

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Struan Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Dunvegan 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 Struan Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Dunvegan Primary School.
- 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 Struan 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:

Dunvegan Primary School, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye;
Carbost Primary School, Isle of Skye

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

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

Area Care and Learning Office,
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

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

Email: 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 Dunvegan Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) Parents/carers of pupils attending Carbost Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (iii) The Parent Council of Dunvegan Primary School.
- (iv) The Parent Council of Carbost Primary School
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (vi) Staff of Dunvegan Primary School.
- (vii) Staff of Carbost Primary School
- (viii) Struan Community Council
- (ix) Dunvegan Community Council
- (x) Trade Union representatives.

Advertisement in Local Media

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

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 23 February 2023 and will end on 21 April 2023. 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 20 March 2023 at Struan Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service.

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

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

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

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

Responses to the Proposals

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

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

Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, to be found at:

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

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

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made

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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, 21 April 2023 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 2 May 2023, 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 23 May 2023. 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 October 2023, prior to submission to the Education Committee in November 2023. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

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

As the proposal involves the closure of a school, Highland Council would be required to notify Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers would have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the

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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 Struan 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 Struan PS, taking into account the current pattern of enrolments, has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 6-10 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 15 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Struan catchment (Section 13 below).

Reasons for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - Struan PS has been mothballed since April 2022, after the school roll fell to two. There are currently no children within the catchment who are within the P1-7 age group, excepting a small number who attend other schools voluntarily, either on placing requests or to attend Gaelic Medium Education. (Struan Primary School has never offered GME).
 - Consequently, no children have attended the school since April 2022.
 - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 In November 2022 an informal discussion was held with Struan Community Council about the future of the school. The Parent Councils of Dunvegan Primary School and Carbost Primary School were also given advance notice of the proposal and invited to comment.
- 2.3 A note of the discussion with the Community Council can be found at **Appendix B**. The Community Council accept that the Highland Council should move forward to statutory consultation on closure.

Current Details – Struan Primary School

- 3.1 Struan Primary School is located in the middle of its catchment area between Meadle and Caroy. The main building dates from the 1890s but has had many alterations internally, over the years, and an extension opened in 1998, which provided modern, spacious accommodation. The school was well resourced

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and enjoyed the use of a spacious detached Demountable Unit and a modern Multi-use Games Pitch both of which are closely adjacent to the school.

When last in operation Struan was managed by a Head Teacher who oversaw both Struan and Carbost Primary Schools. Struan pupils travelled on a weekly basis to the larger Carbost Primary School for P.E, health and well-being, outdoor learning and weekly Assemblies. Both schools engage in a variety of other joint activities such as Ocean School, Christmas plays, performances, parties, visiting workshops and special events.

- 3.2 The school has been mothballed since April 2022 when the school roll fell to 2. Initially the pupils transferred to Carbost Primary School, but one is now at High School and the other has left the area. The only P1-7 pupils from within the catchment now attend Dunvegan Primary School.
- 3.3 There were no nursery children at Struan 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 50, based on the availability of two classrooms.
- 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, Struan Primary School was rated as "B" for the educational suitability of the building and "C" for building condition.
- 3.6. In the five sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there were 4 placing requests to leave Struan PS, and 1 placing request to join.
- 3.7 No current HMle Report is available.
- 3.8 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 the CO₂ equivalent emissions from the Struan Primary School building are estimated at just over 32 tonnes.

Current Details – Dunvegan Primary School

- 4.1 Dunvegan Primary School is located in the village of same name. It is classed as 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 Skye, and the Gàidhlig Medium catchment covers a still wider area, including the EM catchments of both Struan Primary and Edinbane Primary.
- 4.2 The school premises consist of:
 - the main building which is single storey and has a ramp at one main door, three classrooms, a gym, a resource room, girls' and boys' toilets, an office, a staffroom and staff toilets.

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- a demountable unit which has one classroom, a cloakroom, a resource room, a work room, toilets (staff & pupil), and Art cupboard & a large storage cupboard off the classroom.
 - a demountable unit which has two large rooms, one is the nursery and the other is a library.
 - the canteen where meals are cooked and served.
 - the playground which has tarmac immediately round the school leading into grassed areas.
- 4.3 The 2022-23 roll is 45 pupils within P1-7. There is a near-even split between pupils in English Medium education (23) and Gàidhlig Medium education (22). There are a further 15 children in the nursery class.
- 4.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 100. The 2022-23 roll of 45 therefore represents 45% use of capacity.
- 4.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Dunvegan PS is contained within the document attached at **Appendix C**, whilst a copy of the Council's methodology for calculating the forecasts can be found at **Appendix Ci**.
- 4.6 It can be seen from Appendix C that the roll at Dunvegan Primary School is forecast to rise to 70 in session 2027/28 and to 98 in session 2035/36. The Council will carefully monitor the roll at Dunvegan PS with a view to managing the accommodation issue if and when capacity issues arise.
- 4.7 The present Dunvegan Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "C" for Condition. A replacement building for the school has been nominated by the Highland Council for consideration by the Scottish Government for the third phase of their Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP).
- 4.8 In the 5 sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there were 7 placing requests to leave Dunvegan Primary School, and 7 requests to join.
- 4.9 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 4.10 Annual CO₂e emissions from Dunvegan Primary School building from April 2021 to March 2022 were just over 24 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Struan Primary School.

Current Details – Carbost Primary School

- 5.1 Carbost Primary School is also a "very remote" rural school. Its catchment serves the area of Carbost, Portnalong and nearby glens.
- 5.2 The school building was opened in 1988 and is surrounded by extensive wooded and grassy grounds, including a tarred Games Pitch area. Two main classrooms are included in the building, along with the normal educational requirements e.g., a well-equipped gym. A modern kitchen enables lunches to

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be provided every day. Nursery education is delivered in a modern and bright building, next to the school.

- 5.3 The 2022-23 roll is 22 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 2 children in the nursery class.
- 5.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 50. The 2022-23 roll of 22 therefore represents 44% use of capacity.
- 5.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Carbost PS is contained within the document attached at **Appendix C**, whilst a copy of the Council's methodology for calculating the forecasts can be found at **Appendix Ci**.
- 5.6 It can be seen from Appendix C that the roll at Carbost Primary School is forecast to rise gently to 35 in session 2034/35.
- 5.7 The Carbost Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 5.8 In the five school sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there were 5 placing requests to leave Carbost Primary School, and none to join.
- 5.9 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 5.10 Annual CO₂e emissions from Carbost Primary School building from April 2020 to March 2021 were just under 17 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Struan Primary School.

Examination of Alternatives

- 6.1 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 Struan PS with its current catchment area.
 - iii. To re-open Struan PS with an expanded catchment area.
 - iv. To re-open Struan PS as a school offering Gaelic Medium Education.
- 6.2 As part of the consideration of alternatives, the Council has investigated the long-term roll projections – see Appendix C and Appendix Ci. The roll projections, prepared prior to the school being mothballed, predicted a fall to zero by 2025/26, but in practice this has happened more quickly. There are no planned housing developments in the area.
- 6.3 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

- 7.1 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 Struan PS catchment indicates strongly that the school is no longer viable. “Mothballing” would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school and would prevent the community from developing options for the future use of the accommodation. The Council would also be burdened with the costs of maintaining a “mothballed” building.
- 7.2 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 mothballing as a realistic alternative to closure, and informal engagement with the community supports this view.
- 7.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.

Option 2 - Re-Opening of Struan Primary School with its Current Catchment Area

- 8.1 For the 2022-23 school session, there are no pupils of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school, excepting a small number who attend other schools voluntarily, either on placing requests or to attend Gaelic Medium Education. The issue of GME is considered at Option 4 below.
- 8.2 Taking all of the above into account, the Council’s review suggests there is no possibility of re-opening the school at the present time. Longer-term projections suggest there is no prospect of the roll recovering to a level that would justify re-opening the school.

Option 3 - Re-Opening of Struan Primary School with an Expanded Catchment Area

- 9.1 The Struan PS catchment is linked by road to three other primary school catchments. In one direction the Struan catchment extends very close to the catchment area of Carbost Primary School, a small rural school with a current roll of 22, located 10.9 miles from Struan Primary. The Struan catchment could not be extended towards Carbost without encompassing pupils who live much closer to Carbost than to Struan. It would not be reasonable to expect children from Carbost itself to travel 11 miles to Struan for their primary education, and therefore not reasonable to alter this catchment boundary in favour of Struan PS.

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- 9.2 To the northwest the next school to Struan is Dunvegan Primary, a small rural school with a current roll of 46, located 8.8 miles from Struan PS. The first community within the Dunvegan catchment is at Balmeanach. Whilst this community is marginally closer to Struan, transferring it to the Struan catchment would not materially affect the total roll at that school. At the time of writing there are no P1-7 pupils from Balmeanach.
- 9.3 Altering the catchment of Dunvegan PS in favour of Struan would of course require a statutory consultation in its own right. Taking all the circumstances into account, it would not be appropriate to alter this catchment boundary in favour of Struan Primary School.
- 9.4 In an easterly direction, Struan is linked to Portree Primary School over a narrow mountain road that travels 11 miles over uninhabited upland. The journey times is around 25 minutes one-way. There is no population on this route until Glengrasco, located approximately 8.4 miles (19 minutes) from Struan but only 2.3 miles (6 minutes) from Portree. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to alter this catchment boundary in favour of Struan PS.

Option 4 – Re-opening Struan PS as a School offering Gaelic Medium Education

- 10.1 As mentioned above, Struan Primary School has never offered GME. A very small number of children from the area currently attend Dunvegan PS in order to access GME. However, the number of children concerned does not meet the criteria of five that would generate a GMPE assessment under the terms of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, and no such request has ever been received.
- 10.2 There is a well-known national shortage of Gaelic Medium teachers at the present time. A recent attempt by Highland to introduce GME at Applecross Primary in Wester Ross foundered due to a lack of applicants for the post, and in general Highland Council struggles to staff its already extensive provision of GME.
- 10.3 The Portree High School Associated School Group (ASG) is well-provisioned with GME at the present time. Six of the fourteen primary schools within the ASG already offer GME, as does Portree High School. In terms of expanding GME, Highland Council intends to prioritise schools where parents have actively requested a GMPE assessment.
- 10.4 The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education is clear that all Local Authorities, irrespective of whether GME is available, must promote GME appropriately. Within the local geographical context of Struan Primary, there would be consideration of existing GME provision as there is reasonable travelling distance to Dunvegan in the case of a GMPE request.
- 10.4 Lack of pupil numbers would however be the most significant barrier to re-opening Struan Primary as a school offering GME.

Educational Benefits

- 11.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland. 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.
- 11.2 Highland Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing its' school estate:
- Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
 - Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
 - Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
 - Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
 - Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural council area such as Highland.
 - School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
 - School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
 - Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
 - Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
 - The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
 - Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built-up community.
- 11.3 As mentioned above, evidence gathered by Highland Council to date suggests that there is no realistic prospect of a viable roll at Struan PS. Currently there are no pupils in the P1-7 age group within the Struan catchment, excepting the small number who attend other schools voluntarily. Any individual pupils who might be in the area would suffer educational detriment from attending a school by themselves or perhaps with one other pupil.
- 11.4 Currently, Dunvegan Primary School and Carbost Primary School are managed by a single Head Teacher as part of a "cluster" arrangement. There is thus a commonality of approach to learning and teaching within the two schools.
- 11.5 Children at both Dunvegan PS and Carbost PS regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of a re-opened Struan 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

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groups. A very small roll would also limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.

- 11.6 A larger school roll makes it easier for the school to attract visiting speakers, tutors and other external partners to work with the children. In many cases external partners look for a certain threshold in the number of children they will be working with.
- 11.7 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 11.8 The existence of pre-school classes at Dunvegan PS and Carbost PS enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 11.9 The language programmes at Dunvegan PS and Carbost PS aims to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills. Listening is developed by games, stories, radio & television programmes, music, and use of ICT. The school aims to develop fluency and clarity of expression and to extend vocabulary. Talking is developed by role playing, mime, reporting, interviewing etc. They are also used for the teaching of French and Gaelic, which are 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.
- 11.10 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills, including team working, leadership and working with others. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition would very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 11.11 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.
- 11.12 As with sports, the larger rolls at Dunvegan and Carbost provides a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of group musical and artistic opportunities, events that are more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers.
- 11.13 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

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pupil being enabled to be part of an age-appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.

- 11.14 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Struan Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at Dunvegan and Carbost. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities, and socialisation, can all benefit from the greater numbers that are available. Conversely, the roll of a re-opened Struan Primary School would be insufficient to keep the school viable.

Re-allocation of Struan PS Catchment

12.1 A map of the current Struan, Dunvegan and Carbost catchments is Appendix D.

12.2 In the event that Struan Primary School closes, there are 3 options for re-allocating school catchment:

- i. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Dunvegan Primary School
- ii. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Carbost Primary School
- iii. Split the current catchment between the two schools. One option would be to draw the Carbost /Dunvegan School Catchment boundary along the same line as the boundary between Minginish and Dunvegan Community Councils

12.3 Option iii above has the disadvantage that very few houses are included in the area between the current and proposed Carbost school catchment boundaries.

12.4 For Gaelic Medium purposes, the Struan PS catchment is included with the Gaelic Medium catchment of Dunvegan Primary School. There would be merit in aligning the GM and EM catchments.

12.5 Taking the above into account, Highland Council proposes that the Struan PS catchment should be transferred entirely to that of Dunvegan Primary School, upon the closure of Struan. The Council would however welcome views on this aspect of the proposal.

12.6 A map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix E**.

Effect of Differing Transport Arrangements

13.1 Currently, there are no P1-7 pupils within the Struan PS catchment except a small number who attended other schools prior to mothballing. Therefore, no differing transport arrangement would need to be applied in the event Struan PS is closed.

13.2 The travel time between Struan PS and Dunvegan PS is approximately 14 minutes (source: Google Maps) whilst the travel time from Struan PS to Carbost PS is approximately 18 minutes. Both figures are well within the normal range for the Highland Council area.

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- 13.3 The closure of the school would not at present result in any additional CO₂e emissions arising from transport. Any that arise in the future would be negligible, and would in any case be set against the annual emissions of over 32 tonnes that could be expected from the Struan Primary School building itself were it operational.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 14.1 As the school is already “mothballed” there will be no impact on school management arrangements at Dunvegan PS or Carbost PS from a formal closure of Struan Primary School.
- 14.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements.

Effect on the Local Community

- 15.1 Unlike many communities, Struan does not have a village hall or community centre. The school building therefore represents an important public space, and the only practical location for community meetings.
- 15.2 Since the school was mothballed in April, the Struan Community Council have been active users of the building, and took over the management of the school building in January 2023, with an interim lease setting out the detailed arrangements. The community are interested in securing the future of the building in a way that will benefit local people.
- 15.3 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.

Financial Consequences

- 16.1 The Table at **Appendix F** 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.
- 16.2 The table does not include property costs that would arise if Struan PS were to become operational once more. At the present time this figure can only be a very rough estimate.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 17.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality areas:
- Disability
 - Gender

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

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

Rural Impact Assessment

- 18.1 Struan PS, Carbost PS and Dunvegan 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 April 2022. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.
- 18.2 The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Struan to Dunvegan, a distance of 8.8 miles.
- 18.3 As set out in Section 11 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.
- 18.4 The maximum additional travel time for school pupils from the Struan PS site to Dunvegan is 14 minutes (source: Google Maps). As school transport is provided by the Council, the proposal would not be expected to have any impact on accessibility to education or on fuel poverty.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 19.1 As there are currently no pupils within the Struan PS catchment who were already attending other schools on either placing requests or to attend GME, no adverse effects arise.

Recommendation

- 20.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Struan Primary School, currently “mothballed,” is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Dunvegan Primary School.
- 20.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority’s procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report

Appendix A

and submissions received will be presented to the Education Committee of the Highland Council.

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER