

Mr Ian Jackson
Education Officer
Highland Council

1st May 2024

Dear Mr Jackson,

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF
EDUCATION AT DUROR PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

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

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

The school itself is in s a state of good repair, despite the claims made in the outdated report and its location on the National Cycle Network offers the children the opportunity for regular exercise, as well as carbon-free travel to and from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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully,

Kay Duffy

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