

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	EDU/5/25

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Education

**Date:** 26 February 2025

**Report Title:** Statutory Consultation: Closure of Badcaul 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 Badcaul Primary School, which has been "mothballed" since January 2022.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree to recommend that the Highland Council discontinues education at Badcaul Primary School, transferring its catchment to that of Ullapool Primary School. Badcaul Primary has not been operational since January 2022, and a closure decision would formalise the current operational situation.

## 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 - The proposed closure would have no effect on Gaelic Medium Education (GME) which was not offered at Badcaul Primary School prior to the school being mothballed. GME is offered at Ullapool Primary School. Pupils from the Badcaul

Primary School catchment were able to opt for GME at Ullapool Primary School prior to Badcaul being mothballed.

#### 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 13 December 2024. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that, as the school has been mothballed for more than 3 years, permanent closure will not alter the situation on the ground, and that there will thus be no significant impacts. 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>No impact</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 impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>No impact</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>No 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 There were 24 written responses from pupils of Ullapool Primary. Fourteen of the pupils who responded thought Badcaul should be permanently closed. Six others thought mothballing should continue and four that Badcaul Primary should re-open. The detailed comments from pupils can be viewed at **Appendix 3xv** and **3xvi**.

- 5.3 There were 16 written responses received from other stakeholders. All the respondents opposed the proposed closure due to the effect on the community, and suggested the school should continue to be mothballed. All but one of the responses came from local residents, rather than parents of primary age children from within the catchment.
- 5.4 The public meeting was reasonably well-attended, given the small size of the local community. Once again though there were no parents of primary age or pre-school children in attendance. Amongst those who were there, there was an acceptance that the school could not realistically re-open at present, but also a desire to see a continuation of mothballing, to allow more time for the new families to move into the area.
- 5.5 In their report, Education Scotland agree with the Council's reasons for the proposal to permanently close Badcaul Primary School. Numbers attending the school prior to mothballing were very small. At the time of mothballing, parents decided that Ullapool Primary School would provide a more rounded educational experience for their children. The provision of stronger transitions from pre-school to primary school and the availability of GME are also beneficial.

Education Scotland further noted that overall, parents and children were mostly in favour of the proposal. Children attending Ullapool Primary School enjoy their learning and feel that they have a positive experience with lots of opportunities. However, they expressed sadness at the loss of a village school. The report noted that the children who have moved to Ullapool Primary School have settled well and are enjoying their learning. The lack of primary school age children in the Badcaul area means that the re-opening of the primary school is unlikely. Continued mothballing of the school building will incur additional costs for the Council and ongoing uncertainty for local residents. However, the Council should continue to engage with local people in Badcaul and the surrounding areas due to the strength of feeling about the loss of the school building.

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 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 28 January 2025. Any further representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.
- 6.2 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 Committee 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 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

Background Papers:

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-4xviii – Copies of individual responses  
 Appendix 5 – Education Scotland Report  
 Appendix A – Original Proposal Paper  
 Appendix B Map of proposed Combined Badcaul PS/Ullapool PS  
 catchment  
 Appendix Bi Existing Badcaul PS catchment  
 Appendix Bii Existing Ullapool PS catchment  
 Appendix C School Roll Forecasts – Ullapool Associated School  
 Group  
 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 Badcaul Primary School

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

**Who may be affected by the proposal?** The community of Badcaul in Wester Ross

**Start date of proposal:** 01/06/2024

**End date of proposal:** 21/05/2025

**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, Place

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

**Provide details of the existing proposal:** Consultation on the Closure of Badcaul PS, approved at Education Committee on 1 June 2024

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## Author details

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**Service:** People

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**Sign off date:** 2025-01-27

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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 permanent closure of a school which has been temporarily closed since January 2022. There are thus no direct impacts on children, who will continue with their current education. Furthermore, 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:** No impact

**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?** No impact

**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?** As the school is already mothballed, there will be no impact on existing children.

**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 within the Badcaul PS catchment 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?**

## **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?** Yes

**How could the impact differ?** There is no impact on the community and families at present, as the proposal formalises the existing de facto position. Implementing the proposal will mean that children in the area have further to travel to school than they did prior to January 2022.

**Have any negative impacts been identified?** Yes

**Provide details of negative impacts, mitigating actions and the service that is responsible for them:** There are no negative impacts as compared with the current de facto position with Badcaul School. There are negative impacts when compared with the de jure position. The latter relate to the travel time for children to school.

## 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)?** No

**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:** At present 3 children are travelling to Ullapool Primary, who would not have to do so if Badcaul Primary re-opened. However, travel is on a pre-existing bus service.

## 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 BADCAUL PRIMARY SCHOOL, RE-ASSIGNING ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO THAT OF ULLAPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

- To discontinue education provision at Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ullapool 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 Badcaul Church of Scotland on 10 September 2024
- The report from Education Scotland.

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

## CONTENTS

1.0 Background

2.0 Consultation process

3.0 Review of the proposals following the consultation period

4.0 Responses received

5.0 Overview of Issues Raised During the Consultation Period

6.0 Summary of issues raised during the consultation period, and Highland Council's responses

- 7.0 Summary of issues raised by Education Scotland, and Highland Council's responses
- 8.0 Effects on the Community
- 9.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies
- 10.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure
- 11.0 Procedure for Ministerial Call-in
- 12.0 Legal issues
- 13.0 Financial implications
- 14.0 Integrated Impact Assessment
- 15.0 Effects on School Transport
- 16.0 Mitigation of Adverse Effects
- 17.0 Conclusion
- 18.0 Recommendation

Appendices:

<b>Appendix 2</b>	Minute of public meeting held on 10 September 2024
<b>Appendix 3</b>	List of written submissions
<b>Appendix 3i-3xviii</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>	Map of proposed Combined Badcaul PS/Ullapool PS catchment
<b>Appendix Bi</b>	Existing Badcaul PS catchment
<b>Appendix Bii</b>	Existing Ullapool PS catchment
<b>Appendix C</b>	School Roll Forecasts – Ullapool Associated School Group
<b>Appendix D</b>	Financial Analysis

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education Committee, at its meeting on 30 May 2024, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment to that of Ullapool Primary School.
- 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 Badcaul Primary School has been mothballed since January 2022, when the remaining pupils transferred to Ullapool Primary School.
- 1.4 Having once again reviewed the status of Badcaul Primary, it is the Council's view that there is an insufficient number of children of suitable age in the Badcaul catchment, who wish to attend Badcaul Primary School, and that consequently the school is no longer viable. Further details on this are provided in Sections 6 and 10 below.
- 1.5 Badcaul 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 6-10 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 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 13 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and is further considered at Sections 6, 8 and 10 below, in the light of 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 11 of the Proposal Paper, (**Appendix A**) and reconsidered 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 26 August 2024 to Friday 11 October 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 Ullapool Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
  - (ii) The Parent Councils of Ullapool Primary School, Ullapool High School, Bualnaluib Primary School, Scoraig Primary School, and Gairloch High School.
  - (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
  - (iv) Staff of Ullapool Primary School
  - (v) Lochbroom Community Council
  - (vi) Aultbea Community Council
  - (vii) Trade Union representatives.

- 2.3 The proposal document was also advertised on the Highland Council website.
- 2.4 A public meeting was held at Badcaul Church of Scotland on 10 September 2024. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website, X Account and Facebook page, and in the *Ross-shire Journal* and the *Ullapool News*. 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 14 written responses (not including the pupil questionnaires). Copies of the responses can be found at Appendices 3i-3xiv.
- 4.2 The views of pupils of a suitable age at Ullapool Primary School (which included the pupils living within the Badcaul catchment area) were sought by means of an age adapted questionnaire. Appendix 3xv-3xvi summarises their views, which are also discussed at Section 5 below.

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

- 5.1 There were 24 written responses from pupils of Ullapool Primary. Fourteen of the pupils who responded thought Badcaul should be permanently closed. Six others thought mothballing should continue and four that Badcaul Primary should re-open. The detailed comments from pupils can be viewed at Appendix 3xv and 3xvi.
- 5.2 HM Inspectors visited Ullapool Primary School and Ullapool High School and had discussions with parents, staff and children. There were mixed views about the proposal, but overall, parents and children were mostly in favour. Children attending Ullapool Primary School enjoy their learning and feel that they have a positive experience with lots of opportunities. However, they expressed sadness at the loss of a village school.
- 5.3 The arguments advanced by the pupils in favour of re-opening the school, are set out at Issues 1-3 below, together with arguments put forward in support of closure.

- 5.4 There were 16 written responses received from other stakeholders. One of the respondents added further information after the end of the consultation period. All the respondents opposed the proposed closure due to the effect on the community, and suggested the school should continue to be mothballed. Only one of the responses came from a parent of primary age children from within the catchment. One other response came from a parent with a pre-school child, who plans to move to the area in 2026 and whose child would be eligible for P1 in 2028 (a further response was submitted by a grandparent of the same child).
- 5.5 The public meeting was reasonably well-attended, given the small size of the local community. Once again though there were no parents of primary age or pre-school children in attendance. Amongst those who were there, there was an acceptance that the school could not realistically re-open at present, but also a desire to see a continuation of mothballing, to allow more time for the new families to move into the area.
- 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 in favour of re-opening are set out at Issues 1-3 below, and addressed at Responses 1-3.

### Issue 1

Badcaul is a good school. I would like to go back.

### Response 1

Badcaul was a good school, but the Council don't think there are enough children in the area to keep a school going.

### Issue 2

Some families may not have time to get to Ullapool.

The school should re-open so families don't have to drive or get the bus with no parents.

### Response 2

The Council provides a bus for children of school age to travel to Ullapool, although it's true children have to get the bus without parents travelling with them.

### Issue 3

Opening Badcaul again would encourage more people to the area.



**Response 3**

The Council doesn't think enough people will come to make a difference to the school.

- 6.2 Arguments advanced by the children in favour of continuing to mothball Badcaul Primary School are set out at Issue 4 below, and addressed at Response 4.

**Issue 4**

New families might want to stay in Badcaul and going on the bus every day will be really hard.

We might get more families.

If you close the school it will be a very long journey for little ones.

**Response 4**

It is a long journey for infants, but there just aren't enough children in the area, and we don't think there will be in future.

- 6.3 Arguments advanced by the children in favour of closing Badcaul Primary School are set out at Issue 5 below, and addressed at Response 5.

**Issue 5**

It would be good for Ullapool Primary to get more children and more staff.

You can make more friends.

It's nice to have more friends.

There would be more friends to play football with.

There are not many kids in the area and a lot of old people.

People in Badcaul have to come to Ullapool for High School. They could get used to the journey and get to know the friends they will have in High School.

**Response 5**

The Council agrees with these comments.

- 6.4 The arguments advanced in written responses are set out at Issues 6-14 below and addressed at Responses 6-14. Where different responses raise similar concerns, these have, to an extent, been combined as a single issue.

6.5 In general, the written response also accept that the school could not realistically re-open at present, but argue for a continuation of mothballing, to allow more time for the new families to move into the area. The main arguments against permanent closure can be summarised as follows:

- The permanent closure of the school would be a disincentive for families to move to the area.
- The lack of families would have a negative effect on the community, leaving it mainly inhabited by retired people.
- A new fish farm is being constructed, and there are plans for affordable housing for the area, which may lead to new families moving in
- Closure would also have a knock-on effect to Scoraig Primary, as the two schools formerly had close links.
- The travel distances to and from Ullapool are too long for primary school children, and the route is vulnerable to winter weather.
- Closure would lead to minimal financial saving to the authority.

#### **Issue 6**

I am in the process of submitting an application for my daughter to start primary school in Wester Ross. We have planned to move up to Dundonnell summer of 2026. We would be looking at a place for our daughter aged 3 in (October) at Badcaul primary school, as this would be our 1st choice. We are keen for her to start her education here as we have heard a lot of positive reviews. I, myself, attended Ullapool high school before moving to the west midlands, but we plan to return to the highlands in 2026.

#### **Response 6**

We welcome new families moving to the Highlands. However the Council has proposed the closure of Badcaul Primary School on the basis that the school is no longer viable. Unfortunately, the addition of one child in 2026 will not alter that position.

#### **Issue 7 – Effect on the community**

Badcaul School should be kept open. This is a very rural area and the community needs the school as more and more people are moving to the area. Closing this school goes against all that the SNP promised rural areas. Very sad.

It is exceptionally short sighted to close this school. As it stands there is already a parent group investigating childcare options in the area yet what impetus will come when the children have no prospect of schooling?

To future proof the resilience of this community it is essential to keep the facility open this is an area that is affected by snow storms in winter and can often be cut off.

The impact of closing the school will see fewer and fewer families willing to move to Little Loch Broom due to lack of services or distance.

The Scottish Government has policies to guard against pupil deprivation and lack of access to services is a form of rural deprivation.

Instead of adopting the default position to close a school that is dwindling why not work with those in the community looking to grow a childcare facility and look at routes to provide wrap around school and nursery care.

Furthermore please consider the reasons why recruitment of teachers is problematic. If there is very little housing available then it becomes a problem. If the school were remodelled and updated to include a family house for a teacher that was tied to the job this may change things.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/affordable-housing-initiative-for-key-workers/>

The closure of this school would have a knock on effect on Scoraig, on Ullapool High and on the provision of services for families nearby as it will see the doctor surgery close and regular public transport also close.

A school is the heart of any community and this one could be turned around if plans to reverse this decision were made concrete because this will deliver a critical hammer blow to rural depopulation in Wester Ross.

Permanently closing Badcaul Primary School would be detrimental to the area of Dundonnell. It is the hub of the community and very sorely missed. Having no school in an area does not attract young families into the area which is so needed here.

### **Response 7**

There is no clear evidence to support the suggestion that the closure of a village school leads to a decline in local population. The Scottish Government's Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, which reported in 2014, noted that the existence of a school is not always a prerequisite for a community to exist or thrive, and that there is 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. It should be noted that Badcaul Primary was first mothballed precisely as a result of a decline in the number of children attending, despite the presence of a local school.

School enrolments in Highland are in decline generally. Since 2018 the annual total number of primary school children in Highland has been:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
17349	17301	16835	16714	16572	16187	15895

As can be seen, the number has dropped each year, and this pattern is expected to continue for the next few years at least. Sadly, this has inevitable repercussions for our primary schools.

Providing additional school-related housing in rural areas raises significant challenges. Over time, our authority has strategically reduced its involvement due to high maintenance costs, reduced demand in certain regions, and tax implications for staff occupying housing for extended periods. Vacant properties have also posed financial and logistical burdens without effectively addressing broader housing needs.

Rural communities undoubtedly face housing pressures, often exacerbated by factors such as second-home ownership. However, The Highland Council has previously encountered difficulties in managing the evolving demands of education-linked housing. By collaborating with housing teams or private developers, we can better support tailored solutions that align with community needs while ensuring our resources remain focused on educational priorities. This approach ensures long-term viability without diverting essential resources from education.

It is acknowledged that the travel time from Badcaul to Ullapool is unusually long for primary school children. However, it was local parents themselves who decided to move their children to Ullapool. The fundamental issue is a lack of demand for children to attend Badcaul Primary.

Whilst the school itself has been mothballed since January 2022, The primary school Early Learning Centre (ELC) has been inactive since August 2018 and there have been no enquiries since then about ELC, childcare or school age childcare.

There are currently no children of ELC age in the Badcaul school catchment area, although we are aware of two children who will be eligible for ELC in the coming years. An ELC experience for a lone child would exclude the child's opportunities for play and socialisation with their peers. By attending an ELC with greater numbers locally, children from remote and rural locations benefit immensely from mixing with other children and will therefore be more prepared and better equipped when it comes to starting school.

There was a school age childcare service in Ullapool provided by the Care and Learning Alliance, however, it closed due to reduced numbers attending after the Covid pandemic, affecting sustainability and efforts to re-establish it proved difficult, as they were not able to recruit sufficient staff.

### **Issue 8**

For various reasons some Dundonnell residents are upset about the proposed closure of Badcaul Primary School. Not least of these reasons is the journey distance to and from the alternative primary school in Ullapool. For young children travelling that distance on a daily term time basis is a considerable undertaking.

However, residents have had to acknowledge - however reluctantly - that the current reality of so few youngsters now living in Dundonnell makes it financially untenable for the Highland Council to keep the school open.

Residents having recognised that fact, I wonder if there may be an outside chance that, if in the interim an alternative community use of the school side of the building (not including the residential side) can be made and run by the community (having negotiated tenure on a rental basis) there might be a possibility that one day the school section could be returned into the possession of the Highland Council to be reactivated as a school, should the Dundonnell population once again include young families.

The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust could be approached to ascertain if they would be interested in not only building two houses in the spacious playground area but also making the school house available as a viable residential property. Hopefully a realistic option for them because their expenditure would be greatly lessened by the fact that access, electricity, water, sewerage, a large parking area and even fibre optic high speed broadband are already in place.

The school – inclusive of hall, toilets, classrooms, small office and kitchen - would be a valuable resource for a community trust to operate. They could offer the facilities for a variety of uses: meetings; classes; activities; craft sessions; craft markets; exhibitions; talks etc. All of which happenings would have to raise money towards rental from the HC, insurance and maintenance. Plus for the services of someone willing to be a caretaker. A tall order but, with enough commitment, perhaps a possibility!

Obviously, the child sized toilets would have to be altered for adult usage (although there is already one standard toilet in place) and wheelchair access would have to be installed. There is already a substantial pot of money lying dormant - collected many years ago by community members for the intention of creating a building for the above mentioned usage. That money could, hopefully, be utilised if the school is acquired for local use and if there is community agreement.

That erstwhile community group – known as DACE (Dundonnell Area Community Enterprise) disbanded and the funds that were raised have not been used.

I am an elderly resident who has lived in Dundonnell since the nineties. The area was thriving back then. It would be so uplifting to see it even partially regenerated because now it is dying.

### **Response 8**

If Badcaul Primary is closed on a permanent basis, it is highly unlikely that a school would ever open again in the community. The only prospect of reactivating the school would be via continued mothballing.

The Council believes that the low number of children in the area mean that the school is no longer viable, and there is no prospect of becoming viable in the foreseeable future.

If the school is closed, the community could advance proposals for utilising the building, including in any of the ways suggested.

### **Issue 9**

I was sorry not to make the consultation meeting in September.

I see in the Ross-shire journal Emma Roddick's comments about the impact of affordable housing on rural communities. It is my understanding there are proposals to seek funding for affordable housing in Dundonnell/Badcaul area. If the school were to close it would mean the end of any chance of young families (with the obvious financial constraints that mean they would need to apply for affordable housing) being able to move there. Placing Badcaul in the Ullapool catchment would mean the need for 2 vehicles per household one for the dropping off and collection of children as well as another for the person going to work tradespeople most likely. Also the road over the Feign is treacherous in winter with many fearing driving conditions just doing the journey once let alone twice a day when weather is bad.

I would urge that the process of closure is reconsidered until plans for affordable housing in the area is fully explored giving the chance of 'halting rural depopulation'.

Scoraig has recently seen an increase in young families as a result of plans to make land affordable to them (ongoing) and I think that the same would be true in Badcaul if plans for affordable housing were realised.

Rural communities are in trouble and this latest school to highlight that is Badcaul.

This used to be one of the schools I visited as part of my job, as was Kinlochewe, both moth-balled in the last couple of years. The schools get so small that the parents start to worry about the kids experience and take them to a bigger school (I understand why) The schools then drift towards an unsustainable number and then close. Meanwhile, many of the houses big enough to house families with children are being bought up by retirees or as second homes or holiday lets. The communities become a monoculture in demographic terms.

In the meantime, this community is putting in motion new (more) affordable housing for people but the pace of this can't keep up with the school closures. This results in a community with a little bit of affordable housing but no school and therefore a lack of desire for families to move there. It's a nail in the coffin

of rural communities. It creates retirement/holiday villages where there is no one to run the services in aging populations where care is required.

It makes me so sad and needs major political and systematic change.

This is not a simple case of please don't close another rural school. It is a plea to see there are other major factors at play and that is the housing situation.

Please give this school a chance to stay open at least until the community's efforts to build more housing for families can change its course.

Aside from permanently ruining a rural community, the way to Ullapool is a dangerous section of road, often difficult in winter.

### **Response 9**

In the event the school closed, the Council would provide transport to Ullapool for any children in the P1-7 age group.

There is no evidence that the number of young children in the area will increase to the point when the school can again become viable.

### **Issue 10**

The temporary closure of the school is already having a negative impact on the local community. In my view this proposal is premature and no full risk assessment has been undertaken of the impacts. There are good prospects for the development of housing and employment in the catchment area—unlike Ullapool, which could benefit Ullapool High School, albeit in a modest way. Extension of the mothballing seems prudent and would provide flexibility for the future and community resilience.

#### **Process**

The public meeting on 10th September was conducted in a transparent way and the Highland Council (HC) staff and HC member enabled a frank and open discussion. However, it is of some concern to me that this meeting was organised somewhat late in the official process. I know that Hall was booked in some secrecy many weeks before. I appreciate Loch Broom Community Council had been briefed at an earlier stage, but their focus is Ullapool in my experience (as an ex-Member). However it was reassuring that the meeting was well-attended by a range of local people and interests, with experience of other school mothballing, local conditions and school and transport issues. Many of the points I make below I picked up from others at the meeting though I have amplified these in some cases.

### Current and medium-term situation

It was somewhat of a shock when the school was shut in January 2022, but obviously when there are no children, there was no alternative. However, now there are three potential nursery age children in the catchment area. Two more primary age children are currently being home-schooled. The Dundonnell estate has made housing land available and this is being progressed by the Rural and Islands Housing Fund. Sadly, lack of finance is slowing this proposal down but a positive move on the extension of mothballing could mean, houses for young families (and single young people) could be planned and built rather than sheltered housing- residents of which will need care workers etc. Also the increasing tourist stock of former homes and new pods is running into constraints due to a lack of staff for cleaning and catering. Badcaul is at the centre of a strategic network of roads, down to Gairloch, Inverness and Ullapool and beyond. It's not at the end of a single track road. The NC 500 runs straight through. Dundonnell is rich in resources. Currently MOWI are building a fish hatchery, to extend their fish farming activities with I understand 16 jobs to be created. There is prawn and lobster fishing in the loch, oyster farming being developed and mussel growing being explored. The situation can change very quickly.

### Risk Assessment

The Educational Benefits statement is of course focussed on the education dimensions and not the implications for the local community. The school was the centre for a range of activities including fund raising soup lunches and its loss is felt keenly. However Highland Council and the Scottish Government have a broader remit which hopefully they will bring to bear on their assessment.

But there are some issues regarding educational benefits which were picked up at the meeting, particularly on transport. The report is misleading in using Google maps driving times to Ullapool (see para 11.3) of 41 minutes. This ignores delays in summer due to the ever-congested NC 500 on A 832 and A 835, and in winter with ice and snow on the high Fain stretch in particular. Moreover currently pupils have to change buses at Braemore junction, which for young children and special needs pupils is not great to say the least. Additionally, it cannot be assumed there will be willing school bus drivers in the medium term.

The assessment does not consider the adverse effect on Scoraig school which used to work closely with Badcaul school, enabling some working in an age-appropriate peer group. (Our household helped with joint environmental education with the schools). Apparently now Scoraig pupils have to get to Ullapool which is much more difficult. (Boat trip and extended road transport). When Badcaul school was open, many opportunities on music and sport were made available to pupils.

Other aspects.

It is noted in the report that the school buildings are in good condition so obviously an extended mothballing will not be very costly. Also they currently provide an IT link to Scoraig and Achiltibuie schools. It is expected this will not be necessary in 2025, however if you are waiting for BT provision via the R100 scheme, please note we have been waiting 8 years already for this.

Much is made of the very remote rural schools classification, as if that is a negative designation. We have been living here for 12 years, when Badcaul school was functioning. We knew the children who went there, in this time and have been very impressed by their independent outlooks and very varied career outcomes. Also some would like to return, for their future lives. (Sadly our direct contributions have been support to school events and functions, not pupils.)

Mothballing does have a negative impact - families have withdrawn from house purchases due to the lack of a school. Also when hopefully the mothballing will be extended it will be vital to make this as a positive statement about future life in the Dundonnell. On mothballing in January 2022 the HC published a rather negative report in the Ullapool News, our local newspaper about school closure as if it only had a very rich history and that closure was definitely permanent.

It is very unlikely that the school building would have a future community use, if shut. We already have one church building which is likely to be sold, currently used as a community room (where the school meeting was held).

Point 13.3 states due to a radio link for IT services at Scoraig and Achiltibuie being housed in Badcaul that the building will be maintained until December 2025. So why can the school not remain mothballed until at least then. In addition to the educational needs of children living in the area now and in the future the impact of a school closure on a local community and the depopulation of an area should be considered.

### **Response 10**

The comments about future population growth have been noted and addressed elsewhere.

The public consultation was approved by the Council's Education Committee on 1 June 2024, but the consultation itself did not begin until late August. It was a conscious decision to avoid the school summer holidays when parents of young children might be away from the area. The Church was provisionally booked as a venue prior to the Education Committee meeting in June although the booking was not confirmed until the consultation had been approved. The public meeting on 10 September was advertised in the local press for the 2 weeks prior to the meeting, as well as on the Council's social media accounts a few days beforehand. As a general rule we find it more effective to concentrate the advertising near to the date of the meeting, so that it remains fresh in the mind.

There are four live consents for single houses in the area at present and work has started on two of these. Although there is local optimism about the provision of more housing, any proposals seem to be longer-term and aspirational rather than firm.

Each year, the Highland Council undertakes a forecasting exercise to predict future roll pressures on schools due to new housing and other factors. As part of the current School Roll Forecasting (SRF) methodology, 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 data inputs to forecasting school rolls. The current PPR value for primary school age children in Ross-shire is 0.2, meaning that even 10 additional houses would normally produce no more than 2 additional pupils. As mentioned, there are live consents for only four houses in the area at present. The available data does not suggest any significant rise in the number of children locally.

None of the parents of young children mentioned in the response have been in touch to express any concern about the closure proposal, either in writing or at the meeting. The proposal has been extensively advertised locally, including to parents at the Kinder Croft nursery in Leckmelm.

As mentioned at Response 8, If the school is closed, the community could advance proposals for utilising the building, including in any of the ways suggested.

The comments about the travel time are noted. Clearly the approximate travel times can vary according to weather conditions and traffic volumes, although the busiest times of year for visitor traffic might largely coincide with the school summer holidays. As previously stated the Highland Council fully accepts that travel times from Badcaul to Ullapool are longer than desirable for primary school children. The school was however mothballed after parents chose to enrol at Ullapool Primary.

Badcaul Primary has not been operational since January 2022, a period of 3 years at the time of writing. Scoraig Primary has already had to adjust to the situation across all of that time.

The replacement radio link that enables IT services at Scoraig and Achiltibuie schools is due to be activated by December 2025 at the latest, and this closure proposal, if approved, would not be approved before May 2025.

Response 7 advises that there is no clear evidence about a link between school closures and the growth or decline of a community. Some communities thrive without a school and others continue to decline despite the presence of a school. Jobs and housing are the two most important factors in sustaining a community.

**Issue 11**

As a community member living in Durnamuck next to Badcaul and a parent of two former recent pupils I feel strongly that Badcaul primary should be given consideration for further mothballing for the next 5 years. The reasons I set before you: - The proposal to send future pupils to Ullapool primary is not ideal for several reasons –

First the time it takes to travel is as you say 41 mins on a good day- this can take considerably longer- if there is ice or snow on the Fain. The treacherous winter conditions is a valid reason in it self- I was worried on many days when my two children had to undertake that journey when at high school - let alone being very young and at primary. The children would be going and coming home from school in the dark in the winter - this long distance.

Many children hate this long journey from Dundonnell - often feel sick and struggle if there are issues with other children in a confined space of a bus every day! The children were always being called into the heads office and being asked to report on disruptive behaviour of other children (when at high school - this was for a 6-year period! If children are expected to go from primary 1 to Ullapool that is 13 years of this long journey! I think children will give up education early just not to do this journey! Speaking from experience.

Another issue with the transport system is that it is a small privately owned Minibus for the first leg of the journey to Ullapool - then the children have to change bus at Braemore junction - and get onto a public bus that comes from Dingwall. This is not acceptable to send 12 year olds onto a public bus unattended by a responsible PVG accredited adult. Teachers and people working with children have to be PVG accredited - by expecting young children to catch a public bus makes a nonsense of this! The children will be under the Highland councils care at this time - can the Highland Council guarantee their safety?

Second point - Badcaul Primary covers a large area from many directions and gives a very excellent option for children and parents to choose from with regards a primary school. There are actually more children of primary age in this area than quoted - some are being home schooled - if the school was open it would give an option and then the children that travel at present may well change to Badcaul.

Third point - As a community we are at the initial stages of getting 4 affordable family houses built in Badcaul. The land has been identified and we hope to realise the project with in the next 5 years. The local fish farm owned by MOWI are currently building a new hatchery- the company has very recently bought a large house with other large accommodation on site and a lot of land to build potential houses. There are going to be 16 jobs available at the hatchery- this could potentially mean that 16 families could move into the

area. This will not happen if there is not any chance of a primary school.

Fourth point- Re populating the Highlands has been the Governments mantra for a while- this will not happen when primary schools are closed-what will happen is an aging population will move in (which is fine) However - the community becomes unbalanced - for a thriving community a good balance of old and young is needed. The school provides jobs, encourages families into the area and is the foundation of a community.

Fifth point - There was always a healthy interaction with Scoraig primary School - where resources, teachers and experiences were shared. Both schools benefitted enormously - by having the children mix and make new friends - the schools supported each other - and more opportunities for both schools became available. A good symbiotic relationship. Much was gained and shared.

Sixth and final point - If the school was sold - its outlook does not look bright- it would be bought as a private house - but no school so not by a family! Or sold to a developer- for flats- no school - so no one with children will buy them. or sold as a holiday let- this will be the end of any chance at a community and add to the rapid de population of the Highlands. So it is with this in mind that I fervently ask that Badcaul Primary School is mothballed for a further 5 years to give us and it another chance.

If it does not cost the Highland Council anything to keep it mothballed nothing is lost - it may be gained in the form of a repopulated area and some hope.

I attended the public consultation on the proposal to close Badcaul School. My interest is that my daughter who attended Ullapool High School, is intending to return to live in Dundonnell in the summer of 2026. The move is planned to allow her daughter to continue her nursery education at their current location in England but for her to attend primary school here in the Highlands. The proposal and presentation at the public meeting in Badcaul was positive about the educational benefits of children being educated at Ullapool Primary school, but it made no reference to the adverse effects on small children having to travel a long distance back and forth to school. I was surprised to find out that no consideration has been given to the transport needs of the children, the proposal simply assumes that the existing transport arrangements are adequate. I strongly disagree with this assumption. It is not acceptable for young children of primary age to be ferried unescorted from Badcaul to Braemore Junction, and then placed on a public service bus unaccompanied, to continue the rest of the journey. While this arrangement has operated for years for High school children, young children starting primary school should not be exposed to risk in this manner and I would consider that even now at the present time the council is failing in its duty to care for vulnerable children. This should have been considered and addressed as part of the proposal to close the school and it should not be sweep under the carpet. Public transport is not available for a parent to take their child to school, so it puts an added burden on parents who do not wish their young children to travel 50 miles plus a day without an

accompanying adult. Over all I can see that that there is an economic case for closing the school based on current numbers but number may change over time, for example my daughter will be bringing her family to live in the area here in 2026, and no doubt there will be other such changes. The most sensible option would be to keep the school in mothballs but in the meantime the transport arrangements for young children travelling to Ullapool school needs to be urgently reconsidered.

Whilst the proposal paper presented by Highland council gives a clear argument for the closure of the school I do not think that this should be taken forward at this time and that the school should continue to be mothballed.

The reasons why the school should be mothballed rather than closed are: There are pre-school children living in the catchment area at present and another family are going to move in. These are children that are known about at present there is always the possibility that other families with young children may move into the area.

The transport arrangements for children to go to Ullapool primary school are not appropriate for young children, the length of the journey 32 mile is extreme, there is designated pupil only transport from Badcaul to Braemore junction but at this point the children transfer to a public service bus for the last 12 miles I do not see this as appropriate for young children.

### **Response 11**

As set out above, the Council agrees that the travel time is undesirable. This has been covered in previous responses.

The transfer of pupils at Braemore junction takes place within the large la-by/parking area that lies directly opposite the junction itself. The transfer of pupils is supervised by the minibus driver who ensures all of the children transfer onto the Ullapool bus. The drivers of both vehicles are PVG checked. It is true that the bus to Ullapool is a public one and therefore available to passengers. It is common practice in Highland to make school services open to the public, and doing so provides a valuable public service. The Council will look at reserving seats at the front of the bus for primary age children, to address the concerns expressed.

It is noted that neither the parents involved in home-schooling, nor any pre-school parents currently in the area, have responded to the current consultation exercise. It may be inferred from this that they do not feel strongly about the proposed school closure.

It is speculative to say that 16 jobs, if created, could lead to 16 families moving in. Even if 16 new houses were built, the Council's school roll forecasting model suggest that around 3 additional primary school children would result. This would still be well below the figure required to make the school a fully viable educational facility.

**Issue 12**

The aging demographic of the catchment area will be unstoppable if Badcaul Primary School closes. The only way to attract young families to the area and to keep this wonderful crofting community alive, is to keep the school open. All children deserve equal opportunity to education regardless of where they live. The current practice of transporting children to Ullapool daily is adding a gruelling two hours, especially in winter, to their school day. This is surely detrimental to their wellbeing and education, especially for the younger children.

Myself, my siblings, my cousin, my father and aunt all attended Badcaul Primary School. My grandmother, her father and his father have all lived in the Little Loch Broom area, and likely more generations before.

Little by little traditional Highland culture and lifestyles is being destroyed. Closure of Badcaul Primary School will be the end of a community that has endured through the centuries, generation after generation.

**Response 12**

There is always an element of sadness to these events, when a historic village school closes. As mentioned at Response 7, the issue is simply a lack of demand for the school. Fundamentally, schools exist to provide education for children.

The transport issues have been covered elsewhere in the responses.

**Issue 13**

I am writing as the owner of a holiday rental property in Badcaul. While I do not need the local school personally, I believe it is an essential asset to the community, and I would like to express my support for avoiding its permanent closure.

If the school were to close, reopening it in the future would be extremely challenging. The nearest alternative, Ullapool, is too far away and results in long, stressful journeys for young children. I understand that maintaining the school in its current status is a cost-effective solution.

There are young families in the area, and keeping the school available will help preserve the local demographic and could attract more families to settle here. Permanently closing the school could negatively impact the community and change its character.

As someone invested in the local community, I hope the school remains available for future use, ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to benefit from it.

I have one child of primary school age p6, and when we moved here there was no option to attend the local school as it was mothballed. At that time I had 2 in primary school. While my children are older and don't mind the commute to Ullapool, it is a worry travelling to school in the winter so early in the morning. There are some mornings in really bad weather I won't put my children to school. It is also a long day for the children, they leave at 7:40 and return at 4:30. They also have homework to do after this and they do get tired, especially the younger one.

If my children were p1-3, I would have had serious second thoughts about moving to the area. It's too far for little ones.

I do realise though, that the demographics of the area don't support a school. There is no housing for families to come into the area, no other amenities for children.

I don't know what the forecasts are for this area in term of demographics, but if you want to attract young families to the area and stop rural depopulation or an ageing population, then closing the school may not be the best idea.

I do not think it is in the interest of the community in Badcaul and it is not in the interest of the children to travel to Ullapool to go to school, as the trip to Ullapool takes one hour. We need to keep the school to encourage new people to move to the area.

### **Response 13**

The Council has not proposed the closure of Badcaul on financial grounds, but as a response to the lack of parental demand for a school in the community. In addition, we consider there are educational benefits to the closure, arising from the larger number of children in Ullapool Primary. These arguments were set out in detail in the Proposal Paper.

The Council agrees that the travel time to Ullapool is undesirable for primary school pupils, although the travel arrangements have already been in place for 3 years.

### **Issue 14**

Badcaul Primary School has been an integral part of the Dundonnell community for over 120 years. Primary schools are anchors within small rural communities and are indicators of a living community with a future.

The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address

depopulation' published February 2024 states that 'In Scotland there is a presumption against closure of rural schools', there's good reasons for that. If closed Badcaul Primary School will probably never reopen, no families with young children will come to the area, there will be an inevitable ageing of the demographic leading to terminal population decline in direct contrast to the Scottish Government's stated intent to reverse this decline.

The Highland Council Education Committee report concentrates on the basics of current pupil numbers, perceived lack of support from existing parents and advantages of a bigger school like Ullapool Primary whilst completely ignoring the irreversible effect of closure; the ultimately adverse socio-economic effect on the local area, associated cluster school Scoraig Primary and Ullapool High School and the future cost and logistical issues resulting from no primary provision in Dundonnell.

### CURRENT SITUATION

Presently there are 8 children in the area from pre-nursery, through nursery to primary. Section 2 of the report highlights that no parents of current eligible children have indicated support for the school reopening. How were they contacted, what options were put to them? Understandably, in a small community people are reluctant to put themselves in the spotlight. Anecdotally their views appear to be a lot more nuanced. Those of us against the closure cannot reasonably contact the people involved and appear to pressurise them but given the importance of this issue Highland Council could take a more pro-active and creative approach.

The report assesses the educational suitability of the building as C (poor). The building has a large hall suitable for PE and music, as recently as 2017 there were two classrooms, a library, a nursery, an outdoor growing space and a playground with play apparatus; parents were more than happy with the educational suitability.

The forecast school rolls in the report demonstrate why we shouldn't be closing any more feeder schools to UHS. The predicted UHS decline in roll is directly related to all the schools inputting to its roll. If you permanently remove the opportunity for families to move to the Dundonnell area and have their children educated locally the decline of UHS is inevitable. Look at Kinlochbervie if you want to see where this leads.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address depopulation' published February 2024 specifically recognises the the problem of declining population in rural areas and identifies key issues which contribute to this or provide solutions. Education is one of these key factors. A broad local demographic is key to this. A community with young people, working age people and retired people contributes to a diverse and sustainable community.

Young people are potential employees for existing local employers such as MOWI, the Dundonnell Hotel, local hospitality and proposed mussel farm and local social care.

#### LOGISTICS AND COSTS

As the report says the building is in good order, the cost of continued mothballing is minimal, the cost of reopening a closed school which may well have been sold off in the interim would be relatively extremely high.

The HC report says 'Highland Council does not consider extending the mothballing would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community' Really? £4,264p/a to keep it mothballed is not a significant cost. Why not hire the hall out for community use in the interim and send a message that the building isn't closed for business.

There are hidden costs resulting from closure not considered in the report. If the statutory nursery provision is going to continue at Ullapool Primary how are pre-school children going to be transported for over an hour with an unsupervised bus change at Braemore Junction? This equally applies to general safeguarding issues for young children and ASN kids.

So called advantages of pupils being in a larger (UPS) school need to be set against the difficulties and risks for very young and /or vulnerable pupils in travelling for an hour with an unsupervised bus changeover. Imaginative collaboration with Scoraig, Ullapool and Baulnaluib which as has been successful in the past needs to be considered in the context of the social and educational 'advantages' (Section 9 Report) offered by a larger school. The wonderful environment where Badcaul is situated also offers daily outdoor activity opportunities which are not available at Ullapool Primary. If these arguments held up to any scrutiny we would close Scoraig now notwithstanding that its location makes this difficult.

#### FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

MOWI are building a hatchery in Ardessie which could employ up to 15 people some of whom may have young children. Rather than bussing the employees in or bussing their children out, why not facilitate a sustainable community locally.

It's already been successful in the recent past but working with Scoraig Primary can secure mutual sustainability for primary education along Little Loch Broom.

There is currently an initiative (registered with the Rural and Island Housing Fund) to develop affordable housing in Dundonnell close to the school. The whole point in this kind of initiative relates to the issues in the The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address depopulation' where housing is also identified as a key factor. There will be no point in delivering new affordable housing which could potentially welcome young people with

children to the area if there is no school for those children to go to therefore leading again to inevitable population decline and dying rural communities.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is still too early to take a decision on the closure of Badcaul Primary when there are still so many variables at play and communities across the North West Highlands are making a concerted effort to arrest population decline. The school can easily maintain its mothballed status at minimal cost whilst the situation develops. If the school is permanently closed there will be no way back and the community will shrink to being a hospitality stop off on the NC500.

#### Response 14

Kinlochbervie is an area which has seen a severe decline in the number of school children, despite the fact there is a High School and a primary school in the village itself, and two other primary feeder primary schools. At the time of writing, there are less than 80 pupils in the entire Associated School Group, spread between a secondary school and three primary schools. This shows that the existence of schools does not necessarily prevent a decline in the number of children in an area.

As highlighted above, the pupil changeover at Braemore Junction is monitored by the driver.

All parents of children currently attending Ullapool Primary, Ullapool PS nursery class and Kinder Croft Nursery were sent an individualised letter with a link to the Proposal Paper, as of course were the Community Council. The public meeting was well advertised locally and the proposal has been advertised on the Council's website ever since the start of the consultation on 26 August. There has been plenty of opportunity for anyone with concerns to get in touch.

In discussing transport arrangements, we have to take into account that Badcaul Primary has not actually operated now for more than 3 years. If the school is permanently closed, the transport arrangements from Badcaul to Ullapool will be the same as those that have operated since Jan

### 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 In their report, Education Scotland agree with the council's reasons for the proposal to permanently close Badcaul Primary School. Numbers attending the school prior to mothballing were very small. At the time of mothballing, parents

decided that Ullapool Primary School would provide a more rounded educational experience for their children. The provision of stronger transitions from pre school to primary school and the availability of GME are also beneficial.

- 7.3 Education Scotland further noted that overall, parents and children were mostly in favour of the proposal. Children attending Ullapool Primary School enjoy their learning and feel that they have a positive experience with lots of opportunities. However, they expressed sadness at the loss of a village school. The report noted that the children who have moved to Ullapool Primary School have settled well and are enjoying their learning. The lack of primary school age children in the Badcaul area means that the re-opening of the primary school is unlikely. Continued mothballing of the school building will incur additional costs for the council and ongoing uncertainty for local residents. However, the council should continue to engage with local people in Badcaul and the surrounding areas due to the strength of feeling about the loss of the school building.

## **8.0 Effects on the Community**

- 8.1 Paragraphs 13.1 - 13.3 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 The consultation exercise identified concerns about the effect of the school closure on the future health of the community. The issues raised are addressed at Responses 6-14 above.
- 8.3 Response 7 above highlights that there is no clear evidence to support the suggestion that the closure of a village school leads to a decline in local population. The Scottish Government's Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, which reported in 2014, noted that the existence of a school is not always a pre-requisite for a community to exist or thrive, and that there is 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.
- 8.4 Several responses have made reference to a decision by MOWI to develop a new hatchery in Little Loch Broom, adjacent to Badcaul. It is to be noted that this development has taken place in a community where a school last operated more than 3 years ago. This does not appear to have deterred the company from investing.

## **9.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies**

- 9.1 There were no alleged omissions or inaccuracies.

## **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 5-8 of the Proposal Paper identified and discussed the following alternatives to closure:

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

- 10.2 Sections 6 and 7 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council’s consideration as to why Options i and ii above would not be viable options for Badcaul Primary School. No additional suggestions were made during consultation, although Option i – continued mothballing - was strongly favoured both by those who responded in writing and by those who attended the public meeting.
- 10.3 Similarly, in respect of option (iii) in paragraph 10.1 above, Section 8 of the original Proposal Paper set out the reasons why an expanded catchment area would not be a viable option for Badcaul Primary School. Again, no suggestion to this effect was made during consultation.
- 10.4 It was suggested in consultation that, in the event Badcaul Primary were closed, that the catchment should be re-allocated to that of Bualnaluib Primary rather than Ullapool Primary.
- 10.5 The above suggestion is not an “alternative to closure”. Rather it is a suggestion for an alternative course of action if the school does close. The issue was previously considered at Paragraphs 10.2-10.6 of the Proposal Paper at Appendix A.
- 10.6 Having reconsidered this point following consultation, Highland Council is not minded to change its stance on the re-allocation of the catchment, for the reasons stated in the Proposal. It would of course be possible to change the catchment areas in future, although this would be subject to statutory consultation.
- 10.7 Having reconsidered each of the alternatives identified at Sections 5-8 of the Proposal Paper, the Highland Council has concluded that the alternatives to closure would not deliver the educational benefits of the proposal.
- 10.8 No further alternative approaches were suggested during the consultation exercise:
- 10.7 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.

- 10.8 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.
- 10.9 The impact of the proposal on travel time was considered at Section 11 of the original proposal paper. Since Badcaul Primary School has been mothballed since January 2022, implementation of the proposal would not require the introduction of any different travelling arrangements for pupils or staff. It is accepted that the travel times from Badcaul to Ullapool are unusually long for primary school children. However, this must be balanced against the reality of the simple lack of demand for a school at Badcaul, that has now been evident for 3 years.

#### **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 Badcaul 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 Integrated 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 As the school is already mothballed, the Impact Assessment did not identify any issues relating to the above.

## **15.0 Effects on School Transport**

- 15.1 The effects on school transport were considered at Section 11 of the Proposal Paper. As there are no pupils currently attending Badcaul Primary School, there are no differing school transport arrangements to take into account.

## **16.0 Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

- 16.1 Adverse effects were considered at S.17 of the proposal Paper, and none were identified. Again, this assessment was based on the fact that there are currently no pupils attending Badcaul Primary School.
- 16.2 Although no adverse effects can be identified for current pupils, a number of the consultation responses highlighted that the closure of the school would mean a long journey time for children in Badcaul, as compared with a hypothetical scenario in which Badcaul Primary was re-opened.

- 16.3 Appropriate school transport is and will continue to be provided for any children travelling from Badcaul to Ullapool for 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, 6, 7, 8 and 10 above. For the reasons set out in detail in sections 5-8 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 firstly, there is general agreement that there is no possibility of re-opening Badcaul Primary School at the present time, due to the lack of children willing to attend. Secondly, the school has now been mothballed for 3 years, and it is time to come to decision on the permanent future of the school. Lastly, there is no evidence to suggest that the number of children in the catchment in the future would be enough to make the school viable, and that there would consequently be educational disadvantages arising from such a decision. Lastly, Ullapool Primary School is itself a rural school.
- 17.3 Education Scotland staff visited Ullapool 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. They agree that The Highland Council's proposal will result in educational benefits for the children of the Badcaul Primary School catchment area.
- 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 Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ullapool Primary School.

Kate Lackie  
Assistant Chief Executive (People)  
**28 January 2025**

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

**HELD AT BADCAUL CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – 10 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 6.30pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

#### **Panel**

Cllr. Sarah Atkin - Chairperson  
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Resources  
Mhairi MacDonald, Area Education Manager

#### **In Attendance**

Robert Hynd, Education Scotland  
16 members of the public

**The Chairperson – Cllr. Sarah Atkin** introduced herself as an elected councillor and a member of the Council's Education Committee, and welcomed everyone to the consultation meeting. She had taken over the Chairperson's role tonight as the local Area chairperson was indisposed.

She continued as follows:

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to formally close Badcaul Primary School, (as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper). The proposed change, if approved, will take place at the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

Other options identified in the proposal paper are keeping the school open, or continuing 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).

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 Badcaul 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 11 October, 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 Badcaul PS, but before that I will briefly describe the rest of the consultation process.

Since January 2022 Badcaul PS has been "mothballed", which means it is not operational, but neither is it permanently closed. The Council held some informal discussions about the future of the school in the spring of 2023 and again in the spring of this year. There was though limited engagement from the community, and we felt it was appropriate to advance this formal proposal in the expectation that it might generate a wider range of views.

The formal process has a number of stages. Once the public consultation ends on 11 October, 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 Ullapool Primary 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** commented that page 10 of the Proposal Paper sets out our view on the educational benefits of closure. I had the pleasure of visiting Badcaul a couple of times when it was clustered with Scoraig and I saw the dedication of the staff and what a close knit group of young people we had, but it was shortly after that the parents chose to move their children to Ullapool PS, which they saw as better for their children.

The indicators that the Council looks at are set out at Section 9 of the Paper, but the key thing for the Council is the peer group available to young people in a school. People often ask whether the Council has a specific number of children they regard as necessary for a school, but for me it is often the make-up of children. There was a school that Ian and I visited earlier this year, that had 7 children, due to fall to five, but in only 3 families, and two of those families were related. The parents felt it was restrictive for the children to be living in the same community, socialising with each other, and also to be in the same class at school all day long. Those parents felt that moving to another school with larger numbers would benefit the children.

The evidence that we have suggests that there is no realistic prospect of Badcaul PS having a viable roll in the foreseeable future. Currently there are only 2 children of primary school age in the catchment area, and both currently attend Ullapool PS. We have not been made aware of any parental demand to re-open the school.

Should Badcaul PS be closed, the new catchment school would be Ullapool PS, where there is a healthy roll, an Early Years setting and a choice of English Medium or Gaelic Medium education.

Working with others across a wide range of curriculum areas is important for young people's development, getting opportunities to share and to develop responsibilities. There are also issues such as team sports and other recreational or cultural activities. Language learning also benefits considerably from having greater numbers. All of that is to the benefit of young people.

In summary, closing Badcaul PS would provide educational benefits through increased opportunities for young people.

**The Chairperson** opened the meeting to the floor.

**Q1** – You have described the benefits, but have you addressed the disadvantages? One example might be transport. You have primary school children travelling with high school children, perhaps some of the primary school children could have special educational needs. Have the costs of that been identified?

**A1 (Mhairi)** – In terms of children with additional needs, we always consider the appropriateness of transport arrangements.

**Q2 (Follow-up)**– But what about the age differences? Is it appropriate to allow 5-year-olds to travel with teenagers, without adult supervision?

**A2 (Mhairi)** – That is common throughout Highland. It happens in my own community on Skye, with children going to Portree. It seems to work well.

**Q3 (Follow-up)**– So there is no provision for chaperoning very young children?

**A3 (Mhairi)** – There is for children with identified needs, where the needs require it. Assessing whether a transport escort is required is part of what we do, where children have additional needs.

**Q4 (Follow-up)** – That wasn't covered in the report, and I am disappointed that you don't seem to have considered any of the possible downsides to the proposal.

**A4 – (Ian)** The purpose of this meeting is to gather community views. Section 17 of the report does address possible adverse effects, although we concluded there were none since the pupils are already attending Ullapool PS.

**Q5 – (Follow-up)** – But there will be additional children in years to come.

**A5 – (Ian)** – In terms of presenting the educational benefits, that has to be the Council's justification for making this proposal. We are presenting this paper to effectively say, "We think it's a good idea to close Badcaul Primary, and these are the reasons why." We have assessed this and we think there are benefits to what we propose, but, this is a consultation and we have to listen to the views expressed tonight.

**Q6 –** I appreciate there has been a certain momentum in favour of Ullapool as the destination school, linked to the availability of transport, but having read through the paper, I felt it was very dismissive of Bualnaluib PS. Is Bualnaluib on the short list for closure as well? It's 32 miles from Badcaul to Ullapool, but only 14 miles to Bualnaluib. Ullapool is a long way for small children, especially in wintertime.

I will admit I see a strong case for closing Badcaul. It's hard to see how the school could stay open, but I wonder whether Bualnaluib might be a more viable option.

**A6 (Ian)** – Thanks for the comment. The geography is obvious, Aultbea is much closer to Badcaul than Ullapool. The parents, when they made their choice, made their choice for Ullapool. One factor is the boundary of the Associated School Group (ASG), by which we mean a secondary school and the primary schools that feed into it. Bualnaluib PS is part of the Gairloch ASG and feeds into Gairloch High. Badcaul,

when it was last in operation, fed to Ullapool High, as does Scoraig, and of course there is the hostel in Ullapool for the secondary school age pupils from Scoraig

**Q7 (follow-up)** – Pupils from Scoraig previously travelled to Gairloch.

**A7 (Ian)** – At sometime in the past, yes, but Ullapool PS/HS are the designated schools for Badcaul and Scoraig, and Scoraig will always fit better with Ullapool because of the school hostel there. Part of the issue with considering a catchment change for the primary school, is that it would also mean a catchment change for the secondary school. However, if there is demand from parents in Badcaul to be part of the Gairloch ASG, then we could take account of that. It is possible to amend catchment areas, but again it would require a statutory consultation.

In answer to your question about whether Bualnaluib is on a list for closure, absolutely not! None of us can give promises about what might happen in the far future, but at the moment there are 20-odd children at Bualnaluib School and no plans to close it.

**Q8 (follow-up)** – The critical point is that in sparsely populated areas like ours, the demographics can change rapidly. Shildaig is a good example of that. The argument you make in your paper is very strong, I can't find many flaws in it, but I think it is too dismissive of Bualnaluib, when we are talking about small children. Then there is this point about changing demographics. There is talk of a fish farm development here, and who knows what population that might bring to the area. I accept that the education that could be offered at Badcaul at present would be limited in comparison to what is offered at Ullapool, despite the professionalism and dedication of staff, but I do think there is a case for not rushing into full-scale closure too precipitately.

**A8 (Ian)** – I think what you are saying there is that we should continue with the mothballing for the time being. We will note and consider that.

**Q9** – It used to be the case that the pupils travelling to Ullapool had to change buses at Breamore Junction. If that is still the case, I would question whether it is appropriate for very young children?

**A9 (Ian)** – Within the Council, the detailed arrangements for school transport are organised by our Public Transport Unit (PTU). In effect the Education Service advises the PTU that we have X amount of pupils who need to get from Point A to Point B at a certain time, and the PTU make the arrangements for that. I will follow that up with the PTU.

**Q10** – There are pre-school children in the area, that could potentially change the current situation. We came here 14 years ago, and the school was thriving at that time. We are where we are, but I would question your approach to mothballing. We look out at night and there are lights flashing and an alarm going off. The Highland Council should look at cutting the costs of mothballing, and also give a bit more flexibility in case the numbers of children locally do change.

You also mentioned Scoraig, and this school did a lot of good work together with Scoraig. What's going to happen to those connections in the future? I'm very surprised at the lack of mention of Scoraig. It's hardly mentioned at all. I'm also concerned about the state of the transport. I know people are concerned about the current arrangements. Are you even going to be able to get drivers in the future?

**A10 (Ian)** – There's a particular issue with the Badcaul building providing a broadband link to Scoraig and Achiltibuie, which meant we had to keep the power on. We are always happy to take comments about reducing the costs of mothballing, but fundamentally the issue with the future of Badcaul School is the lack of children. Others have advocated tonight for continued mothballing on the basis that the school should be kept open to allow for a future increase in numbers. It's true that there are patches within Highland which have seen increases in the number of children – Shieldaig was one and has been mentioned. Any information about the numbers of pre-school children locally and their ages, would be useful to us. On the sustainability of transport – it's our job to provide the transport.

**(Mhairi)** - Regarding Scoraig, for a while we had the cluster HT covering Scoraig and Badcaul. We have just split that again, so that Scoraig has its own HT. It is difficult for the children over in Scoraig to get up to Ullapool, though I know they go up there for swimming. I acknowledge that the lack of children in Badcaul has been a loss to Scoraig as well, but the new HT at Scoraig will work closely with Ullapool PS to make sure the children get as many links as possible with the larger school.

**Q11** – Both my children went to Badcaul Primary, and I taught Bikeability at Scoraig, along with marine surveys and learning about plants. It was very valuable for our children to interact with Scoraig, and Badcaul offered an alternative for the Scoraig children, in a way that was much easier for them than travelling to Ullapool. The reason we should continue to mothball this school is that, over the past year, I and others in the community have gone to considerable length to look into affordable housing in this community. We set up a meeting recently, to which a lot of people came. The primary school is at the forefront of this issue. Without a school and a shop, you don't have a community. Our community is dying. We hear Highland Council talk about boosting the Highland population, and taking schools away doesn't help that aim. There are young people who grew up here and who would like to live here, but they can't afford a house. Without a school and without youth facilities, we are only going to get one demographic type moving here. The new fish farm has just bought accommodation next door for conversion into a bunkhouse and house, so there are developments on the horizon. It doesn't cost the Highland Council much to keep the school mothballed.

**A11 (Ian)** – The one thing I will say about mothballing is that buildings do deteriorate when they are left empty. Mothballing for year after year can be an issue.

**Q12** – It would be cheaper to maintain the school as an empty building for now than to deal in the future with an aging population, empty houses, no income apart from tourism.

**Q13** – We should look from the top-down rather than the bottom-up. Looking from the bottom-up, nobody denies there are not enough kids to have a school at the moment. But what are the consequences of closing the school permanently? If we look from the top-down, let's take the government's strategic document about reversing population decline, which focused on various areas, education and housing being two of them. If we don't support the feeder schools, we will just end up with everything being in Ullapool, and the Highland economy being centralised in Inverness. I'm sure we can accept the points about socialising for children, but we have to be more creative with those schools, and with networking to build up opportunities. As others have said it won't cost the Council much to continue mothballing, but once the school is gone it will never come back. We are looking to build affordable homes here – affordable homes are for young people, but if there's no school, what's the point of building affordable homes? In the government's paper, it states that the presumption is against the closure of rural schools, so that's government policy. I can appreciate you are looking at it from the educational point of view, there are no pupils at the moment, how long do we keep this empty building, but there are a lot of bigger issues. Scottish Ministers could decide that on the basis of the bigger issues, closure is not the correct route at the moment. We need to think about what we want this area of Scotland to look like in 15-20 years' time. This constant chipping away at what we've got here – such as with the Care Home in Ullapool – which was saved by the community - takes a lot of energy from local communities. The school is another domino in the narrative of services being reduced. You've said the population of children is in decline, but we don't need to accept that.

**The Chairperson** suggested that the comments being made should also be submitted in writing.

**Q14** – Would there be any possibility of a community rental of the school to use the building, to keep it from deteriorating, and then, if in future there are enough children to consider re-opening the school, it could then revert to being a school again?

**A14 (Ian)**– In principle that could be done. For example we had a school on Skye, in Uig, that school was mothballed for about 12 years. It did eventually close but for a long time there was a mission church that rented and used the building.

Briefly on the point earlier about Ministers and the presumption against rural school closures, that is correct and is written into the 2010 Act, under which we are advancing this proposal. I can assure you that if this proposal goes to Ministers, that is not a rubber-stamping exercise, and there is an opportunity for people to make representations direct to Ministers.

**(Mhairi)** – We have another school in Skye that is currently mothballed, but which was used for a while by the John Muir Trust. It's good to see an empty building being put to use for the benefit of the area.

In my experience, parents prefer schools with larger rolls. I was formerly cluster Head Teacher of two neighbouring schools in Skye, one very small and the other a bit larger. When parents moved into the area, they preferred to enrol children in the larger school, even if they were within the catchment of the smaller one. That's not to say the same would definitely happen here, but it's been my experience.

**Q15** – I can see that, but I have been thinking about other schools that have closed, for example Inverasdale School, but the difference between them and here is that Badcaul is geographically central. It covers a large area and it provides options for people. It would be a mistake to close it because of the distances involved.

**Q16** – What would the Highland Council do with the building if it closed?

**A16 (Ian)** – We have to be careful about assuming the school is going to close, when we are still consulting on that very proposal. However, this question does come up quite often in these situations. Broadly speaking, where the Education Service has a surplus building, other Council services would be asked if they have a potential use for the building. That would include, for example, the Housing Service, who might want to redevelop the building, or redevelop the site. If no-one within the Council wants to use the site, there could be an opportunity for a community buyout. It's not simply a case of asking for the building. The community would have to prepare a business case, and evidence that it was not going to undercut other local businesses. If there no interest in a community transfer, the Council would put the building up for sale on the open market.

**Q17** – You suggested earlier that continued mothballing could lead to the building deteriorating. The school is your asset, it is in your interest to maintain it. I think there is a mood in this meeting tonight that, whilst we accept there are currently not enough children to operate the school, things could change. There are developments within this area that could lead to that change, and I think it would be a little precipitate to close this school now. I have read the report which is well-drafted, but I think we need to look to the future. I agree with the suggestion that when families move to an area, the first thing they consider is "Where are the schools?" If your area doesn't have a school, you've got a problem. So I favour the idea of an extended mothballing. Let's just wait and see what happens in this community. In my experience, demographics can change. In a school this size, one family can tip the balance. We should not be closing the school on the basis of this meeting tonight.

**A17 (Ian)** – Tonight's meeting is just part of the overall consultation process, which ends on 11 October. Any evidence that you wish to present can be submitted by that date.

**Q18** – If mothballing continues, the building could be used?

**A18 (Ian)** - In principle yes. I wouldn't want to talk about the detailed arrangements here, but it's been done in the past. I would say though that, if mothballing continues, there is an expectation that the position would be annually reviewed. Not through a formal setting like this, but a more informal discussion, and people here tonight have been part of the last two of those in relation to Badcaul.

**The Chairperson** commented that the community would need to lead with any proposed use.

**Q19** – The general consensus of this meeting .is that we don't want the school to be permanently closed. [There was general agreement from the floor about this]

**Q20** – It's only been mothballed for two years. That's not a long time. Couldn't we just wait and see?

**Q21** – You said earlier that Uig was mothballed for 12 years.

**A21 (Ian)** – That's longer than we would see as desirable, to be honest. There is National Guidance about this that says that schools shouldn't normally be mothballed for more than 3 years unless they are in a very rural location. Clearly this school is in a very rural location, but the 3-year timescale gives an idea of the normal expectation. When a school becomes mothballed for a very long time there is a danger it becomes a fait accompli. People get used to the idea of the school not being there. Families might move in but there's no school so their children get settled in the alternative school and make friends there.

**Q22** – But this community is trying to do things. We are trying to get affordable housing. The fish farm could have 8 or 9 employees, or more.

**A22 (Ian)** – The Council could, at the end of this process, decide to continue with mothballing, or it could decide on closure. However, if we do continue with mothballing, then we might all be back here one day having the same discussion.

**Q23** – The feedback from tonight, and the written responses, are they put to the Education Committee? Are we privy to that?

**A23 (Ian)** – That's published a minimum of 3 weeks before we go back to Committee, and we basically put all the points into a report along with our responses. Anyone who submitted a representation in writing to this exercise is contacted with a copy of the report and is invited to make "further representations". Those further representations are then put to the Members of the Committee. The Committee meets four times a year, usually in February, May, September and November. Officials will make a recommendation to the Committee members.

**Q24** – You do need to look at the transport arrangements. The report says 41 minutes travel time, but it could be a lot more in the winter, and there could be small children.

**A24 (Ian)** – I agree the journey is an unusually long one for primary school children.

**Q25** – The provision of nursery would be an issue as well. You can't put a 3-year-old on the bus to Ullapool.

**A25 (Ian)** – We would have to look at other potential alternatives there, for example if there was a local childminder in the community, or even paying the parents themselves.

**Q26** – Cumulatively, these various issues could start racking up costs.

**Q27** – I would like to add that the school is the beating heart of the community. They used to do wonderful things, like at Halloween. The children would visit everyone along the road and the parents and others in the village would love that. Badcaul PS "Sale of Work" was legendary. A lot of older folk used to appreciate the school for those events. There's a bigger picture here.

[Various comments followed from the floor, from people saying they would not have moved here had there not been a primary school].

**Q28** – Could the Council make money temporarily renting out the schoolhouse, to pay for the maintenance of the school part of the building?

The Chairperson commented that she was a member of the Council's Housing and Property Committee. There would be complications around acceptable standards for renting.

**A28 (Ian)** – I can take that up with our Estates Team, but you get into complications with tenants' rights as well. Fundamentally, this issue is about the lack of children for the school. Sadly, the type of comments you were making earlier are common across Highland. There are so many communities now where people are saying things like, "It was wonderful back when the children came out at Halloween" and about how strong the links were between school and community. The problem is there are so many communities where the children just aren't there anymore.

**Q29** – I don't think you are basing this purely on education. There has to be a financial consideration.

**A29 (Mhairi)** – We've got to this point tonight because there are no children who want to attend Badcaul Primary.

**(Ian)** - There is a financial analysis attached to the back of the paper, but we would not be advancing this proposal were it not for the severe lack of children in this

community. On a personal as well as a professional basis, I do think that children need to be with other children their own age.

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 11 October 2024**. She 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 Badcaul Primary School**

1. Un-named response dated 30 August (email address provided)
2. Heather Wiseman
3. Lucy Beattie
4. Maureen Stewart
5. Jenny Grant
6. Merylyn MacKenzie-Hedger
7. Susan Pomeroy
8. David Higgon
9. Laurence Glass
10. Anne Hunter
11. Neilian Campbell
12. Shona Ross
13. Eleanor Jane Turner
14. Seoras Burnett
15. Pupil Responses – 1
16. Pupil Responses – 2
17. Michelle Smith – received after the close of the consultation period
18. John Cooper - received after the close of the consultation period

I am in the process of submitting an application for my daughter to start primary school in wester ross. We have planed to move up to dundonnell summer of 2026 and would be living with my dad (brackloch cottage, dundonnell by garve, IV23 2QW). We would be looking at a place for our daughter (Alexandria-Rose Graye, 3 on 6th October) at Badcaul primary school, as this would be our 1st choice. We are keen for her to start her education here as we have heard a lot of positive reviews. I, myself, attended ullapool high school before moving to the west midlands, but we plan to return to the highlands in 2026.

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** Badcaul School should be kept open. This is a very rural area and the community needs the school as more and more people are moving to the area. Closing this school goes against all that the SNP promised rural areas. Very sad 😞

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** Concerned local resident.

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Ms	Heather	Wiseman

**Address:**

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
IV222JL	Anchor Cottage 38b Mellon Charles, Aultbea, IV22 2JL	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** It is exceptionally short sighted to close this school. As it stands there is already a parent group investigating childcare options in the area yet what impetus will come when the children have no prospect of schooling?

To future proof the resilience of this community it is essential to keep the facility open this is an area that is affected by snow storms in winter and can often be cut off.

The impact of closing the school will see fewer and fewer families willing to move to Little Loch Broom due to lack of services or distance.

The Scottish Government has policies to guard against pupil deprivation and lack of access to services is a form of rural deprivation.

Instead of adopting the default position to close a school that is dwindling why not work with those in the community looking to grow a childcare facility and look at routes to provide wrap around school and nursery care.

Furthermore please consider the reasons why recruitment of teachers is problematic. If there is very little housing available then it becomes a problem. If the school were remodelled and updated to include a family house for a teacher that was tied to the job this may change things.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/affordable-housing-initiative-for-key-workers/>

The closure of this school would have a knock on effect on Scoraig, on Ullapool High and on the provision of services for families nearby as it will see the doctor surgery close and regular public transport also close.

A school is the heart of any community and this one could be turned around if plans to reverse this decision were made concrete because this will deliver a critical hammer blow to rural depopulation in Wester Ross.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

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

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Miss	Lucy	Beattie

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
IV23 2RN	Hilltop Cottage Campbelltown, Loch Broom, IV23 2RN	Yes

For various reasons some Dundonnell residents are upset about the proposed closure of Badcaul Primary School. Not least of these reasons is the journey distance to and from the alternative primary school in Ullapool. For young children travelling that distance on a daily term time basis is a considerable undertaking.

However, residents have had to acknowledge - however reluctantly - that the current reality of so few youngsters now living in Dundonnell makes it financially untenable for the Highland Council to keep the school open.

Residents having recognised that fact, I wonder if there may be an outside chance that, if in the interim an alternative community use of the school side of the building (not including the residential side) can be made and run by the community (having negotiated tenure on a rental basis) there might be a possibility that one day the school section could be returned into the possession of the Highland Council to be reactivated as a school, should the Dundonnell population once again include young families

Probably a forlorn hope but a suggestion anyway!

The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust could be approached to ascertain if they would be interested in not only building two houses in the spacious playground area but also making the school house available as a viable residential property. Hopefully a realistic option for them because their expenditure would be greatly lessened by the fact that access, electricity, water, sewerage, a large parking area and even fibre optic high speed broadband are already in place.

The school – inclusive of hall, toilets, classrooms, small office and kitchen - would be a valuable resource for a community trust to operate. They could offer the facilities for a variety of uses: meetings; classes; activities; craft sessions; craft markets; exhibitions; talks etc. All of which happenings would have to raise money towards rental from the HC, insurance and maintenance. Plus for the services of someone willing to be a caretaker. A tall order but, with enough commitment, perhaps a possibility!

Obviously, the child sized toilets would have to be altered for adult usage (although there is already one standard toilet in place) and wheelchair access would have to be installed. There is already a substantial pot of money lying dormant - collected many years ago by community members for the intention of creating a building for the above mentioned usage. That money could, hopefully, be utilised if the school is acquired for local use and if there is community agreement.

That erstwhile community group – known as DACE (Dundonnell Area Community Enterprise) disbanded and the funds that were raised have not been used.

I am an elderly resident who has lived in Dundonnell since the nineties. The area was thriving back then. It would be so uplifting to see it even partially regenerated because now it is dying.

Maureen Stewart. The Bothy, Durnamuck, Dundonnell, IV23 2QZ

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** Rural communities are in trouble and this latest school to highlight that is Badcaul.

This used to be one of the schools I visited as part of my job, as was Kinlochewe, both moth-balled in the last couple of years. The schools get so small that the parents start to worry about the kids experience and take them to a bigger school (I understand why) The schools then drift towards an unsustainable number and then close. Meanwhile, many of the houses big enough to house families with children are being bought up by retirees or as second homes or holiday lets. The communities become a monoculture in demographic terms.

In the meantime, this community is putting in motion new (more) affordable housing for people but the pace of this can't keep up with the school closures. This results in a community with a little bit of affordable housing but no school and therefore a lack of desire for families to move there. It's a nail in the coffin of rural communities. It creates retirement/holiday villages where there is no one to run the services in aging populations where care is required.

It makes me so sad and needs major political and systematic change.

This is not a simple case of please dont close another rural school. It is, a plea to see there are other major factors at play and that is the housing situation.

Please give this school a chance to stay open at least until the community's efforts to build more housing for families can change its course.

Aside from permanently ruining a rural community, the way to Ullapool is a dangerous section of road, often difficult in winter.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** I live in Ullapool but work all over Wester Ross

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

**Name:**

Title	First name	Last name
Miss	Jenny	Grant

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
Morefield Place	23, Morefield Place, Ullapool, IV26 2TS	Yes

**SUBMISSION IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE EDUCATION PROVISION AT  
BADCAUL PRIMARY SCHOOL, REASSIGNING ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO THAT OF  
ULLAPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**By Dr Merylyn MacKenzie Hedger**

**9 Durnamuck,**

**Dundonnell,**

**Garve,**

**IV23 2QZ**

*Background: OBE, BSC Soc, MCD, MRTPI, PhD, career in planning, development and climate change).*

**28-09-24**

**SUMMARY**

The temporary closure of the school is already having a negative impact on the local community. In my view this proposal is premature and no full risk assessment has been undertaken of the impacts. There are good prospects for the development of housing and employment in the catchment area- unlike Ullapool, which could benefit Ullapool High School, albeit in a modest way. **Extension of the mothballing seems prudent and would provide flexibility for the future and community resilience.**

Process

The public meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September was conducted in a transparent way and the Highland Council (HC) staff and HC member enabled a frank and open discussion. However, it is of some concern to me that this meeting was organised somewhat late in the official process. I know that Hall was booked in some secrecy many weeks before. I appreciate Loch Broom Community Council had been briefed at an earlier stage, but their focus is Ullapool in my experience (as an ex Member). However it was reassuring that the meeting was well-attended by a range of local people and interests, with experience of other school mothballing, local conditions and school and transport issues. Many of the points I make below I picked up from others at the meeting though I have amplified these in some cases.

### Current and medium term situation

It was somewhat of a shock when the school was shut in January 2022, but obviously when there are no children, there was no alternative. However, now there are three potential nursery age children in the catchment area. Two more primary age children are currently being home-schooled. The Dundonnell estate has made housing land available and this is being progressed by the Rural and Islands Housing Fund. Sadly lack of finance is slowing this proposal down but a positive move on the extension of mothballing could mean, houses for young families (and single young people ) could be planned and built rather than sheltered housing- residents of which will need care workers etc. Also the increasing tourist stock of former homes and new pods is running into constraints due to a lack of staff for cleaning and catering. Badcaul is at the centre of a strategic network of roads, down to Gairloch, Inverness and Ullapool and beyond. Its not at the end of a single track road. The NC 500 runs straight through. Dundonnell is rich in resources. Currently MOWI are building a fish hatchery, to extend their fish farming activities with I understand 16 jobs to be created. There is prawn and lobster fishing in the loch, oyster farming being developed and mussel growing being explored. The situation can change very quickly.

### Risk Assessment

The Educational Benefits statement is of course focussed on the education dimensions and not the implications for the local community. The school was the centre for a range of activities including fund raising soup lunches and its loss is felt keenly. However Highland Council and the Scottish Government have a broader remit which hopefully they will bring to bear on their assessment.

But there are some issues regarding educational benefits which were picked up at the meeting, particularly on transport. The report is misleading in using Google maps driving times to Ullapool (see para 11.3) of 41 minutes. This ignores delays in summer due to the ever congested NC 500 on A 832 and A 835, and in winter with ice and snow on the high Fain stretch in particular. Moreover currently pupils have to change buses at Braemore junction, which for young children and special needs pupils is not great to say the least. Additionally, it cannot be assumed there will be willing school bus drivers in the medium term.

The assessment does not consider the adverse effect on Scoraig school which used to work closely with Badcaul school, enabling some working in an age-appropriate peer group. (Our household helped with joint environmental education with the schools). Apparently now Scoraig pupils have to get to Ullapool which is much more difficult . (Boat trip and extended road transport). When Badcaul school was open, many opportunities on music and sport were made available to pupils.

Other aspects.

It is noted in the report that the school buildings are in good condition so obviously an extended mothballing will not be very costly. Also they currently provide an IT link to Scoraig and Achiltibuie schools. It is expected this will not be necessary in 2025, however if you are waiting for BT provision via the R100 scheme, please note we have been waiting 8 years already for this.

Much is made of the very remote rural schools classification, as if that is a negative designation. We have been living here for 12 years, when Badcaul school was functioning. We knew the children who went there, in this time and have been very impressed by their independent outlooks and very varied career outcomes. Also some would like to return, for their future lives. (Sadly our direct contributions have been support to school events and functions, not pupils.)

Mothballing does have a negative impact -families have withdrawn from house purchases due to the lack of a school. Also when hopefully the mothballing will be extended it will be vital to make this as a positive statement about future life in the Dundonnell . On mothballing in January 2022 the HC published a rather negative report in the Ullapool News, our local newspaper about school closure as if it only had a very rich history and that closure was definitely permanent.

It is very unlikely that the school building would have a future community use, if shut. We already have one church building which is likely to be sold, currently used as a community room (where the school meeting was held).

**Note: A subsequent addition was made to the above, on 2 December 2024, after the close of consultation – copy below**

Dear Mr Jackson

Following our earlier interactions re Badcaul School, (see below), I am enclosing a recent photo of the development of the Fish farm at Ardessie, Dundonnell.

This is a multi million development about a mile from Badcaul school which is to serve other MOWI establishments and presumably generate revenue for Highland Council and the Scottish Government. The employment requirements are estimated to be considerable. So it can underpin the Dundonnell community and its school with planned associated housing development .

Merylyn Mackenzie Hedger



**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School**Your comments:** Dear Ian Jackson,

As a community member living in Durnamuck next to Badcaul and a parent of two former recent pupils I feel strongly that Badcaul primary should be given consideration for further moth balling for the next 5 years.

the reasons I set before you:-

The proposal to send future pupils to Ullapool primary is not ideal for several reasons-

First the time it takes to travel is as you say 41 mins on a good day- this can take considerably longer- if there is ice or snow on the Fain. The treacherous winter conditions is a valid reason in it self- I was worried on many days when my two children had to undertake that journey when at high school- let alone being very young and at primary. The children would be going and coming home from school in the dark in the winter- this long distance.

Many children hate this long journey from Dundonnell - often feel sick and struggle if there are issues with other children in a confined space of a bus every day! The children were always being called into the heads office and being asked to report on disruptive behaviour of other children (when at high School)- this was for a 6 year period! If children are expected to go from primary 1 to Ullapool that is 13 years of this long journey! I think children will give up education early just not to do this journey! Speaking from experience.

Another issue with the transport system is that it is a small privately owned mini bus for the first leg of the journey to Ullapool- then the children have to change buss at Braemore junction - and get onto a public bus that comes from Dingwall. This is not acceptable to send 12 year olds onto a public bus unattended by a responsible PVG accredited adult. Teachers and people working with children have to be PVG accredited- by expecting young children to catch a public bus makes a nonsense of this! The children will be under the Highland councils care at this time- can the highland Council guarantee their safety?

Second point- Badcaul Primary covers a large area from many directions and gives a very excellent option for children and parents to chose from with regards a primary school. There are actually more children of primary age in this area than quoted- some are being home schooled- if the school was open it would give an option and then the children that travel at present may well change to Badcaul.

Third point- As a community we are at the initial stages of getting 4 affordable family houses built in Badcaul. The land has been identified and we hope to realise the project with in the next 5 years. The local fish farm owned by MOWI are currently building a new hatchery- the company has very recently bought a large house with other large accommodation on site and a lot of land to build potential houses. There are going to be 16 jobs available at the hatchery- this could potentially mean that 16 families could move into the area.-This will not happen if there is not any chance of a primary school.

Forth point- Re populating the Highlands has been the Governments mantra for a while- this will not happen when primary schools are closed-what will happen is an aging population will move in (which is fine) However- the community becomes unbalanced-for a thriving community a good balance of old and young is needed.

The School provides jobs, encourages families into the area and is the foundation of a

community.

fifth point- There was always a healthy interaction with Scoraig primary School- where resources, teachers and experiences were shared. Both schools benefitted enormously- by having the children mix and make new friends- the schools supported each other- and more opportunities for both schools became available. A good symbiotic relationship. Much was gained and shared.

sixth and final point- If the school was sold- its out look does not look bright- it would be bought as a private house- but no school so not by a family! Or sold to a developer- for flats- no school - so no one with children will buy them. or sold as a holiday let- this will be the end of any chance at a community and add to the rapid de population of the Highlands. So it is with this in mind that I fervently ask that Badcaul Primary School is moth balled for a further 5 years to give us and it another chance.

If it does not cost the Highland Council any thing to keep it moth balled nothing is lost- it may be gained in the form of a re populated area and some hope.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Parent of two recent ex pupils

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

**Name of Parent Council:** Sue Pomeroy

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Miss	Susan	Pomeroy

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>	<b>Address line 1</b>	<b>Address line 2</b>	<b>Address line 3</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
IV23 2QZ	No	2 Durnamuck	Dundonnell		Garve	IV23 2QZ

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** I attended the public consultation on the proposal to close Badcaul School. My interest is that my daughter who attended Ullapool High School, is intending to return to return to live in Dundonnell in the summer of 2026. The move is planned to allow her daughter to continue her nursery education at their current location in England but for her to attend primary school here in in the Highlands. The proposal and presentation at the public meeting in Badcaul was positive about the educational benefits of children being educated at Ullapool Primary school, but it made no reference to the adverse effects on small children having to travel a long distance back and forth to school. I was surprised to find out that no consideration has been given to the transport needs of the children, the proposal simply assumes that the existing transport arrangements are adequate. I strongly disagree with this assumption. It is not acceptable for young children of primary age to be ferried unescorted from Badcaul to Braemore Junction, and then placed on a public service bus unaccompanied, to continue the rest of the journey. While this arrangement has operated for years for High school children, young children starting primary school should not be exposed to risk in this manner and I would consider that even now at the present time the council is failing in its duty to care for vulnerable children. This should have been considered and addressed as part of the proposal to close the school and it should not be sweep under the carpet. Public transport is not available for a parent to take their child to school, so it puts an added burden on parents who do not wish their young children to travel 50 miles plus a day without an accompanying adult. Over all I can see that that there is an economic case for closing the school based on current numbers but number may change over time, for example my daughter will be bringing her family to live in the area here in 2026, and no doubt there will be other such changes . The most sensible option would be to keep the school in mothballs but in the meantime the transport arrangements for young children travelling to Ullapool school needs to be urgently reconsidered.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** my self ,my daughter and my granddaughter who will start primary school in 2026

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Mr	David	Higgon

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
IV23 2QW	Brackloch Cottage, Dundonnell, IV23 2QW	Yes

Dear Ian,

I was sorry not to make the consultation in September and see the consultation process is open until tomorrow (the 11th).

I see in the Ross-shire journal Emma Roddicks comments about the impact of affordable housing on rural communities. It is my understanding there are proposals to seek funding for affordable housing in Dundonnell/ Badcaul area. If the school were to close it would mean the end of any chance of young families (with the obvious financial constraints that mean they would need to apply for affordable housing) being able to move there. Placing Badcaul in the Ullapool catchment would mean the need for 2 vehicles per house hold one for the dropping off and collection of children as well as another for the person going to work tradespeople most likely. Also the road over the Feign is treacherous in winter with many fearing driving conditions just doing the journey once let alone twice a day when weather is bad.

I would urge that the process of closure is reconsidered until plans for affordable housing in the area is fully explored giving the chance of 'halting rural depopulation'.

Scoraig has recently seen an increase in young families as a result of plans to make land affordable to them (ongoing) and I think that the same would be true in Badcaul if plans for affordable housing were realised.

Best regards

Laurence Glass (Chair Scoraig Primary Parent Council)

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** Badcaul Primary School

Whilst the proposal paper presented by Highland council gives a clear argument for the closure of the school I do not think that this should be taken forward at this time and that the school should continue to be mothballed.

The reasons why the school should be mothballed rather than closed are:

There are pre school children living in the catchment area at present and another family are going to move in. These are children that are known about at present there is always the possibility that other families with young children may move into the area.

The transport arrangements for children to go to Ullapool primary school are not appropriate for young children, the length of the journey 32 miles is extreme, there is designated pupil only transport from Badcaul to Breamore junction but at this point the children transfer to a public service bus for the last 12 miles I do not see this as appropriate for young children.

Point 13.3 states due to a radio link for IT services at Scoraig and Achiltibuie being housed in Badcaul that the building will be maintained until December 2025. So why can the school not remain mothballed until at least then.

In addition to the educational needs of children living in the area now and in the future the impact of a school closure on a local community and the depopulation of an area should be considered.

**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	Anne	Hunter

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>	<b>Address line 1</b>	<b>Address line 2</b>	<b>Address line 3</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
IV23 2QY	No	croft 3	Badcaul	Dundonnell	Ross Shire	IV23 2QY

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School and Nursery

**Your comments:** The aging demographic of the catchment area will be unstoppable if Badcaul Primary School closes. The only way to attract young families to the area and to keep this wonderful crofting community alive, is to keep the school open. All children deserve equal opportunity to education regardless of where they live. The current practice of transporting children to Ullapool daily is adding a gruelling two hours, especially in winter, to their school day. This is surely detrimental to their wellbeing and education, especially for the younger children.

Myself, my siblings, my cousin, my father and aunt all attended Badcaul Primary School. My grandmother, her father and his father have all lived in the Little Loch Broom area, and likely more generations before.

Little by little traditional Highland culture and lifestyles is being destroyed. Closure of Badcaul Primary School will be the end of a community that has endured through the centuries, generation after generation.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Former pupil

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Ms	Neilian	Campbell

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
IV1 3YH	65, Ferry Brae, North Kessock, IV1 3YH	Yes



**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** Permanently closing Badcaul Primary School would be detrimental to the area of Dundonnell. It is the hub of the community and very sorely missed. Having no school in an area does not attract young families into the area which is so needed here.

**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	Shona	Ross

**Address:**

<b>postcode_search</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
IV23 2QY	Caberfeidh Badcaul, Dundonnell, IV23 2QY	Yes

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing as the owner of Langridge, IV23 2QY, a holiday rental property in Badcaul. While I do not need the local school personally, I believe it is an essential asset to the community, and I would like to express my support for avoiding its permanent closure.

If the school were to close, reopening it in the future would be extremely challenging. The nearest alternative, Ullapool, is too far away and results in long, stressful journeys for young children. I understand that maintaining the school in its current status is a cost-effective solution.

There are young families in the area, and keeping the school available will help preserve the local demographic and could attract more families to settle here. Permanently closing the school could negatively impact the community and change its character.

As someone invested in the local community, I hope the school remains available for future use, ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to benefit from it.

Best regards,

Eleanor Jane Turner, PhD, FRCS

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** Badcaul Closure Consultation

Badcaul Primary School has been an integral part of the Dundonnell community for over 120 years. Primary schools are anchors within small rural communities and are indicators of a living community with a future.

The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address depopulation' published February 2024 states that 'In Scotland there is a presumption against closure of rural schools', there's good reasons for that. If closed Badcaul Primary School will probably never reopen, no families with young children will come to the area, there will be an inevitable ageing of the demographic leading to terminal population decline in direct contrast to the Scottish Government's stated intent to reverse this decline.

The Highland Council Education Committee report concentrates on the basics of current pupil numbers, perceived lack of support from existing parents and advantages of a bigger school like Ullapool Primary whilst completely ignoring the irreversible effect of closure; the ultimately adverse socio-economic effect on the local area, associated cluster school Scoraig Primary and Ullapool High School and the future cost and logistical issues resulting from no primary provision in Dundonnell.

#### CURRENT SITUATION

Presently there are 8 children in the area from pre-nursery, through nursery to primary. Section 2 of the report highlights that no parents of current eligible children have indicated support for the school reopening. How were they contacted, what options were put to them? Understandably, in a small community people are reluctant to put themselves in the spotlight. Anecdotally their views appear to be a lot more nuanced. Those of us against the closure cannot reasonably contact the people involved and appear to pressurise them but given the importance of this issue Highland Council could take a more pro-active and creative approach.

The report assesses the educational suitability of the building as C (poor). The building has a large hall suitable for PE and music, as recently as 2017 there were two classrooms, a library, a nursery, an outdoor growing space and a playground with play apparatus; parents were more than happy with the educational suitability.

The forecast school rolls in the report demonstrate why we shouldn't be closing any more feeder schools to UHS. The predicted UHS decline in roll is directly related to all the schools inputting to its roll. If you permanently remove the opportunity for families to move to the Dundonnell area and have their children educated locally the decline of UHS is inevitable. Look at Kinlochbervie if you want to see where this leads.

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address depopulation' published February 2024 specifically recognises the the problem of declining population in rural areas and identifies key issues which contribute to this or provide solutions. Education is one of these key factors.

A broad local demographic is key to this. A community with young people, working age people and retired people contributes to a diverse and sustainable community.

Young people are potential employees for existing local employers such as MOWI, the Dundonnell Hotel, local hospitality and proposed mussel farm and local social care.

## LOGISTICS AND COSTS

As the report says the building is in good order, the cost of continued mothballing is minimal, the cost of reopening a closed school which may well have been sold off in the interim would be relatively extremely high.

The HC report says 'Highland Council does not consider extending the mothballing would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community' Really? £4,264p/a to keep it mothballed is not a significant cost. Why not hire the hall out for community use in the interim and send a message that the building isn't closed for business.

There are hidden costs resulting from closure not considered in the report. If the statutory nursery provision is going to continue at Ullapool Primary how are pre-school children going to be transported for over an hour with an unsupervised bus change at Braemore Junction? This equally applies to general safeguarding issues for young children and ASN kids.

So called advantages of pupils being in a larger (UPS) school need to be set against the difficulties and risks for very young and /or vulnerable pupils in travelling for an hour with an unsupervised bus changeover. Imaginative collaboration with Scoraig, Ullapool and Baulnaluib which as has been successful in the past needs to be considered in the context of the social and educational 'advantages' (Section 9 Report) offered by a larger school. The wonderful environment where Badcaul is situated also offers daily outdoor activity opportunities which are not available at Ullapool Primary. If these arguments held up to any scrutiny we would close Scoraig now notwithstanding that it's location makes this difficult.

## FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

MOWI are building a hatchery in Ardessie which could employ up to 15 people some of whom may have young children. Rather than bussing the employees in or bussing their children out, why not facilitate a sustainable community locally.

It's already been successful in the recent past but working with Scoraig Primary can secure mutual sustainability for primary education along Little Loch Broom.

There is currently an initiative (registered with the Rural and Island Housing Fund) to develop affordable housing in Dundonnell close to the school. The whole point in this kind of initiative relates to the issues in the The Scottish Government document: 'An action plan to address

depopulation' where housing is also identified as a key factor. There will be no point in delivering new affordable housing which could potentially welcome young people with children to the area if there is no school for those children to go to therefore leading again to inevitable population decline and dying rural communities.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is still too early to take a decision on the closure of Badcaul Primary when there are still so many variables at play and communities across the North West Highlands are making a concerted effort to arrest population decline. The school can easily maintain its mothballed status at minimal cost whilst the situation develops. If the school is permanently closed there will be no way back and the community will shrink to being a hospitality stop off on the NC500.

### Upload documents or letters :

**I am commenting as:** Local resident

**I am commenting on behalf of:** I am a Community Councillor, parent of three former pupils and recently chair of UHS Parent Council for 6 years

### Name:

Title	First name	Last name
Mr	Seori	Burnett

### Address:

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
IV232QP	12 Badralloch, Dundonnell, IV23 2QP	Yes

HELLO EVERYONE!

CAN YOU HELP HIGHLAND COUNCIL WITH AN IMPORTANT DECISION?

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Badcaul, Dundonnell and Badralloch to go to Ullapool Primary, instead of Badcaul Primary.

Now we have to decide what to do for the future. We have 3 choices:

1. Close Badcaul Primary for good, with children from Badcaul coming to Ullapool Primary instead.
2. Re-open Badcaul Primary, so any children from there would go to that school and not to Ullapool.
3. Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer before we decide for good.

Which idea do you think is best? In the table below, place a tick next to which one you think is best.

Idea No. 1 - Close Badcaul Primary for good.	
Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	✓
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	✓

Why?

its a good school?

I would like to

go

back



Why?

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

Why?

There are not that many kids in the area, and I think that Badcaul needs a shop, as there are a lot of old people.

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<input type="checkbox"/>

I think that the Badcaul Primary should be closed for good because that would mean that more people will come to Ullapool primary.

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why!

More and many people go to it and there should be a shop

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 1 - Close Badcaul Primary for good.	✓
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Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

Why?

I think it would be nice to have some more people in the Ullapool primary, and there aren't that many kids in Badcaul. They call it for something else.



HELLO EVERYONE!

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Maybe families if some don't have time to

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No.3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

So there are more people to play Football with.

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	
Idea No.3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

So you can make friends and we need more people so we can do more stuff with more people

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<input type="checkbox"/>

I think Badcaul Primary should not close because new families might want to stay there and going on the bus every day will be really bad.

HELLO EVERYONE!

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<input type="checkbox"/>

I think they should come to Ullapool Primary because it's good to have more people and more friends. Also it would be good to bring them to a bigger school with more people.

Riley

HELLO EVERYONE!

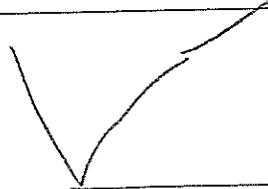
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Which idea do you think is best? In the table below, place a tick next to which one you think is best.

Idea No. 1 - Close Badcaul Primary for good.	
Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	 Why? because it encourage more people
Idea No.3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

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Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

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Idea No. 1 - Close Badcaul Primary for good.	
Idea No. 2 - Re-open Badcaul Primary.	
Idea No. 3 - Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.  ✓	why? because there might be more

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	<p>✓ I think you should try this for a bit longer because if they close down it will be a very long drive.</p>

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	<p>they have to get used coming to ullapool because in high school they have to come every day</p>
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	it would be fine because they will get to know the people in their high school classes
Re-open Badcaul Primary	✓ Re-open so they don't have to drive so they can go on the bus with no parents
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

Conclusion. → because you are not sure.

naive and evi

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	✓ ✓ ✓
Close Badcaul Primary for good	because they will need to do the drive to Millpool high school anyway so it will be good for them to get used to the drive and the people who might be in their class in high school. we can also
Re-open Badcaul Primary	make new friends.
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	✓ close is for good so they get to know the journey they will make to High School.
Re-open 'Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

AI To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good ✓✓	We want this option because we want to make new friends and get them used to who they might go to high school with
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

AI. To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

### The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	✓ We're not sure if there'll be more pupils.

AI. To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

### The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	I think it should close because it would be nice for them to have new friends and it's a lovely <del>the</del> school here
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

AI. To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

### The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	X
Re-open Badcaul Primary	X
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	✓ I think you should try this for a bit longer because if they close down it will be a very long journey for little ones and older but if you open it it will take a while to get teachers.

AI. To use "accountable talk" to support my opinions.

### The Badcaul Primary School question

Idea	
Close Badcaul Primary for good	they need to get used to coming to school because they have to come everyday when they are in high school
Re-open Badcaul Primary	
Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer	

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** I have one child of primary school age p6, and when we moved here there was no option to attend the local school as it was mothballed. At that time I had 2 in primary school. While my children are older and don't mind the commute to Ullapool, it is a worry travelling to school in the winter so early in the morning. There are some mornings in really bad weather I won't put my children to school. It is also a long day for the children, they leave at 7:40 and return at 4:30. They also have homework to do after this and they do get tired, especially the younger one.

If my children were p1-3, I would have had serious second thoughts about moving to the area. It's too far for little ones.

I do realise though, that the demographics of the area don't support a school. There is no housing for families to come into the area, no other amenities for children.

I don't know what the forecasts are for this area in term of demographics, but if you want to attract young families to the area and stop rural depopulation or an ageing population, then closing the school may not be the best idea.

**Upload documents or letters :**

**I am commenting as:** Parent

**I am commenting on behalf of:**

**Name:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>
Mrs	Michelle	Smith

**Address:**

<b>Enter a postcode to search for the address</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
IV23 2QY	Tigh Na Froich Badcaul, Dundonnell, IV23 2QY	Yes

**Name of consultation:** Badcaul Primary School

**Your comments:** I Do not think it is in the interest of the community in Badcaul and it is not in the interest of the children to travel to ullaPool to go to school. as the trip to ullaPool take one hour we need to keep the school to encourage new people to move to the area

**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	Cooper

**Address:**

<b>Enter a postcode to search for the address</b>	<b>Choose address</b>	<b>Did you find the address on the list above?</b>
lv232qy	5 Cnoc Dubh Badcaul, Dundonnell, IV23 2QY	Yes



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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ullapool Primary School.**

November 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 Badcaul Primary School, re-aligning its catchment to that of Ullapool 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 school; 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;
- 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 10 September 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 Ullapool Primary School and Ullapool High 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 Badcaul 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 consultation ran from 26 August to 11 October 2024. A public meeting was held in Badcaul Church on 10 September 2024 and attended by 16 members of the public. Further to the mothballing of the school in January 2022, the council held an informal consultation about the future of the school with representatives from Lochbroom Community Council and local Parent Councils. Advance notice of the proposal was also circulated to parents of primary and pre-school children in the Badcaul area. It was agreed by all parties that the re-opening of the school was not realistic, given the lack of demand for primary education in the area. However, there was a plea by the local community for further mothballing for 12 months at which point a further review should take place.

2.3 There were 17 responses to the public consultation and almost all respondents were not in favour of the school closing permanently. Consultation with primary school children carried out by the council had a more mixed response, although the majority were in favour of closure.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The Highland Council believes that the educational benefits of closing Badcaul Primary School outweigh the benefits of it remaining mothballed. The three remaining children who attended Badcaul Primary School moved to Ullapool Primary School in January 2022, as a result of placing requests. The council suggest that the current children, and those that may attend in future, will have improved educational experiences by attending Ullapool Primary School in terms of collaborative learning and working with others. They believe that there are increased opportunities provided, such as artistic and sports activities. Additionally, the council notes that the provision of pre-school education at Ullapool Primary School is leading to a smoother transition for children moving into Primary 1. The availability of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at Ullapool Primary School also provides additional choice for parents who want their children to learn Gaelic.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree with the council's reasons for the proposal to permanently close Badcaul Primary School. Numbers attending the school prior to mothballing were very small. At the time of mothballing, parents decided that Ullapool Primary School would provide a more rounded educational experience for their children. The provision of stronger transitions from pre-school to primary school and the availability of GME are also beneficial.

3.3 HM Inspectors visited Ullapool Primary School and Ullapool High School and had discussions with parents, staff and children. There were mixed views about the proposal. A few staff at Ullapool Primary School were not in favour, citing the impact of the loss of a small rural school in their communities. They feel that this may discourage new people from moving to the area. They also expressed concern about the lengthy bus journey to Ullapool for very young children, which they feel increases the length of the school day considerably. Overall, parents and children were mostly in favour of the proposal. Children attending Ullapool Primary School enjoy their learning and feel that they have a positive experience with lots of opportunities. However, they expressed sadness at the loss of a village school.

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. The council has considered the alternatives to closing Badcaul Primary School permanently. They do not feel that continued mothballing is viable, in part due to the ongoing cost of maintaining the building. Based on school roll projections and other demographic data, the council do not believe there is a reasonable case for the school to re-open. They considered changing the catchment to another primary school, Baulnaluib. However, it has a declining roll which is projected to fall further. Although the catchment areas for both Badcaul and Baulnaluib are similar, any change would result in alteration to the secondary school catchments. The council decided it was not appropriate to alter secondary school catchments at this time. The council

understands the strength of feeling expressed at the public meeting and from the responses to the consultation. The loss of rural schools in communities is viewed by local people as adding to de-population in Highland Council. There is local interest in discussing the future of the school building and the council has agreed to engage in further discussions.

#### 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree with The Highland Council's proposal to permanently close Badcaul Primary School. It is clear that the children who have moved to Ullapool Primary School have settled well and are enjoying their learning. The lack of primary school age children in the Badcaul area means that the re-opening of the primary school is unlikely. Continued mothballing of the school building will incur additional costs for the council and ongoing uncertainty for local residents. However, the council should continue to engage with local people in Badcaul and the surrounding areas due to the strength of feeling about the loss of the school building.

**HM Inspectors  
November 2024**

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

### EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ullapool 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 Badcaul Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ullapool Primary School. A map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix B**. Maps of the existing school catchments for Badcaul PS and Ullapool PS are at **Appendices Bi and Bii** respectively.
- For the avoidance of doubt, it should be assumed that the related Pre-School provision is included within any reference below to a Primary School. In particular, any reference to Badcaul Primary School should be taken as a reference to both the primary and nursery classes.
- The proposed change, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.

## **SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **PUBLICATION INFORMATION**

#### **Proposal Paper Published**

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

Ullapool Primary School, Quay Street, Ullapool IV26 2UE

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:

Education Business Support Team,  
Highland Council  
Charles Kennedy Building  
Fort William  
PH33 6RQ  
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 Education Business Support Team, Highland Council, Charles Kennedy Building, Fort William PH33 6RQ  
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 Ullapool Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) The Parent Councils of Ullapool Primary School, Ullapool High School, Bualnaluib Primary School, Scoraig Primary School, and Gairloch High School.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (iv) Staff of Ullapool Primary School
- (v) Lochbroom Community Council
- (vi) Aultbea Community Council
- (vii) 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 26 August 2024 and will end on 11 October 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 10 September 2024 at Badcaul Church of Scotland. 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 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:

Education Business Support Team,  
Highland Council  
Charles Kennedy Building  
Fort William  
PH33 6RQ

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>

## Appendix A

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, 11 October 2024 at 5.00pm.

### **Involvement of Education Scotland**

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 4 November 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 22 November 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.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in January 2025, prior to submission to the Education Committee in February 2025. 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.

## Appendix A

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 Badcaul Primary School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the school is classed as "very 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 Badcaul PS, taking into account the current pattern of enrolments, has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 5-8 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 13 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Badcaul catchment (Section 11 below).

### **Reasons for the Proposal**

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - Badcaul PS has been mothballed since January 2022, after all the children moved to Ullapool Primary School on placing requests.
  - Consequently, no children have attended the school since January 2022.
  - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 In March 2023, representatives of Lochbroom Community Council were invited to an informal discussion about the future of the school. The Parent Councils of Ullapool Primary School, Ullapool High School and Bualnaluib Primary School were also given advance notice of the proposal and invited to comment, as were all parents of primary school age and pre-school age children within the Badcaul PS catchment. No current parents of primary school children attended the meeting.
- 2.3 It was agreed by all parties that a lack of parental demand for Badcaul Primary meant that re-opening the school was not a realistic possibility at the time. Community Council and Parent Council representatives argued that it was too soon for a closure proposal, and that the school should remain mothballed for a further 12 months, at which point a further review could be held.
- 2.4 In line with the above, representatives of Lochbroom Community Council were invited to a further informal discussion about the future of the school. The Parent Councils of Ullapool Primary School and Ullapool High School were also given advance notice of the proposal and invited to comment, as were all parents of primary school age and pre-school age children within the Badcaul

## Appendix A

PS catchment. No current parents of primary school children attended the meeting.

- 2.5 Community Council and Parent Council representatives both submitted views that the mothballing of the school should continue for a further year, arguing that the permanent closure of the school would exacerbate the depopulation issues facing the area. They also highlighted the prospect of an expansion in local fish farming, with more jobs coming to the locality.
- 2.6 In advancing the current proposal, Highland Council has taken account of the fact the school has been mothballed since January 2022. It is undesirable that schools should continue as “mothballed” for several years, and there appears to be little parental demand to re-open the school. In addition, a statutory consultation exercise would provide a fuller opportunity for everyone in the community to comment on the proposal, compared with informal discussions.

### **Current Details – Badcaul Primary School**

- 3.1 Badcaul School serves a sparsely populated rural area, with the small local population spread widely across the school catchment. The school building has one large primary classroom and one additional room which was used as the nursery. The school office is located by the front door. The school has a large grass playground with a range of play equipment and a large garden area, all fenced off from the surrounding area. The building is in good condition overall.

When last in operation Badcaul PS was managed by a Head Teacher who oversaw both Badcaul and Scoraig Schools.

- 3.2 The school has been mothballed since January 2022 when the 3 remaining pupils all opted to transfer to Ullapool Primary on placing requests.
- 3.3 There were no nursery children at Badcaul PS prior to mothballing, but the school did operate a nursery class when there were children to attend it. As mentioned above, this closure proposal encompasses both the primary school and nursery class stages.
- 3.4 The school has a registered permanent capacity of 25, based on the availability of one classroom for P1-7.
- 3.5 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). Prior to mothballing, Badcaul Primary School was rated as “C” for the educational suitability of the building and “B” for building condition.
- 3.6 In the five sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there were 5 placing requests to leave Badcaul PS, and zero placing requests to join.
- 3.7 No current HMIE Report is available.

## Appendix A

- 3.8 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions from the Badcaul Primary School building are estimated at less than 5 tonnes. The school was of course mothballed from January 2022 although the power has been left on due to an IT issue that is discussed below - see paragraph 13.3.

### Current Details – Ullapool Primary School

- 4.1 Ullapool Primary School is located in the large village of same name. Although Ullapool is the main centre of population in NW Ross, its population is c.1,500. Only schools located in communities with a population of 3,000 or more are not classed as rural schools, so Ullapool Primary falls within the category of a “very remote” rural school. It provides education in both English (EM) and Gàidhlig (GM). Its English Medium catchment encompasses a wide area of Northwest Ross, and the Gàidhlig Medium catchment covers a still wider area, including the EM catchments of Achiltibuie Primary, Lochinver Primary, and Badcaul Primary.
- 4.2 The main building houses much of the school’s accommodation, namely: offices, medical room, canteen and school hall, classrooms, ICT suite and ASN area. Both nurseries are in a purpose-built nursery attached to the main school. The school also has a resource room and Rainbow Room all within the school grounds and an external hut for music and art rooms. The school also makes extensive use of the excellent local facilities in Ullapool. Pupils benefit from both the swimming pool and leisure centre as part of their weekly PE routine. Use is also made of the local Drill Hall and a substantial playing field and extended school grounds including wildlife and vegetable gardens.
- 4.3 The anticipated roll for 2024-25 is 114 pupils within P1-7, with 42 children in English Medium and 72 in Gàidhlig Medium. There are 35 further children in the nursery classes, which again are split between English and Gàidhlig Medium.
- 4.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 172. The 2023-24 roll of 114 therefore represents 66% use of capacity.
- 4.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Ullapool PS is attached at **Appendix C**.
- 4.6 It can be seen from Appendix C that the roll at Ullapool Primary School is forecast to fall to 100 by 2038-39.
- 4.7 The Ullapool Primary School building is rated as “B” for educational suitability and “B” for Condition.
- 4.8 In the 5 sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there was 1 placing request to leave Ullapool Primary School, and 5 requests to join. In the years there have been 4 placing requests to join Ullapool PS, and none to leave.
- 4.9 There is no current HMle Report for the school.

- 4.10 Annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from Ullapool Primary School building would not be affected by the formal closure of Badcaul Primary School.

### **Examination of Alternatives**

- 5.1 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. To continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.
  - ii. To re-open Badcaul PS with its current catchment area.
  - iii. To re-open Badcaul PS with an expanded catchment area.
- 5.2 As part of the consideration of alternatives, the Council has investigated the long-term roll projections.
- 5.3 The detail of the Council’s consideration of the reasonable alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and its appendices.

### **Option 1 – Continued Mothballing**

- 6.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement, Highland Council does not consider that would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community. The very low number of children in the Badcaul PS catchment suggests that the school is no longer viable. The school has now been mothballed for well over 2 years and the time has come to make a decision on its future. “Mothballing” would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school, and also means the community has not been able to express its views via a full statutory consultation. The Council would also be burdened with the costs of maintaining a “mothballed” building.
- 6.2 Scottish Government guidance relating to the mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation. The status of mothballed schools should be regularly reviewed. Having undertaken such a review, Highland Council does not see continued mothballing as a realistic alternative to closure.
- 6.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.

### **Option 2 - Re-Opening of Badcaul Primary School with its Current Catchment Area**

- 7.1 For the 2024-25 school session, there are expected to be 2 children of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school. As previously mentioned, there is no indication for either pupil would attend a re-opened Badcaul Primary School.

### **Option 3 - Re-Opening of Badcaul Primary School with an Expanded Catchment Area**

- 8.1 The Badcaul PS catchment is linked by road to the Ullapool and Bualnaluib catchments, the latter being part of the Gairloch ASG. At present the Badcaul/Bualnaluib catchment boundary is at a point roughly equidistant from the two schools. Moving the catchment in favour of Badcaul would place children who live close to Bualnaluib PS within the Badcaul PS catchment. It would also mean changing the secondary school transfer arrangements for children from the affected communities. Any such proposal would of course require a statutory consultation.
- 8.2 The current catchment boundary between Badcaul and Bualnaluib Primaries mirrors the Community Council boundary between Lochbroom and Aultbea.
- 8.3 It should also be borne in mind that Bualnaluib Primary is a very remote rural school with a declining roll, currently 29 but projected to fall to 11 by 2028.
- 8.4 As set out in paragraph 4.1 above, Ullapool PS is also classed as a very remote rural school. It too has experienced a declining roll.
- 8.5 Within the Ullapool PS catchment, the nearest communities to Badcaul and are string of tiny settlements along the south shore of Loch Broom. These communities are at least twice as far, in miles and travel time, from Badcaul as they are from Ullapool. It would not therefore be appropriate to transfer this area to the Badcaul PS catchment. As mentioned at paragraph 9.1, any such proposal would itself be subject to statutory consultation.
- 8.6 Taking all the above into account, it would not be appropriate to alter either catchment boundary in order to expand the Badcaul PS catchment.

### **Educational Benefits**

- 9.1 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. Some of the activities listed in the paragraphs below have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the educational benefits of the closure are considered in the longer term.
- 9.2 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 and art.
  - Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.

## Appendix A

- 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.
- 9.3 As mentioned above, evidence gathered by Highland Council to date suggests that there is no realistic prospect of a viable roll at Badcaul PS. By August 2024 there will be only 2 pupils in the P1-7 age group within the Badcaul catchment. Both currently attend Ullapool PS and as far as the Council is aware, there is no desire amongst parents for any to attend Badcaul Primary School.
- 9.4 Children at Ullapool PS regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of a re-opened Badcaul PS 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.
- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 The availability of GME at Ullapool PS also provides a further element of choice for Badcaul pupils attending the school. The very small numbers of children within the Badcaul catchment means that GME is unlikely to ever be a realistic option at Badcaul Primary.
- 9.7 The existence of pre-school classes at Ullapool PS enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 9.8 The language programmes at Ullapool PS aims to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills. Sound building blocks in talking and listening

## Appendix A

support the development of reading and writing as children move up through school. Children build their vocabulary and sentence structure in a variety of contexts at home and school. Regular conversations and discussion with teachers and other children will help them to achieve. These building blocks are also used for the teaching of French, which is introduced to pupils as part of the 1+2 language initiative. Once again, the emphasis is on oral work and role play. In all cases, working with others plays an important role.

- 9.9 It is self-evident that an overall school roll in single figures 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.
- 9.10 As with sports, the larger roll at Ullapool provide 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.
- 9.11 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.
- 9.12 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Badcaul Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at Ullapool Primary. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities can all benefit from the greater numbers that are available. Conversely, the roll of a re-opened Badcaul Primary School would be insufficient to keep the school viable.

### **Re-allocation of Badcaul PS Catchment**

- 10.1 Maps of the current Badcaul PS and Ullapool PS catchments can be found at Appendices Bi and Bii.
- 10.2 In the event that Badcaul Primary School closes, there are 3 options for re-allocating school catchment:
- i. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Ullapool Primary School
  - ii. Split the current catchment between Ullapool PS and Bualnaluib PS.
  - iii. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Bualnaluib Primary School
- 10.3 The travel distance and time between Badcaul Primary and Bualnaluib Primary is 14 miles/22 minutes (source: Google Maps). That between Badcaul and Ullapool Primary is 31 miles and 41 minutes. Bualnaluib Primary is therefore closer than Ullapool Primary.

## Appendix A

- 10.4 However, as mentioned above, transferring the Badcaul catchment to Bualnaluib would also mean changing the secondary school transfer arrangements for children from the affected communities.
- 10.5 The pupils who have left Badcaul PS on placing requests have all chosen to transfer to Ullapool Primary School. In doing so they have taken advantage of existing school transport going from Badcaul to Ullapool High School. In recent history the Badcaul community has been linked with Ullapool High rather than Gairloch High for educational purposes.
- 10.6 Taking the above into account, Highland Council proposes that the Badcaul PS catchment should be transferred to Ullapool Primary upon the closure of Badcaul. The Council would however welcome views on this aspect of the proposal

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

- 11.1 As there are currently no children attending Badcaul Primary School, no differing transport arrangement would need to be applied in the event of the formal closure of the school.
- 11.2 For the 2024-25 school session, there are expected to be 2 primary age pupils, who will have longer journeys than would be necessary if Badcaul Primary School were still operational.
- 11.3 As set out above, the driving time between Badcaul Primary School and Ullapool Primary School is given as 41 minutes (source: Google Maps). It is appreciated that potential driving times from the extreme ends of the catchment would be longer.
- 11.4 Since the children travel using existing transport to Ullapool High School, there no measurable effects arise from the transport of children from Badcaul to Ullapool Primary.

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

- 12.1 As the school is already “mothballed” there will be no impact on school management arrangements at Ullapool PS from a formal closure of Badcaul Primary School.
- 12.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements.

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

- 13.1 Because the area is sparsely populated, and has a scattered population, the school building was one of only two public spaces in the area. The other is the local church, which is available for hire.
- 13.2 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 building and site. Any such proposal would however have to

be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management arrangements.

- 13.3 At the present time the Badcaul PS building is the location for a radio link that enables IT services at Scoraig and Achiltibuie schools. A new connection is due to be activated by December 2025 at the latest, but the Council will require to maintain the existing link, and therefore the building that hosts it, until that new connection is operational.

### **Financial Consequences**

- 14.1 The Table at **Appendix D** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger. As the school is currently mothballed, the savings identified are already being made and no additional saving would arise to the Council from closure.
- 14.2 The table does not include property costs that would arise if Badcaul PS were to become operational once more. At the present time this figure can only be a very rough estimate.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 15.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality 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
- 15.2 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**

- 16.1 Badcaul PS, Ullapool PS and Bualnaluib PS are classed by the Scottish Government as "very remote rural schools". Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since January 2022. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.

## Appendix A

- 16.2 The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Badcaul to Ullapool, a distance of 31.3 miles.
- 16.3 As set out in Section 11 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.
- 16.4 The maximum additional travel time for school pupils from the Badcaul PS site to Ullapool PS is 41 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.

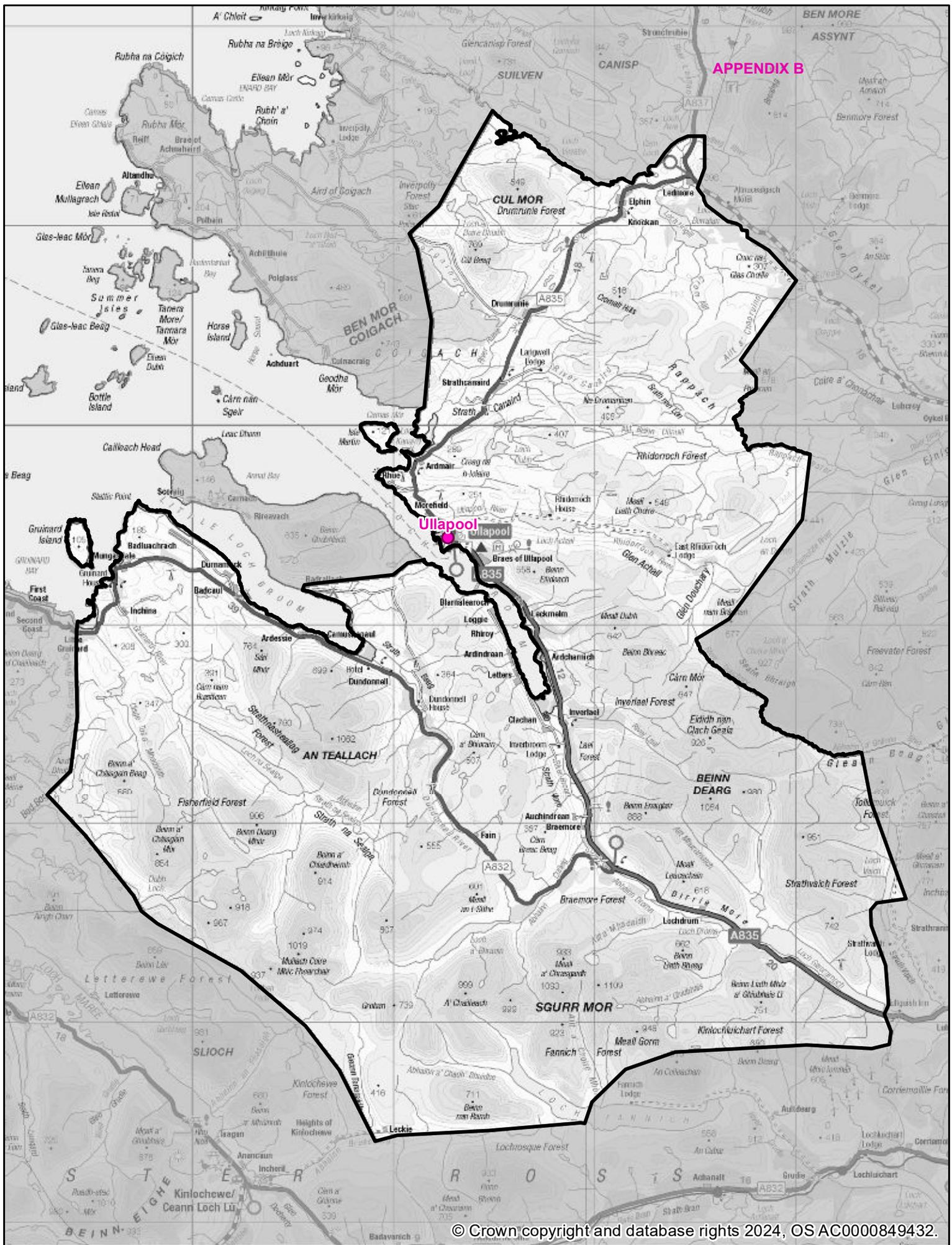
### **Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

- 17.1 As all the pupils within the Badcaul PS catchment are already attending Ullapool Primary School on placing requests, no adverse effects arise.

### **Recommendation**

- 18.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Badcaul Primary School, currently “mothballed,” is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Ullapool Primary School.
- 18.2 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**



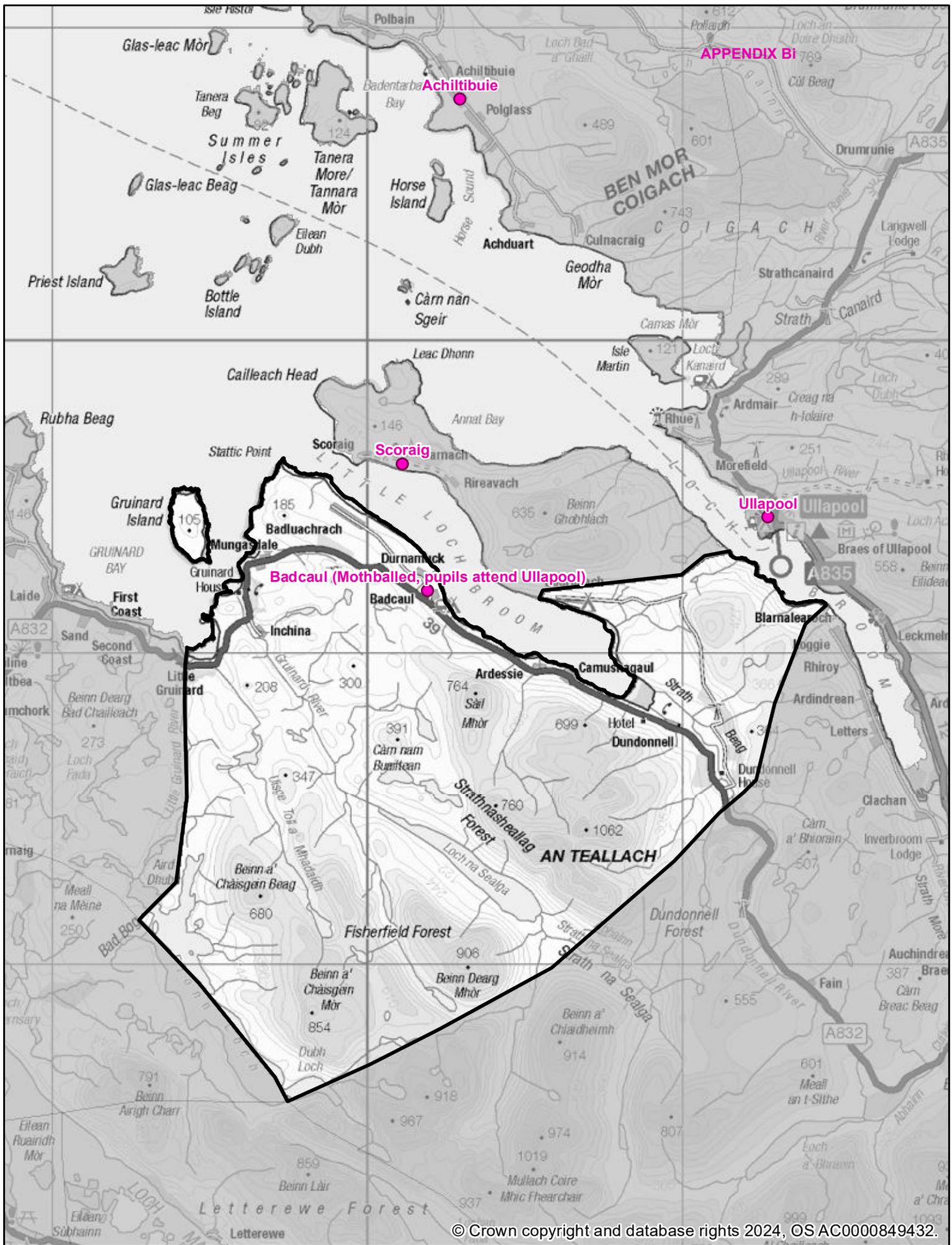
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# Combined Ullapool & Badcaul Primary School Catchments

Ref: gis2901  
Date: 22 March 2024

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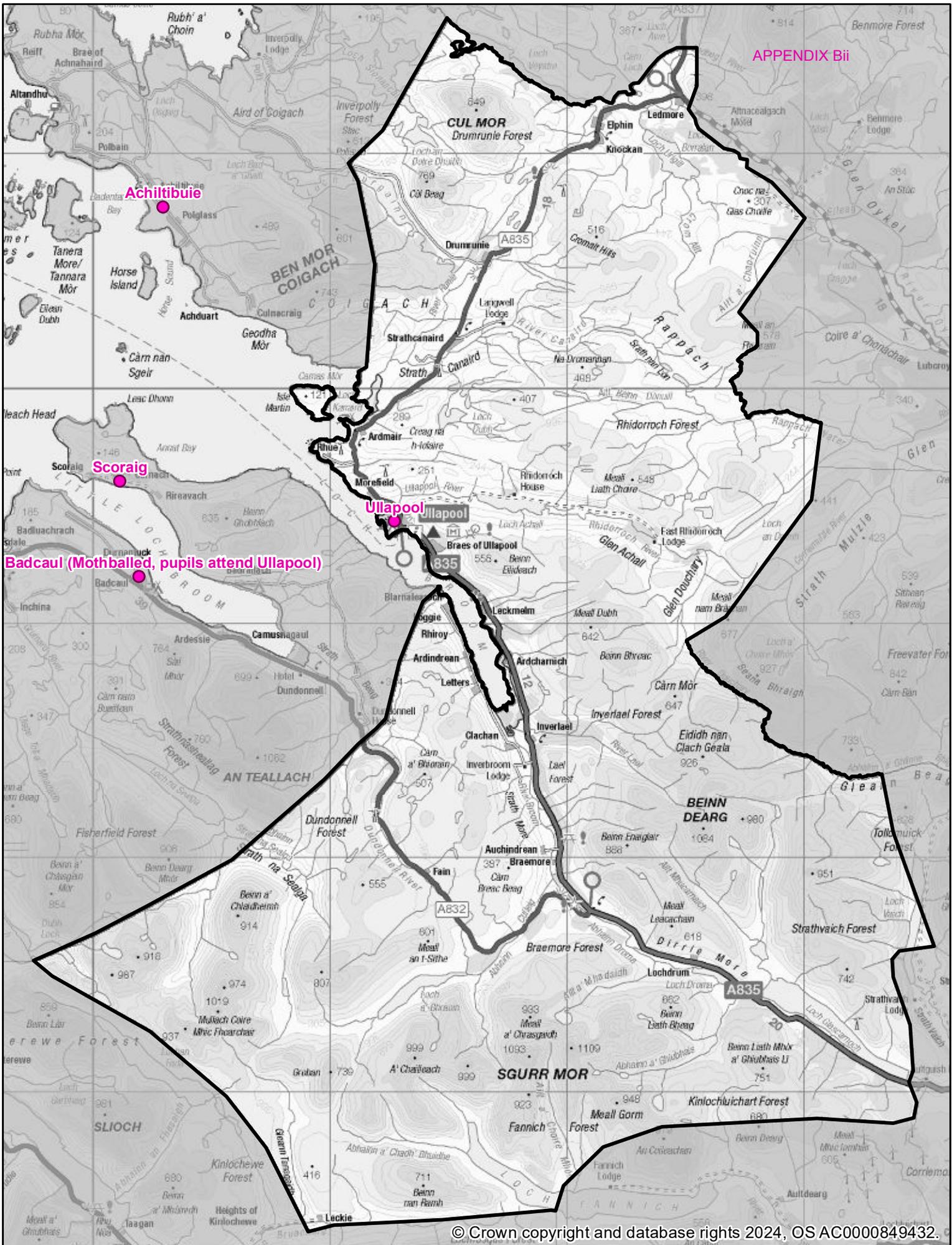


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# Existing Badcaul Primary School Catchment

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# Existing Ullapool Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2901  
Date: 22 March 2024

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School Roll Forecast  
 Ullapool High School  
 Ullapool High School

APPENDIX C

5139120	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39
S 1	30	36	26	27	32	21	21	30	19	21	24	21	22	24	24	24
S 2	28	30	36	26	27	32	21	21	30	19	21	24	21	22	24	24
S 3	33	28	30	36	26	27	32	21	21	30	19	21	24	21	22	25
S 4	32	33	28	30	36	26	27	32	21	21	30	19	21	24	21	22
S 5	31	28	29	24	26	32	23	23	28	18	18	26	16	18	21	18
S 6	19	21	19	19	16	17	21	15	15	18	12	12	17	11	12	14
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>542</b>															
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-369	-366	-374	-380	-379	-387	-397	-400	-408	-415	-418	-419	-421	-422	-418	-415
<b>Tot Roll/Tot Cap %</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>

School Roll Forecast  
 Ullapool High School  
 Achiltibuie Primary

APPENDIX C

5113024	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39
P 1	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
P 2	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
P 3	3	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
P 4	1	3	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
P 5	1	1	3	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1
P 6	3	1	1	3	0	3	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 7	1	3	1	1	3	0	3	0	2	1	0	1	1	2	2	2
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>25</b>															
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-13	-14	-16	-16	-17	-19	-17	-19	-13	-17	-14	-14	-13	-12	-12	-12
<b>Tot Roll/Tot Cap %</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>52%</b>

5109728	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39
P 1	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4
P 2	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3
P 3	3	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4
P 4	8	3	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3
P 5	5	8	3	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4
P 6	2	5	8	3	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	4
P 7	6	2	5	8	3	4	1	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	3
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>75</b>															
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-46	-48	-48	-51	-56	-56	-56	-54	-54	-52	-51	-48	-49	-49	-48	-50
<b>Tot Roll/Tot Cap %</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>33%</b>

School Roll Forecast  
 Ullapool High School  
 Scoraig School

APPENDIX C

5120829	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39
P 1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
P 2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
P 3	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
P 4	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
P 5	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
P 6	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
P 7	0	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>													
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-15	-15	-14	-16	-16	-19	-18	-19	-18	-19	-18	-19	-18	-17	-20	-17
<b>Tot Roll/Tot Cap %</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>19%</b>

School Roll Forecast  
 Ullapool High School  
 Ullapool Primary

APPENDIX C

5153522	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39
P 1	20	13	14	18	13	15	14	14	15	14	14	14	14	15	14	14
P 2	15	20	13	14	18	13	15	14	14	15	14	15	14	14	14	14
P 3	11	15	20	12	15	18	13	15	14	15	14	14	15	14	14	14
P 4	21	11	15	20	12	15	18	13	14	15	15	14	15	14	15	14
P 5	16	21	11	15	20	12	15	18	12	15	15	15	14	15	14	15
P 6	19	16	21	11	15	20	12	14	19	12	15	15	15	14	15	14
P 7	27	19	16	21	11	15	20	12	14	19	12	15	15	15	14	15
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>172</b>															
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-43	-57	-62	-61	-68	-64	-65	-72	-70	-67	-73	-70	-70	-71	-72	-72
<b>Tot Roll/Tot Cap %</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>58%</b>

## Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	<b>Current revenue costs for school proposed</b>			
	<b>Name of School</b> Badcaul Primary School	<b>Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)</b>	<b>Costs (during the period of Mothball)</b>	<b>Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)</b>
Row 2	<b>School costs</b>			
Row 3	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 4	teaching staff	£71,892	£0	£71,892
Row 5	support staff	£12,621	£0	£12,621
Row 6	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	£256	£0	£256
Row 7	support staff training	£0	£0	£0
Row 8	Supply costs - note 2	£1,035	£0	£1,035
Row 9				
Row 10	<i>Building costs:</i>			
Row 11	property insurance	£0	£387	-£387
Row 12	non domestic rates	£0	£0	£0
Row 13	water & sewerage charges	£0	£216	-£216
Row 14	energy costs	£0	£3,510	-£3,510
Row 15	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£1,275	£0	£1,275
Row 16	building repair & maintenance	£0	£151	-£151
Row 17	grounds maintenance	£0	£0	£0
Row 18	facilities management costs - note	£2,295	£0	£2,295
Row 19	revenue costs arising from capital	£0	£0	£0
Row 20	other	£0	£0	£0
Row 21				
Row 22				
Row 23	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials	£1,274	£0	£1,274
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)**se	£19,116	£0	£19,116
Row 26	SQA costs	£0	£0	£0
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g	£0	£0	£0
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
Row 30	home to school	£0	£0	£0
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	£0	£0	£0
Row 32	staff travel	£174	£0	£174
Row 33	<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>£109,938</b>	<b>£4,264</b>	<b>£105,674</b>
Row 34				
Row 35	<i>Income:</i>			
Row 36	Sale of meals	£0	£0	£0
Row 37	Lets	£0	£0	£0
Row 38	External care provider	£0	£0	£0
Row 39	Other	£0	£0	£0
Row 40	<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>
Row 41				
Row 42	<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR</b>	<b>£109,938</b>	<b>£4,264</b>	<b>£105,674</b>
Row 43				
Row 44	<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>36,646</b>	<b>1,421</b>	<b>35,225</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	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
<b>Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal</b>			
property insurance			£387
non domestic rates			£0
water & sewerage charges			£216
energy costs			£3,510
cleaning (contract or inhouse)			£0
security costs			£0
building repair & maintenance			£151
grounds maintenance			£0
facilities management costs			£0
other			£0
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>			<b>£4,264</b>

Table 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
<b>Non-recurring revenue costs</b>			
Catering Equipment			3500
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>			<b>3,500</b>

Table 5	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
<b>Impact on GAE - note 5</b>			
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>			

## APPENDIX D

### Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the *additional* cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring.

For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff.

Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services.

For support staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.

3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc

4. Row 30 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.

5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document that accompany this template.

6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.

7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.