

**From:** Caroline Hamilton <chair@tkcc.scot>  
**Sent on:** Saturday, February 3, 2024 11:32:55 AM  
**To:** Ian Jackson (Resources) <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>  
**CC:** Mhairi MacDonald (Area Education West) <Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: Kinlochewe Primary School

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Dear Ian,

I refer to your e-mail below of 4<sup>th</sup> December regarding the future of Kinlochewe Primary School. This was discussed by Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) at our meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January. Present at the meeting (held by Zoom) were 3 parents of primary and pre-primary school age children. The following reflects the views they expressed and those of TKCC.

A school is a vital part of a community and without a school it is very difficult to attract young people to live there. However, it was acknowledged that this consultation is happening because over the last few years parents have taken their children out of the school and sent them to school elsewhere. For the school to have a viable future would depend, in part, on parents bringing their children back to the school, which they may not want to do. It would also depend on the parents of children approaching school age choosing to place their children in the school. TKCC understands that there are currently around 12-13 children, toddlers and babies in Kinlochewe. The parents of school age children are being consulted about the future of the school, but the parents of pre-school children, and those thinking of having children, should be too. In the past Kinlochewe Primary School has taken pupils from as far afield as Achnasheen and Badavanich, Letterewe Estate, Loch Maree Hotel and Talladale. In its consultation, HC should also seek the views of residents in those areas.

TKCC understands that the condition of the buildings at Kinlochewe Primary is poor and that they are unlikely to last long in their mothballed state. While some attending the meeting suggested that no decision should be taken on the future of the school for some time, a delay is likely to lead to a significant deterioration in the state of the buildings. On balance, TKCC consider that Highland Council should come to a decision sooner than later, always allowing for proper consultation. If the decision is to re-open the school, this will limit the extent of remedial work needed. If the decision is to move towards closure and disposal of the site, it will maintain the value of the buildings.

As regards re-zoning, TKCC acknowledges that this is a contentious issue and that Kinlochewe looks to both Gairloch and Torridon/Shieldaig. The village is in the historic parish of Gairloch and children of secondary school age attend Gairloch High School. On the other hand, medical cover is provided by Torridon Medical Practice which also covers Shieldaig and the surrounding area and TKCC's own boundaries reflect the connections between the village and the communities to the west of it. In considering how the catchment should be re-zoned (should this become necessary), Highland Council should remember that this is a matter that will affect the whole community and will have a bearing on whether the village leans more to Gairloch or to Torridon and Shieldaig. Any consultation on re-zoning should therefore involve the community as a whole. The potential receiving schools should also be consulted. TKCC understands that Shieldaig has been approached, but it is unclear if a similar approach has been made to Gairloch Primary.

The catchment of Shieldaig Primary now extends from Diabaig round Loch Torridon to north Applecross. While it has a good number of pupils at present, that may not always be the case and it would be disastrous for many communities if Shieldaig Primary were to close. To include Kinlochewe in its catchment may help secure the position of Shieldaig, this would make a significant difference for Shieldaig Primary and avoid the risk that pupils from outlying areas such as Diabaig would have to travel even further than they do at present. Gairloch Primary is unlikely to face such risks.

Travel arrangements should also be considered. Although Shieldaig Primary is a little closer to Kinlochewe than Gairloch, the travel times are similar. Highland Council should also remember that it may not be appropriate for a child of as young as four to share transport with teenagers. Separate arrangements for primary school pupils may be required whether they are travelling to Shieldaig or to Gairloch.

I should add that TKCC welcomes the fact the Highland Council is having this conversation at an early stage and has invited the community to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Hamilton

Chair – Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council