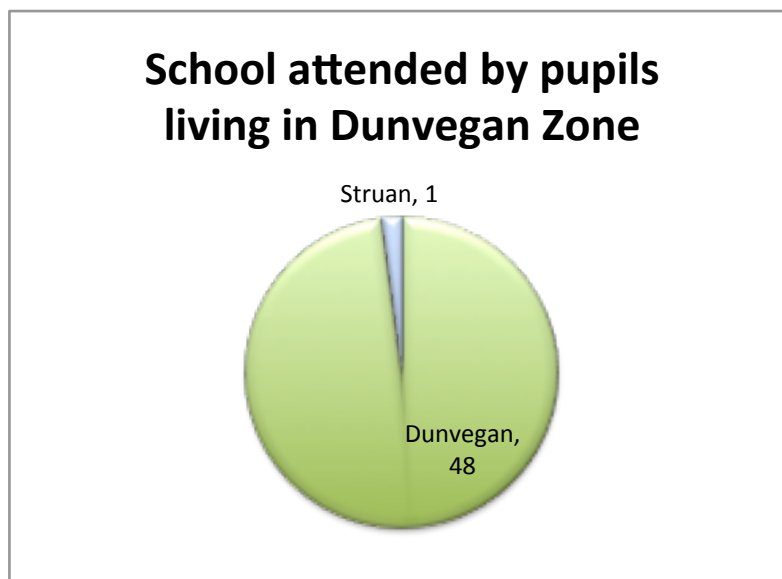
Dunvegan Primary school serves a large part of the north western side of Skye including the Duirnish peninsula. It has around 53 pupils in two English classes and one Gaelic class. Its roll is forecast to fall as shown below in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2



Around 49 pupils live in the Dunvegan Primary catchment zone, of whom 48 attend Dunvegan Primary and one attends Struan as shown below in Figure 3-3.

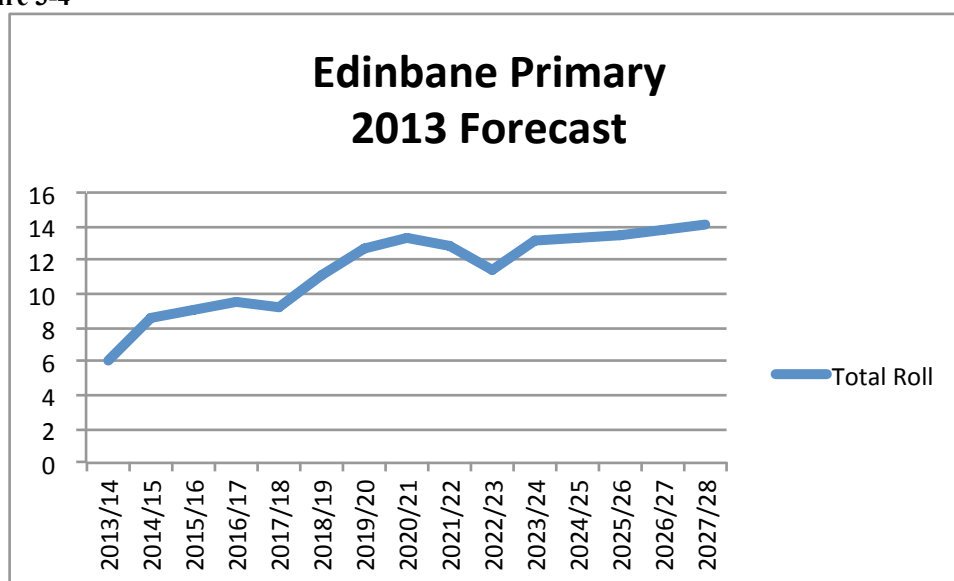
Figure 3-3



3.3 Edinbane Primary School

Edinbane Primary school serves the village of Edinbane and surrounding area around Loch Greshornish. It is a little under 9 miles from Dunvegan Primary School. It currently has 6 pupils in a single English class. Its roll is forecast to rise as shown below in Figure 3-4 although this is very sensitive to placing request assumptions and currently more than half the pupils in the school's zone attend other schools by parental choice.

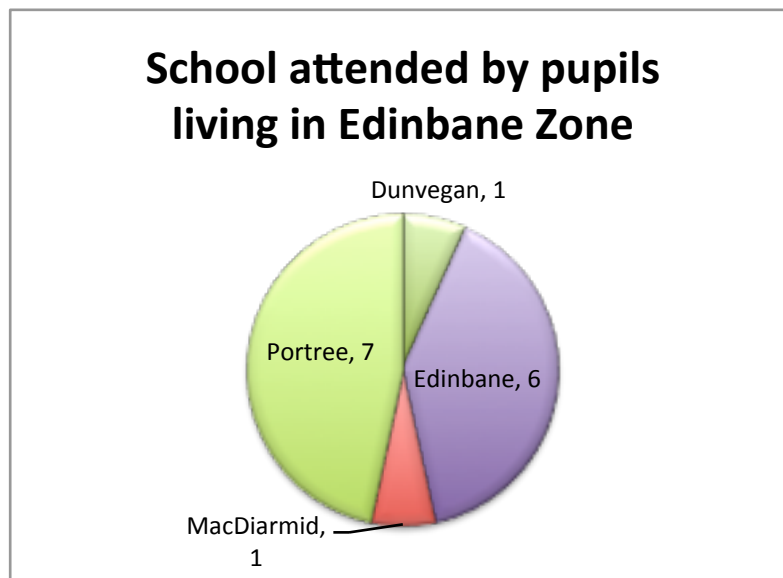
Figure 3-4



Around 15 pupils live in the Edinbane Primary catchment zone, of whom six attend Edinbane Primary, seven attend Portree and one attends each of Dunvegan⁶ and MacDiarmid as shown below in Figure 3-5.

Of the seven shown as attending Portree Primary, three are in Gaelic Medium classes, three in English Medium classes and one is believed to have subsequently moved home into Portree. The pupil who attends Dunvegan is in an English Medium class.

Figure 3-5



3.4 Knockbreck Primary School

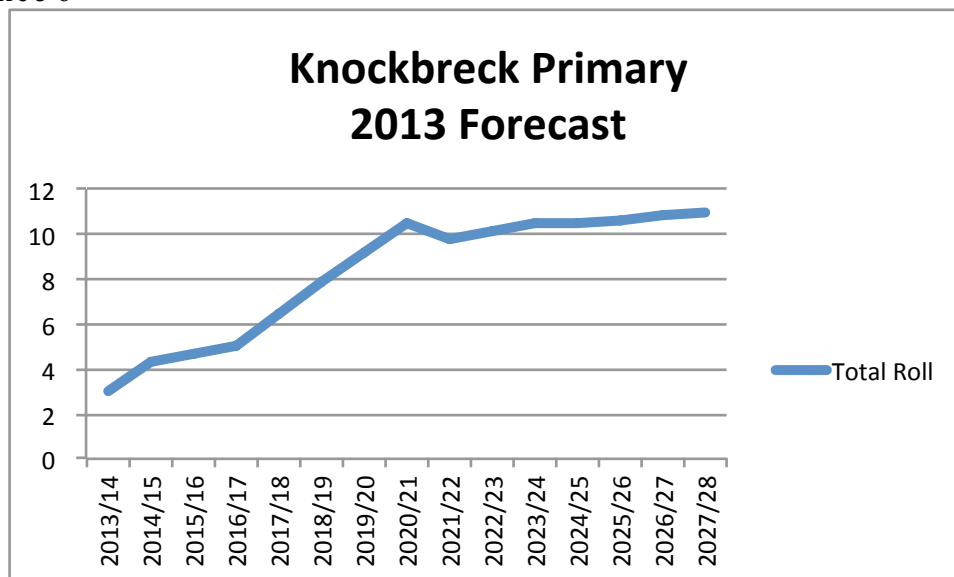
Knockbreck Primary School serves the Waternish peninsula. It is situated towards the farther end of the peninsula and is beyond the main settlements.

It is roughly 11 miles by road from each of the two nearest schools (Dunvegan and Edinbane).

Its roll is forecast to rise as shown below in Figure 3-6 although as with any very small school the forecast is highly sensitive to assumptions on placing request choices, birth rates, and new housing developments (build rate, occupancy type and occupants).

⁶ this pupil transferred to Portree Primary School after this analysis was carried out

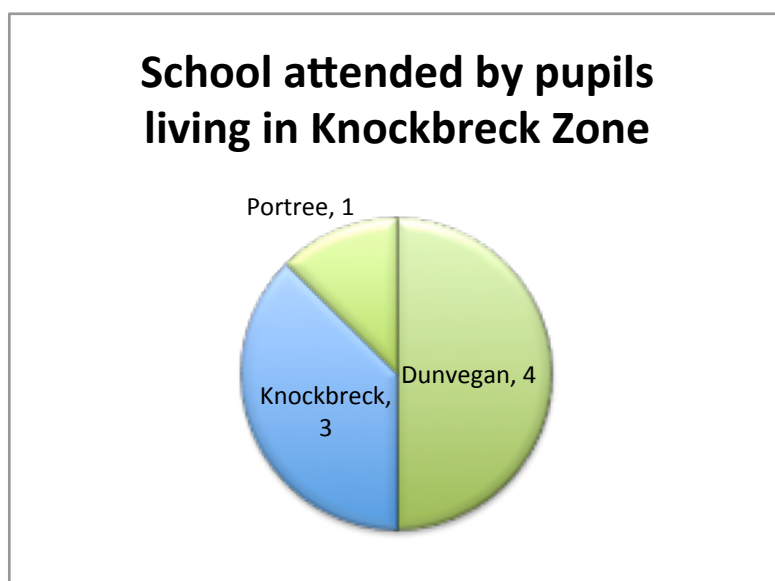
Figure 3-6



At the time the figures were produced around eight pupils lived in the Knockbreck Primary catchment zone of whom three attended Knockbreck, four attended Dunvegan and one attended Portree as shown below in Figure 3-7.

All the pupils attending Dunvegan or Portree are in English medium classes.

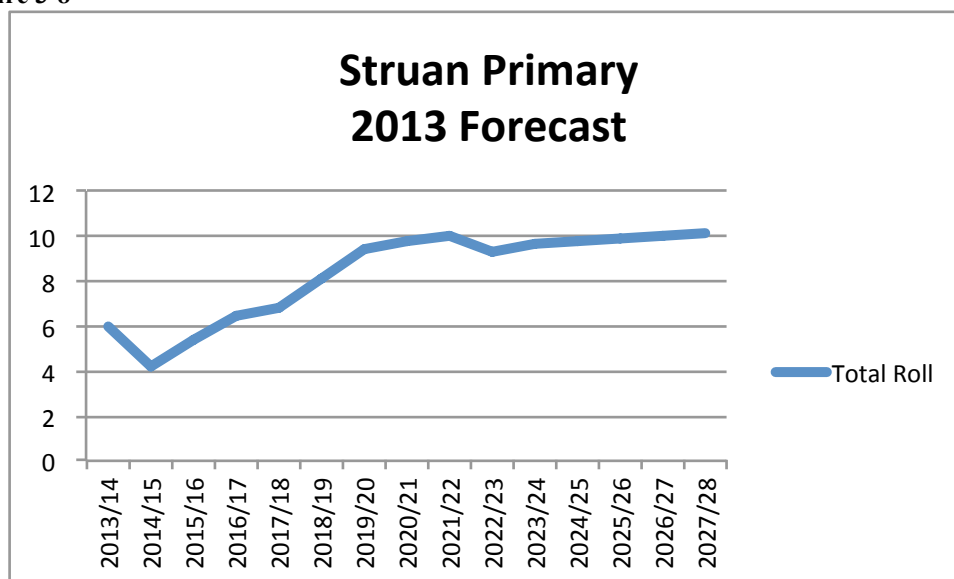
Figure 3-7



3.5 Struan Primary School

Struan Primary school serves the area around Bracadale roughly from Ose to Drynoch and along the B885. Its roll is forecast to rise to around 10 as shown below in Figure 3-8.

Figure 3-8



All pupils currently living in the Struan zone attend the school.

3.6 Reasons given for placing requests

Information on placing requests is provided here in relation to each of the schools concerned, to the extent that it is available. Parents making a placing request are not obliged to provide a reason although many do so. The placing request data held does not include information for pupils in Gaelic classes.

Since 2003 there have been a total of eleven placing requests from the Dunvegan catchment zone to other schools in the area; eight from the Edinbane zone; three from the Knockbreck zone; and two from the Struan zone.

The reasons given by those making placing requests were:

- childcare – parents work in Portree;
- bad behaviour/challenging class (four pupils in total);
- sibling attends another school in the area (three pupils in total);
- social and educational – childcare - parents work in Portree;
- unhappy with teacher;
- family reasons;
- larger school, social & after school activities - Parents work in Portree, childcare;
- moved outwith catchment of another school - wished to remain at their existing school;
- parents thought Additional Support Needs not being met at the school;
- family being re-homed elsewhere on Skye (two pupils);
- parental work commitments;
- wanted pupils to attend a larger school that provided more opportunities (two pupils);
- family were in temporary accommodation in [the area] and expected to move elsewhere on Skye;

- family moved to the zone but child was already attending a nursery elsewhere – parents wanted continuity from nursery into primary;
- parents thought that school did not deal with bullying issues (two pupils, different schools);
- no reason given (one pupil)

4 School Inspection Reports

4.1 Introduction

Each year Education Scotland (HM Inspectorate of Schools) inspects and reports on the quality of education in a sample of primary schools and other educational establishments. The purpose of these inspections is to:

1. promote improvement by supporting the school to continue to improve;
2. evaluate and report on a school's capacity to improve;
3. provide assurance to users on the quality of education; and
4. provide evidence for the national overview of Scottish education.

From 2011-12, they moved from a generational cycle of inspection (where a school was inspected every six to seven years) to a sampling model where around 240 inspections take place each year across all sectors.

Education Scotland's most recent report on the national picture⁷ found that:

1. overall the quality of learners' experiences has improved since...2009... in most schools the quality of learners' experiences is good;
2. the extent to which learners' needs are met is good or better in most schools;
3. most schools continue to provide a curriculum of a good standard;
4. most primary schools are well led.

Thus, it is against a generally positive picture painted by the above pattern of inspections that the reports of the four schools in north west Skye can be viewed.

4.2 Dunvegan Primary School

Dunvegan Primary School was last inspected in 2007 at which time the primary school roll was reported as being 68. At that time the format of inspections and reports was different from the present approach. The main points of the report were:

- the quality of pastoral care was very good;
- the school's links with parents and the wider community were very good;
- staff had created an environment where all children and parents were made to feel welcome;
- there were important weaknesses in the quality of the accommodation and facilities.

4.3 Edinbane Primary School

Edinbane Primary School was last inspected in 2009 at which time the school roll was reported as being 15. A selection of the main points of the report includes:

⁷ Quality and improvement in Scottish education, trends in inspection findings 2008-2011, Education Scotland

- confident, friendly children who contribute to the school's positive ethos;
- staff provide a broad and balanced range of experiences for children;
- children have a strong sense of responsibility;
- staff have high expectations of children's behaviours, attendance and achievements.

4.4 Knockbreck Primary School

Knockbreck Primary School was last inspected in 2009 at which time the roll was ten. A selection of the main points of the report includes:

- children feel safe and happy;
- the school provides a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum;
- the school has built very positive partnerships with parents;
- relationships between staff and children are very positive.

4.5 Struan Primary School

Struan Primary School was last inspected in 2011 at which time the roll was reported as being 14. A selection of the main points of the report includes:

- most children are well motivated and keen to learn;
- the school has built effective partnerships with parents to the benefit of children;
- the headteacher and staff are committed to the children and are keen to improve the school;
- the school has high expectations of children's conduct and attitudes.

HMiE agreed areas for improvement with each of the four schools and education authority.

5 School Transport

5.1 Statutory position and Council Policy

The Council's school transport policy is published on the "Information for Parents" section of the Council's website⁸. This summarises the statutory obligations as being:

The Education Authority is required by law to arrange transport for pupils to and from school so that they do not have to walk more than the following distances each way:

- 2 miles if aged under 8;
- 3 miles if aged 8 or over.

The Education Authority is required to have regard to the safety of pupils when making arrangements for the provision of school transport.

There is no requirement to provide transport for pupils who have been granted a placing request to attend a school other than the school in whose catchment area they reside.

The policy document goes on to explain that Highland Council provides free school transport if:

- a child is under eight years old, lives in the catchment area of the school which he or she attends, and lives more than two miles away from that school (by the shortest safe walking route);
- a child is aged eight years and over, lives in the catchment area of the school which he or she attends, and lives more than three miles away from that school (by the shortest safe walking route);
- a child has a medical condition which the Council has accepted as making him or her unfit or unable to walk to school;
- a child has been assessed as having additional support needs which require transport provision;
- a child would have to walk on a route which is considered by the Council to be unsafe for children to walk, even if accompanied by an adult.

On a "dedicated" school contract i.e. for school pupils only, after seats have been allocated to children who meet the criteria for free school transport, any vacant seats may be allocated for concessionary transport which are chargeable per current Council policy.

5.2 Number using school transport

Many pupils are transported to and from school every day across the Highlands by the Council. As shown below in Table 5-1, over 2,800 or 17% of primary age pupils and 5,837 or 42% of secondary age pupils use school transport. These figures include ASGs in Inverness and other towns where many pupils live within walking distance of their school. In the Portree ASG, 329 out of 650 (51%) of

⁸ <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0FFCBCD2-CABC-441A-A99B-6FA51AC72447/0/SchoolTransportPolicy.pdf>

primary aged pupils and 392 out of 541 (72%) of secondary aged pupils are transported to school by the Council. By comparison, in the Plockton ASG 50% of primary and 86% of secondary pupils are transported, and in the Gairloch ASG 35% of primary and 66% of secondary pupils are transported.

Table 5-1

School name	Number of Pupils Transported	School Roll	Percentage
All Highland Primaries	2,889	16,602	17%
All Highland Secondaries	5,837	13,970	42%
Portee ASG Primaries	329	650	51%
Portee ASG Secondaries	392	541	72%
Plockton ASG Primaries	123	248	50%
Plockton ASG Secondaries	259	302	86%
Gairloch ASG Primaries	55	151	36%
Gairloch ASG Secondaries	101	152	66%

Table 5-2 shows the number of pupils using school transport in NW Skye at the time of writing.

Table 5-2

School name	Number of Pupils	School Roll	Percentage
Dunvegan Primary School	37	51	73%
Edinbane Primary School	1	6	17%
Knockbreck Primary School	3	4	75%
Struan Primary School	2	6	33%
Total	43	67	64%

Transport for all but eight of these fall into the categories set out in the previous section as qualifying for school transport, the remainder are either concessionary but free because they are entitled to free school meals, concessionary but free pending safety assessment, or a concessionary place offered.

If the council decides to conduct a statutory consultation on a new school, a comprehensive analysis of the numbers entitled to school transport will be undertaken at that stage. However, on the basis of the information shown above, it appears that the number entitled to free school transport would increase by approximately ten (this being pupils from Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan catchments not currently transported), with the possibility of a slight change in the numbers from Dunvegan, depending on where they live and the eventual location of a new school.

It must be noted that pupils from the smaller schools are currently regularly transported to other schools in the area during the school day so that they can benefit from a range of activities and experiences not possible in their own school. The creation of a new school would remove the need for these specific trips. Other school trips may be undertaken in the normal course of events for a variety of reasons.

6 The Local Economy

6.1 Introduction

It is argued by some that a school is ‘the heart of the community’ and that any change from the status quo will cause irreparable damage to the social and economic fabric of the area. Others argue that a child only gets one chance at an education and therefore prime consideration should be given to education factors.

The Scottish Government recently conducted a review of literature that explores the links between rural schools and the local community, looked at the potential impact of rural school closure and made some suggestions for how to lessen the impact⁹. The review found little evidence on the impact of rural school closures and suggested that what evidence did exist should be treated with caution.

The following sections provide a picture of the current economic position in the area, based mainly on data from the 2011 national census.

6.2 Population Change

The Council’s Planning and Development Service recently presented a report to the Skye, Ross and Cromarty Area Committee about Population Change in Skye, Ross and Cromarty¹⁰ from 2001 to 2011 on the basis of national census information.

The main findings of that report in the context of the North West Skye area is that overall growth in Skye of 7.8% is lower than the Highland average, with an increase in 9 out of 12 data zones. The strongest growth has been in Portree North (41%), Skye Central North (18%), Skye South East (17%) and Sleat (15%), all linked to relatively high rates of new house building. The more densely populated areas such as Broadford and Portree West, where there is less scope for new house building, have seen declines of 1% and 9% respectively; Dunvegan & Waternish fell by 3%; and Skye East and Raasay by 11%, the latter including a reduction from 194 residents on Raasay to 164.

Some assert that people will be reluctant to move to an area that has no school, however local evidence does not seem to back this up. The report referred to above notes that the population in Dunvegan (where there is a school) fell by 3% , whilst the population in Duirinish (where Borodale school closed in 2007) grew by 6%. The report comments that this indicates that remoteness is not an absolute barrier to growth.

⁹ Research evidence on impact of rural school closure on local community – short literature review, February 2012, Scottish Government, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00418753.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/committees/rossskyeandlochabermeetings/rcsac/2014-02-05-src-ag.htm>

6.3 Population in each of the four catchment areas

The information in this section and the following sections is extracted from the Settlement Zone¹¹ breakdown of the 2011 Census data published on the Council's website.

The Settlement Zones boundaries are a close, but not perfect, match with the school catchment zones. The main differences are:

- Dunvegan catchment zone – comprises mainly the Glendale, Vatten and Dunvegan Settlement zones. A small part of the Edinbane Settlement Zone is also within the Dunvegan Primary School catchment zone;
- Edinbane catchment zone – comprises mostly the Edinbane Settlement Zone, but also includes a small part of the Skeabost Settlement Zone and two corners of the Geary Settlement Zone;
- Knockbreck catchment zone – closely matches the Geary Settlement Zone, but includes a small part of the Edinbane Settlement Zone;
- Struan catchment zone – closely matches the Struan Settlement Zone, but includes small parts of the Vatten, Edinbane and Skeabost Settlement Zones.

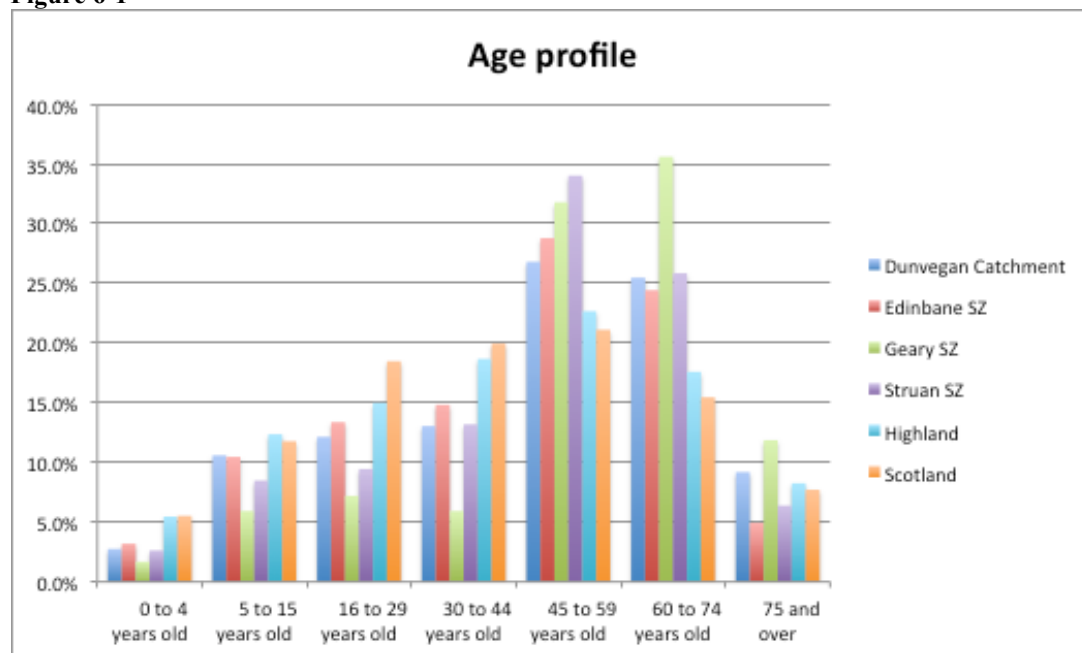
Most of the overlaps lie in the less populated parts of the area and therefore it is felt that the Settlement Zones are sufficiently representative to be used as a basis for a high level economic overview of the areas.

The population of the four catchments is Dunvegan (1027), Edinbane (344), Knockbreck (236) and Struan (217).

Figure 6-1 shows the age profile in the four areas compared to the Highland and Scotland figures. This shows that the four areas have an older population overall than the Highland and Scotland figures, with fewer people under 44, and more in the older age brackets, especially the 45 to 74 range. The difference is most marked in the Knockbreck (Geary) area. Edinbane and Struan have the lowest proportion of people over 75.

¹¹ <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/highlandfactsandfigures/census2011.htm>

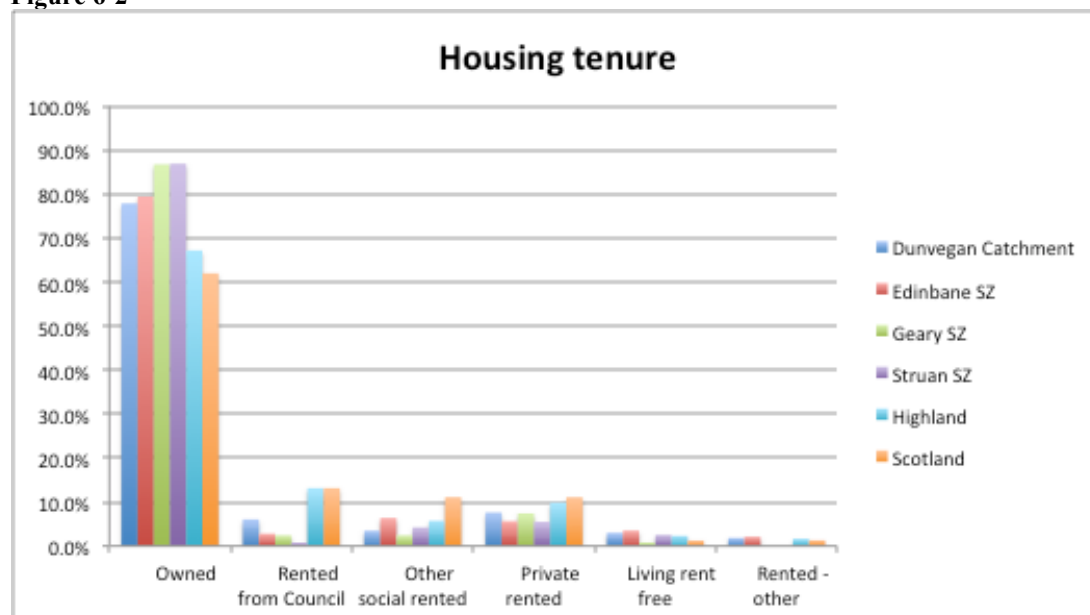
Figure 6-1



6.4 Housing

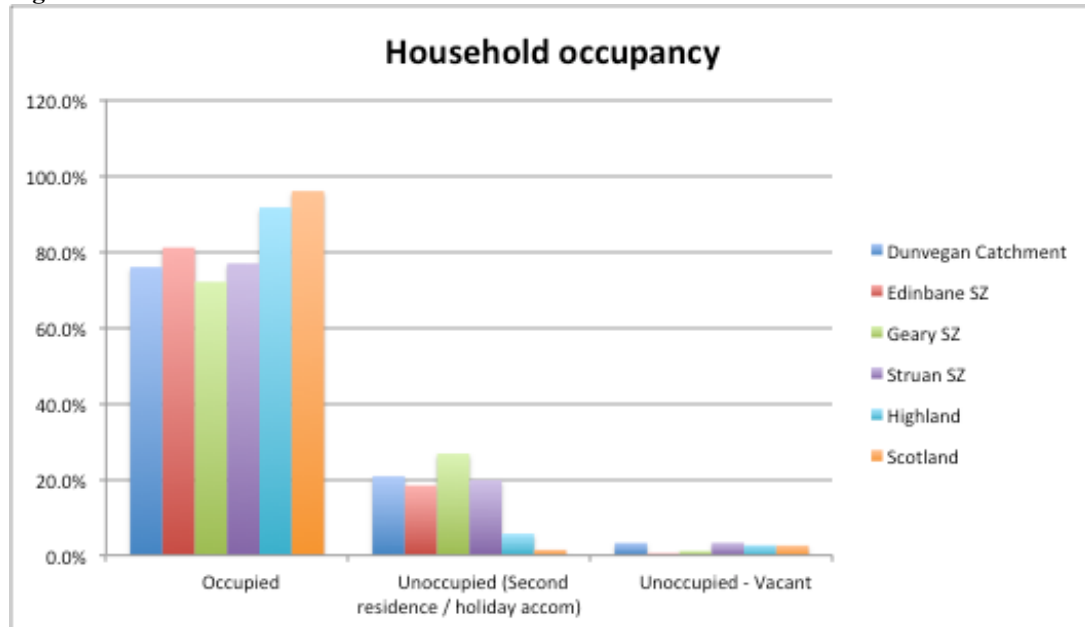
The area has a higher proportion of owned housing than the Highlands and Scotland figures with the highest proportions in Geary and Struan. Dunvegan has the highest proportion of Council rented housing, although this is much less than the Highland and Scottish levels as shown below in Figure 6-2.

Figure 6-2



Levels of housing occupancy are lower than in the Highlands as a whole and Scotland, with Geary having the lowest rate of occupancy and the highest proportion of second homes or holiday accommodation as shown below in Figure 6-3.

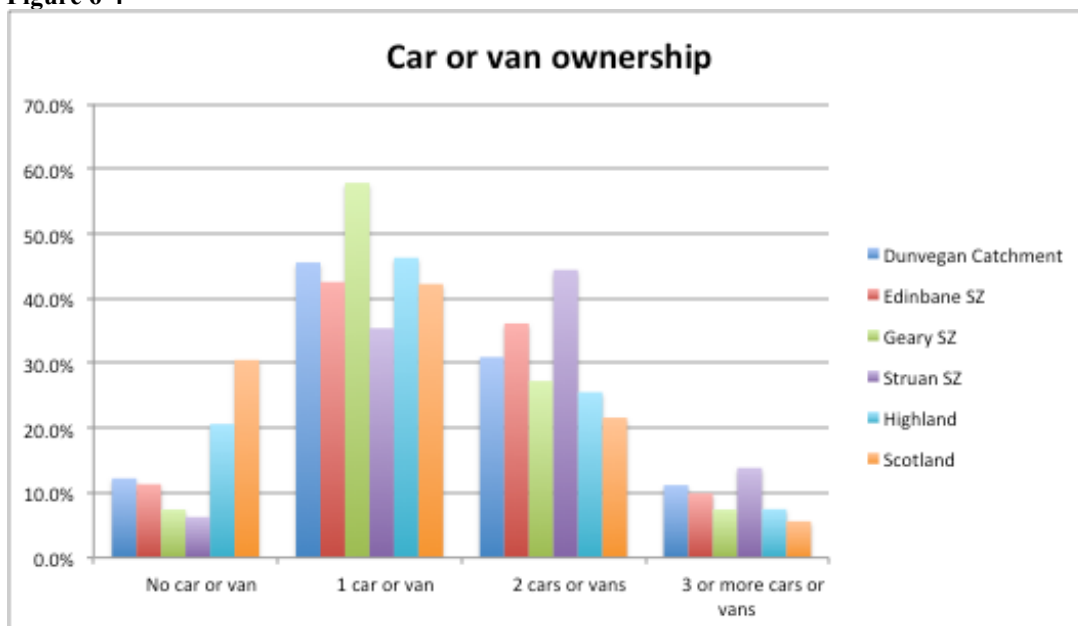
Figure 6-3



6.5 Car or van ownership

Figure 6-4 shows the levels of car/van ownership per household. This shows that a lower proportion of households is without a car/van than the rest of the Highlands or Scotland and that a higher proportion has two or more cars/vans. The lowest proportion of households without a car/van is Struan and the highest proportion is Dunvegan.

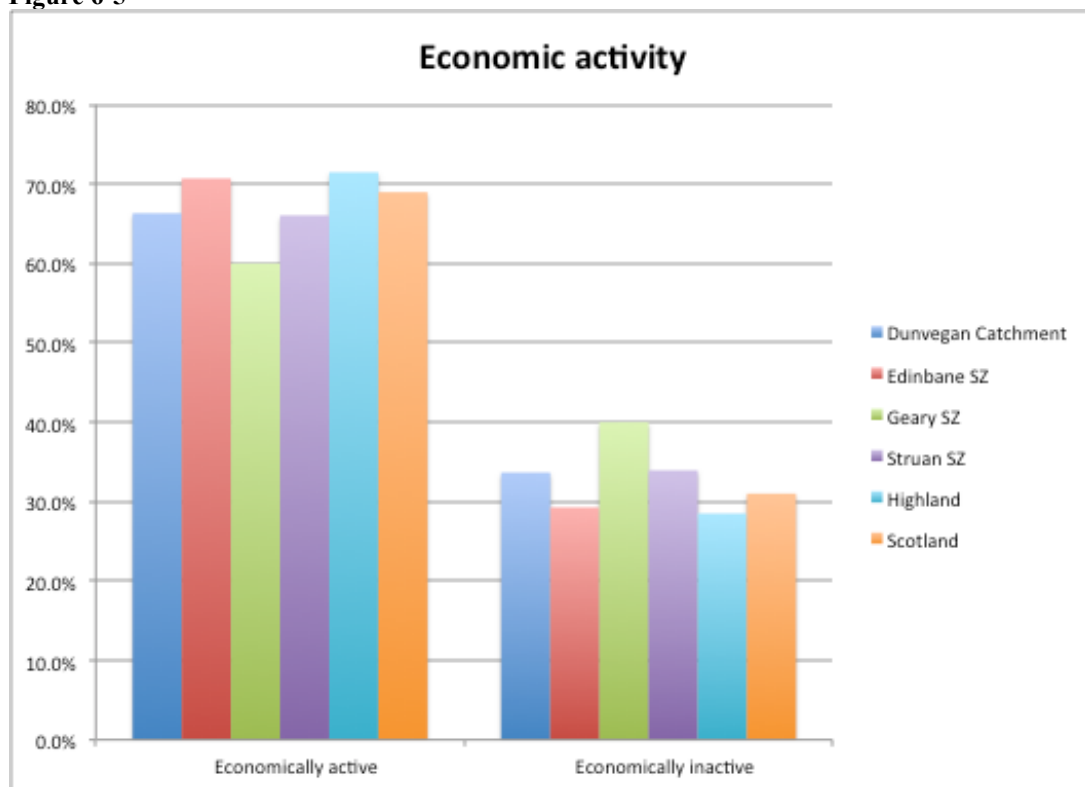
Figure 6-4



6.6 Economic Activity and Employment

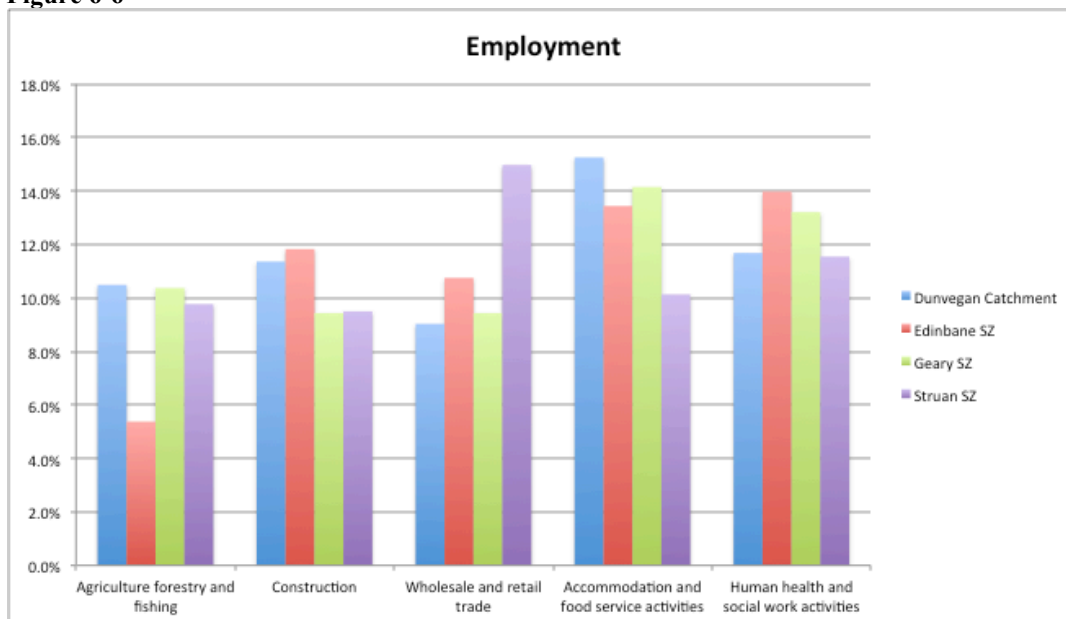
Figure 6-5 shows that levels of economic activity (among the population aged 16-74) are broadly similar to the rest of the Highland and Scotland, although each of the four areas has a lower level than the Highlands as a whole. Geary shows the lowest level of activity and Edinbane the highest.

Figure 6-5

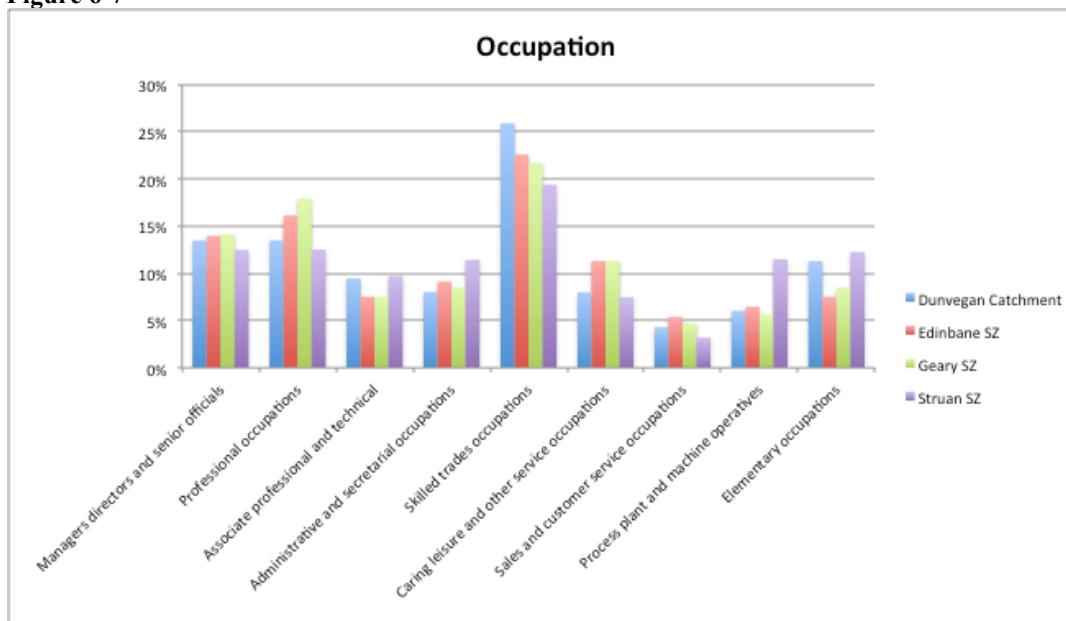


Unemployment in most of the area is close to the Highland figure of 4% with the exception of the Struan Settlement Zone where unemployment is around 1%.

The largest employment sectors in the area overall are Accommodation and Food Services, Human Health and Social Work, Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trade and Agriculture Forestry and Fishing. Figure 6-6 shows that Accommodation and Food Services is the largest employment sector in the Dunvegan and Geary areas, Human Health and Social Work in the Edinbane area, and Wholesale and Retail in the Struan area.

Figure 6-6

There is a fairly uniform spread of occupations across the four areas as shown below in Figure 6-7, with the largest proportion in each area involved in Skilled Trades and the smallest proportion in Sales and Customer Service.

Figure 6-7

7 Options Considered

7.1 Introduction

During the course of the SSER study on Skye a range of ideas have been discussed. These are:

- A. Leave all schools as they are, continuing with routine maintenance and transporting pupils between the schools for specific activities;
- B. Replace every school with a new one on a like for like basis;
- C. Close Struan and merge with Carbost;
- D. Close Struan and merge with existing Dunvegan;
- E. Close Struan and merge the southern part of its catchment with Carbost and the northern part with the existing school at Dunvegan;
- F. Close Knockbreck and merge with Dunvegan;
- G. Close Knockbreck and merge with Edinbane;
- H. Close Knockbreck and merge part with Dunvegan and part with Edinbane;
- I. Close Edinbane and merge with Dunvegan;
- J. Close Edinbane and merge with Macdiarmid;
- K. Close Edinbane and merge with Dunvegan, perhaps with the eastern part of its catchment going to Macdiarmid;
- L. Build a new school around Skeabost. Close and merge Macdiarmid and Edinbane;
- M. Build a new school around Dunvegan. Close Knockbreck and merge with Dunvegan. Close Edinbane and Struan and merge all or part of the catchments with Dunvegan and remainder of the catchments with either Macdiarmid or Carbost respectively.

7.2 Developing a Shortlist of Options for Consideration

Before committing time, energy and resources to exploring these in detail, an initial filtering process was carried out to identify those options which appeared to be most reasonable and viable and which showed the greatest potential to deliver educational benefits and to enhance the overall quality and standard of the school estate. To do this, two tests were applied to each of the ideas explained above:

- **Test 1** – would the implementation of this idea increase the likelihood of more pupils being taught in a school with at least three classes. The reason for using this test is that it is believed that significant educational benefits are believed to accrue when a school reaches this level, as explained in Sections 9 and 10.
- **Test 2** – would the implementation of this idea increase the number of pupils in buildings with Condition and Suitability ratings of at least B-B? These ratings are defined in Scottish Government Guidance¹². This test is consistent with the aspiration set out in the National School Estate Strategy that: “all

¹² Details of the national school estate strategy and details of the Condition and Suitability ratings can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Buildings/commitments>

children ... will be educated in ... schools that are 'fit for purpose' in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency”.

7.3 Option Shortlist

Table 7-1 below shows the results when the two shortlisting tests are applied to the Ideas A to M.

Table 7-1 (a)

<i>A: Leave all schools as they are, continuing with routine maintenance and transport pupils between the schools for specific activities</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
No improvement	No improvement	Baseline position against which to test other options
<i>B: Replace each school with a new one like for like;</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
No improvement	All	Expenditure could not be justified when other options would deliver significant additional benefits at lower cost
<i>C: Close Struan and merge with Carbost</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
Would benefit pupils by being in larger groups and significantly reduce the need for them to travel elsewhere for a range of activities, losing valuable learning and teaching time during the school day (*). Would not hit the three class ideal	Carbost is B-B, Struan is C-B. Struan pupils would not need to travel for PE	Dunvegan closer to northern part of Struan catchment therefore Idea E would be preferable
<i>D: Close Struan and merge with existing Dunvegan</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
As (*) above regarding travel during the day. Unlikely to be sufficient pupils between the two to sustain Dunvegan at three EM classes	Both schools are C-B. Same comment as above regarding PE	Carbost closer to southern part of Struan catchment therefore Idea E would be preferable
<i>E: Close Struan and merge the southern part of its catchment with Carbost and the northern part with the existing school at Dunvegan</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
As (*) above regarding travel during the day. Insufficient pupils between the two to sustain Dunvegan at three EM classes	Carbost is B-B, others are C-B. Same comment as above regarding PE	
<i>F: Close Knockbreck and merge with Dunvegan</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
As (*) above regarding travel during the day. Unlikely to be sufficient pupils between the two to sustain Dunvegan at three EM classes	Knockbreck is B-C and Dunvegan C-B	No significant educational benefit
<i>G: Close Knockbreck and merge with Edinbane</i>		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
There will not be sufficient pupils between the two to sustain three classes	Knockbreck is B-C and Edinbane is C-C	More travel for no significant educational benefit

Table 7.1(b)

H: Close Knockbreck and merge parts with Dunvegan and Edinbane		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
As (*) above in respect of those who might move to Dunvegan	Same comments as above	Knockbreck catchment is more or less linear along the road. No obvious/logical way of splitting catchment
I: Close Edinbane, merge with Dunvegan		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
Would place Edinbane pupils in a school with three classes, though not of the same language medium	Edinbane is C-C, Dunvegan C-B so slight improvement, but does not meet aspiration of B-B for all	Would provide educational benefit to the extent that Edinbane pupils would be in a larger unit
J: Close Edinbane, merge with Macdiarmid		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
Likely to put Edinbane pupils in a school with three classes in the same language medium	Would put Edinbane pupils in better building, (Macdiarmid is BB)	This option could deliver educational benefits but is not viable because Macdiarmid would not have sufficient capacity in the medium term
K: Close Edinbane and merge with Dunvegan, perhaps eastern part of its catchment going to Macdiarmid;		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
Same as "I" above for Dunvegan. Macdiarmid already has three classes in the same language medium so any Edinbane pupils going there would benefit accordingly	Edinbane is C-C, Dunvegan C-B and Macdiarmid B-B	Would be low cost option that could deliver educational benefits
L: Build a new school around Skeabost. Close and merge Macdiarmid and Edinbane		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
Would put Edinbane pupils in three class school where all the classes are in the same language medium	Would put Edinbane pupils in better building, but Macdiarmid is already BB therefore benefit compared to merging with existing Macdiarmid is relatively small	Unlikely to be able to justify replacing a school that is in BB condition when many others in the Highlands are significantly worse condition
M: Build a new school around Dunvegan. Close Knockbreck and merge with Dunvegan. Close Edinbane and Struan and merge all or part of the catchments with Dunvegan and remainder of the catchments with either Macdiarmid or Carbost respectively.		
Test 1	Test 2	Additional Comments
All pupils in the four catchments would benefit because the new school would sustain at least three classes (EM and GM total) and has the possibility of three in EM	Pupils from all four schools would be in AA.	Appears to deliver the maximum benefits in terms of the parameters set out. Also any Edinbane pupils not zoned to Dunvegan would go Macdiarmid which is B-B.

From the above analysis it is clear that idea M is the most reasonable and viable option and the one therefore which merits being explored further.

8 What Might a New Build School Be Like?

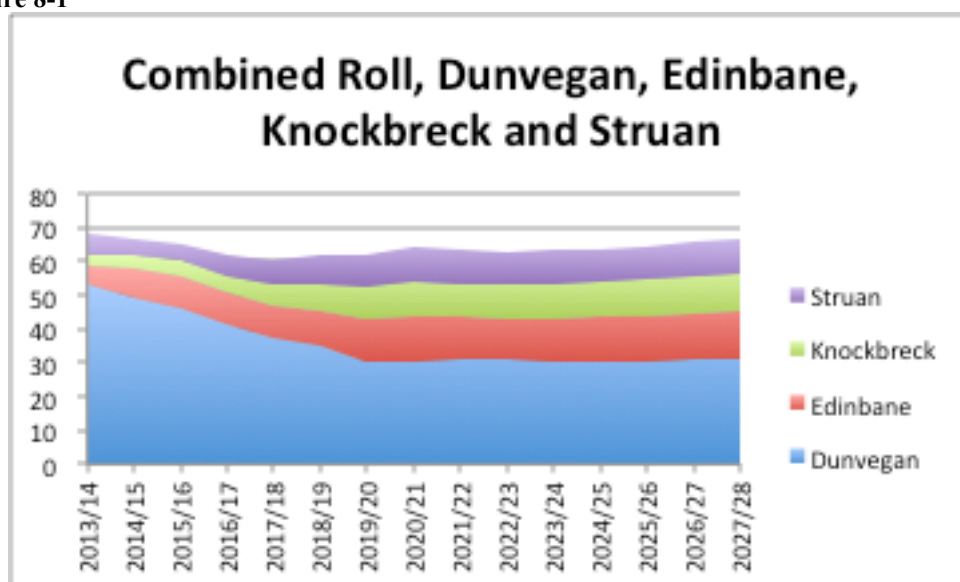
8.1 Introduction

In this section and those which follow, the idea of a new school in Dunvegan (Idea M from the previous section) is examined in more detail.

8.2 Rolls and Class Configuration

If the same placing request assumptions are made as in the published forecasts for the four existing schools, and if the whole of the catchment zones of the four existing schools were to be merged, the roll of the new school would be between 60 and 70 pupils for the foreseeable future, as shown below in Figure 8-1.

Figure 8-1



If there were to be fewer outward placing requests than are assumed in the current forecasts then this would result in a larger roll, and if there were to be more placing requests out then this would result in a smaller roll.

If house completions were to be greater than the current assumptions, or if those houses were to produce more pupils then this would result in a larger roll and *vice versa*. Similarly if birth rates turn out to be higher than assumed then this too would result in a larger roll and *vice versa*.

8.3 Potential Uptake of Gaelic

On the assumption that the same proportion of the pupils attend the Gaelic and English streams (27%) as in Dunvegan at present, this would suggest that the new school would have between 16 and 18 pupils in a Gaelic class, and between 44 and 50 in two or three English classes.

As a comparator, the average number of pupils in Gaelic medium education in Skye overall is close to 30%, the number of Skye residents who understood Gaelic in the 2001 census was around 40%, and the take up of Gaelic education is as high as 75% in some areas. This suggests that there may be potential for the proportion choosing Gaelic to increase in NW Skye.

Experience elsewhere in the Highlands and indeed in other parts of Scotland suggests that a new school is attractive to parents and tends to result in an increase in demand for places at the new school. With a new Gaelic school planned for Portree it is possible that the demand for places in that school will increase from its surrounding catchment zones including from the four existing schools which are the subject of this report. If this happens it will reduce the rolls of the existing schools unless something can be done to make it more attractive for parents to send their pupils for education in their local catchment area.

Assuming that retaining pupils and educational provision in the outlying parts of Skye is thought to be a positive thing, a new school in Dunvegan with purpose-built nursery, Gaelic and possibly wrap-around care provision has the potential to counter this 'gravitational pull' from Portree and address some of the other issues that are given as being reasons for placing requests out of the four existing schools.

8.4 Features of a New School

New primary schools designed in the Highlands in recent years have typically featured:

- grass and all-weather sports pitches;
- school kitchen;
- sports hall;
- separate dining area i.e. separate from sport hall;
- classrooms opening directly onto outdoor teaching space;
- complete separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- separate drop-off areas for school buses;
- light, bright classrooms with natural light and ventilation.

It is expected that the new school, if it goes ahead, would include all these physical features in a building designed to cope with the Hebridean climate and sympathetic to the local landscape.

It is hoped that the new school would be built adjacent to the proposed new community sports facilities. Whilst these ideas are still at a very early stage of development, it is hoped that arrangements could be made for the school and community to benefit accordingly from these facilities if the development goes ahead.

8.5 Timescales

There are many factors both within and outwith the Council's control that could influence the timetable for the creation of a new school, should the Council decide to take the idea forward. At this early stage it is difficult to be certain about the

timetable, however in considering the merits of an idea it is important that those potentially affected have an indication of the timescales involved.

If the Council were to take a decision in May 2014 to proceed with statutory consultation on the creation of the new school and the merger of the four existing schools, an indicative timetable could be:

- August 2014 to spring/summer 2015 – statutory consultation and subsequent decision, if the decision were to be approval of the proposal;
- spring/summer 2015 to spring 2016 – design, planning, land, procurement of new school;
- spring 2016 to summer 2017 – construction of new school;
- August 2017 – pupils move into new school.

9 Qualitative Assessment Workshop

9.1 Introduction

A workshop was held in Portree in February 2014 to obtain a professional view on the educational advantages that might be delivered by a new build school in line with Idea M above compared to the existing configuration.

This workshop followed a similar format to those held for other SSER studies and the structure has been developed in order to provide a model for the assessment of the options which is clear, comprehensive, robust and easily understood. It seeks to identify what specific educational benefits can be expected to accrue from the options under consideration relative to the current position. It also seeks to gauge the impact on communities of different options and provide an indication of where other work may be required to explore impacts on a community.

It takes as its starting point view that the primary purpose of a school is to provide a context for the delivery of education. This unarguable fact sits alongside the statutory obligation of Local Authorities in providing education as defined in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 that *“it shall be the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential”* (Para 2 (1)).

The framework provides a template which can be used to gauge the relative value of aspects of the options under consideration which contribute to educational and community provision. In undertaking this exercise, priority has been given to the view that a school is principally the group of children or young people and staff who come together for the provision of education and that the nature, potential and dynamics of that group is of fundamental importance in the development of children and young people to their fullest potential in order that they might become, as described in Curriculum for Excellence:

- Successful Learners;
- Confident Individuals;
- Responsible Citizens;
- Effective Contributors.

Very much of the above is, in fact, dependent upon the interaction amongst learners and between teacher(s) and learners.

Other documents which have been taken into account in developing this framework include *HMiE How Good is our School?*, the Highland Council's *Annual Statement of Improvement Objectives*, and the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

9.2 Workshop Participants

Parents place their children in the care of Head Teachers and school staff every day, and rely greatly on their judgement, professional wisdom and expertise to do the best for pupils. For this reason, SSER takes the view that the Head Teachers as

a body are best placed to provide a view on the educational advantages and disadvantages of ideas such as those being discussed in this report and that the local Head Teachers' views collectively carry particular weight.

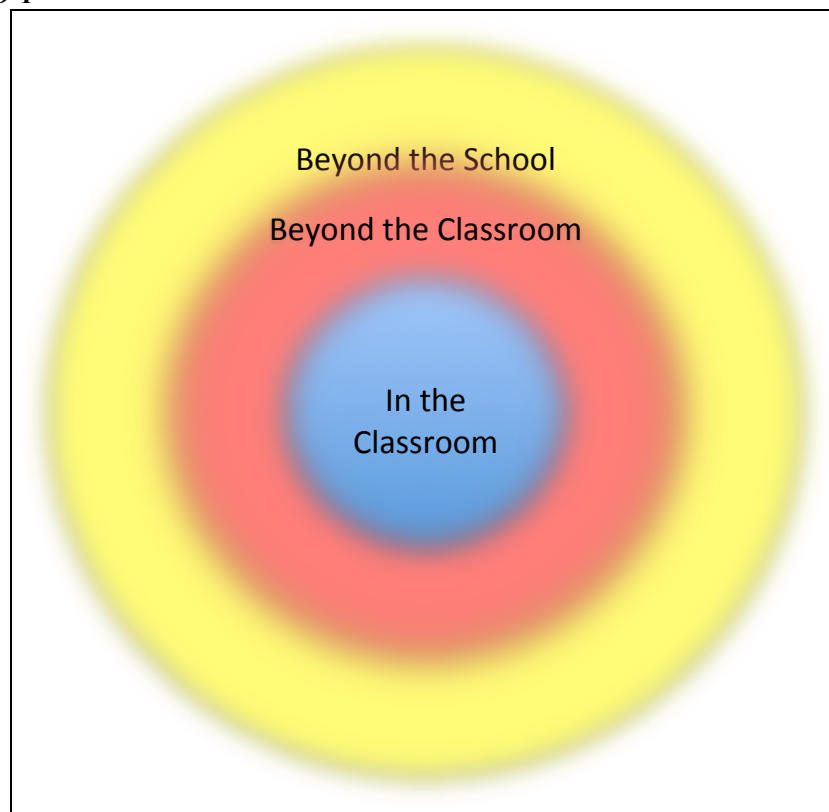
All Primary School Head Teachers in the Portree High School ASG were invited to participate in the workshop, and although some were not available for a variety of reasons, five volunteered to take part, representing a very significant body of professional wisdom and knowledge with experience of working in many schools of a range of sizes across Skye, the Highlands and overseas.

9.3 Workshop Structure

The workshop was designed around a simple representational model of a school and its relationship with its community. This model has three components (Figure 9-1), as follows:

1. what happens **“in the classroom”**: those activities that take place which might be considered ‘lessons/learning and teaching’ in the traditional sense and most recently as encapsulated in the framework of the Curriculum for Excellence. This area of school life is related in the main to the quality of the interactions between pupils and teachers, between pupils and between staff, and applies to all pupils regardless of age, stage, gender and any Additional Support Needs they may have;
2. what happens **“beyond the classroom”**: the wider experiences that pupils would normally be expected to have during their time at school, such as enjoying a safe and healthy environment in sound and appropriate school facilities, making friends and participating in social groups with others of a similar age and with similar interests, experiencing a range of sporting and expressive activities as individuals and in groups or teams, and benefiting from interaction with different teachers, staff and other adults;
3. what happens **“beyond the school”**: the broader interaction between a school and its community such as community use of the buildings and grounds, individuals from the community sharing their skills and interests with the school, pupils sharing their achievements and interests with the community, community events, efficient journeys to and from school, the impact of school traffic on the immediate neighbourhood, and the role the school has in supporting the identity and sustainability of the community.

All participants agreed that the three headings were relevant and constituted a sound representational model for the purposes of the workshop.

Figure 9-1

9.4 Factors Considered

Within each of the three components described above, a list of factors has been developed and refined over the course of a series of SSER studies. These are shown below in Table 6-1 and are explained in detail in Appendix 1.

The initial list of factors has been developed and refined with groups of Head Teachers in a range of setting across the Highlands and other parts of the country over several years. It is notable that there is a high degree of consistency amongst the groups who have worked with the list of factors. In total, over one hundred experienced Heads have worked with this list and confirmed that it reflects the full spectrum of issues that they would expect to see taken into consideration, subject always to minor adjustments to reflect local nuances.

Table 6-1

Initial List of Factors as presented to Head Teachers before Workshop
GROUP 1 – “In the classroom”
Learning and achievement for all
Cooperative/Flexible Teaching and Support for Learning
Peer Group Challenge/Group Work/Cooperative Learning
Access to appropriate ICT infrastructure
Early Years education
Continuity and Progression
Management and Leadership
Professional Learning Communities
Gaelic Provision

Initial List of Factors as presented to Head Teachers before Workshop
GROUP 2 – “Beyond the classroom”
Recreation/Team Games/Active Schools
Musical Group and Performing Arts Activities
Social Interaction
Extra Curricular Activities/interests –
Health and Wellbeing
Inclusion
Pastoral Care
A Community Facility
GROUP 3 – “Beyond the school”
Community identity
Community Use of Facilities
Interaction with the Community
Travel distance, time, risk and impact on community
Wrap around care
Planned Housing Developments
Opportunities for Co-location with other bodies

9.5 Review of list of Factors by Head Teachers

As part of the preparation for the workshop, the participants were invited to review and comment on the draft list of factors (a Briefing Note provided to them in advance is shown in Appendix 2). In response to their review, the following factors were added to the list:

- **Support and specialist services** - is an option likely to increase or decrease a school's access to pupil support and specialist services?
- **Health and Safety of staff or pupils** - is an option likely to reduce or increase the likelihood of "lone adult worker" situations arising?
- **School identity** - Every school has a unique culture, ethos and identity, Will an option enhance or limit the extent to which a positive ethos and culture can exist or be created?
- **Travel to school - healthy options** - Does an option enhance or limit the extent to which pupils can travel to school on foot/cycle or similar, should they wish to?

9.6 Rating the Options against the Factors

Participants considered each Factor and considered whether the reconfiguration option under consideration conferred benefits relative to the status quo, or whether it was worse than the status quo on that Factor. Participants had the choice of:

- significantly better;
- slightly better;
- no change;
- slightly worse;
- significantly worse.

It was noted that the impact (positive or negative) was likely to be much more significant on pupils from the three smaller schools (Edinbane, Knockbreck and

Struan) making a possible move to a new larger school than the pupils from Dunvegan. For this reason it was agreed that participants would consider the benefits relative to the pupils in the smaller schools.

Participants discussed the options against each factor and agreed the rating on a consensus basis. The ratings that were agreed are described in the following section.

10 Results of the Qualitative Assessment

10.1 Introduction

In this section the results of the Qualitative Assessment of the options are described.

10.2 In the Classroom

The ratings given to the two options under consideration are shown below in Figure 10-1. Participants felt that the new school would be '**Significantly better**' on five of the Factors:

- *Cooperative/Flexible Teaching and SfL (Support for Learning);*
- *Peer Group Work/Cooperative Learning;*
- *Early Years education;*
- *Professional Learning Communities;*
- *Health and Safety of staff or pupils.*

Participants felt that the new school would be '**Slightly better**' on two of the Factors:

- *Learning and Achievement;*
- *Support and Professional Services.*

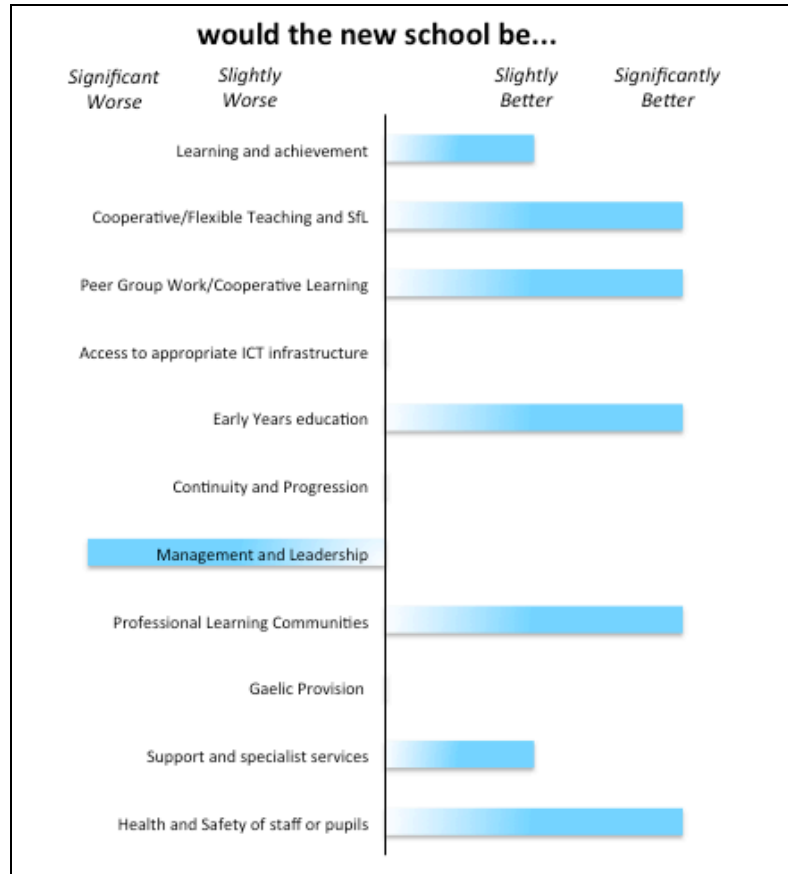
When considering *Management and Leadership*, Participants felt that the new school could be '**Significantly worse**' than the status quo. Their reason for saying this is that under the current arrangements, the schools operate as clusters in which the Head Teachers have no teaching commitment¹³ whereas under the reconfiguration the Head Teachers highlighted that, based on the current management arrangements in the four schools (Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan) the new school at Dunvegan, along with other affected schools (Macdiarmid and Carbost) could each have Head Teachers with a teaching commitment. Head Teachers prefer the non-class committed cluster arrangement for a variety of reasons.

Participants felt that the new school would be '**neither better nor worse**' than the current arrangement against three of the Factors:

- *Access to appropriate IT infrastructure;*
- *Continuity and progression;*
- *Gaelic provision.*

¹³ Dunvegan and Edinbane Primary Schools currently share a Head Teacher; Macdiarmid and Knockbreck share a Head Teacher; and Carbost and Struan also share a Head Teacher. None of these three posts has a teaching commitment.

Figure 10-1 – In The Classroom



10.3 Beyond the Classroom

The ratings given to the two options under consideration are shown below in Figure 10-2. Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**Significantly better**’ on four of the Factors:

- *Recreation/Team Games/Active Schools;*
- *Musical Group and Performing Arts Activities;*
- *Social Interaction;*
- *Health and Wellbeing;*

Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**Slightly better**’ on two of the Factors:

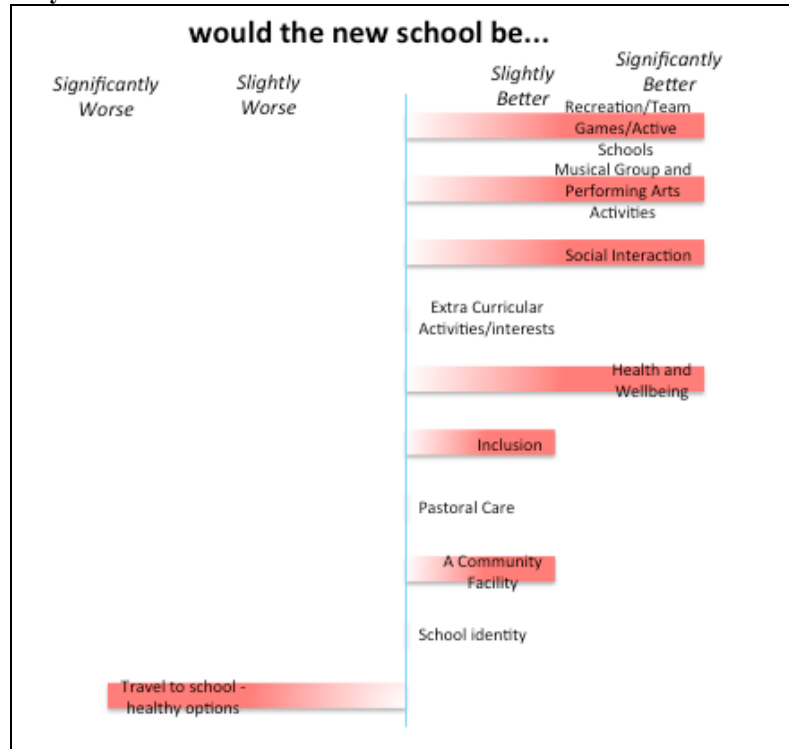
- *Inclusion;*
- *As a community facility.*

When considering “*Travel to school - healthy options*”, Participants felt that the new school could be ‘**Significantly worse**’ than the status quo because fewer pupils would be able to travel to school on foot/cycle or similar should they wish to do so.

Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**neither better nor worse**’ than the current arrangement against three of the Factors:

- *Extra Curricular Activities/interests;*
- *Pastoral care;*
- *School identity.*

Figure 10-2 – Beyond the Classroom



10.4 Beyond the School

The ratings given to the two options under consideration are shown below in Figure 10-2. Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**Slightly better**’ on one of the Factors:

- *Opportunities for co-location with other bodies.*

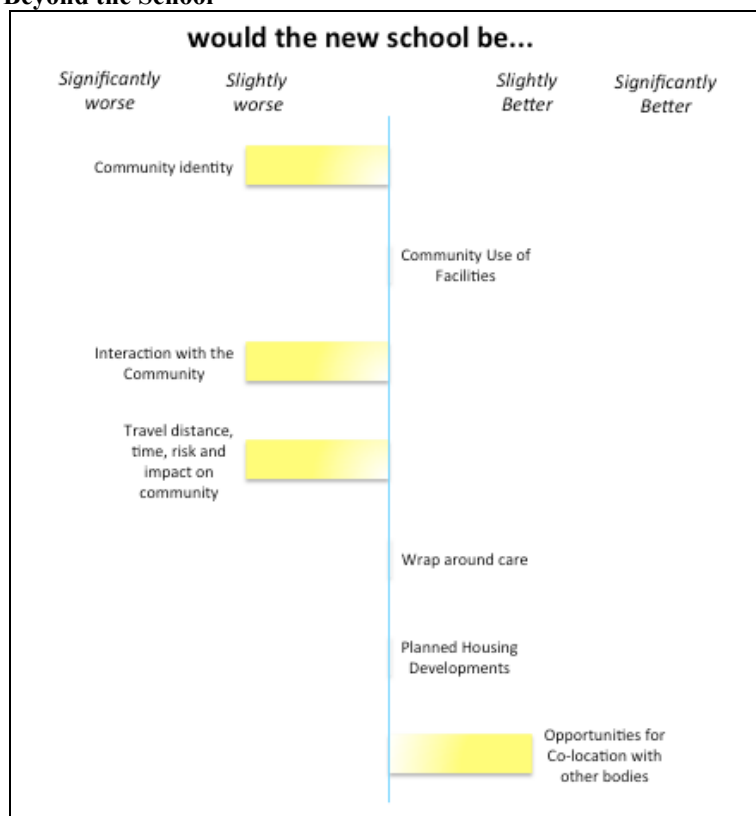
Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**Slightly worse**’ than the existing arrangement on three of the Factors:

- *Community identity;*
- *Interaction with the community*
- *Travel distance, time, risk and impact on the community.*

Participants felt that the new school would be ‘**neither better nor worse**’ than the current arrangement against three of the Factors:

- *Community use of facilities (except for Struan where the community use the school facilities for a range of activities);*
- *Wrap around care;*
- *Planned housing developments.*

Figure 10-3 – Beyond the School



10.5 Summing Up

Across all twenty eight factors considered, the workshop found that the ‘*new school*’ option would offer ‘**Significant benefits**’ on nine factors and ‘**Slight benefits**’ on five factors. The ‘*new school*’ option was considered to be ‘**Significantly worse**’ than the existing arrangement on two factors, one of which would be changed to ‘**neither better nor worse**’ if the new school had a Head Teacher with no class commitment. The ‘*new school*’ option was thought to be “**Slightly worse**” on three factors. There was thought to be no difference on nine Factors.

The workshop gave the twenty eight factors, and the three groups of factors equal consideration and treated them as being of equal importance. However, it is important to recognise that a school’s primary function is to provide pupils with the best possible educational experience. The Council’s legal obligations in terms of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act¹⁴ 2000, the central role of the Educational Benefits Statement in any proposal taken forward in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, and the emphasis on the “whole child” embedded in GIRFEC¹⁵ and Curriculum for Excellence, suggest it would be natural to look first to the “In the Classroom” and “Beyond the Classroom” factors to provide an indication as to which of the ideas should be the preferred option.

¹⁴ "the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential"

¹⁵ The national Getting It Right For Every Child model

10.6 Conclusions – positive impacts of a new build merged school

In light of the above, the primary conclusion of the workshop is that the suggested new school could reasonably be expected to deliver a wide range of very valuable long term educational benefits to pupils on a stable and sustainable basis, and therefore that this should be considered the ‘preferred option’.

These positive benefits derive either from the numbers of pupils and staff coming close to the ‘ideal’ of three classes identified in other studies, or from the opportunity to design a building ideally suited for the delivery of a modern education. Specifically, these educational benefits are:

1. improving pupils’ chances of reaching their full potential by allowing the teaching staff to employ a range of flexible teaching approaches including cooperative teaching in meeting the needs of all pupils especially those who are experiencing particular difficulties or needing additional support;
2. enabling pupils to work in groups with others of a similar age and ability, challenging each other and learning together;
3. providing an environment where there are sufficient teaching staff in a school to allow them to work together in curriculum development initiatives, affording each other professional support, sharing best practice and developing skills. While this can happen to an extent across schools, co-location is clearly an advantage for a variety of reasons;
4. providing better access to a range of support and specialist services: visiting specialists will be able to spend less time travelling between schools and therefore more time with pupils and the number of pupils in the school will justify spending more time there;
5. reducing the possibility of any member of staff being in a ‘lone adult worker’ situation, or the minimising the need to make special arrangements to avoid such situations arising, to the benefit of pupils and staff alike;
6. providing greater likelihood of a range of opportunities being available including participation in a wide range of team sports and active recreational activities. Some of these benefits arise from larger pupils numbers (e.g. to form teams of similar age and size), partly because a large staff and parent body increases the likelihood of interested adults leading a range of activities, and partly through improved facilities in a new school;
7. as with sports, providing a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities;
8. recognising that the level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem will be enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer

group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform;

9. creating a modern design which will allow pupils to enjoy a comfortable, naturally lit and well ventilated environment with meals cooked on site, and which is safe, secure, and designed to meet the needs of modern learners and teachers;
10. designing a new build school such that pupils with a wider range of needs could be educated in their local school, partly because of enhanced facilities, and partly because a larger staff means increased opportunities for individual members of staff to develop skills in supporting pupils with particular needs (e.g. hearing loss, sight impairment, medical needs);
11. ensuring that the creation of a new school provides an opportunity to integrate other community services in the facility which can often be of benefit to pupils. New community sports facilities are currently being considered in Dunvegan. Whilst this initiative is still at the very early stage of development, if the new school were collocated with community sports facilities, should they come to fruition, it would give pupils access to a far higher standard of sport facilities than present;
12. similarly, the creation of a new school will allow opportunities to be explored to collocate other community services which may be of benefit to pupils.

This is not to say, however, that the status quo arrangement is without its advantages, and if the Council decides to take forward the idea of a new school, it is important that it considers any negative impacts and seeks to put in place plans to minimise and mitigate, as far as possible, any such negative impacts.

10.7 Conclusions – negative impacts of a new merged school

A further conclusion of the workshop is that the following negative impacts could result from a move to the new school:

- the impact of the allocation of Head Teacher management time in a situation where a Head has a class commitment, compared to a cluster Head with no class commitment. However, it is possible that arrangements could be put in place for there to be a Head Teacher with no class commitment which would fully mitigate this negative impact;
- the impact on school travel and transport: the larger merged school implies an increase in the number of pupils entitled to school transport compared to the number who can currently walk/cycle to school (should they choose to do so), and the occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to/from school during the school day, (should they require to do so);
- the potential loss of focus and identity in the communities concerned, and possibly less interaction between the school and the individual communities.

This may be especially significant in the case of Struan where the community uses the school building for a range of activities and therefore it might be appropriate to explore whether an arrangement could be reached whereby the building (or part thereof) might be transferred to community ownership.

11 Online Survey

11.1 Introduction

An online survey was held to provide a snap shot of public response to the ideas presented in this report. Surveys of this nature are frequently used to inform public policy and can be useful and effective tools for a number of reasons including:

- respondents can complete them at a time convenient to them which is generally thought to lead to a better response rate and fuller responses than other approaches;
- respondents may be more likely to be frank in their responses, particularly compared to face-to-face surveys;
- there is less risk of bias being introduced by the surveyor compared to other approaches, particularly telephone or face-to-face surveys;
- respondents input their answer directly, removing the need for a transcription or data entry stage;
- they are relatively quick, easy and inexpensive to set up and analyse.

However it is widely accepted that they must be designed and interpreted with care for a number of reasons including:

- the sample is self-selecting and therefore the findings cannot be assumed to be unbiased nor to represent the views of the population as a whole;
- individuals may respond more than once;
- it is not possible to be certain that every respondent has understood the full context of the situation or to know whether some responses are frivolous;
- the use of standardised questions means that sometimes a respondent's preferred answers may not be included, leading to a negative attitude towards the survey and incomplete or distorted responses;
- there is a trade-off between the complexity of the survey (the number and nature of the questions asked) and the response rate, therefore it is not always possible to ask every question that the researcher might wish to, or to provide full explanatory text;
- as a general rule, surveys which can be completed in 10 minutes or less appear to have higher response rates, similarly more than 15 questions appear to increase the non-completion rate.

The survey question appears as Appendix 3 of this report. It was open for completion from 25 February until 4 April 2014 and was widely publicised in Council printed and online media.

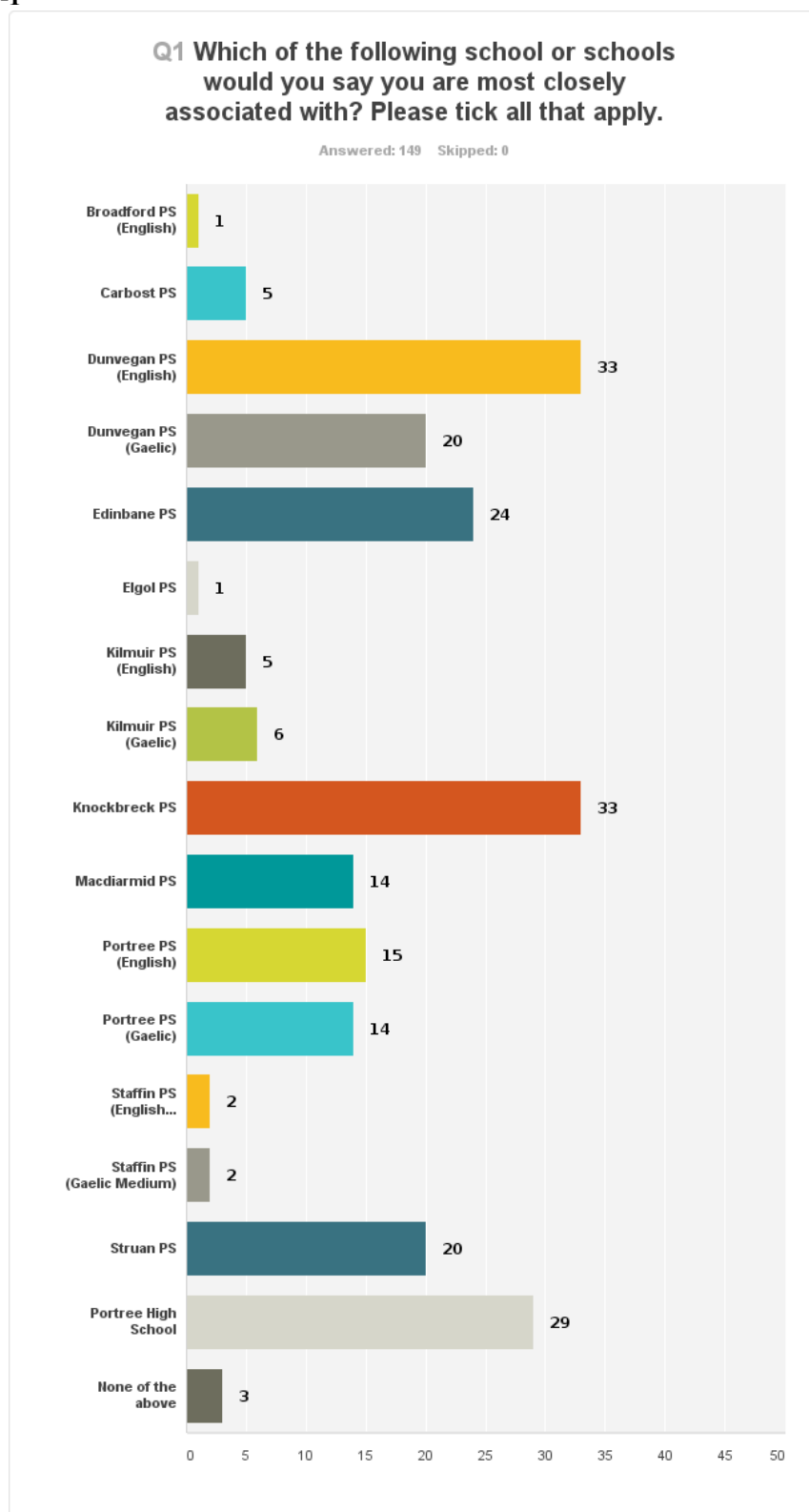
In the introduction to the survey it was stated that the purpose of the survey was to hear views on two specific ideas. It also invited respondents to suggest other ideas they considered to be worthy of consideration.

11.2 Who responded

A total of 149 responses were submitted, of which 97 were complete and 52 partial. Four responses were submitted on paper, the remainder online.

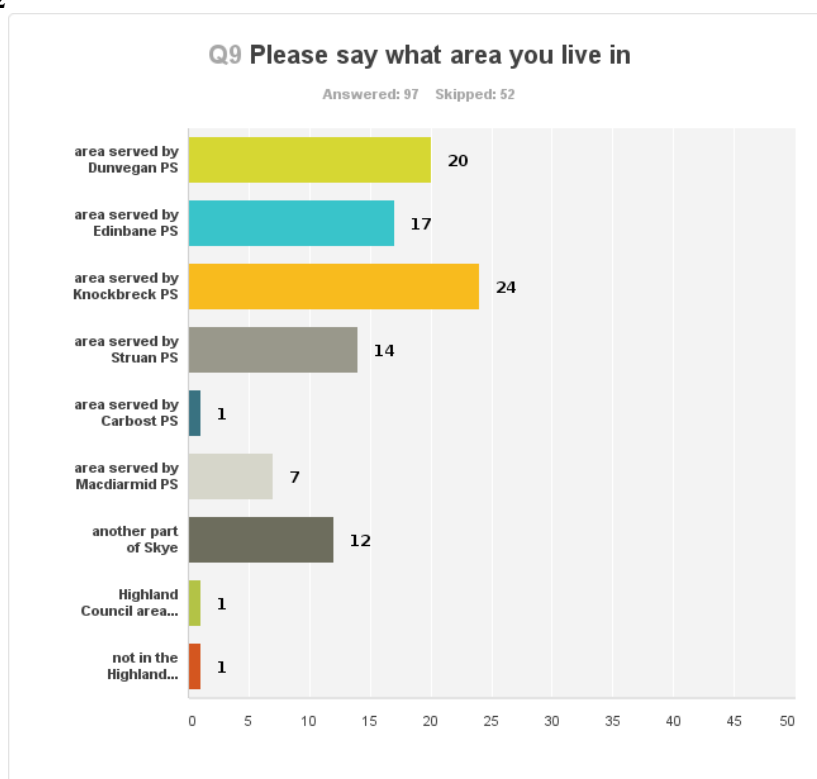
Most respondents included Dunvegan (Gaelic 20 and English 33) as the school they are “*most closely associated with*” followed by Knockbreck (33), Portree High School (29), Edinbane Primary (24) and Struan Primary (20) as shown below in Figure 11-1. Multiple selections were permitted.

Figure 11-1



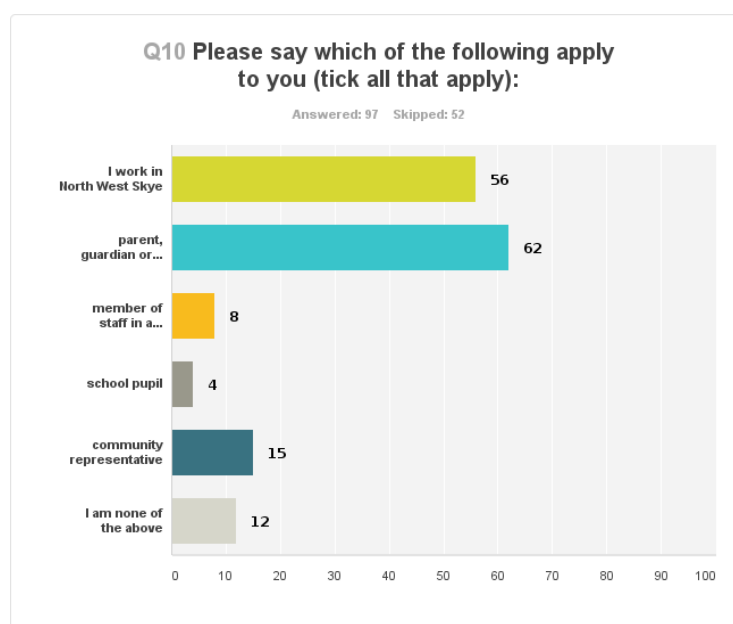
Over three quarters of respondents said they lived in the areas served by Dunvegan (20), Edinbane (17), Knockbreck (24) or Struan (14) Primary Schools as shown below in Figure 11-2. With reference to the population figures set out in Section 6.3, this constitutes responses from 2%, 5%, 10% and 6% of the population of the zones respectively, assuming each response is from a unique individual.

Figure 11-2



Most respondents (62) identified themselves as *a parent, guardian of a school pupil or a family member of a school pupil*. Many also said they work in *North West Skye* (56) as shown below in Figure 11-3.

Figure 11-3



Analysis of the response trends shows that a large proportion of responses (60) were made in the first week with the number of responses falling thereafter as shown

below in Figure 11-4. There was a second peak in responses in week commencing 24 March when 16 (out of a total of 24) responses were made from respondents living in the Knockbreck school area as shown below in Figure 11-5.

Figure 11-4

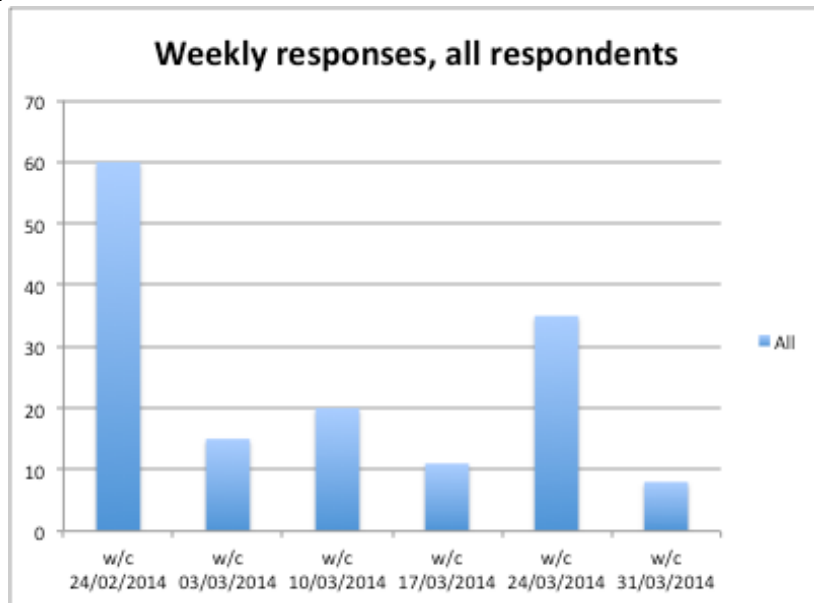
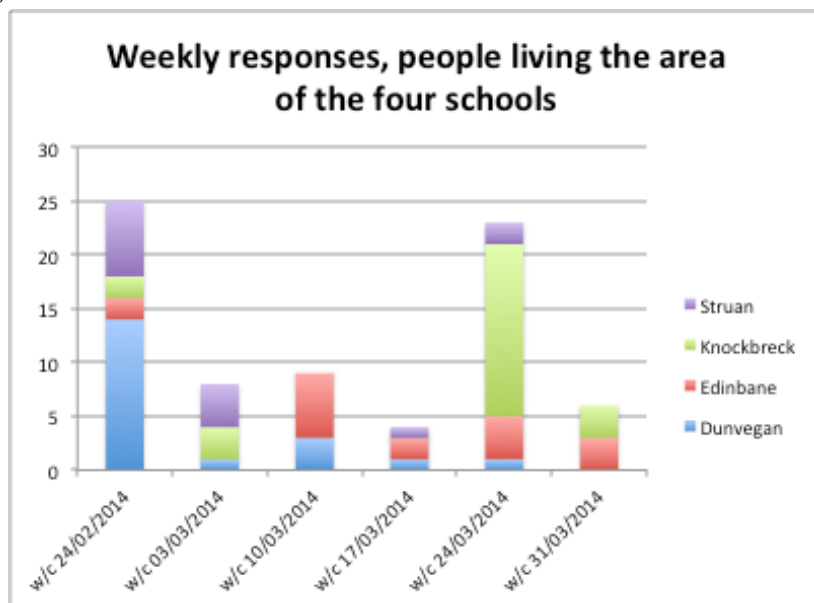


Figure 11-5



11.3 Agreement with a range of statements

Respondents who said they were most closely associated with Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck or Struan primary schools were asked about the extent to which a series of statements most closely fitted with their own views. The purposes of this question were to explore:

- what they felt is most important about a school; and,
- what factors they value under the existing arrangement and would therefore not wish to lose whatever the future configuration, and the factors which they feel are important but which are not present at moment.

The statements were:

- All pupils are known as individuals by key members of staff;
- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard;
- Pupils can take part in as wide a range of extra curricular activities as possible as individuals and in groups;
- A school is located in the middle of its community;
- Schools can attract, retain and develop excellent teachers so that education is of the highest standard;
- Pupils with additional support needs can be fully included within the day to day life of the school;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities;
- As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school;
- Primary schools have nursery provision attached;
- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools.

The responses for all respondents who said they were most closely associated with Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck or Struan primary schools are shown below in Figure 11-6.

This figure shows that across the four schools, the statements most identified as being **“a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”** were:

- All pupils are known as individuals by key members of staff;
- A school is located in the middle of its community;
- Schools can attract, retain and develop excellent teachers so that education is of the highest standard;
- Pupils with additional support needs can be fully included within the day to day life of the school.

The statements most identified as being **“not a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”** were:

- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard;
- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

The statements most identified as being **“not important in a new school”** were:

- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

Figure 11-6 – All associated with Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck or Struan

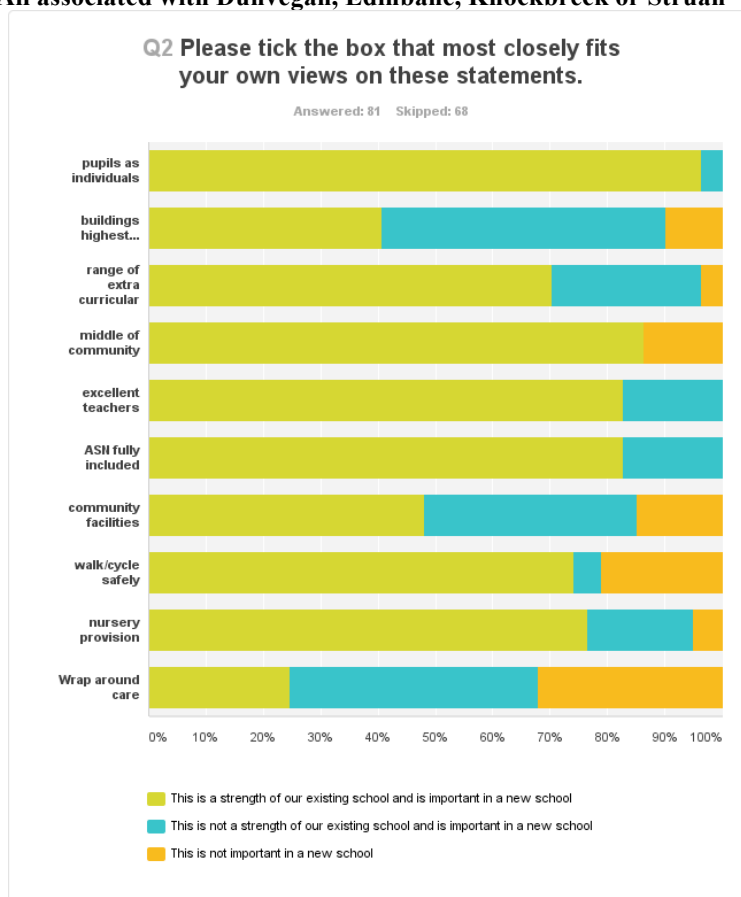


Figure 11-7 shows the results for respondents most closely associated with Dunvegan Primary School. This shows a similar set of statements being most often selected as being **“a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”**. Similar factors were identified as **“not a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”**, but at a much higher rate of occurrence.

Figure 11-7 – Associated with Dunvegan

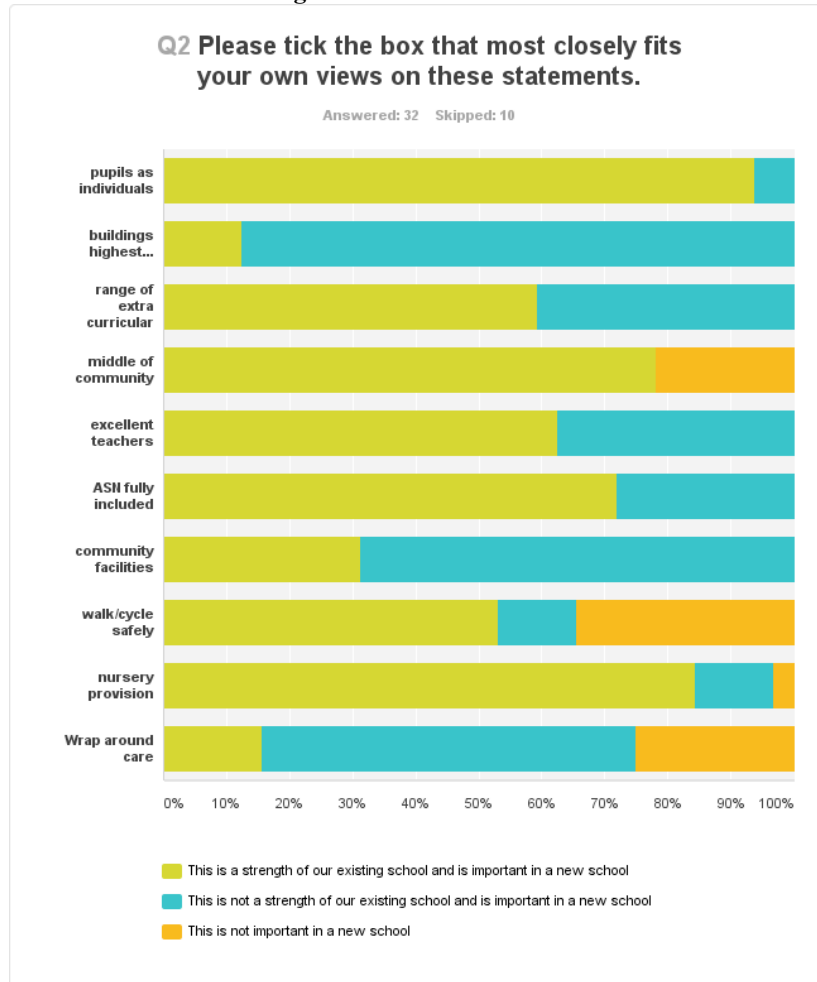


Figure 11-8 shows the responses by respondents most closely associated with Edinbane. Once again, this shows a similar set of factors being selected most often as being **“a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”**, with *“As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school”* also appearing a popular selection.

The statements most identified as being **“not a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”** were the same as the overall picture:

- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard;
- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

The statements most identified as being **“not important in a new school”** were:

- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

Figure 11-8 – Associated with Edinbane

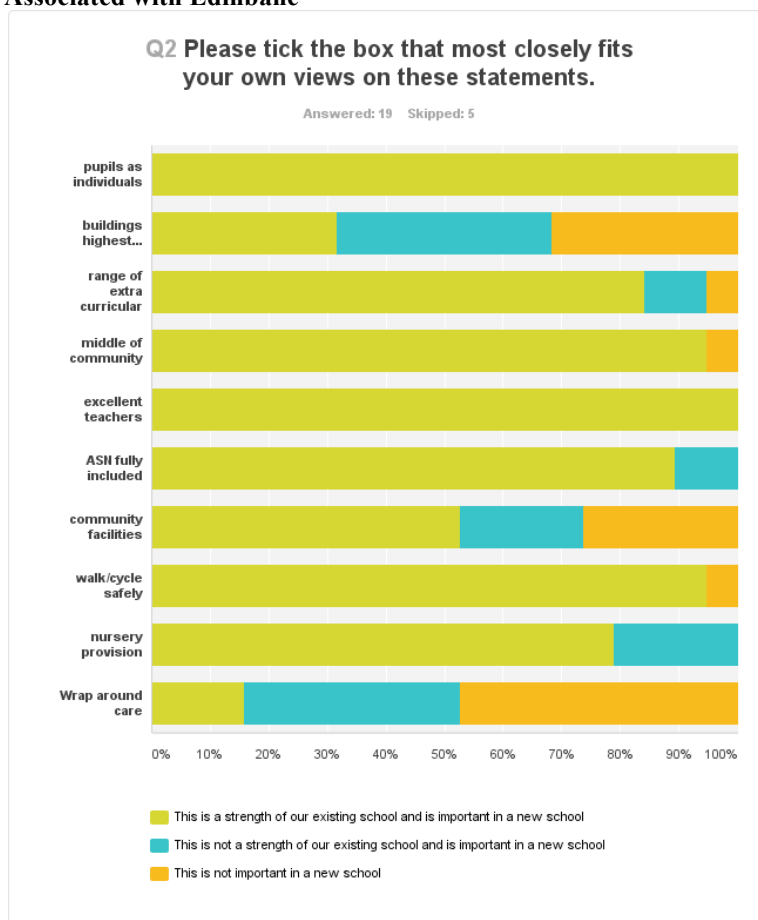


Figure 11-9 shows the responses by respondents most closely associated with Knockbreck. Once again, this shows a similar set of factors being selected most often as being **“a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”**. It is interesting to note that *“As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school”* was a popular selection when three of the four pupils were transported to school at the time of writing.

The statements most identified as being **“not a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”** were the same as the overall picture:

- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard;
- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

The statements most identified as being **“not important in a new school”** were:

- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

Figure 11-9 – Associated with Knockbreck

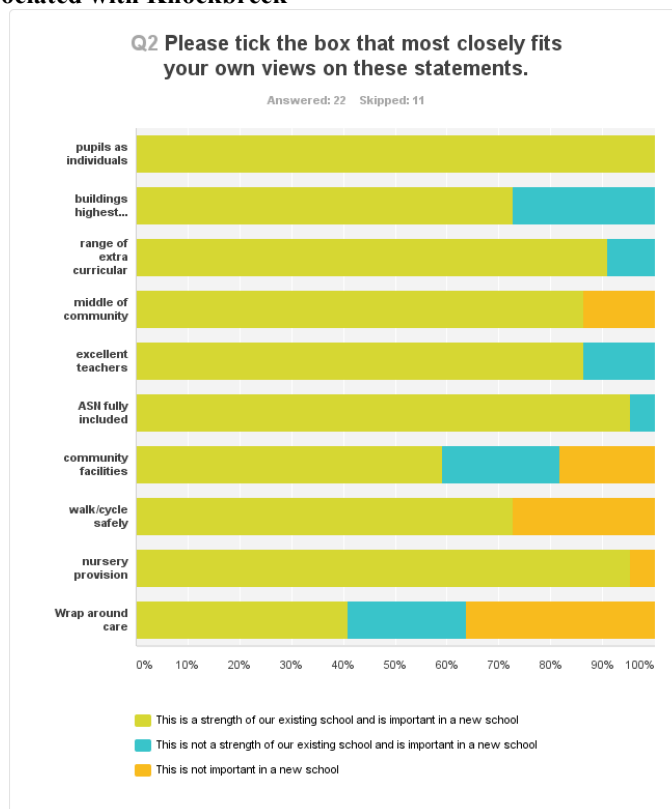


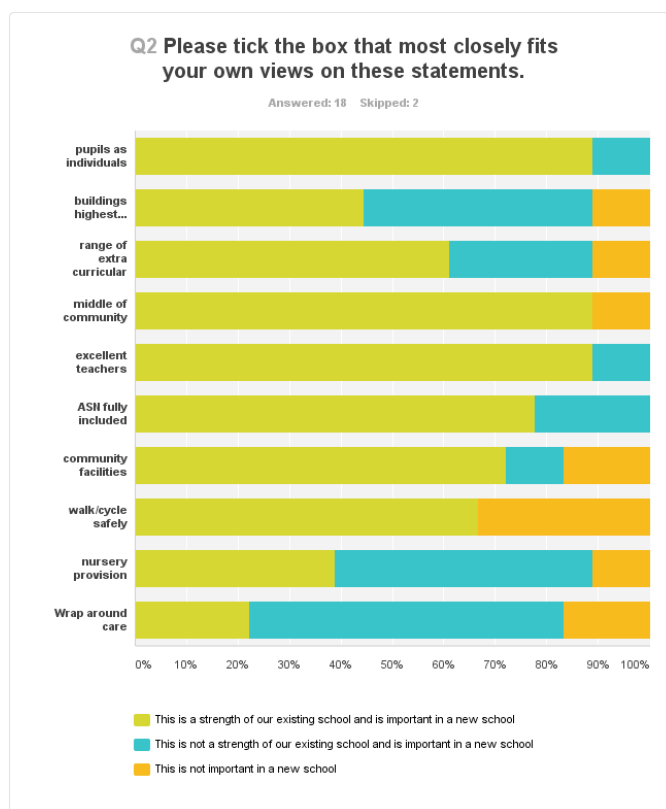
Figure 11-10 shows the responses by respondents most closely associated with Struan. Once again, this shows a similar set of factors as being selected most often as being **“a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”**, with *“As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school”* also appearing a popular selection.

The statements most identified as being **“not a strength of the existing school and important in a new school”** were the same as the overall picture:

- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Primary schools have nursery provision attached;
- Pupils learn in a school where the buildings and grounds are of the highest possible standard.

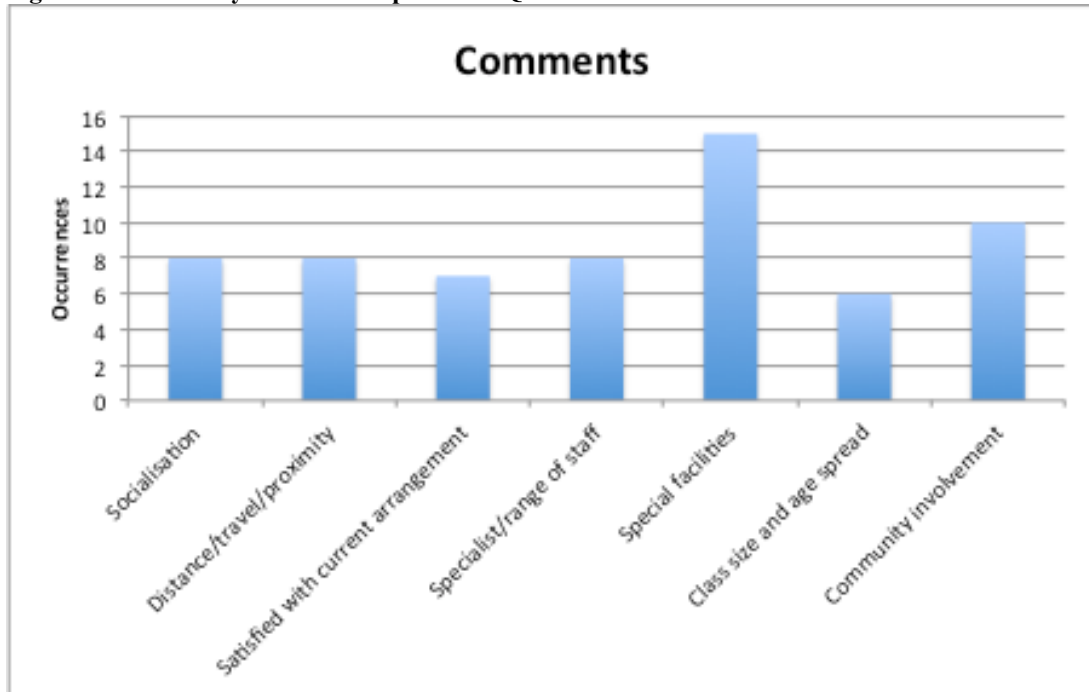
The statements most identified as being **“not important in a new school”** were:

- As many pupils as possible can walk or cycle safely to school;
- Wrap around care (before and after school) is available in schools;
- Schools include community facilities for wider recreational activities.

Figure 11-10 – Associated with Struan

Many respondents took the opportunity to provide additional comments in response to this question. Certain themes recurred in the comments. Accepting that the categories and classification are inevitably slightly subjective, the frequency of occurrence of these themes is indicated in Figure 11-11, and some examples of the comments made listed below.

Figure 11-11 – Analysis of text responses to Question 2



Some respondents commented on aspects of pupil socialisation. A sample of these comments includes:

- *if all the other schools joined [School A] then we would have more friends;*
- *it would be nice to have the [School A] children and [School B] children all in the one school where we could all be friends without their mums and dads being angry about this;*
- *children need to experience education with a wide range of children from all social backgrounds;*
- *I believe that children need the company of others of their age when possible to develop social skills and make friends.*

Many respondents who commented were concerned with distance/travel/proximity:

- *we live [many miles from School X]. In the winter the road can be very treacherous;*
- *[at the moment] children are able to walk to school;*
- *school [should be] easily accessible at all times of day ...for people relying on public transport both from home and their place of work;*
- *Distances here are such that motor transport is essential so there is no necessity for a local school now.*

Many respondents are very content with current provision:

- *Actually I am extremely happy with the features and characteristics of the existing [school];*
- *our school is great and I don't want a new one;*
- *the children have everything they need in [their current school];*

- *I am very happy with the school my child attends. I feel no need for a new school.*

Access to and availability of a range of staff with different skills was mentioned by several respondents:

- *specialist Art & Music teachers should visit at least once a week. PE should be provided by a fully trained PE teacher, not the class teacher;*
- *an art teacher...and some male teachers...;*
- *it would also be a great advantage to include some male staff...;*
- *With too few children and no alternative teacher it can be a disaster if there are personality clashes between children, or between a child and teacher.*

Many respondents made reference to aspects of the facilities:

- *[the building should be] fit for purpose – e.g. no classrooms in Portakabins, decent sized gym, good outdoor play/learning areas;*
- *bright, welcoming and modern;*
- *good sports provision;*
- *the carpark in my childrens' current school is a complete hazard.*

Composition and size of classes was mentioned by some respondents:

- *next year my class might be P4-7. If it was only P6-7 it would be better;*
- *school size should enable classes with a smaller composite spread in order that older children's education stretches their experience as far as possible;*
- *[an advantage of smaller schools is that] cross-age classes facilitate social learning;*
- *small classes allow teachers to spend more time with pupils.*

The theme of interaction between the school and community also occurred regularly among the responses:

- *[in our school the] community can be involved in local events (e.g. litter-pick, eco-morning, coffee afternoons, local Christmas card delivery service, school play etc);*
- *they only get one chance [at education] and it is too precious to risk spoiling for any ideas that "the school should be in the middle of the community" or such adult attitudes. Children first and last;*
- *[in small schools there are] high levels of community involvement in school activities when the school is seen as belonging to the community;*
- *small communities should keep their own schools where possible to guard against rural depopulation and keep communities alive and thriving.*

11.4 Acceptability of ideas for the future

11.4.1 Ideas presented

In the introduction to the survey it was stated that the purpose of the survey was to hear views on two specific ideas. It also invited respondents to suggest other ideas they considered to be worthy of consideration.

In the next set of questions, it was explained that two ideas have been identified for the primary schools in North West Skye. These are:

- Idea A – Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan Primary Schools maintained to existing standards in their current locations
- Idea B - Merge Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan to establish a new build school in Dunvegan

Respondents were asked what they thought of each of these ideas by selecting one of the following choice options:

- This is acceptable
- This may be acceptable but I have concerns
- This is not acceptable
- Don't know/no comment

11.4.2 Acceptability – all respondents

The following charts which are self explanatory show the results of this part of the survey, as a whole (Figure 11-12 and Figure 11-13) and for each school (Figure 11-14 to Figure 11-21).

Figure 11-12 – Idea A, all respondents

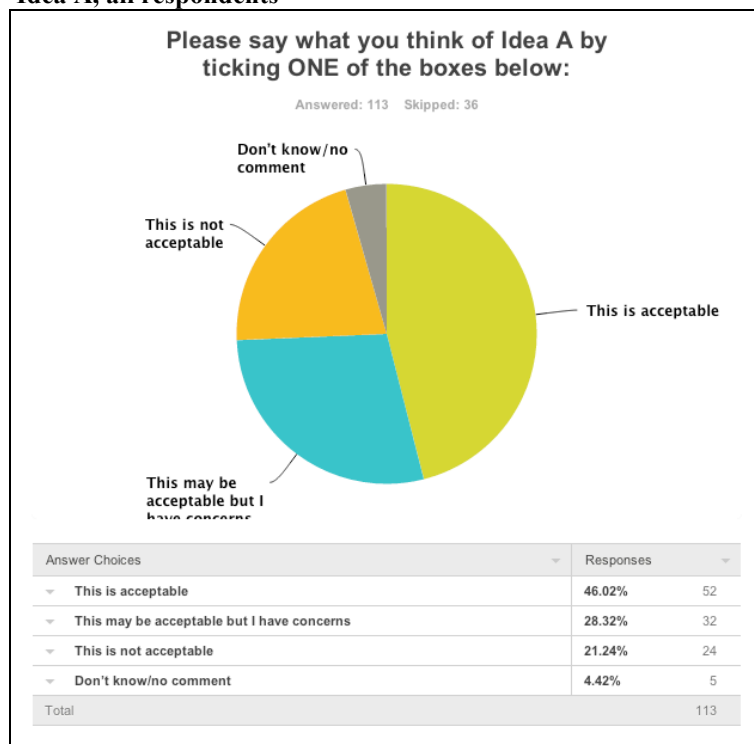


Figure 11-13 – Idea B, all respondents

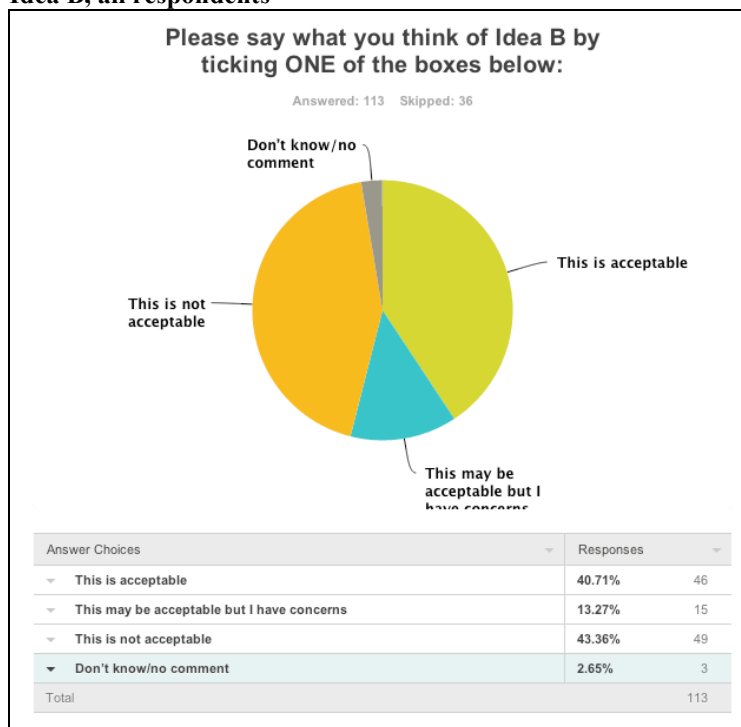


Figure 11-14 – Idea A, respondents living in Dunvegan zone

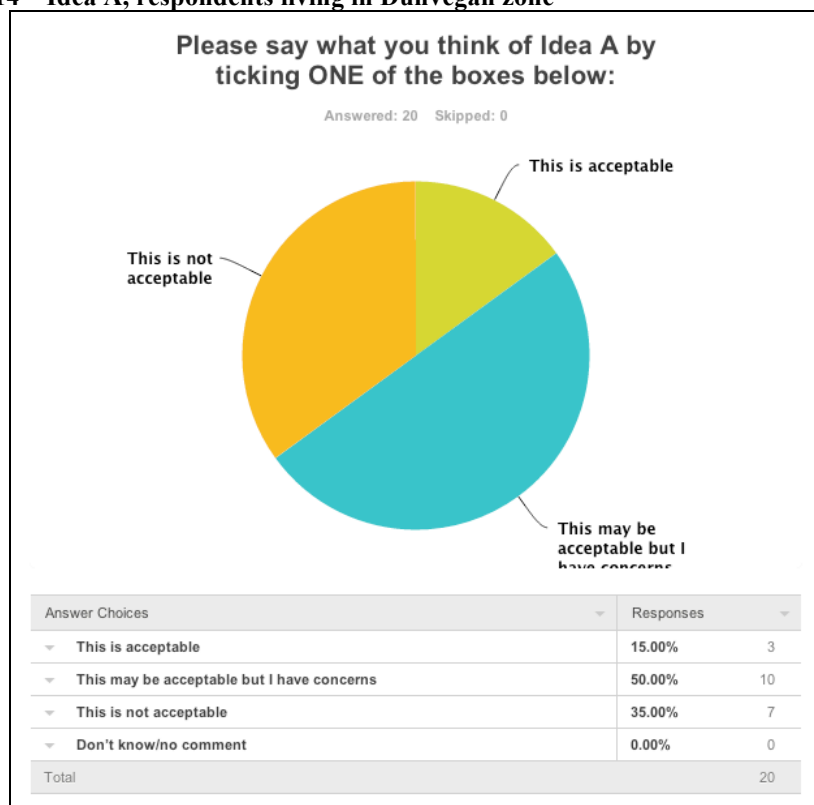


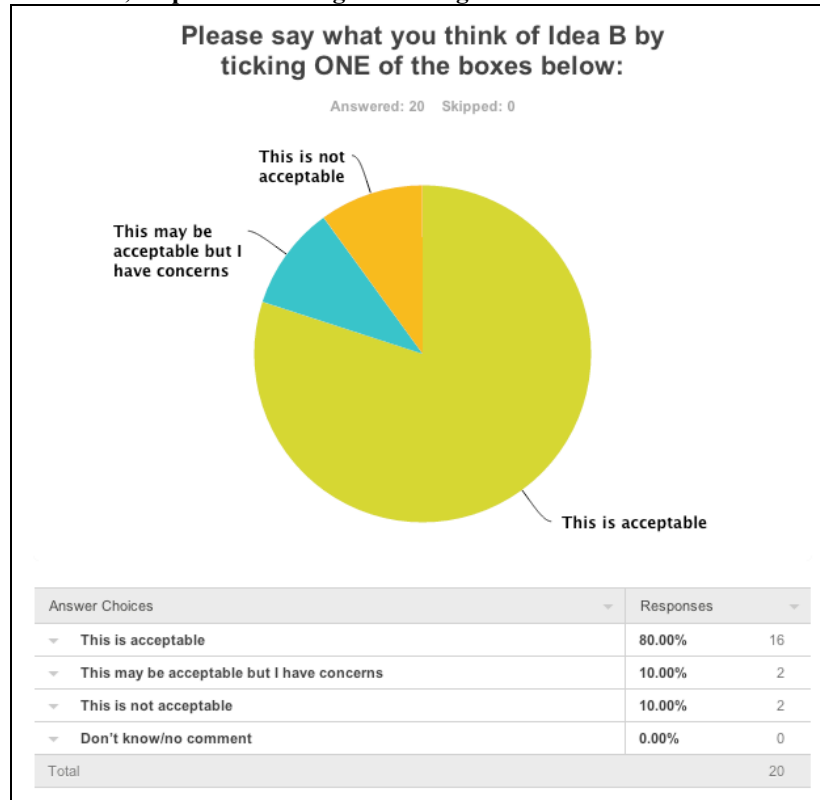
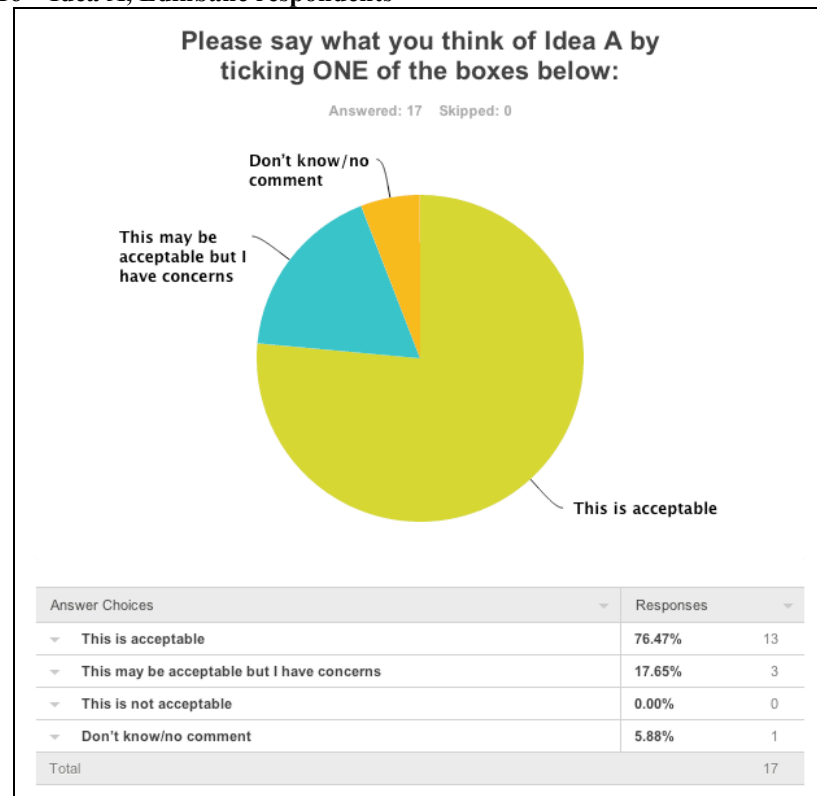
Figure 11-15 – Idea B, respondents living in Dunvegan zone**Figure 11-16 – Idea A, Edinbane respondents**

Figure 11-17 – Idea B, Edinbane respondents

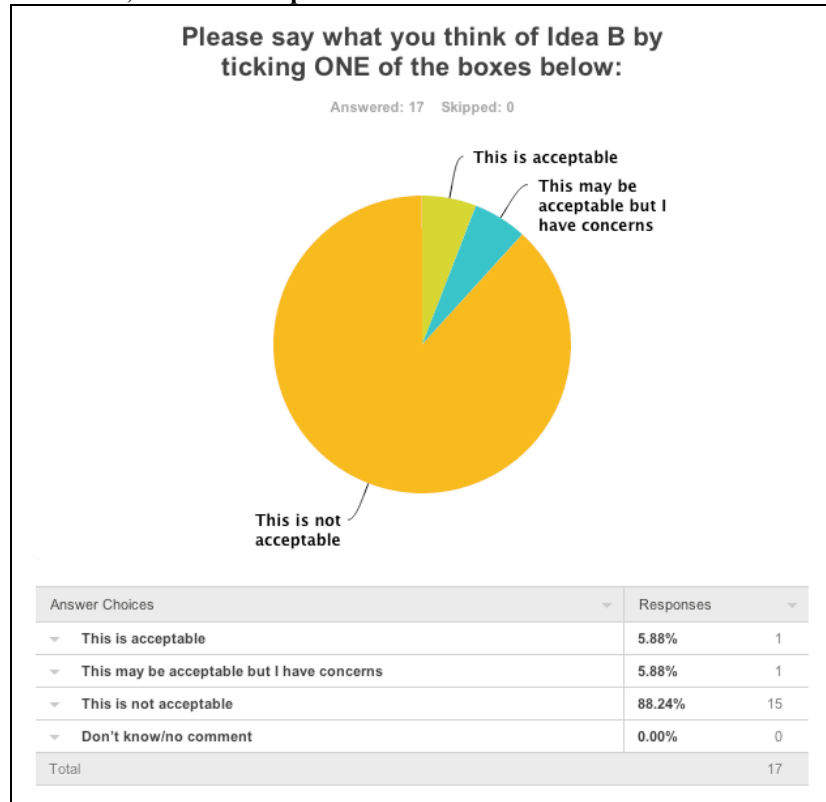


Figure 11-18 – Idea A, Knockbreck respondents

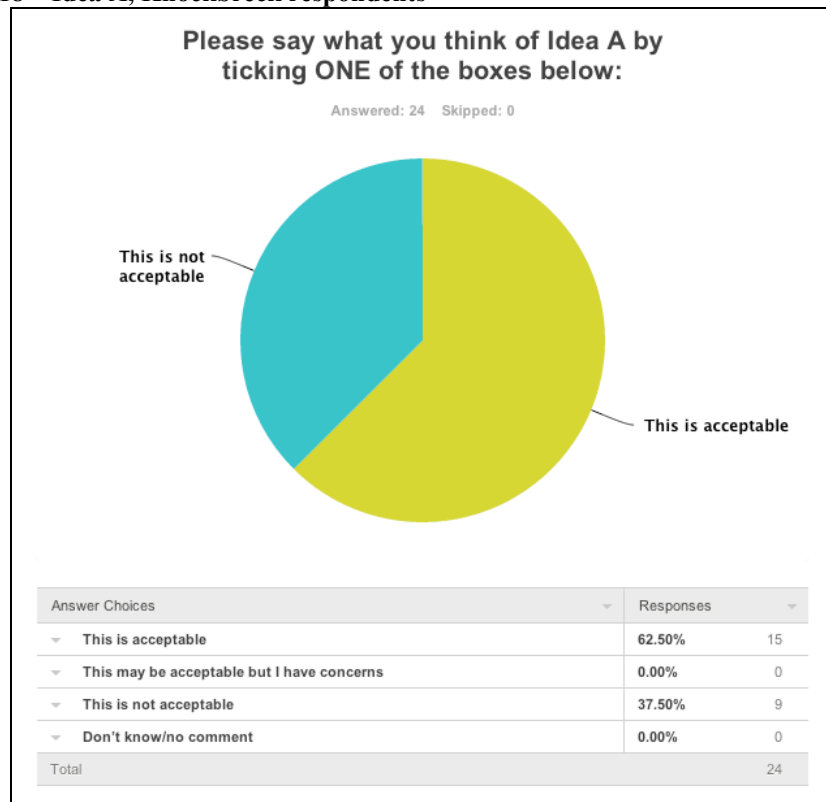


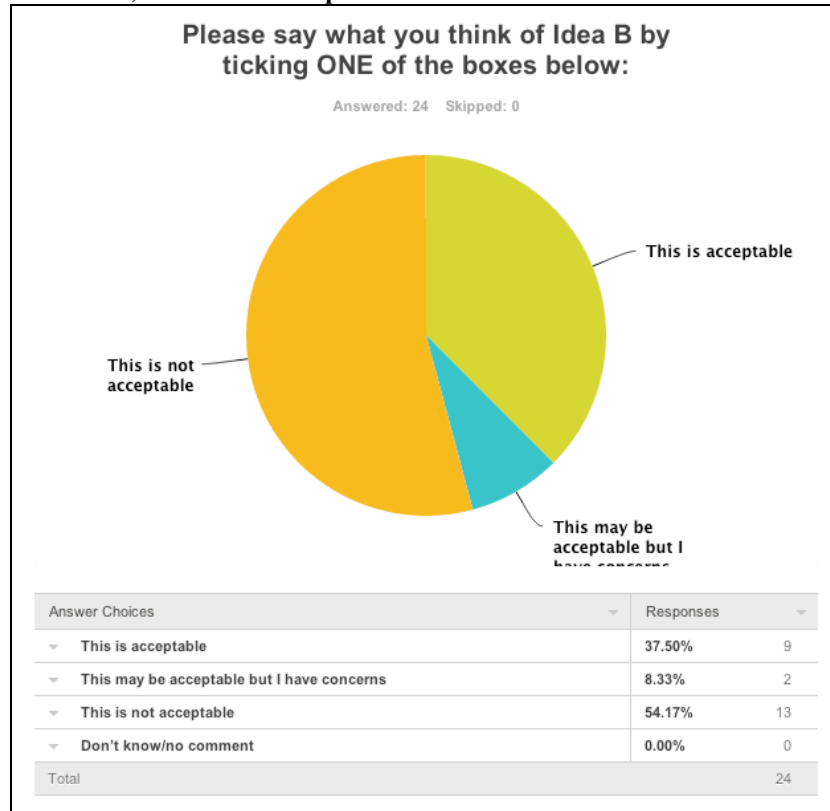
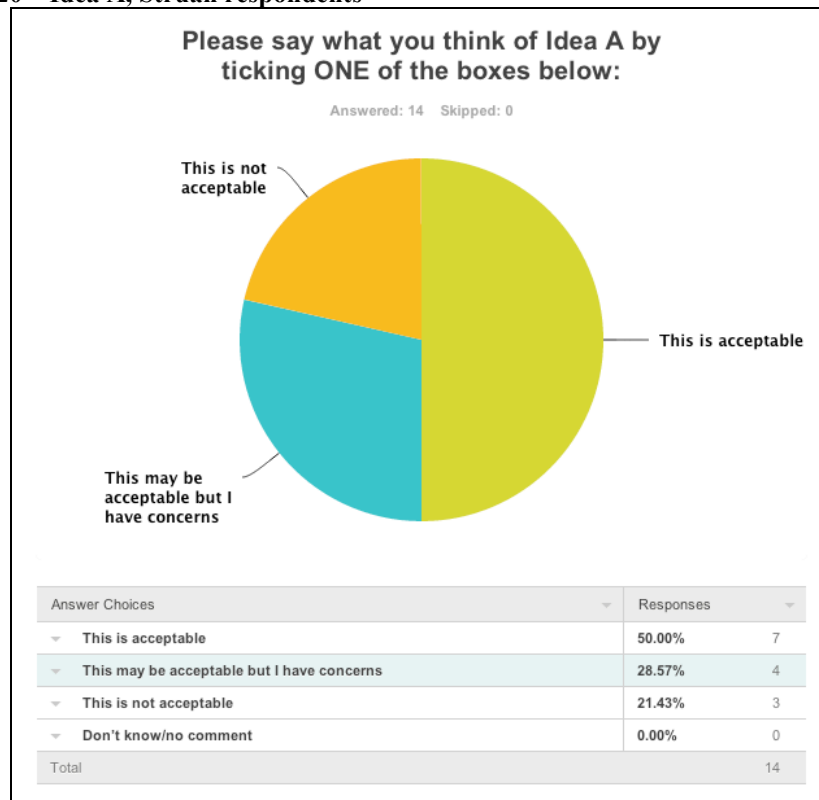
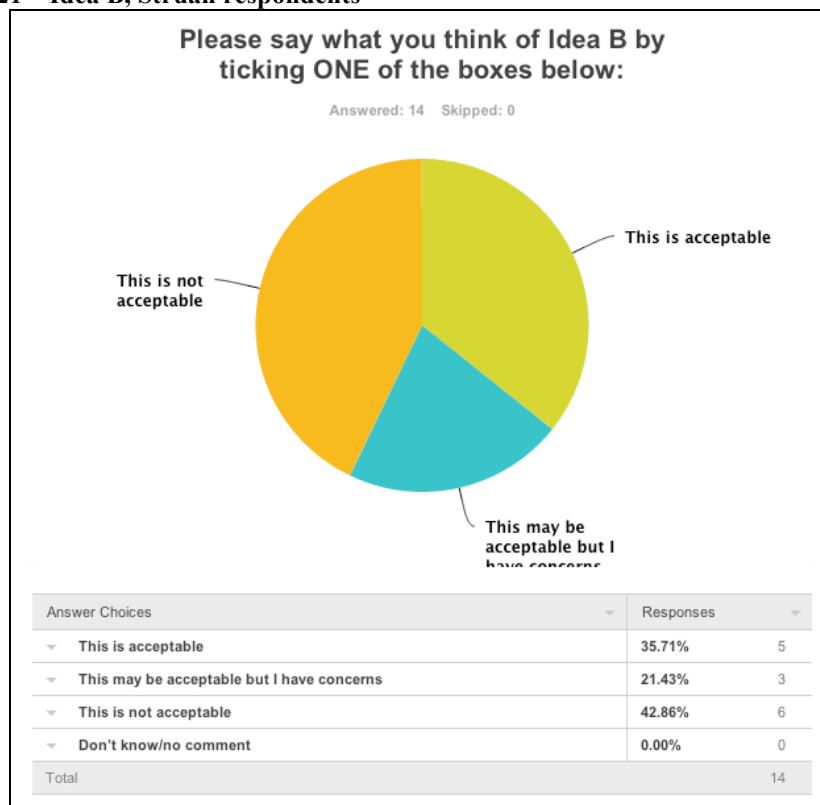
Figure 11-19 – Idea B, Knockbreck respondents**Figure 11-20 – Idea A, Struan respondents**

Figure 11-21 – Idea B, Struan respondents

11.4.3 Comments and observations

The following can be inferred from the survey, (on the assumption that each response is from a unique respondent):

- support for Idea B is greatest among respondents who live in the Dunvegan zone;
- respondents living in the Knockbreck and Struan zones indicate a greater level of acceptance of Idea A than Idea B, although significant proportions (Knockbreck 46% and Struan 57%) think that Idea B is either acceptable or may be acceptable
- respondents living in the Edinbane zone indicated a marked preference for Idea A;

People see many strengths in their existing schools including the quality of the teaching staff and the way pupils are known as individuals. The features that would be important in a new school vary significantly, but overall important features in a new school include wrap-around care and buildings of the highest standard.

12 Conclusions and Recommendations

12.1 Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is concluded that:

- the existing schools in north west Skye are performing well and their strengths are recognised and valued by the communities they serve;
- the current school buildings are varied in terms of Condition and Suitability, but are generally below the ‘Good’ standard specified in national guidance;
- around two thirds of pupils currently attending the four schools in north west Skye use school transport;
- the combined roll of the four existing schools is forecast to remain roughly level at between 60 and 70 pupils for over a decade;
- reasons given for placing requests include availability of childcare convenient for parents’ work; parents believed that behaviour/bullying was not being dealt with; families moving in/out of zone; opportunities in a larger school;
- on the basis of the forecasts it is thought that a new school comprising the pupils from the four existing catchments would have a single Gaelic Medium class and either two or three English Medium classes depending on the number of placing requests, uptake of Gaelic and other factors;
- a number of potential educational benefits of a new school have been identified as a consequence of a larger number of pupils, consequential larger number of staff and enhanced facilities;
- a number of potential negative impacts of a new school have been identified including an increase in the number of pupils requiring to use school transport and perhaps a loss of identity and interaction between the existing schools and their communities;
- there is a wide range of views on the acceptability of a new school: some people find the idea attractive and see significant benefits, others believe that the dis-benefits outweigh the benefits;
- the size of some of the schools is such that it is not possible for school staff to deploy the range of teaching techniques and methods that they would with a larger body of pupils school;
- in some cases, pupils are regularly and frequently transported between schools to participate in activities that cannot be delivered in their own

school due to its size or facilities. For pupils and teachers this means time is spent travelling that would otherwise be spent on education;

12.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- the Council takes the idea of a new school serving North West Skye forward to the next stage of approvals and if such approval is given, carry out a statutory consultation in line with the relevant legislation and associated guidance;
- a site is identified for a new school in Dunvegan and initial outline design work carried out to inform any future public dialogue;
- a financial analysis is carried out in line with recent Scottish Government guidance to demonstrate the financial implications of such a development;
- an analysis is carried out to understand the number of pupils who would require school transport and to understand the extent to which safe walking/cycling routes could be established to a new school.