

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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

Gairloch Primary School, Gairloch, IV21 2BP
Shieldaig Primary School, Shieldaig, IV54 8XN

and published on the Highland Council website:

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

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

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 Gairloch Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) Parents/carers of pupils attending Shieldaig Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (iii) The Parent Council of Gairloch Primary School.
- (iv) The Parent Council of Shieldaig Primary School
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (vi) Staff of Gairloch Primary School.
- (vii) Staff of Shieldaig Primary School
- (viii) Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council
- (ix) Gairloch Community Council
- (x) Shieldaig Community Council
- (xi) Garve and District Community Council
- (xii) 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 13 January 2025 and will end on 28 February 2025. 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 28 January 2025 at Kinlochewe Village Hall. 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

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.

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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, 28 February 2025 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 10 March 2025, 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 28 March 2025. 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 August 2025, prior to submission to the Education Committee in September 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.

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

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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 Kinlochewe 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 Kinlochewe 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 Kinlochewe catchment (Section 13 below).

Reasons for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - Kinlochewe PS has been mothballed since the summer of 2022, after the school roll fell to zero. 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. (Kinlochewe Primary School has never offered GME).
 - Consequently, no children have attended the school since the end of June 2022.
 - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 In December 2023 the Highland Council contacted local parents and the local community council to gather views about the future of the school. These were informal views gathered as part of pre-consultation. The only views received in response suggested that it would be appropriate to move to a full closure consultation to gain the views of the wider community.
- 2.3 The Community Council expressed the view that 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, they also acknowledged that 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. The community council recognized that the condition of the buildings at Kinlochewe Primary is poor and that they are unlikely to last long in their mothballed state.

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While some members suggested that no decision should be taken on the future of the school for some time, a delay would likely to lead to a significant deterioration in the state of the buildings. On balance, the community council considered 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.

- 2.4 Only one parent responded to the pre-consultation contacts, suggesting that the beginning of any formal consultation should be put on hold for six months and then reviewed. The reason was that there are a number of houses in the village that were either on the market or will shortly be on the market. This delay was agreed, but since there has been no evidence of any new demand to re-open Kinlochewe Primary School

Current Details – Kinlochewe Primary School

- 3.1 Kinlochewe Primary School is located in the village of the same name, which has a resident population of about 60. The school's catchment covers a wide but very rural area, which also encompasses the village of Achnasheen, (resident population about 30).

When last in operation Kinlochewe PS was managed by a Head Teacher who oversaw both Kinlochewe and Shieldaig Primary Schools. The cluster arrangements have since been revised and would require to be reviewed again in the event that Kinlochewe Primary were to re-open.

- 3.2 The school has been mothballed since the end of June 2022 after placing requests reduced the school roll to zero. Most of the children from the catchment area now attend Gairloch Primary School, though a small number attend Shieldaig Primary.
- 3.3 There were no nursery children at Kinlochewe 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.
- 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, Kinlochewe Primary School was rated as "C" for the educational suitability of the building and "C" for building condition.

Current Details – Gairloch Primary School

- 4.1 Gairloch Primary School is located in the village of the same name, and is co-located with Gairloch High School. It is classed as a "very remote" rural

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school. It provides education in both English (EM) and Gàidhlig (GM). Its English Medium catchment encompasses a wide area of Wester Ross, including communities along the coast from Redpoint to Melvaig. The Gàidhlig Medium catchment covers a still wider area, including the EM catchments of Poolewe Primary, Bualnaluib Primary and Kinlochewe Primary.

- 4.2 The school has a school hall, a library, a garden with vegetable beds, playgrounds with soft surfaces and tarmac, as well as access to the Gairloch High School playing field. There is no kitchen, but children eat lunch in the High School canteen.
- 4.3 The 2024-25 roll is 49 pupils within P1-7. There are 36 pupils in English Medium education, in two classes, and 13 in Gàidhlig Medium education, in a single class. There are a further 13 children across the two nursery classes.
- 4.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 124. The 2022-23 roll of 49 therefore represents 40% use of capacity.
- 4.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Gairloch PS is contained within the document attached at **Appendix B**, whilst a copy of the Council's methodology for calculating the forecasts can be found at **Appendix C**.
- 4.6 It can be seen from Appendix B that the roll at Gairloch Primary School is forecast to remain at roughly the current figure for the next decade.
- 4.7 The present Gairloch Primary School building is rated as “B” for educational suitability and “B” for Condition.
- 4.8 In the last 3 school sessions, there were 8 placing requests to join Gairloch Primary School, and 0 requests to leave.

Current Details – Shieldaig Primary School

- 5.1 Shieldaig Primary School is also a “very remote” rural school. It has a large catchment which now extends across both sides of Loch Torridon.
- 5.2 The school building dates from well over one hundred years ago, but in 2022 the conversion of the School House into a purpose built Nursery accommodation was completed. There are two classrooms, a Nursery room, a school kitchen, an office and several toilets. Within the classrooms and nursery there are interactive whiteboards. Adjacent to the school, there is an enclosed grassy playground, plus the Community Association football pitch and multi-use games area, which are located directly behind the school. These areas are all used by the children during outdoor breaks and P.E. The local church hall is also used for P.E. and as a performance venue.
- 5.3 The 2024-25 roll is 26 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 6 children in the nursery class.
- 5.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 46. The 2024-25 roll of 26 therefore represents 57% use of capacity.

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- 5.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Shildaig PS is contained within the document attached at **Appendix B**.
- 5.6 In recent years Shildaig Primary has experienced a markedly rising roll. This is expected to decline to 13 pupils in 2030 and thereafter to rise slightly to 17.
- 5.7 The Shildaig Primary School building is rated as “B” for educational suitability and “B” for Condition.
- 5.8 In the last three school sessions, there were 2 placing requests to join Shildaig Primary School, and none to leave.

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 Kinlochewe PS with its current catchment area.
 - iii. To re-open Kinlochewe PS with an expanded catchment area.
 - iv. To re-open Kinlochewe PS as a school offering Gaelic Medium Education.
- 6.2 There are no forecast housing deliveries in the Council’s current Housing Land Audit (which contains sites of 4 or more either with planning permission or housing land allocations). In the last 5 years, planning permissions for 4 individual houses have been permitted.
- 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 low number of children in the Kinlochewe PS catchment, combined with the low level of parental demand for a school in the community, 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, would lead to a deterioration in the building, 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

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as a realistic alternative to closure.

- 7.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.

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

- 8.1 For the 2024-25 school session, the Council is not aware of any children of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school, whose parents would wish them to attend a re-opened Kinlochewe Primary. 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 Kinlochewe Primary School with an Expanded Catchment Area

- 9.1 The Kinlochewe PS catchment covers a wide area, just over 161 square miles in total. To the east, its nearest neighbour is Strathgarve Primary (part of the Dingwall ASG), but Strathgarve is itself a tiny rural school with a total roll in single figures. To the west the nearest schools are Gairloch Primary and Shieldaig Primary, but although both schools have wide catchment areas, there is no significant population in either catchment beyond the two central communities. Widening the Kinlochewe PS catchment would not solve the issues around low roll that led to the school being mothballed.

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

- 10.1 As mentioned above, Kinlochewe Primary School has never offered Gaelic Medium education. Children from the area may attend Gairloch PS in order to access GME. However, the number of children concerned does not meet the criteria of five that would require 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. In terms of expanding GME, Highland Council intends to prioritize schools where parents have actively requested a GMPE assessment.
- 10.3 Lack of pupil numbers would however be a significant barrier to re-opening Kinlochewe 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.
- 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 Kinlochewe PS. Currently there are no pupils in the P1-7 age group within the Kinlochewe catchment, excepting those 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 Children at both Gairloch PS and Shildaig PS regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of a re-opened Kinlochewe 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.
- 11.5 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.

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- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 The existence of pre-school classes at Gairloch PS and Shialdaig PS enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 11.8 The language programmes at Gairloch PS and Shialdaig PS aim 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.
- 11.9 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.
- 11.9 As with sports, the larger rolls at Gairloch and Shialdaig 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.
- 11.10 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.
- 11.11 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Kinlochewe Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at Gairloch and Shialdaig. 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 Kinlochewe Primary School would be insufficient to keep the school viable.

Re-allocation of Kinlochewe PS Catchment

- 12.1 A map of the current Kinlochewe PS catchment is attached as Appendix D.
- 12.2 In the event that Kinlochewe Primary School closes, there are 2 options for re- allocating school catchment:
 - i. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Gairloch Primary School
 - ii. Transfer the catchment wholly to that of Shialdaig Primary School

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- 12.3 The distances and travel times between the schools is:
- Kinlochewe PS – Gairloch Primary School – 20.3 miles, 31 minutes
Kinlochewe PS – Shildaig Primary School – 17.5 miles, 36 minutes
- 12.4 It can be seen from the above that the travel times are not dissimilar, with Shildaig being slightly nearer in distance terms but slightly further in travel time, due to the nature of the route.
- 12.5 Pupils from Kinlochewe already travel to Gairloch High School when they transfer to secondary education, and the High School is co-located with Gairloch Primary. Merging the Kinlochewe PS catchment with that of Gairloch Primary would therefore be more efficient in transport terms, and would involve less cost to the taxpayer. Pupils might also have the opportunity to travel on the same transport as older siblings.
- 12.6 For Gaelic Medium purposes, the Kinlochewe PS catchment is included with the Gaelic Medium catchment of Gairloch Primary School. There would be merit in aligning the GM and EM catchments.
- 12.7 During informal consultation, the local community council argued it may be more appropriate for the Kinlochewe PS catchment to be merged with that of Shildaig, should the school close. 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 Shildaig and the surrounding area and TKCC's own boundaries reflect the connections between the village and the communities to the west of it. Since the closure of Torridon Primary, the catchment of Shildaig Primary now extends from Diabaig round Loch Torridon to north Applecross. Whilst it has a good number of pupils at present, the community council argue that may not always be the case and it would be disastrous for many communities if Shildaig Primary were to close. To include Kinlochewe in its catchment may help secure the position of Shildaig, this would make a significant difference for Shildaig Primary and avoid the risk that pupils from outlying areas would have to travel even further than they do at present. Gairloch Primary is unlikely to face such risks.
- 12.7 At present some children from Kinlochewe attending Gairloch Primary School where others attend Shildaig. Parents seem to have different preferences on which school would be more appropriate for Kinlochewe children to attend.
- 12.8 Taking the above into account, Highland Council proposes that the Kinlochewe PS catchment should be transferred to that of Gairloch Primary School, upon the closure of Kinlochewe. The Council would however welcome views on this aspect of the proposal.
- 12.9 A map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix E**, whilst **Appendix F** shows a map of the new catchment, should the Kinlochewe catchment be merged with that of Shildaig rather than Gairloch.

Effect of Differing Transport Arrangements

- 13.1 Currently, all of the pupils within the Kinlochewe PS catchment attend other schools. Therefore, no differing transport arrangements would need to be applied in the event Kinlochewe PS is formally closed.
- 13.2 The travel times between Kinlochewe Primary and its neighbouring schools are set out at paragraph 12.3 above.
- 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 that could be expected from the Kinlochewe 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 Gairloch PS or Shieldaig PS from a formal closure of Kinlochewe 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 Kinlochewe has an existing village hall, and so will retain a public space even if the school were to close.
- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 It is often argued that a school closure has a detrimental impact on the community in terms of attracting new families. This issue was considered by the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, set up by the Scottish Government, and which reported in 2014. The Commission noted that a school alone cannot sustain a rural community. Other issues are likely to be as critical to maintaining a working age population. The two most important were jobs and housing. As the Commission noted, without employment opportunities and affordable housing, families can neither move to an area nor remain there. While local schools are strongly desirable in a similar way to local healthcare and a local post office, it seems likely that rural communities generally manage to tolerate travelling a further distance to school. The Commission's review of the scientific and other literature on school closures “found there was 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.”

Financial Consequences

- 16.1 The Table at **Appendix G** 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 Kinlochewe PS were to become operational once more. At the present time this figure can only be a very rough estimate.

Impact Assessments

- 17.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached at **Appendix H**.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 18.1 As there are currently no pupils within the Kinlochewe Primary School catchment not already attending other schools on either placing requests or to attend GME, no adverse effects arise.

Recommendation

- 19.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Kinlochewe Primary School, currently "mothballed," is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Gairloch Primary School.
- 19.2 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