

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	EDU/4/25

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Education

**Date:** 26 February 2025

**Report Title:** Statutory Consultation: Closure of Duror Primary School – Final Report

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - People

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report seeks Members' agreement to a recommendation to discontinue the provision of education at Duror Primary School.
- 1.2 The Proposal issued for consultation suggested that, if the school closes, its catchment area would be transferred to that of Ballachulish Primary School. The Council did however invite views on the proposed new catchment. Having considered the views expressed during consultation, The Council now recommends that the Duror catchment should be transferred to that of St. Bride's Primary School.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Agree to recommend that the Highland Council discontinues education at Duror Primary School, transferring its catchment to that of St. Bride's Primary School.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - This is set out at **Appendix D** of the original proposal issued for consultation.
- 3.2 Legal - The proposed closure has been taken forward under the provisions of The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 1980.
- 3.3 Risk - The main risks associated with the recommendation relate to the potential for call-in by Scottish Ministers. Officials have sought to mitigate the risk through review and evaluation to ensure that procedurally the requirements of the Act and statutory consultation process have been met.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – None.

3.5 Gaelic – No specific implications from this proposal.

#### 4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

#### 4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 3 January 2025. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The screening process has concluded that the negative effects from the proposal are not significant and that a full Impact Assessment is not needed. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

#### 4.3.3 Impact Assessment Area Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and Young People – <i>Positive impact as assessed by the Council.</i></li><li>• Children affected by disability – <i>No impact</i></li><li>• Older adults – <i>No impact</i></li></ul>
Socio-economic	<i>No significant impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
Children’s Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive impact as assessed by the Council</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No significant impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>No significant impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>No significant impact</i>

#### 5. Overview

5.1 **Appendix 2** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal for consultation, and relevant documents for consideration by the Committee, are all also circulated as appendices to this paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council’s response to comments arising from the consultation.

5.2 Views were gathered from the four pupils who attended Duror Primary during the last school session. Two of these were in Primary 7 and have since moved onto high

school. The detailed comments from pupils can be viewed at **Appendix 4ii**. They are opposed to the proposed closure.

- 5.3 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 4**. There were 22 written responses (not including the pupil responses). Copies of these responses can also be found at Appendices 3i-3xxiii. Twenty of the responses opposed the proposed closure, two were in favour. Most of the responses came from the wider community rather than from parents.
- 5.4 The public meeting was reasonably well-attended, given the small size of the local community. The views expressed at the meeting were unanimously against the closure of the school.
- 5.5 In their report, Education Scotland agreed with some, but not all, of the educational benefits outlined in the proposal. They considered the potential limitations of the small school roll could be mitigated by the cluster approach. They noted that children, parents, and staff state that joint working arrangements across the cluster are working well. Education Scotland recommended the Council engage more thoroughly with parents and members of the community, particularly around alternative options to the proposal. This should include consideration of the number of pre-school children living in the current catchment area, and an assessment of any planned housing developments. In preparing its consultation paper, they commented that it would be helpful if the Council could outline the projected school roll of Duror Primary School. Education Scotland commented that, should the Council proceed with the proposal, it will be important to have further discussions with parents about the most appropriate change to the catchment area.
- 5.6 The Council has addressed the recommendations set out above. Further enquiries have identified three preschool children within the Duror Primary catchment area, whose parents would like them to attend the school. The children's ages range from 10 months to three years. The two current children at the school are in P6 and P4, so the older of these will leave for High School in August 2026, the younger in August 2028. Based on this data, the roll at Duror Primary will not rise above three pupils at any time before August 2028.

An assessment of the effects of housebuilding is set out at Response 17 of **Appendix 2**. Comments on the catchment issue are at Response 16 of the same document.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Having once again reviewed the status of Duror Primary, it is the Council's view that there is an insufficient number of children of suitable age in the Duror catchment, who wish to attend Duror Primary School, and that consequently the school is no longer viable. Further details are provided in **Appendix 2**.

## **7. Next Steps**

- 7.1 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further representations. The proposal was published on 29 January 2025. Any further representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.

7.2 Following consideration by the Committee, if the recommendation is agreed, the following timeline will be followed as required by the legislation.

- The recommendation of the Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council.
- If ratified by full Council, the Council must, within 6 working days of the decision, advise Scottish Ministers of the decision it has reached; provide them with the proposal paper and consultation report, and publish a notice stating that Ministers have been advised and the process through which representations may be made to Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal.
- From the date of the Council decision, there is a period of 3 weeks in which representations to Scottish Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal can be made by any interested party.
- Scottish Ministers then have a further period of up to 5 weeks in which to decide whether they will issue a call-in notice.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 27 January 2025

Author: Ian Jackson

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment  
Appendix 2 – Review of Consultation Report  
Appendix 3 – Note of Public Meeting  
Appendix 4 – List of Respondents to Consultation  
Appendix 4i-4xxiii – Copies of individual responses  
Appendix 5 – Education Scotland Report  
Appendix A – Original Proposal Paper  
Appendix B - Note of meeting with Parents at Duror Primary  
Appendix Bi – Email exchange with Duror and Kentallen CC  
Appendix C – Duror Primary School Existing Catchment  
Appendix Ci – Merged Duror Ballachulish catchment  
Appendix Cii – Merged Duror St. Bride's catchment  
Appendix Ciii - Merged Duror Glencoe catchment  
Appendix D -Financial Analysis

# Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

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This Impact Assessment is marked as confidential or sensitive. If you intend to share this document please check with the Responsible Manager who this can be shared with.

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## About proposal

**What does this proposal relate to?** Redesign or change to existing service

**Proposal name:** Proposed Closure of Duror Primary School

**High level summary of the proposal:** Review of a statutory consultation exercise carried out into the proposed closure of Duror PS, and submission to Committee for decision.

**Who may be affected by the proposal?** Children and parents of children attending Duror PS. Staff of Duror PS, and the wider community of Duror/Kentallen.

**Start date of proposal:** 01/11/2023

**End date of proposal:** 18/08/2025

**Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service?** Yes

**Which Council services will be impacted by this proposal?** People

**Does this relate to an existing proposal?** Yes

**Provide details of the existing proposal:** Consultation on the Closure of Duror PS, approved at Education Committee on 21 February 2024

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**Service:** People

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## Responsible officer details

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## Equalities, poverty, and human rights

### Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

**Sex:** No impact

**Age:** No impact

**Disability:** No impact

**Religion or belief:** No impact

**Race:** No impact

**Sexual orientation:** No impact

**Gender reassignment:** No impact

**Pregnancy and maternity:** No impact

**Marriage and civil partnership:** No impact

**Protected characteristics impact details:** The proposal relates to the closure of a school and therefore primarily affects the 5-12 age group. However, age is not a protected characteristic in relation to school provision.

### Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

**Prospects and opportunities:** No impact

**Places:** Positive, Negative

**Financial:** No impact

**Poverty and socio-economic impact details:** The impact on the local community is disputed. The Council argues that proposal will benefit the community by providing a more sustainable form of school provision in the area. The local community argues that the proposal will harm the local community by making it less attractive for families to live there.

### Human rights

**Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal?**No human rights will be affected

**What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people?**No impact

**Human rights impact details:** The Council will still provide access to education for local children, via the provision of free school transport.

## **Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment**

**What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights?** Positive and negative impact (potential or actual)

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

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## **Children's rights and wellbeing**

**What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people?** The closure of the school will have a direct impact on the children who currently attend.

**Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal?** You are working in the best interests of the child (Article 3)

**Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected:** The very small number of children at Duror PS means that the school is no longer viable. Children were given the opportunity to express their views and these were carefully considered.

## **Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment**

**What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing?** Positive impact

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

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## **Data protection**

**Will your proposal involve processing personal data?** Yes

**Is any of this data already processed by the Highland Council?** Yes

**What is the purpose of the personal data being processed?** Parents and residents have submitted views in response to the consultation document. Responses will be published on the HC website together with the respondent's name and address (though not personal email addresses or phone numbers, or signatures). All respondents were offered the opportunity to request that their response is not published.

**Is there an up-to-date privacy notice available on the Highland Council website?** No

## **Data protection screening assessment**

**What change will there be to the way personal data is processed?** No significant change to current processing

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

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## Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? Yes

Could people in island and mainland rural communities be affected differently? No

Have any negative impacts been identified? Yes

**Provide details of negative impacts, mitigating actions and the service that is responsible for them:** If implemented, the proposal would mean that, in the future, children in the Duror/Kentallen area would have further to travel to school than is the case at present. Mitigation exists in that the Council provides free school transport for children in the P1-7 age group. Duror PS does not have a nursery class.

## Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? Minor differences

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

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## Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? No

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

**Provide information regarding your selection above:** The children currently attending Duror PS would have to travel to a neighbouring school to access education. The additional travel would be c. 16 miles per day, 5 days per week for 38 weeks of the year.

## Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? No

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No



## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

### EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

#### REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal:

- To discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting held at Duror Primary school on 16 April 2024.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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<b>Appendix 3</b>	List of written submissions
<b>Appendix 3i-3xxiii</b>	Copies of individual written responses
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Report from Education Scotland
<b>Appendix A</b>	The proposal document and appendices
<b>Appendix B</b>	Note of Meeting with Parents at Duror PS
<b>Appendix Bi</b>	Email exchange with DKCC
<b>Appendix C</b>	Duror PS existing catchment
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<b>Appendix Cii</b>	Merged Duror PS St. Bride's PS catchment
<b>Appendix Ciii</b>	Merged Duror PS Glencoe PS catchment
<b>Appendix D</b>	Financial Analysis

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education Committee, at its meeting on 21 February 2024, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Duror Primary School. The original proposal also suggested that, should Duror Primary be closed, the school's catchment area should be re-assigned to that of Ballachulish Primary School. Following the consultation, the Council proposes to amend this latter aspect.
- 1.2 **Appendix A** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices B - D** are the appendices to the original proposal.

- 1.3 Duror Primary School has a current roll of two pupils. Highland Council is of the view that a total roll of this size creates barriers to education.
- 1.4 Having once again reviewed the status of Duror Primary, it is the Council's view that there is an insufficient number of children of suitable age in the Duror catchment, who wish to attend Duror Primary School, and that consequently the school is no longer viable. Further details on this are provided in Sections 6, 7 and 10 below.
- 1.5 Duror Primary School is designated as a rural school under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In that context, the Council has had special regard to:
- any viable alternative to the closure proposal; alternatives were considered at Sections 7-11 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and have been reconsidered in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 5-10 below.
  - the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to (a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community. The effect on the local community was considered at Section 15 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and is further considered at Sections 8 and 10 below, taking into account representations received during consultation.
  - the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to;
  - the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact. The effects on school transport were considered at Section 13 of the Proposal Paper, (**Appendix A**) and reconsidered again in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 6 and 10 below.

## 2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 4 March 2024 to Friday 3 May 2024. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:
- (i) Parents/carers of pupils attending Duror Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
  - (ii) Parents/carers of pupils attending Ballachulish Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
  - (iii) The Parent Council of St. Bride's Primary School
  - (iv) The Parent Council of Glencoe Primary School
  - (v) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area

affected by the proposal.

- (vi) Staff of Duror School.
- (vii) Staff of Ballachulish Primary School
- (viii) Duror and Kentallen Community Council
- (ix) Ballachulish Community Council
- (x) Trade Union representatives.

2.3 The proposal document was also advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held at Duror Primary School on 16 April 2024. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website, X Account and Facebook page, and in the *Lochaber Times*. The minute of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.

### **3.0 Review of proposals following the consultation period**

3.1 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.

3.2 The feedback from the consultation was considered by a range of Council officials. This ensured that the Council met the requirements of the 2010 Act.

3.3 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

### **4.0 Responses**

4.1 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 3**. There were 22 written responses (not including the pupil responses). Copies of these responses can also be found at Appendices 3i-3xxiii. Twenty of the responses opposed the proposed closure, two were in favour. Most of the responses came from the wider community rather than from parents.

4.2 The views of the four children attending Duror PS during session 2023-24 were sought by means of an age adapted questionnaire. Appendix 3ii summarises their views, which are also discussed at Section 5 below. Two of the four pupils were in P7 in 2023-24 and are now in High School. Two children remain at Duror Primary School.

4.3 During the consultation, one representation against closure was received from the parents of a pre-school child, who moved into the community in December 2023/January 2024. The child is now 3 years old. Since the completion of the consultation exercise, the Council has received further representations from the parents of two other pre-school children, one aged two and the other around 10

months. Neither of these representations were received during the formal consultation period, but they have helped in estimating possible future numbers.

- 4.4 A further representation was received, again after the close of consultation, from an armed forces family with three children who are currently away from the area but who maintain a house in the community. They argued that if the school closed, the catchment should be re-zoned to that of St. Bride's Primary.

## **5.0 Overview of Issues raised during the consultation period**

- 5.1 The closure proposal was strongly opposed by almost all the parents and other residents who responded. The detailed comments from pupils can be viewed at Appendix 3ii.
- 5.2 Education Scotland Inspectors who visited the school noted that all stakeholders felt strongly that the school should remain open.
- 5.3 The arguments advanced by the pupils in favour of re-opening the school, are set out at Issues 1-6 below, together with arguments put forward in support of closure.
- 5.4 There were 22 written responses received from other stakeholders. Two of these supported the proposed closure, which the other 20 respondents opposed.
- 5.5 The public meeting was reasonably well-attended, given the small size of the local community. The views expressed at the meeting were unanimously against the closure of the school.
- 5.6 The main arguments put forward are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. Where different responses raise similar issues, these have been "grouped" for the purposes of the response.

## **6.0 Responses to the Issues raised in Public Consultation**

- 6.1 Arguments advanced by the children are set out at Issues 1-6 below, and addressed at Responses 1-6.

### **Issue 1**

I feel it would be good to make one big school (for South Lochaber).

### **Response 1**

The Council agrees that in principle this would be a good idea. However at the moment the Council has identified other priorities with the money it has available. A single school for the area could though be considered in future as part of a planned 20-year investment programme being taken forward by Highland Council.

**Issue 2**

The school building is underused; there is scope to have the building available for the community such as clubs, afterschool events.

**Response 2**

There would be a cost to Highland Council in doing this. Electricity and heating costs money, and a member of staff would have to be paid to secure the building afterwards. Due to the small population of the area, it is very unlikely that enough people would want to use the school in the evenings, to justify the costs of opening.

**Issue 3**

It wasn't very good (to close the school) as parents do not drive. The school is local and important to me.

The school is in a fantastic location for pupils to travel by foot and cycling.

**Response 3**

If the school does close then transport will be provided to take children to their new school. We agree though that there will be less opportunity for children to walk or cycle to school.

**Issue 4**

The school is in a fantastic area of natural beauty and the children can access great resources inside and outside.

Our school has an advantage compared to other schools because we can easily access the outdoors (Cuil Bay, forest, river and trails).

**Response 4**

It's true that Duror Primary has a fantastic natural location, but that is also true of the other local schools.

**Issue 5**

The school can support an Early Years service (such as a playgroup/toddler group).

**Response 5**

The school has recently been supporting an informal playgroup for one day a week, which has attracted families from outwith the Duror Primary School catchment. However the Council remains unconvinced about the viability of a full Early Years facility at the school. This is discussed further at Response 14 below.

**Issue 6**

(Other schools) It's a lot noisier, we get lots of learning done because it is quiet and I learn off the older children.

We are able to be best at our learning because it is quiet and we all have access to a teacher. Our learning is very individualised.

Small school(s) allow us to be flexible (to the needs and development needs) of the children.

We have a very supportive Parent Council that enable opportunities to experience a wide curriculum, and we get these opportunities because we are a small school.

We get to experience being around the other children as we visit and experience other children (in the cluster) and we have friends beyond the school. We don't feel isolated.

There are lots of things to do in and around the playground.

The community is very connected to the school (open days, school events).

Feels like Duror is a family rather than a school.

**Response 6**

Whilst there are many good things about the school in Duror, the Council thinks that two or three children just isn't enough for a school.

- 6.2 The arguments advanced in written responses are set out at Issues 7-18 below and addressed at Responses 7-18. Where different respondents have raised similar issues, these have been grouped together in the comments below.

**Issue 7**

My wife and I moved to Duror just before Christmas last year and we have a two-year-old son.

We fell in love with Duror since moving here and our property shares a boundary with the school. Our son has got to know the other kids at the

school, been to their open days and is already part of the school community. The pupils, staff and community around the school is amazing and something special is lost if the council chooses to close it.

As you saw and heard at the meeting on 16 April, the community strongly believes that it is best served by having its own school, as it's had since pre-1841.

We are really wanting our son to go to Duror Primary School. He has already enrolled for nursery at St Brides which would be our second choice if Duror closes.

### **Response 7**

We welcome new families moving to the Highlands. However the Council has proposed the closure of Duror Primary School on the basis that the school is no longer viable. Unfortunately, the very small number of children who appear to be available for enrolment locally in future years, will not alter that position.

### **Issue 8**

I feel I must write this letter in the only way I know how, by being honest. In my opinion Duror Primary is not able to provide the level of education that children in Scotland should receive.

Here in the community the parents who put their children in the school are in the minority. There are five families who do not use Duror Primary the reason being that they are not able to offer acceptable levels of teaching. I feel that Duror Primary should not remain open. The village itself is mainly made up of Airbnb and second homes having a school in the village is not essential as I am myself and the other families travel out with to take our children to school, where in many cases the school is the heart of the community here in Duror this is not the case our community centre is the hub of the community where we all gather and come together. The school is not and is no longer fit for purpose. The cost of keeping that school open versus a bus for myself and all the children in the community to go to a school with the village is going to be far more cost-effective than keeping Duror Primary open after the summer holidays the numbers will drop to 2 in the school and I cannot believe that this is a good use of taxpayers money.

### **Response 8**

The Council notes this response.

### **Issue 9**

If the school closes, there will be even less chance of families with children moving to this village. Kentallen School closed in the mid-1960s, and since then very few children have been brought up in Kentallen

**Response 9**

Many of our most rural schools in Highland have seen sharply declining rolls over the last decade, suggesting that the presence of a school does not necessarily have any significant effect on attracting families with young children.

The Scottish Government's Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, which reported in 2014, considered the impact of school closures on communities. They concluded that "...*there was a lack of robust evidence on how pre-school, childcare and school proximity (and freedom from threat of closure) links to the sustainability of communities.*" The Commission added that "*In some of the communities the Commission visited, it found evidence that while a school closure had been resisted and closure still took place, the impact had been less than was feared, with communities adjusting to different school provision and community focus continuing in individual villages. Rural communities and their economic base vary widely, as does their remoteness, and this will affect their resilience to school change.*"

**Issue 10**

When the Travellers' site on the outskirts of Kentallen was a more appealing place for travellers to stay, the majority of traveller parents opted to bring their children to Duror PS. They were in the Ballachulish PS catchment area, but parents told me that their children coped better in a small school and, more importantly, were accepted by everyone in the school community. It is unusual for gypsy traveller parents to attend school meetings let alone speak out. One of the parents who spoke at the meeting on 16 April is from the traveller community and she strongly believes her daughter will be best served by remaining in a small school.

A small rural school can never provide the facilities of a larger school, but parents accept this as they feel the benefits of a small school outweigh the shortcomings.

**Response 10**

The Council accepts the above description is accurate. However both Ballachulish Primary and St. Bride's Primary are small schools. Ballachulish in particular has a much smaller roll than it did 15-20 years ago. On balance, the Council remains of the view that Duror Primary is no longer viable and that the educational interests of the children are best served elsewhere.

**Issue 11**

The Condition and Suitability Surveys were completed in 2016. It may well be that during the last eight years, some of the identified shortcomings may have been dealt with, or has Highland Council done nothing to resolve problem areas?

**Response 11**

As the Suitability Assessment has been circulated, respondents will be aware that the “C” rating was based on issues such the school lacking a dining hall, staffroom, PE hall, and other limiting factors. The school site itself is a small one, so some of these issues could not easily be resolved. In assessing priorities for investment, Highland Council has to take account of the fact it has nearly 200 schools, and limited resources. Around 35% of Highland schools have a “C” rating, and investment must be carefully targeted to ensure Best Value for the Council taxpayer.

The most important point though, is that the closure proposal has been advanced on the educational issues linked to the current roll of two. Upgrading the Duror Primary School building to a “B” rating for Suitability would not alter the educational disadvantages of the very small school roll.

**Issue 12**

I have been employed by Highland Council as the Cleaning Operative for the school for nearly two years. Notwithstanding the fact that this position is a menial one, below the level of my qualifications and experience, the post has served me well as the only employment I could find in my local village. Myself and one other member of the Duror community are employed by the school. Currently, no other establishment exists which provides local employment within the village.

As a Council serving a largely rural area, I feel it is incumbent upon HC to support the needs of small, isolated, rural communities. In the interests of social welfare (some people cannot travel great distances for work due to economic imperatives or mental health), as well as the obvious environmental/sustainability factors involved, it is hugely important to provide employment opportunities at a very local level for those living in small communities.

Although the employment provided by the school may be deemed insignificant to those in the Council at the decision-making level regarding its closure, these roles are enormously important to those whose livelihoods depend on them. Thus, I urge the Highland Council to please consider these factors when deciding to close a very popular village school and put two members of that community out of work.

**Response 12**

Paragraph 14.2 of the Proposal Paper advised that the staff affected would be eligible for redeployment in line with Council policy. Staff would be eligible for transfer into any vacant posts within reasonable travel distance. This was also discussed at the public meeting. It is nevertheless acknowledged that the loss of employment in a rural community is an adverse effect from a school closure.

Ultimately, schools need a viable number of children to continue in operation.

**Issue 13**

The school is very special in nature, being a small rural school within the cluster of four, the other three being larger schools in larger villages. The school provides an excellent level of education for the pupils and is, I believe, vital to the continued development of our community.

The school has been unfortunate in recent months in that a couple of families with multiple children attending have had to move from the area. But there has been a big increase in pre-school age children in the village in the same period, with a total of 8 now in the area, and I believe that the school roll should be given a chance to rise again as it has done in the past.

Should it remain open, I believe that there is an opportunity for the school, in its unique rural setting, to also play a role in the education of children from all of the cluster schools.

I am confident that our village school has some unique attributes that would merit keeping the school open. As part of a schools cluster it appears that, where engagement with larger groups of pupils is beneficial, for example with sports, this is already happening. I would suggest that using this cluster principal to bring pupils from the other 3 primary schools to Duror would be an extremely valuable experience, particularly in order to “study” outdoor activity in its many and varied forms. The environmental surroundings and outdoor space that Duror Primary has access to are second to none.

This school is one of few amenities in the village and an attraction for young families moving to the area. Over decades the school roll has fluctuated, as is usual for a rural school. Children cycle or walk to the school and discontinuation would make this unfeasible. The school is located in a beautiful environment which forms part of the children’s education.

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.

Whilst I acknowledge that the school roll is likely to be very low at the start of the next school year (probably as low as 2 pupils) I can see no evidence of this being problematic for these pupils; their education seems to be progressing very well and their personal integration with our community is exemplary. I do not believe that a small school roll is damaging to pupils. 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.

The community would be very happy to work with Highland Council in any way we can in order to facilitate keeping the school open.

Closing our primary school would stifle the current increase in families with young children (currently there 8 children of pre-school age in this community). Our villages have limited amenities at present, closing the school would drastically worsen this position.

Today Duror Primary School hosted the first (of what I hope will be many) Stay and Play sessions. In total eight pre-school aged children attended all from the local area and therefore potential future pupils. It would be such a shame to close the Primary School now when there will clearly be a real need for it in a few years time. Since moving to Duror a just over a year

ago, I have come to know the lovely staff and pupils which are an absolute credit to that school. The school pupils helped out with session, making cups of tea for the parents and playing with the children. Parents who had not previously met despite living in the village were able to get to know each other. It's a lovely thing to be part of. If you take away the School you will be taking away a crucial asset to Duror, where parents and children can come together without having to travel for miles and miles. It would be so sad if I was unable to send my little boy there when the time comes in a few years. Please don't close Duror Primary School

As a local resident of Kentallen, I wish to express my concerns of the proposed closure of Duror Primary School. I live within the catchment area and while I have no children of primary school age, I do value this as an important local resource and feel it would be extremely detrimental to the area if the closure proceeds.

A recent meeting to discuss the proposed closure heard from parents of pupil past and present, all of whom spoke very highly of the standards of education their children received and dismissed the suggestion that there was a need for increased socialisation, listening and talking, opportunities for peer work that would come from being part of a larger class group.

These positive statements were supported by testimonials from local secondary school teaching staff who reported the social skills of children from the school were not impaired in anyway by the low school role but quite the opposite. The teachers reported Duror Primary children to have strong social skills, keen sense of identity and, more often than not, were better prepared to deal with the transition from primary to secondary than their counterparts from larger populated schools.

The school itself is in s a state of good repair, despite the claims made in the outdated report and its location on the National Cycle Network offers the children the opportunity for regular exercise, as well as carbon-free travel to and from school. With access to forest, glen and coast, the school is well placed to provide the children who attend with an environment rich in educational opportunity that will both sustain and improve the educational opportunities. These opportunities are not so easily accessible at other schools in the area.

The children of Duror and Kentallen are continually active in the community, taking part in local events, both fun and socially minded – such as the local litter picks and beach clean-up events. These kids care about the environment and community in which they live and grow.

Duror and Kentallen communications have recently been improved with the installation of fibre optic cabling to provide reliable Wi-Fi and with this development comes ever-expanding work possibilities for families who are seeking a more rural lifestyle. Covid has led to more businesses offering their employees remote working opportunities which bring social, economic, and cultural benefits the area. Families faced with ever increasing costs of living

and rising house prices are looking to areas that were previously out of reach, and the rise in remote working opportunities has increased the popularity of the area.

In summary, the parents of the children who will be schooled at Duror and Kentallen primary are happy with the education and socialisation on offer. They are also happy with the school premises and the wider environment opportunities of the surrounding area. And given the most significant elements of the financial burden will not be eliminated by closing the school, this is a much less relevant factor than previous suggested.

Closing Duror and Kentallen primary school would be a major loss to current residents and their children and make the community a much less attractive proposition for new families at a time remote working and remote living is becoming more popular, possible, and practical option for so many families.

Duror and Kentallen is a socially diverse and eclectic area. The threat of the school closure is deeply upsetting to many people in the community. It will reduce the attractiveness of the area to families with young children.

While there are many practical elements to be considered I believe Highland Council and Education Scotland must also gave serious weight to the depth of feeling and the emotional impact the closure of this school would bring. I do hope full consideration will be given to the wider impact on the local area and population both in the short and longer term. Since, as stated at the consultation meeting, there are no financial reasons for closure the proposal is presumably based largely on the Suitability Assessment. This appears to have been carried out nearly 8 years ago. It also seems to use standards designed for a larger town school which are not necessarily applicable to a small village school. It is an overly harsh assessment, that does not consider the full social and community environment. I have made more comments at the end of this email. When we first arrived in Duror, in the 1970s, there were proposals to close the school. Fortunately this did not happen, the school roll rose and the school became so well-regarded that some pupils came from Ballachulish. Now that we are facing another proposed closure the arguments against closure remain the same:

1. Although the expected roll for 24/25 is only 2, there are babies and young couples in the village and the roll will increase.
2. Village schools are part of the community. Closing the school will take the heart out of the community and young couples will be discouraged from moving here.
3. Bussing 5-year olds to Ballachulish every day is not acceptable.

Overall, there seems to be no good argument for closure and I hope that Highland Council will keep the school open and allow it to prosper once more. Duror primary has always been a nurturing inclusive school and the pupils are well rounded individuals with a great education base. I would have put my own older children to Duror but did not have my own transport at the time.

Now that I have another baby Duror was where we were hoping he would start his education.

I would like to stress two main points. Firstly the school has and is functioning perfectly well in its present form, providing a rounded, balanced education for all of its pupils – past and present. This, despite not having shiny new facilities, a big car park or a discrete entrance away from the pupils....

Secondly, the damage to the village of the removal of the school would be serious and would discourage young couples from settling here. At the moment there are only a few prospective pupils in the population but demographic change is cyclical and in a few years the demand will almost certainly grow again. Closure now would be the worst type of short-termism. Finally I'd like to express my personal commitment to the school where my three children had an idyllic and fondly remembered education. They still talk about the "extended family" atmosphere, the trips to Cuil Bay which they enjoyed together and the solid foundation for a secondary education that they received there.

I hope that you will ensure that the school stays open, for the benefit of present and future pupils and the inhabitants of the village.

Both my children attended Duror Primary School - the eldest was the only child in her year, and her younger sister was one of 8 in hers. They were extremely privileged to receive the best education - both academically, and - importantly - as active members of the wider Duror community and within the surrounding environment.

If we have no school, we can't attract families - if we have no families we have no school...and Duror will become a retirement village with no transport network or nearby shops. We need more affordable housing and we need a school that is attractive to families who want to come to live in a rural environment - with, for instance, a feeder nursery like eg Stramash.

I appreciate this is not in any way an easy fix - certainly not one that is achievable in the short term - and that finances are tight; also that the housing issue is a UK wide one - although possibly magnified in rural areas because of its direct effect on all other aspects of village life. However, we do have several babies and toddlers in the village and it would be fantastic if a local nursery could be made attractive enough for them to continue their education here - with plenty of interaction with other schools that feed into Kinlochleven, as has always been the case. The new "Stay and Play" initiative (photo uploaded) is a really lovely idea and simple things like this would surely create good foundations for carrying on into a local Primary School.

If the school closes now, I fear it will never reopen and that would sound the death knell for our village.

I remain hopeful that the decision made will not be based on short term, possibly short-sighted thinking - rather, a future vision for a thriving, multi-generational rural community.

I fully understand the Budgetary constraints on the Highland Council and the Education Department but I think the potential Closure of a Village School with such a strong aluminae is a devastating Social blow to a Highland Community;

I have lived in Appin for over 50 years and was a GP with a strong presence in the Duror/Kentallen Community watching generations of Children grow up and thrive in the School catchment area.

Attending a Community School gives young people a strong sense of belonging and confidence which they take forward in life enriching their Community; This is supported by the Stability that having dedicated Teachers in the Community bring as well as the Parents and Grandparents supporting the core of the Community. Duror has lost the Village Shop and Post Office in recent years and to lose the School would devastate the Area; I remember the School being threatened in the 70s and then an extension had to be built to accommodate the rising numbers of Pupils; This is the nature of Rural Communities; Denying that probability will mortally affect this proud, historic Community.

I am so fortunate to have been employed at Duror Village Primary School as general auxiliary/cleric for over 30 years. Over that time I have witnessed the first class education that is the provision of a local village school. It is a well known fact that pupils attending a local village school are provided with opportunities for social interaction with peers who live in the same area. This can help children build social skills and friendships that extend beyond the classroom. I fear this huge benefit would be lost if Duror Village School were to close and pupils were to attend a larger school outside their village of residence.

Families come and go within a community and although at this present time numbers of pupils attending the village school is at an all-time low I feel certain that families with children of primary school age will once again take up residence in the community in the near future.

A local building developer has informed the Duror & Kentallen Community Council of his intention to build 30 homes on a large area of land he has purchased in the centre of Duror village. I would envisage that of these 30 new homes many would be occupied by families with children of primary school age.

The facility of a village school is high on the list of priorities of prospective buyers of property or those seeking employment within the locality. Closure of the village school would be detrimental in that it would discourage new families with school age children moving into the area.

Youth is the very lifeblood of any community, the village school is very much an integral part of the structure of all communities. The retention of our village school is of the utmost importance as the provision of a primary education is undeniable.

Highland Council are far too premature with their suggestion to possibly close Duror Village School.

Duror Primary School is one of many schools across the Highlands that is committed to the Eco-School Programme. The pupils and staff regularly walk to and from school on a daily basis whenever possible. Highland Council have indicated that they would provide a bus to transport pupils to/from Duror village to another school out with the village. A backward step in regard to the Eco- School Programme.

I formally request that The Highland Council take my objections into consideration when deciding on the proposal.

### **Response 13**

Although the other 3 schools in the cluster are larger than Duror PS, they themselves are very small rural schools. Ballachulish PS has a current P1-7 roll of 35, Glencoe PS has 25, and St. Bride's has 31. They would be considered very small schools in almost any other part of Scotland. All three schools have easy access to outdoor landscapes.

Following the completion of the consultation, a number of references were made to the presence of 8 pre-school children in the area. Further enquiries suggested that a number of these live outside the Duror Primary catchment. The Council has been notified of three pre-school children in the catchment who would be interested in attending the school in future years. Given the ages of these three children, and that that the two current children are in the upper stages of their primary school education, the projections do not suggest that the roll at Duror Primary School will rise above three in the foreseeable future.

As noted above, the Council accepts that closure of the school will result in reduced opportunities for the remaining children to walk or cycle to school, though it should also be noted that a only very small number of children would be affected.

The Council stands by the educational benefits outlined in Section 11 of the Proposal Paper.

It is understood that the previous discussions on the closure of the school Took place in the 1970s, when Duror was part of the former Argyll County Council. Those discussions occurred at a time when the school roll was well in excess of what it is at present. It is accepted of course, that rural school rolls can fluctuate to a degree, but Highland Council has seen, and is seeing, a continuing decline in the number of children attending our schools.

The school transport distance from Duror to Ballachulish Primary is well within normal travelling distance for many primary school children in Highland.

The question of rural depopulation is considered at Response 9 above.

#### **Issue 14**

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.

The history of Duror Primary School shows clearly the swings in pupils attending over many years, from nearly thirty to its present level. There are already a few youngsters in the village who may well want to attend the Duror school. The villages of Duror and Kentallen are attracting young families constantly and they would wish to have their own primary school. The provision of a pre-school nursery would enhance its attraction and this is being discussed within the village at present. The previous nursery was excellent and should not have been closed.

While it is understood keeping the school open comes at a cost, with staff being the costliest factor, Highland Council's policy of seeking to redeploy staff to other educational settings will relocate the cost but does not remove it from future budgetary obligations. There are no immediate financial savings to be had from closing the school.

#### **Response 14**

The staff who drafted the Proposal Paper were unaware that there was a school nursery for a brief period in 1998. This may have been so but it is noted that this was more than a quarter-century ago. The Council is grateful to have this information but the existence of a school nursery class for a brief period in 1998 is not material to the discussion about the future of the school taking place in 2024-25.

The school's capacity is officially registered at 25, which is the maximum number of children allowed in a composite class (or indeed for any class that has P1 pupils). The relevant legislation has changed since the 1990s.

Even with a capacity of 25, it is clear that the school will have more than sufficient capacity for the foreseeable future. The roll of 2 for the 2024-25 school session represents 8% of the available capacity.

The comment that the school had more than 25 children in the 1990s illustrates just how much the roll has declined over the last 30 years. Sadly this pattern has been repeated across many rural schools.

The issue of the Suitability rating is addressed at Response 11 above, and at Section 9 below.

The Council does not accept there is a contradiction between the savings identified and its commitment to redeploy staff, since the closure would lead to a reduction in the number of staff the Council requires. Staff who are deployed will usually go into vacant posts elsewhere, thereby avoiding the need to recruit staff for the vacant post.

The Council has repeatedly made it clear that the proposal to close Duror Primary School is being advanced on educational and not financial grounds.

It is the Council's understanding that the partner centre nursery that previously operated from the village hall closed after all the parents withdrew their children.

In respect of early years, Highland Council does not believe that very small settings with 1 or 2 children offer a good learning, play and socialisation environment for young children. It would be very unlikely that, in most years, there will only be 1 or 2 children in each year group in the area, and as such that does not make a viable traditional ELC service (school nursery).

There are alternative solutions, such as a commissioned childminder, which may afford a wider range of childcare availability and include babies and after school care, we could consider looking to recruit to that if the community would be interested in that provision.

There is no suitable accommodation to create an ELC at Duror, even if there was funding available and it was believed to be a viable option.

Children have access to local ELC provisions at Ballachulish and St Brides which offer greater opportunities to socialise play and learn within easy travelling distance.

Evidence across Highland is that there are mixed decisions for parents in keeping their child at the school they attended ELC and moving the child back to the catchment school. Glencoe is an example of this, as a school without a nursery class but where the primary school roll has help up well, with the school even attracting pupils from neighbouring catchments, on placing requests. Many parents are committed to their local catchment school and do move the children back to that, even when they have attended ELC elsewhere. There is also evidence however that some parents choose not to move their child back because they do not want their child to be the only child in their year group.

### **Issue 15**

I propose you put on hold the procedure to close the school for at least three years and await the very likely increase in applications which will follow.

This school has been an integral part of our community for generations, though I do understand that it is not viable with just 2 pupils, it seems short-sighted to shut it down altogether when it is already established that there are enough pre-school age children in the community currently to make it viable again in the near future. Perhaps the council would consider alternatives, such as using it as specialized classrooms (e.g. for horticulture and outdoor education), or as a nursery, with adult evening classes, to help make it pay its way until it is fully populated again? A recent community consultation event I attended suggested that there is a desire in our community to encourage more young families to move into the area. Local

groups and businesses, and developing facilities such as the community centre will help attract these families, but the loss of a school the children can walk or cycle to each day along our fabulous cycle path may be a deterrent.

Therefore, I would be very grateful if, instead of closing the school permanently, you would consider possible alternatives.

### **Response 15**

The suggestion that the school should be “mothballed” was originally made by the Council in November 2023. However there were concerns from the community that “mothballing” would be a back door closure of the school and that an issue as important as the future of the school should be subject to full consultation.

Mothballing has advantages and disadvantages, one of the latter being the tendency of empty buildings to deteriorate.

The question of how many pre-school children are available for enrolment in the next few years is considered above, and indications are that the school roll is unlikely to rise above three pupils.

The possibility of an alternative use for the school is addressed in Section 10 below.

### **Issue 16**

In the event of the closure of Duror Primary school, please relocate the catchment to St Brides Primary School and not to Ballachulish Primary. St Brides is the closer school and the majority of the children in Duror already attend or will be attending St. Brides Primary anyway. This would be helpful with regards to transport provision, which would need to be provided anyway for Ballachulish primary school as it more than 2 miles away. This would greatly improve the lives of the working parents in this area who have commutes to towns such as Oban (the opposite direction of both St Brides and Ballachulish primary schools).

### **Response 16**

The main disadvantage with this proposal is that Duror does not share a catchment boundary with St. Bride’s Primary. Amalgamating the two catchment areas in the way suggested would therefore leave St. Bride’s Primary with an exclave to its core catchment.

Nevertheless, the Council has taken account of the arguments advanced around travel routes, and especially the close links that already exist between the two schools.

However, having considered the representations made, and in particular the links and pupil friendships already formed between Duror Primary and St. Bride's Primary, the Council agrees the suggestion that, in the event the school is closed, the catchment should be re-zoned to St. Bride's rather than to Ballachulish.

### **Issue 17**

I am wishing to inform you that I plan to build a substantial housing development in Duror within the next five years, the housing will be aimed at families. I have two potential sites in Duror that I plan to develop. In all there would be an additional 40 houses and some light industrial space created if planning was granted (of which I am confident and motivated to appeal to the point where it would be approved, I feel there is a need in line with the aspersions of government so approval would be obtained).

I wish to point out that the closing of the School may create a situation where there is insufficient resources to provide for schooling needs. This will create a burden on the council to supply a new school at substantial cost. The only other option would be transport to Ballachulish or North Ballachulish again at substantial cost.

I would suggest making Duror School a Gaelic medium school would increase the pupil numbers and save it from closure if the council are so minded to save such an important part of the community. I myself will be moving to Duror however my 3 children that will be moving with me are learning in Gaelic. I know of others in similar situations.

### **Response 17**

In principle, small scale, proportionate infill development is acceptable at the locality, in terms of the local development plan. There is no mapped boundary for Duror or any specifically allocated development sites. There are certain issues and Placemaking Priorities for the area, and any future planning applications would be considered against these issues and policy criteria. They include the flood risk associated with the River Duror; the presence of relatively good ground conditions, the relatively good aspect but lack of seaward outlook, the very limited capacity of the A828 trunk road junctions through the settlement and the cost of improving or rationalising them; limited water and sewage capacity; and a range of heritage designations that surround or overlap the settlement including areas of ancient/native woodland, the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne Special Protection Area, and the Ardsheal Hill and Peninsula Geological Conservation Review as well as many other listed buildings and monuments.

As stated elsewhere, the school currently has a roll of 2 against a registered capacity of 25. In calculating future rolls, planned new housing developments are expected to yield an average number of Primary and Secondary pupils into the local schools. These Pupil Product Ratio (PPR)

values are one of the key forecasting data inputs. The current PPR for Lochaber is 0.22, so an addition of 40 houses, if completed, would be expected to add around 9 additional pupils to the roll of Duror PS. On this basis, we see no prospect of there being any future capacity problems at Duror Primary School. St. Bride's Primary is currently at 72% capacity (31 pupils with a capacity of 43) and Ballachulish Primary is currently operating at only 47% of capacity (35 pupils with a capacity of 75). The local school estate therefore has ample ability to absorb around 9 additional pupils.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig have issued Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, under which Parents of children under school age, and who have not yet started to attend a primary school, have a right to request an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from the education authority in whose area their child lives. The request must be made in relation to only one child who must be specified in the request. The request must also set out, or be accompanied by, evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children resident in that same education authority area and who are in the same year group as the specified child.

When an education authority receives a parental request for GMPE, the education authority must assess the need for GMPE. Following an initial assessment, the education authority must decide whether there is a potential need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area or not. This is defined as demand for GMPE in relation to five or more children in the same pre-school year group.

The Council would therefore consider any request for the provision of GME at Duror Primary School, made in line with the above.

### **Issue 18**

The school is needed to sustain a community and encourage future families to live in the village.

Ballachulish primary has at times been at capacity and the level of education definitely suffers in those situations. I believe St Brides is also quite full.

### **Response 18**

Ballachulish PS has a registered capacity of 75, and a current roll of 35. St. Bride's PS has a registered capacity of 43, with 31 on the roll. Neither school is forecast to have a rising roll. As there are only 2 children currently attending Duror Primary School, the Council does not anticipate that the closure of that school will result in capacity problems at either Ballachulish or St. Bride's.

## Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland

- 7.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 4**.
- 7.2 HM Inspectors agree with some, but not all, of the educational benefits outlined in the proposal. In the current context, the potential limitations of the small school roll could be mitigated by the cluster approach. Children, parents and staff state that joint working arrangements across the cluster are working well. They are providing valuable learning and teaching experiences for children to engage regularly with their peers from the other cluster schools. The council should engage more thoroughly with parents and members of the community, particularly around alternative options to the proposal. This should include consideration of the number of pre-school children living in the current catchment area, and an assessment of any planned housing developments. In preparing its consultation paper, it would be helpful if the council could outline the projected school roll of Duror Primary School. Should the council proceed with the proposal, it will be important to have further discussions with parents about the most appropriate change to the catchment area. A few consultees and stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors believe there are inaccuracies or omissions in the proposal document. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies or omissions notified to it.
- 7.3 The Council has addressed the recommendations set out above. Further enquiries have identified three preschool children within the Duror Primary catchment area, whose parents would like them to attend the school. The children's ages range from 10 months to three years. The two current children at the school are in P6 and P4, so the older of these will leave for High School in August 2026, the younger in August 2028. Based on this data, the roll at Duror Primary will not rise above three pupils at any time before August 2028.
- 7.4 An assessment of the effects of Housebuilding is set out at Response 17 above. Comments on the catchment issue are at Response 16. Omissions and inaccuracies are addressed at Section 9 below.

## 8.0 Effects on the Community

- 8.1 Section 15 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council's assessment of the effects of closure on the local community, and advised that Highland Council would be keen to work with the local community to see whether the current school building and site could be turned over to community use.
- 8.2 A number of responses have suggested that the closure of the school will have an adverse impact on the future of the community. The Council does not consider there is evidence to support this claim. Further detail is available at Response 9.

## 9.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

- 9.1 Duror and Kentallen Community Council alleged the following inaccuracies in the Proposal Paper. At Appendix A page 5, 3:4, the Proposal Paper stated that there had never been a pre-school class at Duror Primary. The CC comment that 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.
- 9.2 The above issue is addressed at Response 14. The Council did not have a record of a school nursery for a brief period in 1998. This may have been so but it is noted that this was 27 years ago. There has not been a school nursery since that time and the existence of a school nursery class for a brief period in 1998 is not material to the discussion about the future of the school taking place in 2024-25.
- 9.3 The Proposal Paper stated at Appendix A page 6, 3:5, that the school's registered Capacity is 25. The CC commented that from 1991-2001 the school roll exceeded 25 apart from one year (1999) when there was a drop.
- 9.4 There is no inaccuracy here. The school's registered capacity is 25. The issue is addressed in more detail at Response 14.
- 9.5 The Proposal Paper stated at Appendix A page 6, 3:5 that the school building was rated 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.
- 9.6 The condition survey information is reviewed and validated to ensure that the overall condition rating that is reported to the Scottish Government each year is appropriate.
- The condition rating was changed from B to C in 2018 following a benchmarking exercise and has been reported as C since then.
- 9.7 The Proposal Paper stated at that the Educational Suitability of the building was Category C. This Assessment was carried out in 2016. This is clearly outdated and should not be considered in any decision making.
- 9.8 Although the survey dates from 2016, there have been no major alterations to the school building in the intervening years, that would be likely to result in a changed rating. The Council does not agree this is an inaccuracy. As noted at Response 11, the Suitability rating is not the primary basis for the closure proposal.

## 10.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure

10.1 Throughout the consultation the Council has had special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In particular, the Council has had special regard to the following:

- any viable alternative to the closure proposal;

Sections 7-10 of the Proposal Paper identified and discussed the following alternatives to closure:

- i. To continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.
- ii. To re-open Duror Primary School with its current catchment area.
- iii. To re-open Duror Primary School with an expanded catchment area.

10.2 Sections 8 and 9 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council’s consideration as to why Options i and ii above would not be viable options for Duror Primary School. No additional suggestions were made during consultation.

10.3 Similarly, in respect of option (iii) in paragraph 10.1 above, Section 10 of the original Proposal Paper set out the reasons why an expanded catchment area would not be a viable option for Duror Primary School. Again, no suggestion to this effect was made during consultation.

10.5 Having reconsidered each of the alternatives identified at Sections 7-10 of the Proposal Paper, the Highland Council has concluded that the alternatives to closure would not deliver the educational benefits of the proposal.

10.6 Alternative approaches were suggested during the consultation exercise. It was proposed that the school could be kept open as specialised facility for outdoor education and/or horticultural education; or that it could be used to provide a nurture group setting (which would not be mutually exclusive with the other suggestions). Under these suggestions the Duror building would be used as a centre for the whole ASG, in addition to continuing to operate as a school.

10.7 Having reviewed the suggestions above, the Council has concluded that the Duror school building offers no particular advantages over the other schools in the ASG, for the activities suggested. The other ASG schools are all located in rural, coastal settings, and are under-utilised in terms of capacity.

10.8 As highlighted at paragraph 8.1 above, the Highland Council has a positive attitude towards Community Asset Transfer requests, in the event the school was to close.

10.9 The Council has also reconsidered the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to;

(a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community;

The potential community impact of the proposal was considered at Section 13 of the Proposal Paper and is further considered at Section 8 above.

- 10.10 The Council has further reconsidered the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact, (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

The impact of the proposal on travel time was considered at Section 11 of the original proposal paper. The travel times to the alternative schools are not excessive and are within the normal range of school journeys in Highland.

## **11.0 Procedure for Call-in by the Scottish Ministers**

- 11.1 As set out in The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Highland Council is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision on 27 March 2025 to decide if they will call-in the proposal. Within the first three weeks of that eight-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Therefore, anyone who wishes to make representations to the Scottish Ministers can do so up until midnight on 16 April 2025. The Scottish Ministers will have until midnight on 21 May 2025 to take a decision on the call-in of the Closure Proposal.
- 11.2 Anyone wishing to make a representation to the Scottish Ministers requesting them to call-in the decision to close Duror Primary School is asked to email [schoolclosure@gov.scot](mailto:schoolclosure@gov.scot) or to write to **School Infrastructure Unit, Learning Directorate, The Scottish Government, Area 2A South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ by midnight on 16 April 2025.**
- 11.3 Until the outcome of the eight-week call-in process has been notified to Highland Council, it will not proceed to implement the Proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, it will be referred to a School Closure Review Panel.

## **12.0 Legal issues**

- 12.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 12.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland, such education to be directed towards the development of the

personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children or young persons to their fullest potential (Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

### **13.0 Financial Implications**

- 13.1 Advice on the financial implications of the proposal was issued as Appendix D to the Proposal Paper.

### **14.0 Impact Assessment**

- 14.1 An Integrated Assessment has been prepared, covering Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Socioeconomic Effects, Climate Change, Data Protection, and a Mainland Rural Area Assessment.
- 14.2 The Impact Assessment identified mainly positive effects on children's wellbeing, although it was also acknowledged that children will have further to travel to school. No significant effects were identified in any other areas.

### **15.0 Effects on School Transport**

- 15.1 The effects on school transport were considered at Section 13 of the Proposal Paper. The additional travel distances are well within the normal range for school travel in the Highland Council area. The schools, and the routes between them, are all located on the coast and only rarely affected by winter weather.

### **16.0 Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

- 16.1 Adverse effects were considered at S.17 of the proposal Paper. The main adverse effect will be the additional distance that children must travel. This is mitigated by the fact the Highland Council will provide school transport to the alternative school.

### **17.0 Conclusion**

- 17.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 5 -10 above. For the reasons set out in detail above, Highland Council considers that implementation of the closure proposal is the most appropriate response to the reasons for the proposal.

- 17.2 The most significant reason for closure is that all the available evidence suggests that the number of children attending Duror Primary School is and will continue to be too low to make the school viable, and that there would consequently be educational disadvantages arising from such a decision. Lastly, the neighbouring schools, St. Bride's Primary, and Ballachulish Primary, are also rural schools with rolls of just over 30 pupils. The closure of Duror School would thus help consolidate the numbers at these neighbouring rural schools.
- 17.3 Education Scotland staff visited Duror Primary School, to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 17.4 The Assistant Chief Executive (People), on reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; and having had special regard to alternatives to closure, to the community impact and to the impact of travelling arrangements; concludes that the proposal offers educational benefits and that implementation of the Proposal in full is the most appropriate response to the reason for formulating the Proposal. The reasons for this conclusion are set out at Sections 5-10 above.

## **18.0 Recommendation**

- 18.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council approves the proposal to discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of St. Bride's Primary School.

Kate Lackie  
Assistant Chief Executive (People)  
29 January 2025

## **CONSULTATION MEETING – PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**HELD AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL – 16 APRIL 2024 – 6.30pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

#### **Panel**

Cllr. John Grafton - Chairperson  
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Resources  
Mhairi MacDonald, Area Education Manager

#### **In Attendance**

Malcolm McGregor, Head Teacher, Ballachulish, Duror, Glencoe and St. Bride's Primary Schools  
Cllr. Sarah Fanet  
4 members of staff  
23 members of the public

**The Chairperson – Cllr. John Grafton** introduced himself as Vice-Chair of the Local Area Committee and welcomed everyone to the consultation meeting.

He continued as follows:

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to formally close Duror Primary School, (as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper). The proposed change, if approved, will take place at the end of the school year following the conclusion of the statutory consultation process. This would most likely be the end of the 2024-25 school session.

Other options identified in the proposal paper are keeping the school open, or deciding to “mothball” it. We can also discuss any other options or alternatives to closure which those present would like to raise.

The Council officials present tonight are Mhairi MacDonald, Area Education Manager, and Ian Jackson, Education Officer, (Resources). Also present is Malcolm McGregor, Head Teacher of Duror Primary School as well as the schools at Ballachulish, Glencoe and St. Bride's.

Mr Jackson and Mrs MacDonald will shortly make a couple of quick presentations, and following these, I will open to the meeting for questions and observations.

The Chairperson then invited Ian Jackson to describe the consultation process.

**Mr Jackson**

Thank you Chair. The permanent closure of a school, which is what the Council is proposing for Duror PS, is subject to a statutory consultation process, of which this meeting is part. We are currently in the initial phase of that consultation, which is due to end on Friday 3 May, and I would urge anyone who wants to submit views in writing to do so by that date. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather views, and we will try to answer any questions that are raised.

My colleague Mhairi MacDonald will shortly set out the educational basis for the Council's proposal to formally close Duror PS, but before that I will briefly describe the rest of the consultation process.

The formal process has a number of stages. Once the public consultation ends on 3 May, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will look at the Proposal Paper, the note of the meeting tonight, and any written representations, and will form their own view on the educational benefits of the proposal. Education Scotland will contact the school, and they will be keen to hear from any parents who wish to make their views known. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland's view on the educational benefits and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. Following the completion of that stage, the Council will prepare a Report reviewing the consultation exercise and present it to the Council's Education Committee. The Review Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, and anyone who responded in writing to the initial consultation will be invited to make "further representations" during those 3 weeks. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Members will also see copies of the original responses and the note of this meeting.

After all that, there would still be a further opportunity for representations to be made to Scottish Ministers. All school closures in Scotland have to be ratified by Ministers, and they have 8 weeks from the date of the Council's decision to themselves decide whether to ratify the proposal or to refer it to what's called a school closure review panel. During the first 3 weeks of that 8-week period, Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person on whether the decision should be called in, or not called in, for review by a panel. Advice about how to make those representations will be provided at the relevant time.

In summary, I would say that the consultation process provides multiple opportunities for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made.

**The Chairperson** then invited Mhairi MacDonald to outline the educational benefits that would arise from the Proposal.

**Mrs MacDonald** referred to the Proposal Paper, and advised that the goal of the Education Service was to make the educational experience for children as positive as it could be. We have developed a number of indicators around that. The evidence we have gathered for Duror suggest there is no realistic prospect of the roll increasing significantly in the foreseeable future. There are 4 pupils at present but only two are expected for the 2024-25 school session. From the educational point of view there are a number of disadvantages that arise from that. Duror is part of a quad-cluster and in the other cluster schools, children can engage in co-operative learning in groups of various sizes, engaging in listening and talking. These opportunities, and those for peer group opportunities such as sports, are greater in those schools than we have in Duror, especially come August. Working with others is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. Thinking ahead into children moving into high school, it can present challenges if you are the only one from your primary school entering S1. Pages 8-10 in the Report set out the arguments relating to educational provision, and on page 10 it is summarised by concluding that there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Duror Primary School, due to the increased opportunities that can be provided from any of the other schools in the cluster.

The Chairperson opened the meeting to the floor.

**Q1** – I think the proposal is short-sighted. My daughter is one of those who will be in the school next year. This is a rural community and the numbers at the school can fluctuate. This is one of the few amenities in the village. I disagree with the Council's claim that the children are not getting a good education – they get an amazing education, and the socialisation issue is covered by the fact the school is part of a quad cluster. I feel that the education my daughter receives here is probably better than what she would receive at one of the bigger schools.

**A1 (Ian Jackson)** – We obviously take the points you have made there. Just to clarify one issue, the Council is not saying that children at this school do not receive a good education – we think they do – but we think that having a roll of two provides some barriers to education and makes things harder for staff. There's also the issue of socialisation which we discussed before [in pre-consultation].

**Q2** – I think it's also important to remember that small schools are at the heart of their community. There's another aspect of socialisation which you have missed out, which is socialisation with other members of this community. My boys went to St. Bride's, which is at the heart of its community. Once you take that away, you take it away for ever. I would also disagree with your comment about transition. I am a teacher at the High School and in my experience, the children who come from the small schools have a much more developed sense of identity and confidence, and I'm not seeing, in my experience, any difficulty with transition to secondary school.

**Q3** – My children came to this school many years ago. When my oldest daughter came there were two in her year group. When my youngest daughter came there were 8 in

her year group so that gives you an idea of how much the local population can fluctuate. I know it's now the whole school you are talking about, but when my oldest girl went to high school she was the only one left in her year group, and she had no problem with transitioning, even though she went to Lochaber High. She therefore went from being the only pupil from Duror to a much larger school and class, but had no difficulties.

**A3 (Ian Jackson)** – You are right in saying that small school rolls fluctuate, but we are seeing a pattern across Highland, of declining school rolls. The simple fact is that, taken as a whole, there are less children around today than there were 20, 30, or 40 years ago, and there is a fundamental problem with low school rolls in rural areas, and many urban areas as well.

**Q4** – However if you take the school away, anyone else who is thinking of moving to the area that has a family will be deterred from moving.

**Q5** – We moved to Duror a year ago, to work remotely, and one reason we picked the location was the school, so if you get rid of that, there is no reason for young professional families who are looking to work remotely to move here. We have a pre-school child and we don't mind the idea of him being part of a school with a low roll.

**Q6** – I was fortunate enough to have 3 daughters that were all educated here, and who transitioned successfully onto high school. My thoughts on this proposal are that education doesn't start only when a child goes to school in the morning, nor does it finish at the end of the school day. This is an area where we have such environmental beauty, with river, sea and woodland, and these are the things politicians today tell us are the most important.

**The Chairperson** asked Malcolm McGregor whether he wished to comment.

**Malcolm McGregor** - All schools have tons of potential and Duror PS has tons of potential. That doesn't change the fact that the school will be going down to two kids, with all the compromises that involves with clustering, and the hybrid approach. The potential here is good, but the educational concerns don't go away.

**Q7** – Could I ask whether the Education Department works with the Housing Department at any stage? If there is no school here, there will be fewer children wanting to come. Would the Housing Department build more social housing to change the population pattern locally, so that more people can benefit from what is on offer in this area, something others have already spoken about. This is a very caring area, where we take a great interest in the school. I can recall attending lunches that the children had cooked, because they had grown their own food. The children have also been involved in removing litter from Cuil Bay. They take part in the community in the way they would not in a bigger school, and I think they benefit enormously from the community interest in the school.

**A7 (Ian Jackson)** – We take future housebuilding into account when calculating school roll forecasts, both planned developments and what we call “ad hoc” developments – people building a single house for themselves. One of the things we find with housebuilding nowadays is that it doesn’t necessarily follow that more houses means many more children. At the moment, for every 10 houses that are built, we expect around 2 children of primary school age. In the 1970s that figure was 7 children per 10 houses. Having more houses no longer generates big increases in the school roll, certainly not with the number of houses you could expect in a community like this. The issue of the relationship between the presence of a village school and the health of a community is an interesting one. About 10 years ago the Scottish Government set up a Commission on Rural Education. They looked into this, and concluded there was no clear relationship. Some rural communities thrived after losing a village school, others did not. There was no clear pattern. I understand the point you express though.

**Q8** – It’s where the very young get to meet the very old. I feel very strongly that if you take the school out of a community like this, it will leave a huge hole for everyone, not just the children.

**Q9** – My children went to this school also, and before my son went we were told the school was to be closed. It was just before regionalisation, and we were told our children would be going to Appin School. Am I right in saying that, in those days, children in a community had to go to the village school, and that doesn’t always happen now? In days gone by, you didn’t have the choice, but they gave people the choice.

**A8/9 (Ian Jackson)** – You’re absolutely right. There was a time, when if you lived in a particular community, you had to attend the designated school for that community. I don’t want to make this too political, but the change came in in 1980, after the Conservatives took power in 1979. They had a manifesto commitment to introduce an element of parental choice in terms of schools, and they passed legislation accordingly. The way the Council organises this is that every address in Highland is allocated to a catchment area served by a particular school, and our default position is that a child is enrolled into that designated school. However, if parents want another school, they can submit what is termed a placing request. The normal expectation is that we grant those, although there are some circumstances in which we can refuse them, for example where the class is already full. So yes, before regionalisation there wasn’t a choice, but now there is.

**Q10** – You say you don’t expect the school roll to increase, but does the Council actually know how many children there are under a certain age in this area, or is it just guesswork. How do you actually know that figure?

**A10 (Ian Jackson)** – We get information from the NHS about the number of births in a particular area.

**Q11** – So we wouldn’t be recorded on that?

**A11 (Ian Jackson)** – The system gives us some indication, but it's not perfect as it doesn't really give us information on families who move in and out. So if a baby is registered with a GP, we will have that information, but it doesn't really pick up families with pre-nursery age children who move in and out of the area. However, part of the process for this consultation is that we put information on the Council website, we put things in the local paper, we contact all the parents and the community council, and by these methods we hope to catch all the people such as yourselves. We aim to catch all parents. I would hope that in a community like this, if we are talking about something as big as the closure of the school, word will get around the community, and anyone who had a view would be able to submit that view. It's certainly our intention to publicise this consultation as widely as we can.

**Q12** – What does the Council consider as a viable number for a school?

**A12 (Ian Jackson)** – We don't have a set number. We take into account a variety of factors. Partly it is the number of pupils, partly it is the location of the school and how far it is to its nearest alternative. To give an example, we have schools in the Small Isles - Rum, Eigg, Muck etc, and even if there is only one child in those schools, we would keep them open for lack of any alternative within travelling distance. In a school like this, which is 10-15 minutes' drive from other schools, we would look at the numbers in the context of the location.

**Q13** – Has the Council done anything proactive to contact all the people who have children in this locality but who don't send their children here, to find out why?

**A13 (Ian Jackson)** – That's a decision for the parents concerned. We wouldn't challenge those decisions. They don't have to justify their choice to the Council.

**Q14** – You say there are a number of factors taken into consideration. How much weight is given to the number of children in the school? If we had 10 families move in over the summer, each with school age children, would that be weighted more?

**A14 (Ian Jackson)** – I can't give promises about decisions to be made in the future, but the number of pupils and the associated educational issues is the biggest factor. This is a long process. It will not be completed by the summer, and we wouldn't close the school in the middle of a session, so if this process goes through to the end, it will be the summer of 2025 before the school was actually closed. If there was a significant change to the roll between now and then, or certainly between now and when the Education Committee takes its decision, then we would have to take that into account. If our argument is that a roll of two children is not educationally suitable, and if there were 10 children, that changes the scenario.

**Q15** – You've said that you are happy with the education the children receive at this school, and the parents themselves are very happy with it. There seem to be three factors taken into account, one is the roll, the second is distance, and the other is cost,

which hasn't been discussed yet. Is that fair, or are there other factors? Is there anything else that hasn't been mentioned?

**A15 (Ian Jackson)** – We would also look at things like the capacity of the receiving schools. Is the closure of a school and the movement of pupils going to cause any capacity issues in the school that will take those pupils? We also rate all our schools for what we term Condition and Suitability - the latter relates to the design of the school. If the receiving school had lower ratings for these items than the school to be closed, that would be considered as well. There are a range of factors, but the biggest is the educational one, linked to the roll. Where there are only two children on the roll, there are some disadvantages, that Mhairi has set out.

**Q16** - But the parents themselves have argued those disadvantages do not exist. You're saying they do, they say they don't. Which of the arguments are we able to influence?

**A16 (Ian Jackson)**– We have to take away all of the comments made tonight, and consider whether the feedback we have received should alter our proposal.

**Q17** – One gentleman made a comment earlier about moving here. The cost of property in cities is rising continually, and the opportunities to work remotely in this area have been greatly enhanced recently with the installation of fibre cables, so the opportunities to gain more families in this area are growing, not decreasing. It would be good if you could take this into account as well. Previously it was rare to work for home, but a number of us in this room do so.

**Q19** – Could I ask what criteria were used to classify the state of the building? It's been classed as a C, which is poor. What exactly is wrong with it?

**A19 (Ian Jackson)** – Those ratings are produced by our School Estates Team, who carry out the assessments according to Scottish Government criteria. I don't actually know what the details of this school's assessment are off the top of my head, but will certainly get the details.

**Q20** - Sitting here, it's hard to see too many issues.

**A21 (Ian Jackson)** – In terms of the school design, there are some issues with, for example, the lack of a dining room, and children taking their meals in the classroom. The playground is small and not very varied. They look at things like disabled access. Parking is a minor issue but is another problem here.

**Q22** – The disabled access was a big mistake in 1986 when they put the extension on, because the ramp was badly designed.

**Q23** – I suspect that if you were to ask parents, pupils and staff who had been here over the last 30 years, you would find very few complaints. Many of the children would

prefer the playground facilities here to those in a larger school. Have you had any such complaints? If not, that should be taken into account. Because of the very low numbers at this school, the facilities have never been an issue.

**Q24** – I feel timing is a big issue here. My children came here, but it was at the time the nursery was closed, and from then it was a ticking clock – no nursery, no feed into the school. However, if we ride out the current storm, things can improve. We could potentially re-establish the feed-in to the school. We have heard in the past that the school roll has gone down and then back up. I accept though there is a question about how long it can be kept open at a very low level.

**A24 (Ian Jackson)** - Just to clarify, the nursery you refer to was a private sector one at the village hall.

**Q25** – Can we just go back to the criteria you referred to? Is this assessed in the same way for all schools, regardless of the location? Would you judge this school in the same way as the high school in Fort William?

**A25 (Ian Jackson)** – We would judge it against other primaries. Essentially though there are set criteria from the Scottish Government, and we try to be consistent.

**Q26** – But in being consistent you could be comparing this small rural school against a large inner-city school in Glasgow or Edinburgh?

**A26 (Ian Jackson)** – We would compare with other schools in Highland, because it's Highland Council staff that carry out the assessments within our area, but I accept that you might be compared with schools in Inverness. Many of the criteria are the same. Are there dining facilities, is there disabled access, are the classrooms big enough, is there enough car parking, and so on?

**Q27** – I don't think car parking should be a factor, since most of the children here would walk or cycle.

**Q28** – I don't see how you could make an issue with the playground, when you consider the hundreds of children who have gone through this school over the years. The playground has been totally satisfactory. It's incorrect to bring that up now. Also as I said earlier, what about the wider environment here?

**The Chairperson** asked whether the wider environment was considered as part of the Suitability assessment.

**A28 (Ian Jackson)** – The Condition and Suitability ratings relate to the school site.

**Q29** – Can I pick up a point made earlier, which is that many of the children in this area walk or cycle to school, whereas that would not be feasible if you were sending them to Ballachulish.

**A29 (Ian Jackson)** – They would obviously get school transport but yes, walking and cycling to school is something Highland Council would normally encourage, and it would no longer be practical.

**Q30** – Just to be really clear on car parking, I can see the car park from my house and there is almost never a problem, only on an Open Day.

**A30 (Ian Jackson)** – The last time I saw the weightings given to these assessments, these exterior factors were about 10% of the total, so a fairly minor part.

**Q31** – In all the arguments that the Council have made, and that we have answered, it's not been mentioned that this is probably a financial decision. If the Council want to close the school to save money, then why don't you just say that?

**A31 (Ian Jackson)** – We have come today to set out a proposal, and to explain why the Council has chosen to go down this path, and we are here to listen to local opinions on that proposal. We feel that having two children is not ideal, and have explained why we think that.

**Q32** – You're just avoiding the real issue.

**A32 (Ian Jackson)** – I can tell you, in all honesty, that I have been to meet parents at schools where there are more than two pupils, and where the parents have said to me, "we don't think there are enough children to allow this school to continue." Opinions do vary on this matter. This is clearly a community that feels very strongly about keeping their school, and we have to consider all the points that are made.

**Q33** – I disagree strongly with this idea that small schools don't provide enough for the children. When we moved here, one of my sons had been in a class of 30 children, and coming to this tiny community school transformed his educational experience. I work at the high school, and we try to work with children in smaller groups. I would always send children to a small school if I had the choice.

**Q34** - Are these perceived negative impacts of small schools backed by studies or science? Are there studies that would prove or disprove whether larger or smaller schools are positive or negative?

**A34 – (Ian Jackson)** – That is a very good question actually! There has been quite a lot of research on the attainment of what are termed small schools, as opposed to larger schools. The problem is that in much of the research, they define a small school as one with less than 70 pupils, so the research doesn't address schools of the size of this one. They are more likely to compare schools of 60 with schools of 400. One of the issues with doing that kind of research in a school like this is breaching confidentiality, because if you are looking at attainment data in a school with 2 children, it would be easy to identify them. In answer to your question, there is a lack of research applicable to schools this size.

**Q35** – So, if the Council’s argument is that a school of two children is insufficient for the children to thrive and flourish, there is no actual evidence to back that up, one way or the other. Being selfish, as I have a child in the school, I want to know that any move for my child is not going to have a negative impact. In a wider sense, I would also repeat a point made earlier, that the age range of the people here tonight shows the incredible bond there is between this school and its community.

**A35 (Mhairi MacDonald)** – Someone asked about the numbers, and in some of our other schools, we might have say, 7 children, but those children come from only 2 or 3 families. Parents have come to us to say that they feel the school is not working well, because the children see each other at home, and then have the same experience at school. Other people have other experiences, so it doesn’t just come down to the numbers, it’s the make-up of the families in the school as well. Sometimes we find that as children move up the year groups, parents want their children to move to a bigger school as preparation for transition. When we talk about bigger schools, it’s all relative. We are talking about Ballachulish and Glencoe as bigger schools, but many people would see them as very small rural schools. I was HT of two schools in Skye. One had 30 pupils and one had 7. The school with 30 pupils was considered a big school. I had previously taught in Dundee and when I moved from there, the children couldn’t believe I was moving to a school with only 30 pupils. In my school in Dundee there were 30 in a class. Recently, parents in a small school in Highland approached us to say there were not enough children in the school, and their children were not getting enough socialisation. Ultimately that led to the school being mothballed. That didn’t come from the Council, but from the parents. It very much depends on the particular children in a school, rather than just numbers or whether a playground is suitable. It’s a complex assessment. The parents’ views are important.

**Q36** - Just following up on that, if you are genuinely interested in our views, I hope you are picking up the message from everybody here that a small school is fantastic for this community. That’s why everyone is here. I really hope that is noted.

**Q37** – I wanted to add that, although there may only be 2 children, they are involved in the cluster schools, so they do get to meet other children, and participate in sport, and so on. That has to be taken into account as well.

**Q38** - Reference was made earlier to children from the same families at a small school. When my girls were here, there were 8 children, from a total of about 19, who came from four families, and it didn’t cause any problems.

**Q39** – Are you able to give us any information about the financial factors that are being considered?

**A39 (Ian Jackson)** - There is information attached as an appendix to the Proposal Paper.

**Q40** – Mention was made about schools that had closed following parent requests. I assume no such request has come from Duror.

**A40 (Ian Jackson)** – No. I came to meet with the parents in November, and they made it clear they did not want to see the school closed.

**(Mhairi MacDonald)** – Ian and I held an online meeting last year in connection with a mothballed school, where no parents came along, but the wider community did not want the school to close, and so we agreed to continue mothballing for another year to allow the community to attract more families. Even though no parents had expressed an opinion about the school, we did still listen to the community. We reviewed the mothballing again just recently.

**Q41** – But you are not talking about mothballing Duror, you are talking about closing it for good.

**A42 (Ian Jackson)** – Yes, although the paper does say that other options can be considered, and one of those is mothballing.

**Q43** – But just to reiterate that the parents and the community are perfectly satisfied with this school, and the service they are receiving from the Education Department.

**Q44** – There is a plan to get a toddler group going in the area, to start getting a group to feed into the school in future.

**Malcolm McGregor** also made reference to a local Place Plan currently being developed, to try to grow the community. He wished to make the Chair aware.

**The Chairperson** asked whether the Place Plan would be something that the Council would wait for before coming to a decision on the future of the school.

**A44 (Ian Jackson)** – All I can say is that all suggestions made tonight will be part of the mix.

**Q45** – When I read the Proposal, I felt the main reason for it was money, and tonight you have mentioned other reasons. Are you saying that, if those other reasons were sorted, money wouldn't have anything to do with it? Also, how can you grade the school on facilities and make that part of your argument, when you are the organisation with the purse strings to change the facilities? The Council could invest in this building to improve its ratings.

**A45 (Ian Jackson)** – The Scottish Government sets out the factors we must consider in making a school closure proposal, and one of these is the financial analysis attached to the paper. If we didn't do that, when the proposal went to Scottish Ministers, they would kick it back on the basis that we hadn't done the financial analysis, but we are advancing this primarily on the basis of educational benefit.

On the other point about the Suitability and Condition assessments, we can obviously argue about the detail, but I think it is sensible for the Council to have an assessment of the condition and suitability of its school buildings. They are all rated from A to D. The Council has nearly 200 schools in total, so these surveys allow us to prioritize investment. If schools have A or B ratings, they are not as high a priority than those with C ratings. I'm not personally involved in decisions on capital investment for the Council - ultimately those decisions are taken by elected councillors - but the Council does not have enough capital funds to tackle all its building problems, and the suitability and condition ratings are part of the process of assessing that.

**Q46** – Is there any route for us to question the grading of what are going to be key elements of the decision-making process?

**A46 (Ian Jackson)** – People are free to put in comments as they see fit. I need to send out the details of the ratings for you to submit comments on. I will repeat though, that the suitability and condition ratings are one of the factors, but not one of the more significant.

**Q47** - What is the most significant?

**A47 (Ian Jackson)** – The educational issues related to the roll.

**Q48** – The view from the room is to reject the issues you have raised, and it isn't backed up with any scientific evidence, so what is the ceiling you would consider as the number of children that would be appropriate?

**A48 (Ian Jackson)** – A gentleman asked that question earlier, and I said we didn't have a set figure, but we do think that 2 children is a bit low for a school in this situation.

**Q49** – Is there a number of miles that is considered suitable for young children to travel? You are saying that Ballachulish, 10 miles away, is a suitable distance. If it were 20 miles away would that make a difference?

**A49 (Ian Jackson)** – We probably go more on travel time than miles, because in the Highlands the distance in miles could be anything from driving on the A9 to travelling on single track roads. As a rule of thumb, we normally say 30 minutes' drive time for primary school children. We do though have a school in Skye, in Elgol, that we mothballed in 2002 because there were only two children and they were siblings. It's no particular secret because we have been meeting with the parents, as they have a number of pre-schoolers there just now and they are keen to see the school re-opened. We have said we will consider that for August 2025 when there may be more children of school age. Elgol is located about 30 minutes' drive from the nearest alternative school, and some pupils live in addresses another 5 minutes further on again. Something else we might look at is the nature of the route. If it's somewhere in the Aviemore area for example, they are much more affected by winter weather than we are here.

**Q50** – If the school does shut, will we be given the choice of school within the quad cluster, and not just be told which school my daughter would have to go to?

**A50 (Ian Jackson)** – The proposal is that the children go to Ballachulish. That's set out in the paper. We have proposed that on the basis of the geography of the catchment. We are maybe getting ahead of ourselves, in that people here don't want the school to close at all, but again we will consider views on the question of catchment. If it was to be Ballachulish, there is still the placing request system, that was discussed earlier, but the normal practice with the Council is that if someone is on a placing request, they are not eligible for school transport.

**Q51** – Why Ballachulish and not St. Bride's? They are equidistant, and both are 2-teacher schools.

**A51 (Ian Jackson)**. Yes, they are equidistant. However Duror PS only has a boundary with Ballachulish. If the Duror catchment were re-allocated to St. Bride's, it would be a slightly odd arrangement, in that it would leave the St. Bride's catchment with an exclave.

**Q52** – Is that not just a historical thing though, in that, before the bridge was built, St. Bride's pupils transferred to Fort William for secondary because they were in Inverness-shire, whereas Ballachulish was part of Argyll. I think that boundary is imaginary now, and the schools have the same Head Teacher.

**A52 (Ian Jackson)** – You're absolutely right about the history of course. However every school has to have a catchment, and the St. Bride's catchment reflects the historic boundary. There's nothing in law to say that we couldn't have the St. Bride's catchment with an exclave, it would just be unusual. It would be the only such case I know of in Highland. The other possibility would be to move Glenachulish into the new joint catchment, but that would require a statutory consultation.

**Q53** – If the school is to shut, we should have a choice of catchment.

**A53 (Ian Jackson)** – The current Duror catchment has a boundary with Ballachulish, but not with St. Bride's. If the school closed, and we linked the current Duror catchment with St. Bride's, that would be unusual for the reasons mentioned.

**Q54** – If you have a group of people in this room who are really supportive of keeping this school open, and if you have the two children in this school, and their parents saying the children are having a great educational experience, and the community wants to keep things in place as they are, why does the school have to close, if it's not financial?

**A54 (Ian Jackson)** – There is a consultation period that ends on 3 May, After that Education Scotland will come, who are not part of Highland Council. They will want to talk to the parents and children, and they will produce a report saying whether they

think we are making a reasonable argument here. We will then review the consultation exercise, both the public part and the Education Scotland report, and everything said tonight will be part of that.

**Q55** - If the number of children were to rise before the next meeting, would there be a change then?

**A55 (Ian Jackson)** – This came up earlier. It depends on how many, but any changes in circumstances would be part of our review of the consultation.

**Q56** – You’ve mentioned the playground, and the dining room, and other parts of the building, but the children are happy with that. My daughter is thriving in this school. Getting out into nature, being part of this community, has really brought her out. I don’t know what else I can say, but I just want everyone to know I don’t want the school to close.

**Q57** – When you say that Education Scotland will come after this consultation, you said they would talk to pupils and parents, so will they not involve the community?

**A57 (Ian Jackson)** – I think they will contact the community council as well. It’s up to them, they aren’t connected to the Council, but normally they would do that.

**Malcolm McGregor** – That will come through me, so there will be an invite to stakeholders. The Inspector will want to chat with the kids, have a chat with staff, the Parent Council. I was waiting for this meeting to be over before I presented the next meeting! I will be putting invites out, including to the CC, to make sure all stakeholders have the chance to speak to Education Scotland, in a similar way as they have had the opportunity to speak to Highland Council.

**Q58** – Not to harp on about the evidence basis, as previously discussed, but will Education Scotland assess where the kids are at, education-wise, compared with other schools in the cluster?

**A58 (Mhairi MacDonald)** – It’s not that type of assessment.

**Malcolm McGregor** – It’s a consultation. They will listen to the views of the children, and be asking questions. They won’t be comparing schools, more like they will ask “What kind of learning do you do here, do you enjoy learning? What do you like best about the school, what don’t you like about it?” Gathering that sort of evidence.

**Q59** – If the Council’s argument is that having two children is a negative in educational terms, will they assess whether those negative aspects impact on the children? How do you do an assessment on how the kids are getting on?

**A59 (Mhairi MacDonald)** – If Education Scotland were coming to inspect the school next week, one of the big things they would consider is the unique context, and how

does the school use its context to improve the learning and teaching. You've all spoken very well about the environment for the pupils, and in the Inspection process that context and environment is very much taken into account. I would imagine that when the Inspector meets with the community, things that have been said here tonight will be shared with them, and they will take into account what impact it would have if the children were to lose this environment.

**Malcolm McGregor** – I'm quite confident the four kids will tell the Inspector all about it! (Laughter).

**Ian Jackson** – When Education Scotland come, they will consider whether Highland Council have made a reasonable case, and whether it is reasonable to say that the education of the children would be better catered for in another school.

**Mhairi MacDonald** - They will have their view, and we will have to await that view, just as you will.

**Ian Jackson** – If this eventually goes to Scottish Ministers, the Education Scotland report will carry a lot of weight. Whether it is supportive of what the Council is proposing, or whether it is critical of it, it will be a significant document.

**Q60** – There has been a lot of discussion about what will happen to the kids, but what will happen to the staff if this school closed?

**A60 (Ian Jackson)** – We have a redeployment policy for anyone who has a permanent contact, so the teachers would be put into another vacant post. That applies also to any other staff.

**Q61** – That might not be suitable, depending on geography.

**A61 (Ian Jackson)** – Our policy is to offer “reasonable redeployment”. Sometimes the devil can be in the detail, but sending somebody from here to Inverness probably would not be reasonable, sending someone from here to Fort William probably would be reasonable. I'm not saying staff would go to Fort William, but those are the kind of discussions we would have.

**Q62** - So therefore, the financial savings element of this proposal doesn't really exist, at least in staffing, since those staff will remain on the payroll, and will be placed elsewhere. The savings are therefore more around the building, the upkeep, structure, heating, and things like that.

**A62 (Ian Jackson)** – You're right in a sense, but it could also be argued that the Council has made an overall reduction in the number of posts. If the staff currently at Duror were moved to fill a vacancy elsewhere, that means less people to recruit.

**Q63** – Effectively though you have a policy to redeploy staff within the Council, so the salary costs associated with that person are not going to be negated. That reduces the weight of the financial argument. As we have already argued, the social and educational elements are more than satisfactory. The parents, pupils and staff are more than happy with the environment of the school, inside and outside, and the financial element is now reduced.

**A63 (Ian Jackson)** – The only thing I would say to that is that we have not made this case on the basis of financial impact.

**Q64** – From our side, looking at this, none of the criteria you have put forward are stacking up for closure. I can understand the financial argument. If there is a ballpark figure of £100K being spent on 2 kids, I can see why you would want to redirect those resources, but that level of saving is not really going to be achieved. It's only going to be £10-15K maximum. For that saving you will be ripping the heart out of the community and restricting the attractiveness of the community for other families moving in, at a time when remote working and remote living are becoming more popular, feasible and practical. We don't just have people here from Scotland, but from all over the world. It's a very cosmopolitan area, and potentially you are taking a huge part of that attractiveness away, as well as upsetting so many people in the area. There is a big emotional factor to be considered here. I know there are practical arguments, but I think we have covered them. The Council needs to give consideration to the emotional element.

There being no further questions, the Chairperson thanked everyone for coming, and reminded everyone that representations should be sent to Ian Jackson, email [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk) (address circulated in the letter), or via the online form, to arrive **no later than Friday 3 May 2024**. He also advised that the record of the meeting will be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education Committee where it is intended that the report of the meeting, plus any submissions/representations and the view of Education Scotland on the proposal, will be considered.



**List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation Exercise – Proposal to Discontinue Education at Duror Primary School**

1. Jonathan Dent
2. Pupil Responses – Duror PS
3. John Man
4. Charlotte-Ann Mair
5. Janice Murray
6. Amanda Black
7. Rebecca Coope
8. Duror and Kentallen Community Council
9. Robert Coope
10. Lea Thomson
11. Hannah Rodger
12. Jonathan Baxter
13. Audra Sheffield
14. Kay Duffy
15. Niall John McLean
16. Michelle Alexander
17. Paul Williams
18. Flora MacNeil
19. Jane Hartnell-Beavis
20. Iain McNicol
21. Rebecca Bashir
22. Megan Dent
23. Elizabeth MacLachlan

**From:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
**Sent on:** Friday, February 16, 2024 6:13:34 PM  
**To:** Education Consultations <Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk>; Ian Jackson (Resources) <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>  
**CC:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Primary <duror.primary@highland.gov.uk>; dkccinfo@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Duror Primary School  
**Urgent:** High

**CAUTION:** This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Ian,

Please don't close the Duror primary school!

My wife and I moved to Duror just before Christmas last year and we have a two-year-old son.

We fell in love with Duror since moving here and our property shares a boundary with the school. Our son has got to know the other kids at the school, been to their open days and is already part of the school community. The pupils, staff and community around the school is amazing and something special is lost if the council chooses to close it.

We are really wanting XXXXXX to go to Duror primary school. He has already enrolled for nurseery at St Brides which would be our second choice if Duror closes.

I've CC'd my wife XXXXX and Duror community council.

Kind regards

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** I feel it would be good to make one big school (for South Lochaber)

The school building is underused; there is scope to have the building available for the community such as clubs, afterschool events.

It wasn't very good (to close the school) as parents do not drive. The school is local and important to me.

The school is in a fantastic location for pupils to travel by foot and cycling.

The school is in a fantastic area of natural beauty and the children can access great resources inside and outside.

The school can support an Early Years service (such as a playgroup/toddler group).

The community is very connected to the school (open days, school events).

Our school has an advantage compared to other schools because we can easily access the outdoors (Cuil Bay, forest, river and trails).

Other schools are a lot noisier, we get lots of learning done because it is quiet and I learn off the older children.

We are able to be best at our learning because it is quiet and we all have access to a teacher. Our learning is very individualised.

Feel like Duror is a family rather than a school.

There are lots of things to do in and around the playground.

Small school(s) allow us to be flexible (to the needs and development needs) of the children.

We have a very supportive Parent Council that enable opportunities to experience a wide curriculum, and we get these opportunities because we are a small school.

We get to experience being around the other children as we visit and experience other children (in the cluster) and we have friends beyond the school. We don't feel isolated.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** School voice 4 pupils

**I am commenting on behalf of:** School pupils

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mr	Malcolm	McGregor

Address: postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PA38 4BW	Duror Primary School, Duror, PA38 4BW	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** I agree with the closure of Duror Primary School.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Mr	John	Man

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
PH336SE	Birchbrae, Onich, PH33 6SE	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** To whom this may concern

I am writing to say that my own children attended Duror Primary for three years since moving to their new school. They have had to redo their grades, undertaking extensive homework and after school tuition in order to keep up with their peers. They were so far behind where they should have been that I feel I must write this letter in the only way I know how, by being Honest. In my opinion duror Primary is not able to provide the level of education that children in Scotland should receive. Here in the community the parents who put their children in the school are in the minority. There are five families who do not use Duror Primary the reason being that they are not able to offer Acceptable levels of teaching I feel that duror Primary should not remain open. The village itself is mainly made up of Airbnb and second homes having a school in the village is not essential as I am myself and the other families travel out with to take our children to school , where in many cases the school is the heart of the community here in duror this is not the case our community centre is the hub of the community where we all gather and come together the school is not and no longer fit for purpose. The cost of keeping that school open versus a bus for myself and all the children in the community to go to a school with the village is going to be far more cost-effective than keeping Duror Primary open after the summer holidays the numbers will drop to 2 in the school and I cannot believe that this is A good use of taxpayers money.  
Thanks Mrs Mair

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

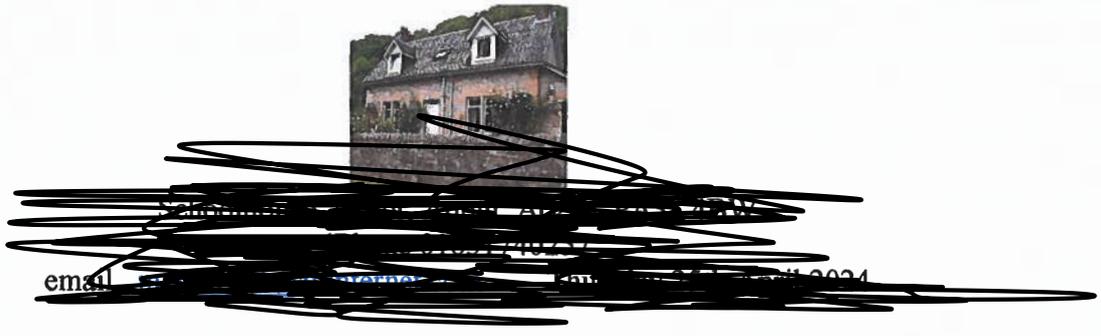
**I am commenting on behalf of:** The community who don't use the school

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Charlotte Ann	Mair

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
Pa384aa	1, Kirk Side, Duror, PA38 4AA	Yes



### Proposal to discontinue provision of education at Duror P. School

Dear Mr. Jackson,

Firstly, thank you for ensuring I was sent links to the various consultation documents. That was much appreciated.

I believe that if the school closes, there will be even less chance of families with children moving to this village. Kentallen School closed in the mid 1960s (some time before I came here) and, in all the years I have lived in Duror, very few children have been brought up in Kentallen.

When the "traveller site" on the outskirts of Kentallen was a more appealing place for travellers to stay, the majority of traveller parents who wanted their child to get some education, opted to bring their children to Duror P. The site was in the BPS catchment area but parents told me that their children coped better in a small school and, more importantly, were accepted by everyone in the school community. As you know, it is unusual for gypsy traveller parents to attend school meetings let alone speak out. One of the parents who spoke at the meeting on 16th April, is from the traveller community and she strongly believes her daughter will be best served by remaining in a small (in this case, VERY small) school.

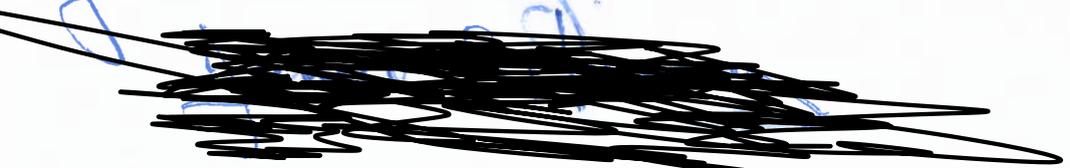
A small rural school can never provide the facilities offered by a larger school but parents accept this as they feel the benefits of a small school outweigh its shortcomings.

Since 2005, Duror has shared a Head teacher firstly with Glencoe, then Glencoe and St. Brides, next with Ballachulish and, more recently one H.T. for all four schools. I believe this was "sold" to parents as a temporary situation. In recent days, we learn that Mr. McGregor is moving, with immediate effect, to Lundavra and an acting H.T. will take charge of the four schools for the remainder of the term. As a previous parent said to me yesterday, "Why is it always us that gets changes foisted on us?"

I noted that the "Condition and Suitability Surveys" were completed in 2016. It may well be that during the last eight years, some of the identified shortcomings have been dealt with. Or, has Highland Council done nothing to resolve problem areas?

As you saw and heard at the meeting on 16th., this community strongly believes that it will be best served by having its own school as it's had since pre 1841.

*Yours sincerely*



Dear Mr Jackson,

In response to the request for local opinion regarding the proposed closure of Duror Primary School, I write to express my own view.

I have been employed by Highland Council as the Cleaning Operative for the school for nearly two years. Notwithstanding the fact that this position is a menial one, below the level of my qualifications and experience, the post has served me well as the only employment I could find in my local village. Myself and one other member of the Duror community are employed by the school. Currently, no other establishment exists which provides local employment within the village.

As a Council serving a largely rural area, I feel it is incumbent upon HC to support the needs of small, isolated, rural communities. In the interests of social welfare (some people cannot travel great distances for work due to economic imperatives or mental health), as well as the obvious environmental/sustainability factors involved, it is hugely important to provide employment opportunities at a very local level for those living in small communities.

Although the employment provided by the school may be deemed insignificant to those in the Council at the decision-making level regarding its closure, these roles are enormously important to those whose livelihoods depend on them. Thus, I urge the Highland Council to please consider these factors when deciding to close a very popular village school and put two members of that community out of work.

Many thanks,

Regards,

Amanda Black

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** I oppose the closure of Duror Primary School. The school is very special in nature, being a small rural school within the cluster of four, the other three being larger schools in larger villages. The school provides an excellent level of education for the pupils and is, I believe, vital to the continued development of our community.

The school has been unfortunate in recent months in that a couple of families with multiple children attending have had to move from the area. But there has been a big increase in pre-school age children in the village in the same period, with a total of 8 now in the area, and I believe that the school roll should be given a chance to rise again as it has done in the past.

Should it remain open, I believe that there is an opportunity for the school, in its unique rural setting, to also play a role in the education of children from all of the cluster schools.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** The community

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Rebecca	Coope

**Address:**

Postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PA38 4BS	North Acharn, Duror, PA38 4BS	Yes

Duror & Kentallen Community Council  
*email: [dkccinfo@gmail.com](mailto:dkccinfo@gmail.com)*

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,



Becky Coope  
Chair Duror & Kentallen Community Council

Dear Mr Jackson,

I would like to robustly object to the proposed closure of the primary school at Duror.

Whilst I acknowledge that the school role is likely to be very low at the start of the next school year (probably as low as 2 pupils) I can see no evidence of this being problematic for these pupils; their education seems to be progressing very well and their personal integration with our community is exemplary. I do not believe that a small school role is damaging to pupils.

I am confident that our village school has some unique attributes that would merit keeping the school open. As part of a schools cluster it appears that, where engagement with larger groups of pupils is beneficial, for example with sports, this is already happening. I would suggest that using this cluster principal to bring pupils from the other 3 primary schools to Duror would be an extremely valuable experience, particularly in order to “study” outdoor activity in its many and varied forms. The environmental surroundings and outdoor space that Duror primary has access to are second to none.

Closing our primary school would stifle the current increase in families with young children (currently there 8 children of pre-school age in this community). Our villages have limited amenities at present, closing the school would drastically worsen this position.

Yours

Robert Coope

North Acharn

Duror

Good evening,

I'm writing to ask you to reconsider the closure of Duror School. This school has been an integral part of our community for generations. Although I do understand that it is not viable with just 2 pupils, it seems short-sighted to shut it down altogether when it is already established that there are enough pre-school age children in the community currently to make it viable again in the near future. Perhaps the council would consider alternatives, such as using it as specialized classrooms (e.g. for horticulture and outdoor education), or as a nursery, with adult evening classes, to help make it pay its way until it is fully populated again?

A recent community consultation event I attended suggested that there is a desire in our community to encourage more young families to move into the area. Local groups and businesses, and developing facilities such as the community centre will help attract these families, but the loss of a school the children can walk or cycle to each day along our fabulous cycle path may be a deterrent.

Therefore, I would be very grateful if, instead of closing the school permanently, you would consider possible alternatives.

Thank you

Lea Thomson

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** In the event of the closure Duror primary school, please relocate the catchment to St Brides Primary School and not to Ballachulish Primary. St Brides is the closer school and the majority of the children in Duror already attend or will be attending St.Brides Primary anyway. This would be helpful with regards to transport provision, which would need to be provided anyway for Ballachulish primary school as it more than 2 miles away. This would greatly improve the lives of the working parents in this area who have commutes to towns such as Oban (the opposite direction of both St Brides and Ballachulish primary schools).

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Mrs	Hannah	Rodger

**Address:**

<b>postcode search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
PA38 4BT	8 Abhainn Cottages, Duror, PA38 4BT	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** The history of Duror Primary School shows clearly the swings in pupils attending over many years, from nearly thirty to its present level. There are already a few youngsters in the village who may well want to attend the Duror school. The villages of Duror and Kentallen are attracting young families constantly and they would wish to have their own primary school. The provision of a pre-school nursery would enhance its attraction and this is being discussed within the village at present. The previous nursery was excellent and should not have been closed.

I propose you put on hold the procedure to close the school for at least three years and await the very likely increase in applications which will follow.

Yours, Jonathan Baxter

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** Community Council

**Name of Community Council:** Duror and Kentallen

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mr	Jonathan	Baxter

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PA384BU	Kentallen House, Kentallen, PA38 4BU	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** I object to the discontinuation of education at Duror Primary School. This school is one of few amenities in the village and an attraction for young families moving to the area. Over decades the school roll has fluctuated, as is usual for a rural school. Children cycle or walk to the school and discontinuation would make this unfeasible. The school is located in a beautiful environment which forms part of the children's education.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** Myself

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Audra	Sheffield

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PA38 4BW	Invernahyle, Duror, PA38 4BW	Yes

Mr Ian Jackson  
Education Officer  
Highland Council

1<sup>st</sup> May 2024

Dear Mr Jackson,

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF  
EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL

As a local resident of Kentallen, I wish to express my concerns of the proposed closure of Duror Primary School. I live within the catchment area and while I have no children of primary school age, I do value this as an important local resource and feel it would be extremely detrimental to the area if the closure proceeds.

A recent meeting to discuss the proposed closure heard from parents of pupil past and present, all of whom spoke very highly of the standards of education their children received and dismissed the suggestion that there was a need for increased socialisation, listening and talking, opportunities for peer work that would come from being part of a larger class group.

These positive statements were supported by testimonials from local secondary school teaching staff who reported the social skills of children from the school were not impaired in anyway by the low school role but quite the opposite. The teachers reported Duror Primary children to have strong social skills, keen sense of identity and, more often than not, were better prepared to deal with the transition from primary to secondary than their counterparts from larger populated schools.

The school itself is in s a state of good repair, despite the claims made in the outdated report and its location on the National Cycle Network offers the children the opportunity for regular exercise, as well as carbon-free travel to and from school. With access to forest, glen and coast, the school is well placed to provide the children who attend with an environment rich in educational opportunity that will both sustain and improve the educational opportunities. These opportunities are not so easily accessible at other schools in the area.

The children of Duror and Kentallen are continually active in the community, taking part in local events, both fun and socially minded – such as the local litter picks and beach clean-up events. These kids care about the environment and community in which the live and grow.

And while it is understood keeping the school open comes at a cost, with staff being the costliest factor, Highland Council's policy of seeking to redeploy staff to other educational settings will relocate the cost but does not remove it from future budgetary obligations. There are no immediate financial savings to be had from closing the school.

The population of school age children across Duror and Kentallen has fluctuated over the years and may well do so again in the near future. There are a number of vacant properties in the catchment area and houses for sale. Local schooling within walking / cycling distance is a key contributing factor for parents when making decisions on where to live and the arrival of families to just a few of these properties could see the school roll easily double or treble.

Duror and Kentallen communications have recently been improved with the installation of fibre optic cabling to provide reliable Wi-Fi and with this development comes ever-expanding work

possibilities for families who are seeking a more rural lifestyle. Covid has led to more businesses offering their employees remote working opportunities which bring social, economic, and cultural benefits the area. Families faced with ever increasing costs of living and rising house prices are looking to areas that were previously out of reach, and the rise in remote working opportunities has increased the popularity of the area.

In summary, the parents of the children who will be schooled at Duror and Kentallen primary are happy with the education and socialisation on offer. They are also happy with the school premises and the wider environment opportunities of the surrounding area. And given the most significant elements of the financial burden will not be eliminated by closing the school, this is a much less relevant factor than previous suggested.

Closing Duror and Kentallen primary school would be a major loss to current residents and their children and make the community a much less attractive proposition for new families at a time remote working and remote living is becoming more popular, possible, and practical option for so many families.

Duror and Kentallen is a socially diverse and eclectic area. The threat of the school closure is deeply upsetting to many people in the community. It will reduce the attractiveness of the area to families with young children.

While there are many practical elements to be considered I believe Highland Council and Education Scotland must also give serious weight to the depth of feeling and the emotional impact the closure of this school would bring. I do hope full consideration will be given to the wider impact on the local area and population both in the short and longer term.

I look forward with keen interest to the decision of Highland Council and Scottish Education.

Yours faithfully,

Kay Duffy

Rowantree Cottage,  
Kentallen,  
PA38 3BU

I am wishing to inform you that I plan to build a substantial housing development in Duror within the next five years, the housing will be aimed at family's. I have two potential sites in Duror that I plan to develop. In all there would be an additional 40 houses and some light industrial space created if planning was granted(of which I am confident and motivated to appeal to the point where it would be approved, I feel there is a need in line with the aspersions of government so approval would be obtained).

I wish to point out that the closing of the School may create a situation where there is insufficient resources to provide for Schooling needs. This will create a burden on the council to supply a new school at substantial cost. The only other option would be transport to Ballachulish or North Ballachulish again at substantial cost.

I would suggest making Duror School a Gaelic medium school would increase the pupil numbers and save it from closure if the council are so minded to save such an important part of the community. I myself will be moving to Duror however my 3 children that will be moving with me are learning in Gaelic. I know of others in similar situations.

If you wish to discuss further please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Niall John McLean  
Director  
Geo-Rope Ltd

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** I very much disagree with the proposed closure of Duror primary. It is needed to sustain a community and encourage future families to live in the village. Ballachulish primary has at times been at capacity and the level of education definitely suffers in those situations. I believe St Brides is also quite full. Duror primary has always been a nurturing inclusive school and the pupils are well rounded individuals with a great education base. I would have put my own older children to Duror but did not have my own transport at the time. Now that I have another baby Duror was where we were hoping he would start his education. Thank you for reading.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Michelle	Alexander

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PH49 4JZ	9-10, Ballachulish, PH49 4JZ	Yes

Good morning,

Since, as stated at the consultation meeting, there are no financial reasons for closure the proposal is presumably based largely on the Suitability Assessment. This appears to have been carried out nearly 8 years ago. It also seems to use standards designed for a larger town school which are not necessarily applicable to a small village school. It is an overly harsh assessment, that does not consider the full social and community environment. I have made more comments at the end of this email.

When we first arrived in Duror, in the 1970s, there were proposals to close the school. Fortunately this did not happen, the school roll rose and the school became so well-regarded that some pupils came from Ballachulish. Now that we are facing another proposed closure the arguments against closure remain the same:

1. Although the expected roll for 24/25 is only 2, there are babies and young couples in the village and the roll will increase.
2. Village schools are part of the community. Closing the school will take the heart out of the community and young couples will be discouraged from moving here.
3. Bussing 5-year olds to Ballachulish every day is not acceptable.

Overall, there seems to be no good argument for closure and I hope that Highland Council will keep the school open and allow it to prosper once more.

### **Suitability Assessment**

Learning \_ Teaching General: Whilst facilities can always be improved, you have to question the need for a PE hall and a grass field. PE is, as stated, carried out in the village hall and the field at the hall is also available for school sports etc.

In spite of the assessment, there does appear to be disabled access.

Internal Social: I think all former pupils would agree that there are adequate social spaces.

Internal Facilities: There is no need for a reception.  
The fact that staff have to “physically open the door” to a very small number of visitors hardly seems to be a problem.

External Social: The play area is small but this never seemed to be a problem, even when the school was at full capacity.

There is no mention of the surrounding natural environment, trips to the Cuil  
Bay beach, vegetable growing etc

External Facilities: There is no need for a separate school car park, the space opposite the school is suitable and there have never been any parking problems.

There is no need for a drop off zone, since the school is on a quiet

single track road.

Regards

Paul Williams  
Mingulay, Cuil Bay  
Duror, Appin  
Argyll, Scotland PA38 4DA

Dear Ian Jackson,

I was unable to attend the consultative meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024 in Duror Hall but I have read the minutes of said meeting.

I would like to stress two main points. Firstly the school has and is functioning perfectly well in its present form, providing a rounded, balanced education for all of its pupils – past and present. This, despite not having shiny new facilities, a big car park or a discrete entrance away from the pupils....

Secondly, the damage to the village of the removal of the school would be serious and would discourage young couples from settling here. At the moment there are only a few prospective pupils in the population but demographic change is cyclical and in a few years the demand will almost certainly grow again. Closure now would be the worst type of short-termism.

Finally I'd like to express my personal commitment to the school where my three children had an idyllic and fondly remembered education. They still talk about the "extended family" atmosphere, the trips to Cuil Bay which they enjoyed together and the solid foundation for a secondary education that they received there.

I hope that you will ensure that the school stays open, for the benefit of present and future pupils and the inhabitants of the village.

Yours sincerely

Flora V. Macneil

Cuil Bay  
Duror  
Appin  
PA38 4DA

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** Dear Mr. Jackson,

I apologise that I was unable to attend the meeting on 16th April, but I have read the summary, and am in agreement with the observations made.

Both my children attended Duror Primary School - the eldest was the only child in her year, and her younger sister was one of 8 in hers. They were extremely privileged to receive the best education - both academically, and - importantly - as active members of the wider Duror community and within the surrounding environment.

If we have no school, we can't attract families - if we have no families we have no school...and Duror will become a retirement village with no transport network or nearby shops. We need more affordable housing and we need a school that is attractive to families who want to come to live in a rural environment - with, for instance, a feeder nursery like eg Stramash.

I appreciate this is not in any way an easy fix - certainly not one that is achievable in the short term - and that finances are tight; also that the housing issue is a UK wide one - although possibly magnified in rural areas because of its direct effect on all other aspects of village life. However, we do have several babies and toddlers in the village and it would be fantastic if a local nursery could be made attractive enough for them to continue their education here - with plenty of interaction with other schools that feed into Kinlochleven, as has always been the case. The new "Stay and Play" initiative (photo uploaded) is a really lovely idea and simple things like this would surely create good foundations for carrying on into a local Primary School.

If the school closes now, I fear it will never reopen and that would sound the death knell for our village.

I remain hopeful that the decision made will not be based on short term, possibly short-sighted thinking - rather, a future vision for a thriving, multi-generational rural community.

Yours Sincerely,

Jane Hartnell-Beavis

**Upload documents or letters :** Stay and Play.jpg

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** Parent of former pupils at the school

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Miss	Jane	Hartnell Beavis

**Address:**

<b>postcode search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
PA38 4DA	Kinbreac, Duror, PA38 4DA	Yes

I fully understand the Budgetary constraints on the Highland Council and the Education Department but I think the potential Closure of a Village School with such a strong aluminae is a devastating Social blow to a Highland Community;

I have lived in Appin for over 50 years and was a GP with a strong presence in the Duror/Kentallen Community watching generations of Children grow up and thrive in the School catchment area.

Attending a Community School gives young people a strong sense of belonging and confidence which they take forward in life enriching their Community; This is supported by the Stability that having dedicated Teachers in the Community bring as well as the Parents and Grandparents supporting the core of the Community. Duror has lost the Village Shop and Post Office in recent years and to lose the School would devastate the Area; I remember the School being threatened in the 70s and then an extension had to be built to accommodate the rising numbers of Pupils; This is the nature of Rural Communities; Denying that probability will mortally affect this proud, historic Community.

Sincerely

Dr.Iain McNicol, MBE  
Dunvegan, Port Appin , Argyll

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** Both my children raised through Duror Primary in recent years , both on the autistic spectrum and both benefited from the small school environment and close attention with community involvement. A school that understands and where everyone knows everyone was what they needed and what was provided . Without this school and with poor transport links in the village their education would have suffered and I am concerned that it would for others . The school should be considered to be adapted for those with additional learning needs perhaps where focus can be given on an individual basis if it is unable to be sustained in its current format . It is the heart of the village and loved by all there - my children have only reached their potential because of Duror primary

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** Former parent of children at school

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Rebecca	Bashir

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PH336BG	Beulah House, Fassifern Road, Fort William, PH33 6BG	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Discontinue provision of education at Duror Primary School

**Your comments:** Today Duror Primary School hosted the first (of what I hope will be many) Stay and Play sessions. In total eight pre-school aged children attended all from the local area and therefore potential future pupils. It would be such a shame to close the Primary School now when there will clearly be a real need for it in a few years time. Since moving to Duror a just over a year ago, I have come to know the lovely staff and pupils which are an absolute credit to that school. The school pupils helped out with session, making cups of tea for the parents and playing with the children. Parents who had not previously met despite living in the village were able to get to know each other. It's a lovely thing to be part of. If you take away the School you will be taking away a crucial asset to Duror, where parents and children can come together without having to travel for miles and miles. It would be so sad if I was unable to send my little boy there when the time comes in a few years. Please don't close Duror Primary School.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** User of the school's community facilities

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Megan	Dent

**Address:**

postcode search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
PA38 4DA	Bracken Bank, Duror, PA38 4DA	Yes

**PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL (SOUTH LOCHABER).**

**I OBJECT TO THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL.**

I am so fortunate to have been employed at Duror Village Primary School as general auxiliary/cleric for over 30 years. Over that time I have witnessed the first class education that is the provision of a local village school. It is a well known fact that pupils attending a local village school are provided with opportunities for social interaction with peers who live in the same area. This can help children build social skills and friendships that extend beyond the classroom. I fear this huge benefit would be lost if Duror Village School were to close and pupils were to attend a larger school outside their village of residence.

Families come and go within a community and although at this present time numbers of pupils attending the village school is at an all-time low I feel certain that families with children of primary school age will once again take up residence in the community in the near future.

A local building developer has informed the Duror & Kentallen Community Council of his intention to build 30 homes on a large area of land he has purchased in the centre of Duror village. I would envisage that of these 30 new homes many would be occupied by families with children of primary school age.

The facility of a village school is high on the list of priorities of prospective buyers of property or those seeking employment within the locality. Closure of the village school would be detrimental in that it would discourage new families with school age children moving into the area.

Youth is the very lifeblood of any community, the village school is very much an integral part of the structure of all communities. The retention of our village school is of the utmost importance as the provision of a primary education is undeniable.

Highland Council are far too premature with their suggestion to possibly close Duror Village School.

Duror Primary School is one of many schools across the Highlands that is committed to the Eco-School Programme. The pupils and staff regularly walk to and fro school on a daily basis whenever possible. Highland Council have indicated that they would provide a bus to transport pupils to/from Duror village to another school out with the village. A backward step in regard to the Eco- School Programme.

I formally request that The Highland Council take my objections into consideration when deciding on the proposal.

E M MacLachlan.

CC: Kate Forbes msp

Jenny Gilruth msp



# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School and reassign its catchment area to Ballachulish Primary School.**

May 2024

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School and reassign its catchment area to Ballachulish Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers. There are special provisions that apply to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area; and in the community;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 16 April 2024 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Duror Primary School and Ballachulish Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school(s), HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Duror Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The statutory consultation for the closure of Duror Primary School ran from 4 March to 3 May 2024. Copies of the proposal were made available online and at Duror Primary School. The proposal document was sent to relevant stakeholders, including parents and carers of Duror Primary School and Ballachulish Primary School, and local community councils. A public meeting was held on 16 April 2024. This was attended by 23 members of the public, including teachers from Duror Primary School. The council received 23 written submissions from local residents, almost all do not support the proposal. A few of these responses were from parents with children who live in or are moving to the area who disagree with the proposal to close the school. The council also gathered the views of the four children who attend Duror Primary School. All stated that they enjoy learning at the school.

## 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Duror Primary School is designated as a remote, rural school. The council predict that the school roll will fall from four to two children from August 2024. In November 2023, The Highland Council held an informal discussion with parents and staff about the future of the school, including mothballing the school on a temporary basis. The council also communicated the outcome of the discussion with parents to Duror and Kentallen Community Council. All stakeholders felt strongly that the school should remain open.

3.2 The council state that closing Duror Primary School may provide educational benefits. These include, improving pre-school to primary transition as there is a pre-school class at Ballachulish Primary School. That primary to secondary transition would likely be easier if children are able to move alongside friends from primary school. They also state that moving to a larger school would provide more opportunities for working with others. HM Inspectors agree that children benefit from having opportunities to play and learn alongside peers. HM Inspectors met with school staff. They stated that the cluster arrangements and single headteacher across Duror, Ballachulish, St Bride's and Glencoe Primary Schools works well to support learning. They believe that this provides a consistent approach to learning and teaching across all four schools. Staff are confident that children from Duror benefit sufficiently through shared learning experiences with their peers from across cluster schools. Overall, HM Inspectors agree that there can be challenges to providing education in a very small school. However, existing arrangements are addressing some of these challenges and that school size shouldn't be the only determining factor for considering closure.

3.3 HM Inspectors met with children, parents, community members and staff. Almost all stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors were not supportive of the council's proposal to close Duror Primary School. They expressed concern that closing the school would make the area less desirable for families to move to, resulting in a longer-term negative impact on the local community. They also note that children currently attending Duror Primary School have a very positive learning experience. They also have good access to local amenities which helps access to outdoor learning which could be extended across the cluster. Almost all stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors believe that, should the council proceed with the closure of Duror Primary School, the catchment area should be realigned to St Bride's Primary School rather than Ballachulish Primary School. They state that the historical boundary issues were resolved with the erection of the Ballachulish bridge. As a result, realignment to St Bride's Primary School would be better for those parents who need to commute. All children that met with HM Inspectors enjoy the learning in their current environment and value the experience to mix regularly with other children

within the school cluster. They are concerned that they would no longer have access to the woodland area behind the school and Cuil Bay which supports outdoor learning.

3.4 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. Most children are able to travel to school by foot or bicycle and appreciate the opportunities for outdoor learning with the natural resources of the surrounding area. Community members that met with HM Inspectors raised questions about the accuracy of the predicted pupil roll for Duror Primary School. They highlighted that there are seven families living within the Duror catchment area who have pre-school children. They also highlighted that land is secured and plans are in development to build 40 new houses within the current catchment area. Stakeholders are also concerned about the future use of the building. Parents and toddlers enjoy recently developed weekly 'play and stay' and 'bookbug' sessions at Duror Primary School and would be concerned if these would stop.

3.5 The council has assessed the effects of its proposal on children and the community. It has not identified any significant impacts from the closure of the school. Duror and Kentallen Community Council would like the council to liaise with the local community about the number of pre-school children in the current catchment. They also believe that the council should revisit its Equality Impact Assessment to consider the needs of those with protected characteristics. If the proposal is agreed the council should work with stakeholders to address their concerns.

3.6 During the consultation period consultees identified alleged inaccuracies in the proposal, including the condition rating of the school and pre-school provision within the school. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree with some, but not all, of the educational benefits outlined in the proposal. In the current context, the potential limitations of the small school roll could be mitigated by the cluster approach. Children, parents and staff state that joint working arrangements across the cluster are working well. They are providing valuable learning and teaching experiences for children to engage regularly with their peers from the other cluster schools. The council should engage more thoroughly with parents and members of the community, particularly around alternative options to the proposal. This should include consideration of the number of pre-school children living in the current catchment area, and an assessment of any planned housing developments. In preparing its consultation paper, it would be helpful if the council could outline the projected school roll of Duror Primary School. Should the council proceed with the proposal, it will be important to have further discussions with parents about the most appropriate change to the catchment area. A few consultees and stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors believe there are inaccuracies or omissions in the proposal document. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies or omissions notified to it.

**HM Inspectors**  
**May 2024**

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Ballachulish Primary School.**

### **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT**

#### **THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ballachulish Primary School.
- The Proposal considers other options in respect of the re-assignment of the catchment.
- The proposed change, if approved, will take place at the end of the school session following the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures. The earliest date is likely to be 3 July 2025, assuming the closure is approved.

### **SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS PUBLICATION INFORMATION**

#### **Proposal Paper Published**

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

Duror Primary School

and published on the Highland Council website:

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Area Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel

Fort William PH33 7NE

Email: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g., large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please contact The Area Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel, Fort William, PH33 7NE.

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Email: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents/carers of pupils attending Duror Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) Parents/carers of pupils attending Ballachulish Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (iii) The Parent Council of St. Bride's Primary School
- (iv) The Parent Council of Glencoe Primary School
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (vi) Staff of Duror School.
- (vii) Staff of Ballachulish Primary School
- (viii) Duror and Kentallen Community Council
- (ix) Ballachulish Community Council
- (x) Trade Union representatives.

### **Advertisement in Local Media**

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the local press and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

### **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 4 March 2024 and will end on 3 May 2024. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

### **Public Meeting**

A public meeting will be held at 6.30pm on 19 March 2024 at Duror Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

### **Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

School staff will arrange to discuss the proposal with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. Questions, responses and views

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will be taken down and the results published in the Consultation Report.

### **Responses to the Proposals**

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Area Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel. Fort William PH33 7NE

Email: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

Or via an online form, to be found at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, 3 May 2024 at 5.00pm.

### **Involvement of Education Scotland**

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 13 May 2024, a copy of any written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 31 May 2024. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

### **Review of Consultation Exercise**

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website and at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council’s considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Education Committee of Highland Council, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

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At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in October 2024, prior to submission to the Education Committee in November 2024. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved at the Education Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

As the proposal involves the closure of a school, Highland Council would be required to notify Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers would have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. Within the first three weeks of that eight-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person.

### **Note on Corrections**

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised.

## DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

### Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Duror Primary School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the school is classed as "remote rural") and the Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the special regard required for rural school closures. The Council has considered the school roll projections for Duror PS, taking into account the current pattern of enrolments, has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 7-10 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 15 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Duror catchment (Section 13 below).

### Reasons for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - The roll of Duror Primary School is expected to fall to two pupils in August 2024.
  - The Highland Council is of the view that a roll of two pupils provides barriers to education, and that closing Duror PS could provide educational benefits to the pupils.
  - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 An informal discussion with current parents, about the future of the school, was held on 1 November 2023, and was followed up with an email informing Duror and Kentallen Community Council on 2 November.
- 2.3 A note of the discussion with parents can be found at **Appendix B**. The email exchange with the Community Council is at **Appendix Bi**.
- 3.1 Duror Primary School is at the southern edge of the Highland Council area, a few miles from the local authority boundary with Argyll and Bute Council. It serves the two small communities of Duror and Kentallen. The school lies just off the A828 trunk road between Fort William and Oban, and is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government. The original building was created in 1877. It's a small school with two main rooms. There is no pre-school provision at the school.
- 3.2 The school is managed as part of a "cluster" with 3 other schools, Ballachulish Primary, St. Bride's Primary, Onich, and Glencoe Primary.
- 3.3 As of the date of writing (January 2024) the total roll is four pupils, but this is expected to fall to two in August 2024.
- 3.4 There has never been a pre-school class at Duror PS. At one time there was pre-school provision in the community, operated by a private sector partner company from the local community hall. However this facility ceased operation some years ago. In recent years the nursery classes at either Ballachulish Primary School or St. Bride's Primary School have been available for pre-school

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children from the Duror PS catchment.

- 3.5 The school has a registered permanent capacity of 25, based on the availability of one classroom plus a GP room. The projected roll of two for August 2024 would therefore represent 8% use of capacity.
- 3.6 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, in line with the Scottish Government's School Estate Management guidelines. Schools are assessed on a scale with the ratings "A" (good) "B" (satisfactory), "C" (poor) and "D" (bad). Duror Primary School is rated as "C" for the educational suitability of the building and "C" for building condition.
- 3.7 In the last two school sessions, there have been 3 placing requests to leave Duror PS, and none to join.
- 3.8 The school was last inspected in 2019 when it was rated "weak" for learning, teaching and assessment and "unsatisfactory" for raising attainment and achievement. A follow-up inspection in 2022 noted that the school and cluster now had a new Head Teacher and Principal Teacher who had made a significant impact on the school. Together with staff, they had made very good progress in improving the school and addressing gaps in learning due to COVID-19.
- 3.9 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions from the Duror Primary School building are estimated at just over 4 tonnes.

### **Current Details – Ballachulish Primary School**

- 4.1 This school has been in existence since the late 1800s. The current school has three main classrooms and an external classroom. The ELC (nursery) has a separate playroom, garden and entrance. The children across the ELC and school have access to a large gym hall which doubles as a dining hall and assembly hall. The children attending the school are mainly from Ballachulish village and nearby areas. It is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government.
- 4.2 The 2023-24 roll is 32 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 17 children enrolled for the nursery class.
- 4.3 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 75. The 2022-23 roll of 32 therefore represents 43% use of capacity.
- 4.4 The present Ballachulish Primary School building is rated as "C" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 4.5 In the last 2 school sessions, there were 15 placing requests to leave Ballachulish Primary School, and 2 requests to join.
- 4.6 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 4.7 Annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from Ballachulish Primary School building from April 2022 to March 2023 were just under 29 tonnes. This figure would not be significantly affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

### **Current Details – St. Bride's Primary School**

- 5.1 St. Bride's Primary School is classed by the Scottish Government as an "accessible rural" school. The catchment area extends from the Ballachulish Bridge to Corrychurrachan, and along the north side of Loch Leven towards Kinlochleven.
- 5.2 The school building contains two classrooms and a nursery extension opened in 2007. There is a large school garden area, large grass area with planted tubs

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and a MUGA (multi-use games area) play area.

- 5.3 The 2022-23 roll is 28 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 15 children enrolled in the nursery class.
- 5.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 50. The 2022- 23 roll of 28 therefore represents 56% use of capacity.
- 5.5 The St. Bride's Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 5.6 In the five school sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there was 1 placing request to leave St. Bride's Primary School, and 8 to join.
- 5.7 The school was inspected in June 2023 and was rated "good" for learning, teaching and assessment and "good" for raising attainment and achievement.
- 5.8 Annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from St. Bride's Primary School building from April 2020 to March 2021 were just under 18 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

### **Current Details – Glencoe Primary School**

- 6.1 The present Glencoe Primary was formed in the late 1960s through a merger of two previous schools. It has an extensive catchment area extending from Glencoe Village to beyond the Kingshouse Hotel to the Highland Council boundary near Loch Tulla, and also to the foot of Glen Etive, a distance of around 21 miles from the school. Within the building are two large classrooms. The larger room doubles with the Dining Room by means of a sliding partition to form an extensive General Purposes area for drama, concerts, etc. The foyer area has a library area and an area for small group work. P.E. is held in the Glencoe Village Hall. Pupils walk to the Hall for lessons. There is no ELC facility. The school does have a purpose-built outdoor classroom with school garden, polytunnel etc. It is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government.
- 6.2 The 2023-24 roll is 22 pupils within P1-7.
- 6.3 The school has a registered capacity of 50. The 2023-24 roll of 22 therefore represents 44% use of capacity.
- 6.4 The present Glencoe Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 6.5 In the last 2 school sessions, there was 1 placing request to leave Glencoe Primary School, and 7 requests to join.
- 6.6 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 6.7 Annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from Glencoe Primary School building from April 2022 to March 2023 were just over 10 tonnes. This figure would not be significantly affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

### **Examination of Alternatives**

- 7.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must give due consideration of alternative courses of action that could be considered. The following reasonable alternatives to closure have been considered:
  - i. The Status Quo.
  - ii. To mothball Duror PS
  - iii. To expand the catchment area of Duror PS

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7.2 The detail of the Council's consideration of the reasonable alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and its appendices.

### **Option 1 – The Status Quo**

- 8.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the status quo, the very low number of children attending Duror PS indicates strongly that the school is no longer viable. This issue is explored further in Section 11 below.
- 8.2 There are no forecast housing deliveries in the most up to date Housing Land Audit (which contains sites of 4 or more either with planning permission or housing land allocations). In the last 5 years, permissions for 12 houses on sites of 1-3 units have been permitted in the catchment area.

### **Option 2 – Mothball Duror PS**

- 9.1 The possibility of mothballing Duror PS an alternative to closure was discussed with the parents of Duror PS but was strongly opposed by them. Statutory Guidance to the 2010 Act suggests that decisions on mothballing should be taken in consultation with the parents involved and if the majority of parents oppose mothballing, it would be appropriate to move to statutory consultation on closure as soon as possible.

### **Option 3 - Re-Opening of Duror Primary School with an expanded Catchment Area**

- 10.1 The southern edge of the school's catchment area abuts the Council boundary between Highland, and Argyll and Bute, so there is no realistic prospect of a change to that aspect of the school catchment.
- 10.2 The only Highland school with which Duror PS shares a catchment boundary is Ballachulish PS. The area of Glenachulish, in the Ballachulish PS catchment, is located approximately 3 miles, (8 minutes travel time) from Ballachulish and 5 miles (10 minutes) from Duror PS. An analysis of the addresses of pupils currently attending Ballachulish PS and pre-school class indicates that moving Glenachulish into the Duror PS catchment would have no effect on the roll at Duror PS.
- 10.3 Taking all of the above into account, the Council's review suggests there would be no merit in altering the catchment boundary of Ballachulish PS, in favour of Duror PS
- 10.4 Altering the catchment of Ballachulish PS in favour of Duror would of course require a statutory consultation in its own right.

### **Educational Benefits**

- 11.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.
- 11.2 Highland Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing its' school estate:
- Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
  - Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
  - Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama

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and art.

- Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
- Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural council area such as Highland.
- School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
- School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
- Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
- Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
- The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
- Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built-up community.

- 11.3 As mentioned above, evidence gathered by Highland Council to date suggests that there is no realistic prospect of a viable roll at Duror PS. Currently there are four pupils attending the school, with the roll expected to fall to two in August 2024. It is the Council's view that there are educational disadvantages to attending school with one other pupil.
- 11.4 Currently, Duror Primary School is managed by a single Head Teacher as part of a "cluster" arrangement, with four schools overall – Ballachulish, St. Bride's and Glencoe being the other three. There is thus a commonality of approach to learning and teaching within the four cluster schools.
- 11.5 Children at the other cluster schools regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of Duror PS from August 2024 would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static, since there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. A very small roll would also limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.
- 11.6 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 11.7 The existence of pre-school classes at Ballachulish PS, and St. Bride's PS enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 11.8 Similarly, moving into high school from a primary school with a roll of two creates additional pressures in respect of transition. It is likely any child would be the only one from their primary school joining high school that year.

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- 11.9 The language programmes at Ballachulish PS, St. Bride's PS, and Glencoe PS, aim to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills. Listening is developed by games, stories, radio & television programmes, music, and use of ICT. The school aims to develop fluency and clarity of expression and to extend vocabulary. Talking is developed by role playing, interviewing etc. The emphasis is on oral work and role play. In all cases, working with others plays an important role.
- 11.10 It is self-evident that an overall school roll of two restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in neighbouring schools, that in itself involves time out of school in travelling.
- 11.11 As with sports, the larger rolls at the neighbouring cluster schools provides a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of group musical and artistic opportunities, events that are more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers.
- 11.12 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 is 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.
- 11.13 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Duror Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at any of the other schools in the cluster. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities, and socialisation, can all benefit from the greater numbers that are available in other local schools. Overall, the opportunities provided by the larger numbers at Ballachulish, St. Bride's, or Glencoe would allow access to a fuller and more consistent curriculum.

### Re-allocation of Duror PS Catchment

- 12.1 A map of the current Duror PS catchment is **Appendix C**.
- 12.2 Paragraph 8.2 above highlighted that Ballachulish PS is the only Highland school with which Duror PS shares a catchment boundary. This provides a strong argument for re-allocating the Duror PS catchment to that of Ballachulish PS, in the event that Duror PS was to close. A map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix Ci**.
- 12.3 During informal discussions with parents, suggestions were made that the Duror catchment should be re-allocated to that of either St. Bride's PS or Glencoe PS, in the event that Duror Primary was closed.
- 12.4 Either of the above options would have the disadvantage of creating a primary school catchment with an exclave – see the maps at **Appendices Cii and Ciii**. In the case of St. Bride's PS, it might be possible to amend the Ballachulish PS catchment to transfer Glenachulish into the new St. Bride's catchment, thereby creating a more geographically coherent catchment. However, this would require a statutory consultation on changing the Ballachulish PS catchment.
- 12.5 The three schools are located close together, so the differences in travel time would be trivial. However, it should be noted, that re-zoning the Duror PS

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catchment to that of Glencoe PS, would require Duror pupils to travel past Ballachulish PS on their way to Glencoe.

- 12.6 Taking the above into account, Highland Council proposes that the Duror PS catchment should be transferred entirely to that of Ballachulish Primary School, in the event the closure of Duror is approved. The Council would however welcome views on this aspect of the proposal.

### **Effect of Differing Transport Arrangements**

- 13.1 The travel distance and time between Duror PS and Ballachulish PS is approximately 8 miles/14 minutes (source: Google Maps). The comparative figures would be approximately 7 miles/11 minutes to St. Bride's PS and 9 miles/13 minutes to Glencoe PS. All these figures are well within the normal range for school travel in the Highland Council area. The schools, and the routes between them, are all located on the coast and only rarely affected by winter weather.
- 13.2 Given the distances involved, any additional CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions arising from transport would be negligible and would in any case be set against the annual emissions of around 4 tonnes that could be expected from the Duror Primary School building itself were it operational.

### **Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

- 14.1 As mentioned above, Duror PS is currently managed as part of a 4-school cluster. In the event that the school closed, the Head Teacher and cluster Principal Teacher posts would be unaffected, as they would continue with managing the remaining 3 schools in the cluster.
- 14.2 The school also has a class teacher, part-time clerical assistant, and part-time cleaner, whose posts would be affected by closure. The staff affected would be eligible for redeployment in line with Council policy. Staff would be eligible for transfer into any vacant posts within reasonable travel distance.

### **Effect on the Local Community**

- 15.1 The community of Duror and Kentallen has a good-sized Community Centre, which appears to be well-used. Facilities include a large open hall with a stage, a small hall set out in a café style, a good size kitchen with modern appliances, plus male, female and accessible toilets. Outside facilities include a playing field, a children's play area, and BBQ facilities with picnic benches. There is free parking directly outside the hall, with accessible access into and throughout the building.
- 15.2 Subject to the Council not having any operational need for the building, Highland Council would be keen to work with the local community over the future use of the Duror School building and site. Any such proposal would however have to be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management arrangements.

### **Financial Consequences**

- 16.1 The Table at **Appendix D** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 17.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality

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areas:

- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Looked After Children
- Young Carers
- Children and Young People Living in Deprivation

17.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to a primary school and as such primarily affects children in the 3-12 age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit to the children in the area concerned. No negative age-related effects arise. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of school provision.

### **Rural Impact Assessment**

- 18.1 Duror PS is classed by the Scottish Government as a “remote rural” school, as are Ballachulish PS and Glencoe PS. St. Bride’s PS is classed as an “accessible rural” school, as it is a few miles closer to Fort William.
- 18.2 The relocation of service would involve moving local school provision from Duror to Ballachulish, a distance of 8 miles.
- 18.3 As set out in Section 11 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.
- 18.4 The additional travel time for school pupils from the Duror PS site to Ballachulish PS is 14 minutes (source: Google Maps). As school transport is provided by the Council, the proposal would not be expected to have any impact on accessibility to education or on fuel poverty.

### **Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

- 19.1 The main adverse effect from the Proposal is the additional journey time for pupils who live within the Duror PS catchment area. The journey time is however well within the normal range for pupils living in Highland. Funded school transport would be provided to all children of school age.

### **Recommendation**

- 20.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Duror Primary School is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Ballachulish Primary School.
- 20.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority’s procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education Committee of the Highland Council.

**END OF PROPOSAL PAPER**

Appendix A

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

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

**Sent:** 02 November 2023 10:29

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

**Cc:** Sarah Fanet (Councillor) <[Sarah.Fanet.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Fanet.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Angus MacDonald (Councillor) <[Angus.MacDonald.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Angus.MacDonald.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Thomas MacLennan (Councillor) <[thomas.maclennan.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.maclennan.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Kate Willis (Councillor) <[kate.willis.cllr@highland.gov.uk](mailto:kate.willis.cllr@highland.gov.uk)>; Dot Ferguson (Community Support & Ward Management) <[Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk)>; Malcolm McGregor (Duror & Glencoe & St Bride's & Ballachulish) <[Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk)>; Jean MacKinnon (Workforce Planning) <[Jean.MacKinnon@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Jean.MacKinnon@highland.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Future of Duror Primary School

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Future action would be for discussion within the Council.

**Copy of Email correspondence between Highland Council and Duror and Kentallen Community Council – November 2023**

Dear Audra

Thanks for the feedback, which will assist the HC in coming to a view about the future of the school.

As mentioned, should a formal closure proposal be made, the Community Council would be a statutory consultee.

Ian Jackson  
Education Officer  
Highland Council  
07435 982557

**From:** Info DKCC <[dkccinfo@gmail.com](mailto:dkccinfo@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 16, 2023 8:29 AM  
**To:** Ian Jackson (Resources) <[ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Anne MacPherson (Resources) <[Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk)>; Dot Ferguson (Community Support & Ward Management) <[Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk)>; Malcolm McGregor (Duror & Glencoe & St Bride's & Ballachulish) <[Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk)>; Mhairi MacDonald (Area Education West) <[Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Future of Duror PS

**CAUTION:** This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Ian

Following the DKCC meeting on Monday night I wanted to inform you that the community council would insist the Duror school remains open.

Kind regards  
Audra Sheffield  
Secretary, Duror and Kentallen Community Council

On Thu, 2 Nov 2023 at 11:31, Ian Jackson (Resources) <[ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk)> wrote:

Dear Secretary/Chairperson

I am writing to update you on some informal discussions that were held yesterday with parents and staff at Duror PS, concerning the future of the school. The roll of the school has recently fallen to four pupils, two of whom are in P7. In August 2024 the school is expected to have only two pupils.

I met with parents and staff to advise that Highland Council sees a number of educational disadvantages to a school with two pupils, and to find out how parents felt about the roll falling so

low. We discussed the possibility of “mothballing” the school – closing the school on a temporary basis, to see whether the roll might recover.

Parents and staff were opposed to mothballing and were of the view that the school should remain open.

I was grateful to hear the views of parents, and advised that the Council would consider the issue further. It is *possible* that we may formally consult on a proposal to close the school, but the decision to launch such a consultation would be subject to approval by the Council’s Education Committee, as indeed would any decision taken following consultation. In addition, all school closures in Scotland must be ratified by Scottish Ministers.

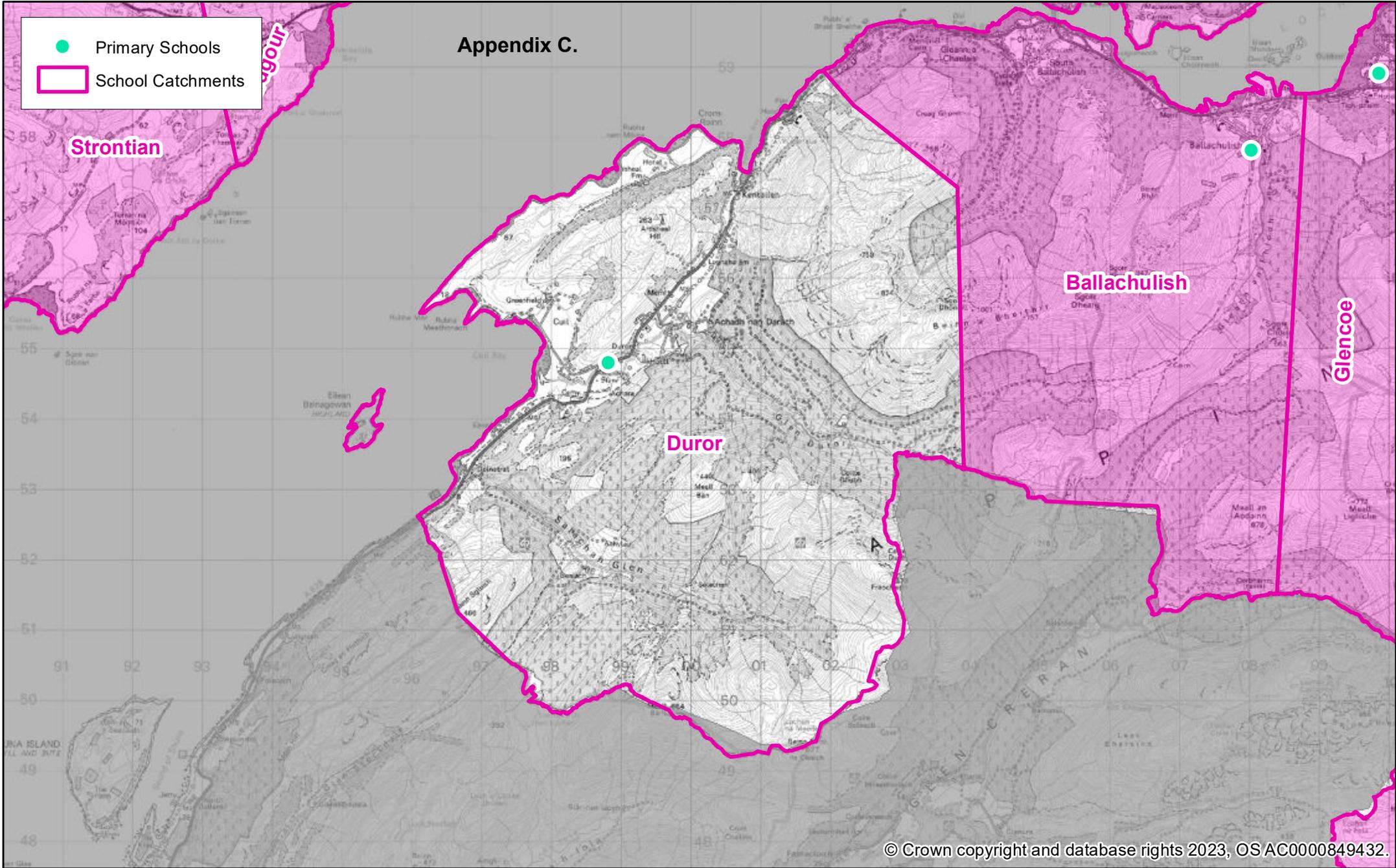
If a consultation on closing the school were to take place, the Community Council would be a statutory consultee.

I would stress however, that no decisions have yet been taken on whether to conduct such a consultation.

Please contact me if you have any queries about the above.

Appendix C.

-  Primary Schools
-  School Catchments



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Ref: gis2850  
Date: Dec2023

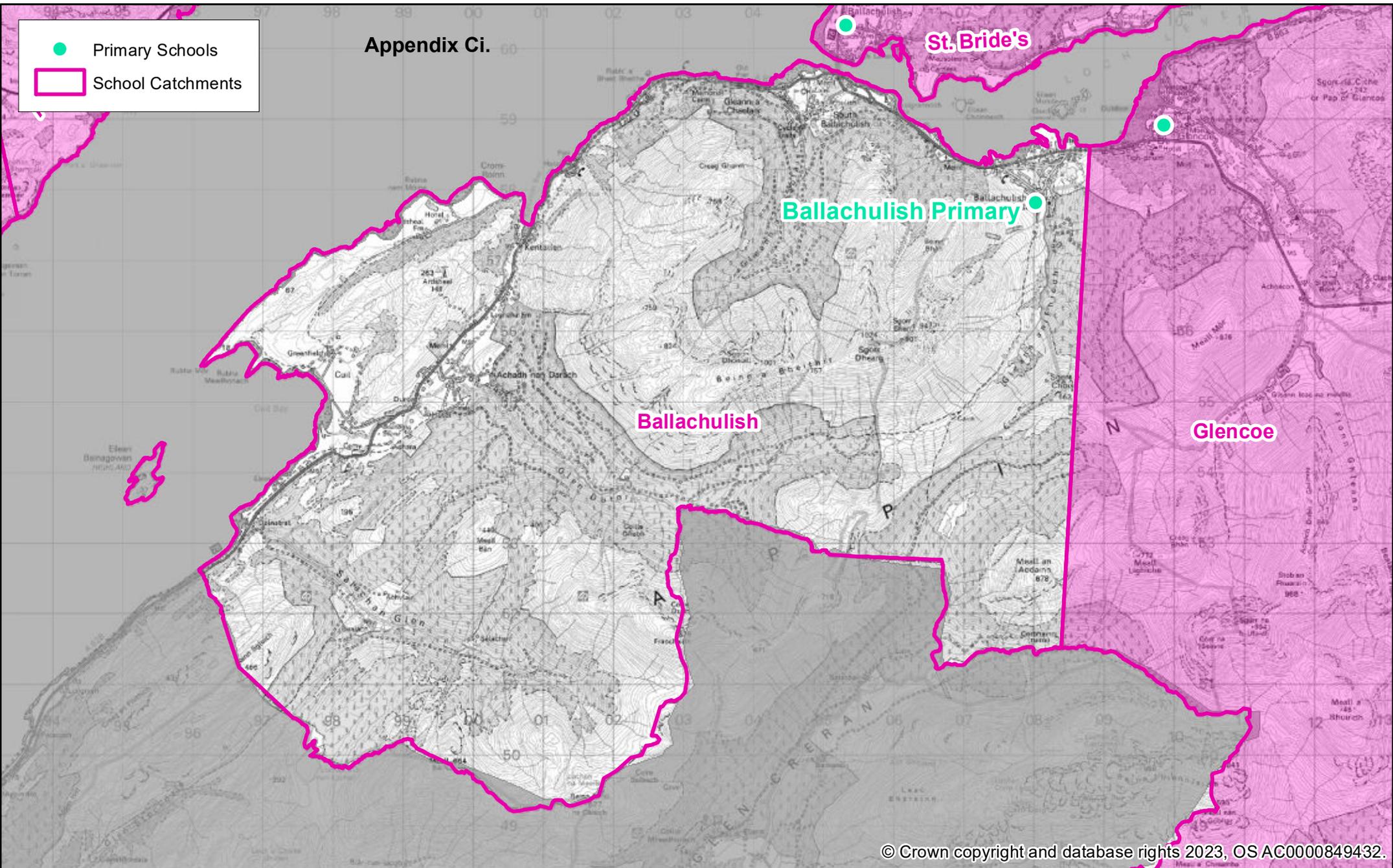
# Duror Primary School Existing Catchment

N  
1:70,000



Appendix Ci.

- Primary Schools
- ▭ School Catchments



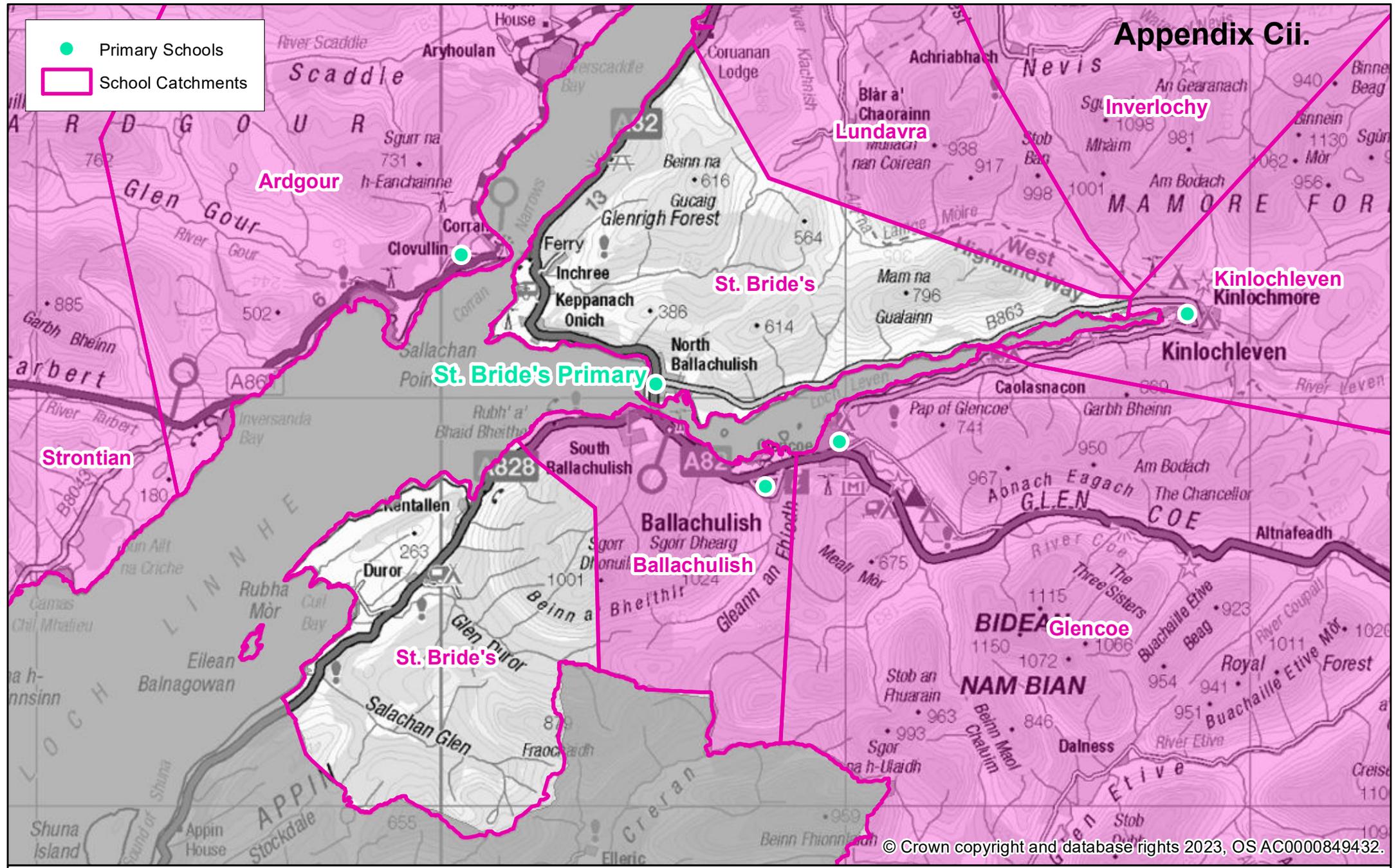
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# Duror Merged with Ballachulish Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2850  
Date: Dec2023



- Primary Schools
- ▭ School Catchments



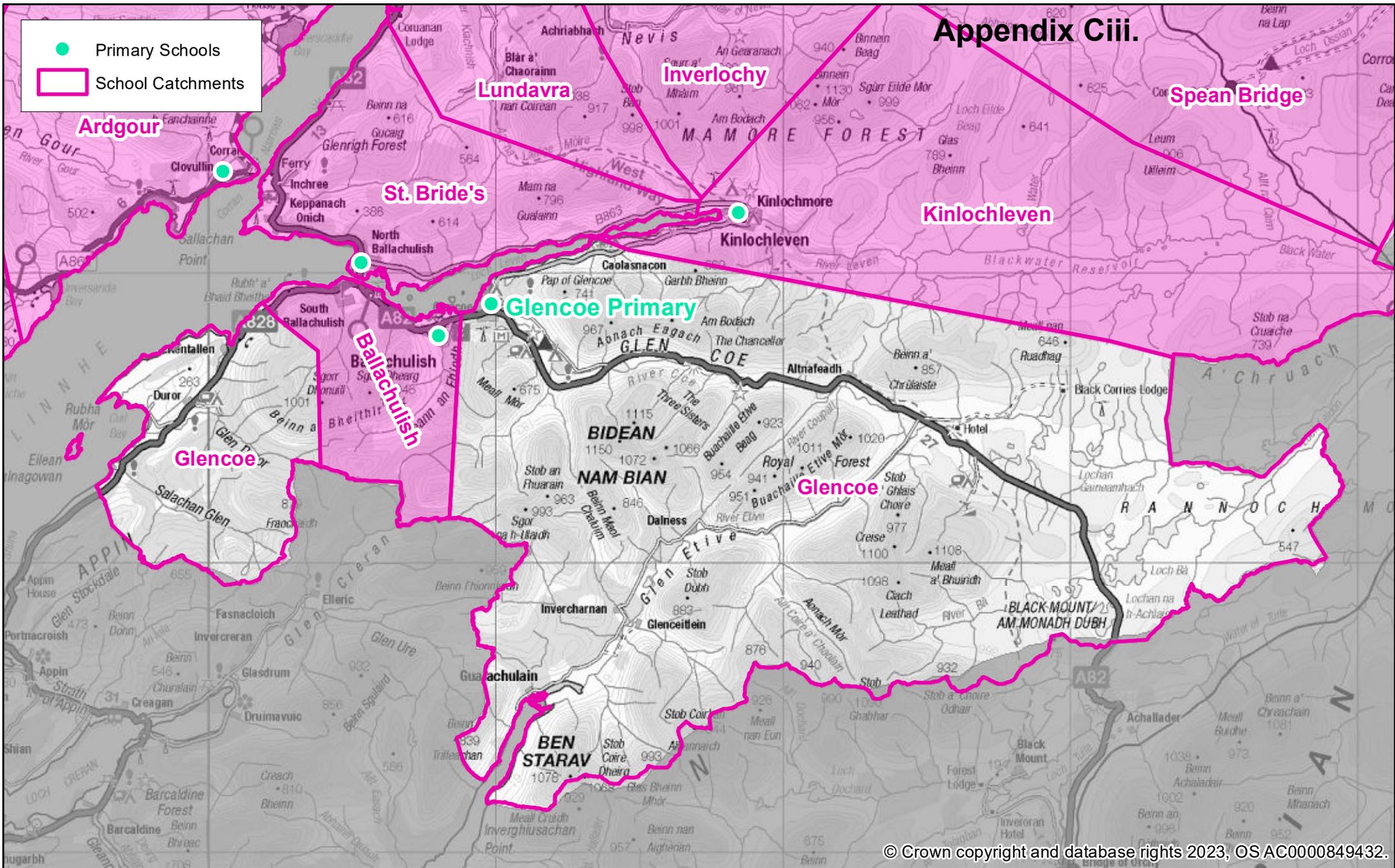
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# Duror Merged with St. Bride's Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2850  
Date: Dec2023

N  
1:120,000





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Ref: gis2850  
Date: Dec2023

# Duror Merged with Glencoe Primary School Catchment

N  
1:170,000



## Appendix D.

### Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	<b>Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure</b>			
	<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)</b>	<b>Additional financial impact on receiving school Ballachulish Primary School</b>	<b>Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)</b>
Row 2	Duror Primary School			
Row 3	<b>School costs</b>			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 5	teaching staff	99,422	21,920	77,502
Row 6	support staff	10,033	-	10,033
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	263	13	250
Row 8	support staff training	-	-	-
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	4,082	-	4,082
Row 10				
Row 11	<i>Building costs:</i>			
Row 12	property insurance	298	-	298
Row 13	non domestic rates	-	-	-
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	1,099	-	1,099
Row 15	energy costs	3,392	-	3,392
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,525	-	4,525
Row 17	building repair & maintenance	115	40	75
Row 18	grounds maintenance	-	-	-
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	-	-	-
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital	-	-	-
Row 21	other	-	-	-
Row 22				
Row 23	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials	1,494	389	1,105
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	15,184	1,375	13,809
Row 26	SQA costs	-	-	-
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	923	-	923
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
Row 30	home to school	-	11,400	- 11,400
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	-	-	-
Row 32	staff travel	344	-	344
Row 33	<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>141,174</b>	<b>35,137</b>	<b>106,037</b>
Row 34				
Row 35	<i>Income:</i>			
Row 36	Sale of meals	-	-	-
Row 37	Lets	-	-	-
Row 38	External care provider	-	-	-
Row 39	Other	-	-	-
Row 40	<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Row 41				
Row 42	<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL</b>	<b>141,174</b>	<b>35,137</b>	<b>106,037</b>
Row 43				
Row 44	<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>141,174</b>	<b>35,137</b>	<b>106,037</b>

Table 2	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
	<b>Capital costs</b>	<b>School proposed for closure</b>	<b>Receiving school</b>
	Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7		
	Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3 Annual Property costs incurred until disposal	
property insurance	298
non domestic rates	-
water & sewerage charges	-
energy costs	-
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	-
security costs	-
building repair & maintenance	115
grounds maintenance	-
facilities management costs	-
other	-
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	<b>413</b>

Table 4 Non-recurring revenue costs	
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	

Table 5 Impact on GAE - note 5	
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	<b>0</b>