

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to establish a new primary school to serve the Tornagrain housing development

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 establish a new primary school east of Inverness to serve the Tornagrain housing development.
- To amend the delineated area (catchment area) of the current Croy Primary School, in order to create the catchment area for the new school.

If the new school is approved as a result of this consultation, it is envisaged it will open for the beginning of the 2027-28 school session.

In this paper, the new school will be referred to by the provisional name of "Tornagrain Primary School". In the event that the new school is approved, the final name of the school will be subject to detailed consultation with stakeholders.

It is proposed that the delineated area of Tornagrain Primary School will be as shown at **Appendix B** attached.

A map showing the proposed catchment area of the new Tornagrain Primary and revised Croy Primary catchment is at **Appendix B**. This paper invites comments on the proposed catchment as well as the proposed new school.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Croy Primary School,
- Culloden Library, Keppoch Rd, Culloden, Inverness IV2 7LL

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from

Business Support Team (South and HQ)
Highland Council HQ
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
E-mail: 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 Business Support Team (South and HQ) Highland Council HQ, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX. 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 of pupils attending Croy Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils
- (ii) The Parent Council of Croy Primary School
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal
- (iv) Staff of Croy Primary School
- (vi) Trade union representatives
- (vii) Croy and Culloden Moor Community Council
- (ix) Education Scotland
- (x) Highland Youth Convener.

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 begin on Monday 23 September 2024 and will end on Friday 22 November 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, the details of which are set out below:

Tuesday 8 October 2024 at Croy Primary School, at 6.30pm.

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 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. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be 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:

Business Support (HQ and South)

Highland Council HQ

Glenurquhart Road

Inverness

IV3 5NX

E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, a link to which can be found on

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 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, Friday 22 November 2024 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 2 December 2024, a copy of any relevant 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 20 December 2024. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Further Consultation

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 as well as 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, 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.

Timescale Following Consultation

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in March 2025, prior to submission to the Education Committee in May 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 Education Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

If approved, the Proposal will then move to the implementation phase. A Stakeholder Group will be established to act as a formal forum for the dissemination of information relating to this development, and to ensure that there is an effective two-way flow of information between the Group and the Council, Project Team and Contractor (once appointed). The Group will also have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the Council's proposals in relation to the new school. It is anticipated that the requirements of design, planning permission and build will require a further 30-36 months after the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

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 HMI will be advised.

PROPOSAL PAPER

- 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). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.
- 1.2 A statutory consultation on this proposal is required under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the following grounds:
- i. Proposal to establish a new school;
 - ii. Proposal to alter the catchment area of a school or schools.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced because on current projections the pupil numbers at Croy Primary School will exceed the school's capacity within the foreseeable future. The capacity issue arises from the construction of a new housing development at Tornagrain. A map showing the proposed site of the new school, can be found at **Appendix C**.
- 2.2 The consultation process, together with the planning process, and the design and construction of the new school, is likely to take at least 3 years. Additional modular accommodation will be installed as required at Croy Primary in the intervening period. This accommodation will be an interim measure and will not offer a long-term solution to the capacity issues that will arise at Croy Primary.

Current Details – Croy Primary School

- 3.1 Croy Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village of the same name, to the east of Inverness. There has been a school in the village since 1872, and the current building dates from 1998.
- 3.2 The main building has 5 teaching rooms, 3 of which are designated as primary classrooms and 2 as nursery rooms. There is also a single court games hall, kitchen and dining area, staff room, and administration and medical rooms. Following the increased house building in the local area, a 2-classroom modular unit has been added on site, both currently used as primary school classes. It is planned to install a new 2-classroom modular unit before August 2025. A grass outdoor area provides space for sports and the tarmac quadrangle in the centre of the school grounds can be used for playground games and other activities. There is a basketball court at the edge of the playing field and

an Adventure Trail. There are other grassy areas, which have picnic benches for the children, a 'bottle' greenhouse, an outdoor classroom and a school garden which is looked after by the pupils.

- 3.3 At the time of writing, the P1-7 roll for the 2024-25 session is anticipated to be 119 pupils. Without the construction of a new Tornagrain Primary, current roll projections for future years are as follows, taking account of the estimated impact of the new housing development:

2025-26	- 134
2026-27	- 154
2027-28	- 176
2028-29	- 198
2029-30	- 200
2030-31	- 209
3031-32	- 215
2032-33	- 221
2033-34	- 232
2034-35	- 243
2035-36	- 252
2036-37	- 277
3037-38	- 291

- 3.5 The school had a permanent planning capacity of 100 at the start of the current school session, with an anticipated roll of 119 at the time of writing. A modular two classroom unit has been installed at the school to provide additional accommodation to address the immediate pressures, but further modular units will be required in the coming years as the roll continues to grow.
- 3.6 The added capacity at the school, when completed, will provide for 7 primary and 2 nursery classes. Seven primary classrooms provide a capacity of up to 198, which on present projections will be reached in 2028-29. It is possible the school may experience accommodation issues earlier, should an individual year group exceed the class size maximum.
- 3.7 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, in line with the Scottish Government's School Estate Management guidelines. School buildings are assessed on a scale with the ratings "A" (good) "B" (satisfactory), "C" (poor) and "D" (bad). The accommodation at Croy Primary School is currently rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for building condition.

Proposed New School

- 4.1 The new school would be of modern design, environmentally efficient, and allowing pupils the opportunity to enjoy a comfortable, naturally lit and well-ventilated environment designed to meet the needs of modern learners and teachers; meeting the requirements for "A" assessments for both Suitability and Condition; and influenced by good practice elsewhere.

- 4.2 The site for the new school is capable of accommodating a 16-classroom building. Since the roll of the school will build gradually, it is likely to be an 8-classroom school when it opens, with extensions being added as required. Extensions would be constructed in 4-classroom blocks.
- 4.3 Pre-school accommodation would be provided, and the pre-school accommodation would be suitable for use by breakfast clubs and after-school clubs, should any be created.
- 4.4 It would be important to include a degree of flexibility and adaptability within the design in order to provide options to alter spaces in the future in response to the changing needs of the school. This approach would optimise the use of available space.
- 4.5 The needs of every child would be placed at the centre of developing the design in recognition of the transitions from pre-school to primary and ultimately to secondary education. The design would be planned to enable the flexibility required to meet the evolving needs of the school curriculum and other developments, including:
- The Pre School educational area having sufficient space to accommodate a variety of activities to support early years learning, together with close internal links with the infant department in order to encourage regular collaborative learning through active play and to enhance the transition between pre-school and Primary 1.
 - Learning and teaching spaces for primary age pupils which have access to internal shared activity areas and external teaching spaces which provide flexibility and opportunities to maximise the use of space inside and outside the building.
 - HT office, reception/admin office, staff room, and meeting room/staff base.
 - Kitchen with dining area.
 - Games hall with changing facilities (potentially accessible to community outwith school hours).
 - Grass playing field, and Multi-use Games Area.
 - A variety of other spaces to support activities within the school, including general purpose space and spaces specifically designed for pupils with Additional Support Needs.
 - Design which will maximise the use of natural daylight and natural ventilation, together with heating, ventilation and electrical systems which provide modern requirements in an energy efficient and sustainable manner.

- The landscaping around the school will be designed in conjunction with the school users to ensure that there is an interesting “play and learning” environment.
 - Safe access to the school with the appropriate arrangements for those arriving/departing on foot, by bicycle, by bus or by car.
- 4.6. The above overview provides an outline of the design opportunities that exist taking into account recent experience with similar primary school projects elsewhere within Highland. These opportunities will be developed in conjunction with the school communities to ensure that the new school design takes account of the aspirations of future users of the facility.
- 4.7 The Scottish Government’s Climate Change Policy specifies that new buildings should be nearly zero in terms of carbon emissions. The Council’s expectation is that the new school would have a Carbon Dioxide equivalent impact of about 15 tonnes per year at most.

Educational Benefits

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the above indicators in reviewing its school estate:
1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
 2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
 3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
 4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
 5. 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.
 6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
 7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
 8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
 9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
 10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
 11. Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built up community.

- 5.3 The projected rolls at paragraph 3.3 indicate that the new school is required in order to address point 6 of the Highland Council criteria “*School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.*” The Tornagrain housing development means that in future Croy Primary will no longer meet this criterion. There is a need for a new school to balance the number of children in the area with the facilities that are available.
- 5.4 If the new school be constructed, the Council would expect the roll of Croy Primary to gradually fall back to the level before the Tornagrain development started. The modular units will be retained as long as they are necessary, but would be removed if they became redundant.
- 5.5 The roll projections provide an overwhelming case for the construction of a new school. It is clear that without a new school in the area, Croy Primary, and possibly other local schools, would be faced with an unmanageable level of overcrowding.
- 5.6 It is of course impossible to predict future school rolls with complete accuracy. Much will depend on the pace of housebuilding in the area. The projections shown are also partly based on the past pattern of local placing requests, but this pattern could itself be changed by the construction of the new schools.
- 5.7 By alleviating future capacity pressures expected to arise at Croy Primary, the proposal would improve the learning environment for the pupils of both Croy Primary and Tornagrain Primary.
- 5.8 In summary, the new school offers the possibility of educational benefit arising through averting future overcrowding at Croy Primary.

Alternative Solutions

- 6.1 In arriving at the proposal set out within this report, the Council has considered alternative solutions. However, none of the neighbouring schools have the capacity to accommodate the number of additional pupils that will arise from the new housing. It has been recognised from the outset that the housing development at Tornagrain would require the construction of the new school.
- 6.2 During informal pre-consultation, the Council explored the option of constructing the new Tornagrain School to accommodate the existing Croy Primary School. In legal terms this would represent the closure of Croy Primary School, which is classed as a rural school. Such a closure would require the approval of Scottish Ministers.
- 6.3 Informal discussions were held at a meeting with parents in December 2023. Following this, the Council issued an informal survey to local people on whether the existing Croy Primary should be merged with the new Tornagrain School, when built. The survey attracted 302 responses, including 196 from parents, 95 from “local residents”, and 8 from staff. The overall response was 57% in

favour of retaining Croy Primary School once the new Tornagrain School is built.

- 6.4 Croy Primary School is classed by the Scottish Government as a “rural school”. Such schools are subject to “special protection” under national legislation, and there is a presumption against closure of schools in this category. Amongst other criteria, a rural school may only be closed where there is no reasonable alternative to closure.
- 6.5 Taking the above factors into account, the Highland Council decided against proposing the closure of Croy Primary, in the context of creating the new school at Tornagrain.
- 6.5. The Council also considered whether Ardersier PS should be included in the option of a new merged school, but ruled this out after a desktop exercise that considered the pupil numbers involved in a 3-way merger, the geographical situation including the physical barrier of the A96, and the difficulty of establishing the lack of any reasonable alternative to the closure of this rural school.

New Catchment

- 7.1 The online survey issued as part of informal consultation offered 3 alternative catchments areas for the new school, each carved from the present Croy PS catchment.
- 7.2 The three options issued are shown at Appendices, B, Bi and Bii.
- 7.3 Of the 3 options, Appendix B gained the most votes, with Appendix Bi narrowly behind.
- 7.4 The Council therefore recommends that the catchment area for the new Tornagrain School is that shown at Appendix B.
- 7.5 The Council does however welcome views on the proposed catchment area.

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Pupils attending Croy Primary are not mostly entitled to school transport as the home to school distances are within walking distance. Appropriate arrangements would be made for any transport required for pupils due to Additional Support Needs.
- 8.2 The construction of the new school will not therefore have any significant impact on school transport.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 9.1 An appropriate management structure will be put in place at the new school, reflecting the size of the school and consistent with such arrangements

elsewhere in Highland. Consideration will be given to the need for transitional arrangements, to fully establish Tornagrain Primary.

- 9.2 The staffing arrangements for Tornagrain Primary will also be consistent with the staffing of other schools in Highland. Staffing levels will be arranged in accordance with local and national agreements, and relevant legislation.
- 9.3 At the present time the new school is too far off to be able to look at the effect on individual staff. The Council will at all times follow its redeployment policy, should there be a need to assign any staff to a new school.

Effect on the Local Community

- 10.1 The establishment of the new school provides the opportunity to improve and expand access to community facilities, within the new school, and through the continuation of the existing Croy Primary School. The scope of, and access to, community facilities would be considered through the briefing and design stage following conclusion of the Statutory Consultation.

Financial Consequences

- 11.1 The capital costs of the new Tornagrain Primary are included within the Council capital programme, approved at the meeting of the full Council held in September 2023. Revenue implications of constructing the new school will be taken account of within the Council's budget planning process.

Integrated Impact Assessment

- 12.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality areas:
- 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
- 12.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to 2 primary schools 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. The school is to be built to prevent overcrowding at Croy Primary. As such it will have a positive effect on children's wellbeing. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of school provision.

- 12.3 The proposed new school would be built to modern standards, offering disabled access for children, parents and the wider community, as well as purpose-built teaching accommodation for children with additional support needs. It would therefore have a positive impact on disability issues.
- 12.4 The new school will also be constructed to modern standards of energy efficiency. The Council's expectation is that the new build would have a CO² equivalent impact of about 15 tonnes per year at most.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 13.1 Adverse effects from the proposal could include the separation of pupils who previously attended the same school, with implications for existing friendships.
- 13.2 When Tornagrain Primary School opens, any pupils from within the delineated area of the new school already enrolled within the Nursery or P1-7 classes at Croy Primary, will be given the opportunity to enrol in the new school or to continue attending Croy Primary, without having to submit a placing request. Where the latter option is taken, this opportunity will also be extended to any younger siblings of pupils already attending Croy Primary at the time of the younger child's admission. This is to enable siblings to attend the same school.
- 13.3 Subsequent to the opening of Tornagrain Primary School, any pupils not falling within the above categories will be enrolled in their catchment school. Parents who wish their children to attend an alternative school may submit placing requests to that effect.

Recommendation

- 14.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that a new primary school is constructed to serve the Tornagrain housing development. The new school's catchment area would be as recommended at Appendix B.
- 14.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report reviewing the consultations, and the submissions received, will be presented to the Education Committee of the Highland Council.

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER