

## 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>

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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.

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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

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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.

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- 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.

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- 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

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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.

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- 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

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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.

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- 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**