
IAN BROWN


Friday, 19 December 2014

Attn.
 Ian Jackson,
 Education Officer,
 Care and Learning Office,
 Camaghael Hostel,
 Fort William,
 PH33 7NE
 ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk

Dear Sir

Public Consultation on the Closure of Edinbane, Dunvegan, Struan and Knockbreck Primary Schools and Replacement with New School in Dunvegan.

I complained about the omission from the report presented to the public of almost all facts apart from those relating to education as I felt the closure of a school affects the whole community badly.

We can now see information presented on most of those topics in the massively extended final report and appendices.

I am pleased to see that the Capital information contrasts keeping and improving the existing schools with building a new school.




I am not so pleased to see that there is absolutely no detail to help assess the capital costs presented. [See table from your report].

SSER Skye and Lochalsh- Dunvegan statutory consultation- Table 2- Capital costs

Option 1- bring existing schools up to A/A standard	
Capital costs	£
Construction costs	7,001,035
Capital Life Cycle cost	5,128,076
Third party contributions to capital costs	0
	10,129,111

Option 2- consolidated new school at Dunvegan	
Capital costs	£
Construction costs	10,415,984
Capital Life Cycle cost	4,044,591
Third party contributions to capital costs	0
	14,460,575

While the proposed option of investment in the existing schools is welcome the level could be set to favour your argument for the single school.

You are clear that you are budgeting for 100 pupils over time.

I'm having difficulty in finding a Scottish budget cost per square metre for new schools but have made some initial assumptions to flesh out your figures.

Construction, New School: Say £2500 per square metre so the new school will be at least 4150 square metres, at least 41.5 square metres per child with 100 pupils!

Renovation and extension, Existing Schools: Allowing £1500 per square metre the budget allows for 4650 square metres of schools to be renovated and extended. That is 465 linear metres of buildings if they were 10 metres wide. 46.5 square metres per child. Much, much more than the area of the existing buildings involved.

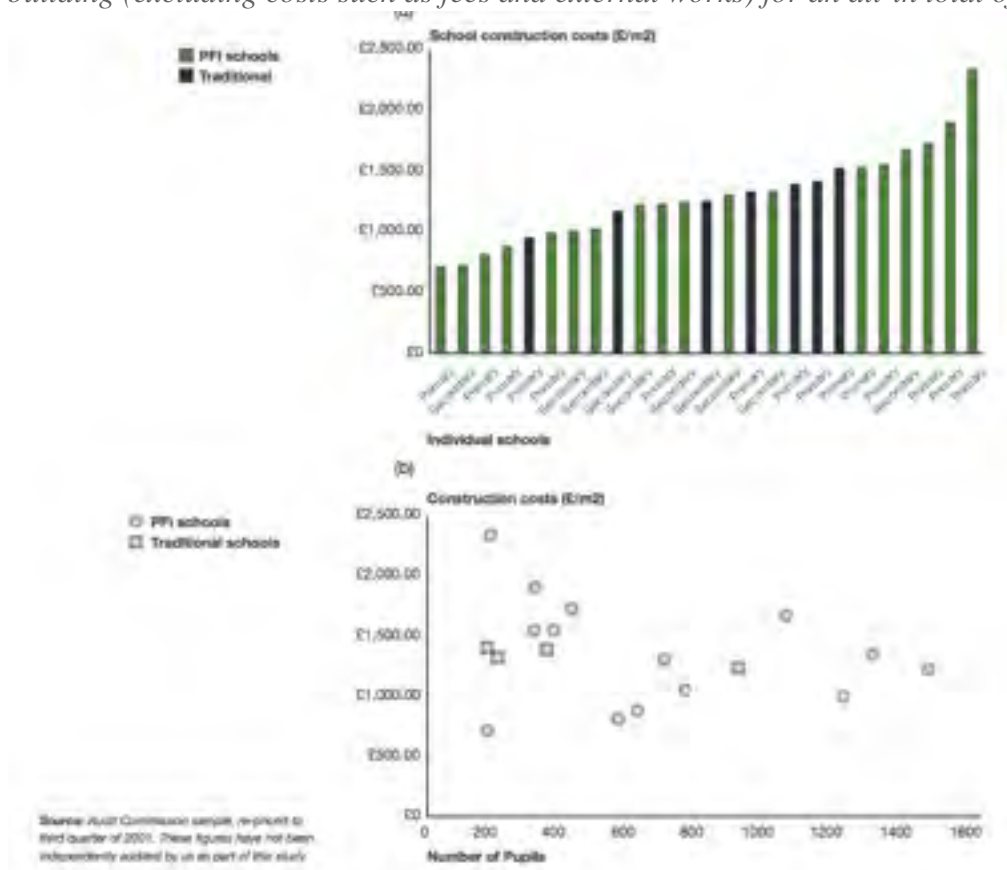
I think it looks like the argument is stacked in favour of the conclusion you wish to reach.

However, as public sentiment appears to favour retention of the existing schools a reduced budget for this may well find favour with the parents in these areas and also in Dunvegan. This would allow a scheme which is cheaper all round and does not have the adverse effect on the community which Glendale residents reported at the public meeting on the school closure plan.

I have copied this widely as I feel councillors need to be primed to consider the costings and options, not just the one option which you are promoting. Some made their choice in favour of the original report which had no Capital cost information at all!

Information on Building Costs.

The following related to England as of October 2012 'Contractors will be expected to build schools designed to a maximum cost/square metre price of £1,113/sq m for the school building (excluding costs such as fees and external works) for an all-in total of £1,465/ sq m'



The attachment shows more historic school building prices.

Yours Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Ian Brown

cc. Chair, Education Committee, Mr A Christie, Alasdair.Christie.cllr@highland.gov.uk
Frances MacLean, Chair Edinbane Parent Teacher Association, 

A black rectangular redaction box covering a line of text.

Mathew and Deborah Bradshaw

09/01/2015

c/o Ian Jackson
Education Officer
Care and Learning Office
Camaghael Hostel
Ft William
PH33 7NE

To whom it may concern,

Re: Proposal to close Knockbreck, Struan, Edinbane and Dunvegan Primary Schools, Isle of Skye

We are writing in connection to the above proposal. We are parents of a child currently in P1 at Knockbreck Primary School on Waternish, Isle of Skye. We are strongly opposed to the plan to close our local school, and creating one larger school in Dunvegan.

We have outlined below many of our concerns and why we do not want it closed. We are still waiting to be given any substantiated proof that our child will receive a better education than she does already, in a different, larger school. We are also sure that this proposal is driven by financial reasons, despite the Council 'claiming' it to be about supposed anecdotal educational benefits outlined by a consultancy firm with 'Economics' in their title.

Knockbreck is one of the best Primary Schools on Skye and scores excellent time and time again in HMIE inspections and yet the Council are seeking to close this school. The vast majority of our community are categorically against the proposed closure. We also have a son who will be two at the end of February. We would be sending him to Knockbreck for nursery and primary education as well, if the school is still open. There is a demand for a local school on Waternish and young working families in the area.

TRAVEL TIMES

- The travel time for children currently attending Knockbreck school to any new school in Dunvegan, is claimed to be 30 minutes by the Highland Council. The reality is that when you take into account the actual collection of each pupil spread around Waternish, the journey time is likely to be nearer 45 minutes to 1 hour, EACH WAY, for children as young as 4 yrs old. Not only does it not take this into account, but it does not consider the ramifications of seasonal conditions either; large sections of single track roads to navigate in winter and busier traffic in summer, not to mention the increased risk being placed upon these children by forcing them to spend so much more time on the road than necessary. Similarly, children

using Knockreck, Edinbane and Struan at present are able to walk or cycle to school in many instances, this option will be taken away from these children if any closure of the small schools is passed.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Closure of local schools will undoubtedly impact on the local community. In all areas there is strong support to keep the small schools open. On Waternish we sent a letter to all residents regarding the proposed closure of Knockbreck School. We received 97 replies which represented 67% of those issued being returned. 86% were in favour of the school staying open and 12% in favour of closure, with 2% having 'no opinion'. On many of the letters, people had taken the time to explain why they supported the school staying open for children in the area. The 'turnout' as politics like to call it, I think even the Council must agree is impressive, given short notice as well, and obviously demonstrates how important an issue this is to local people - residents that Council is supposed to represent. The Council should be aware that parents of the children at these schools, as well as the majority of people in that same area, are totally against the Council's proposal to close the small schools.

KNOCKBRECK IS AN 'EXCELLENT' SCHOOL

- Knockbreck and the other small schools in question, are inspected by HMIE who are, in our opinion, the most qualified body to make an accurate assessment and judgement upon the standard of education children are receiving. Knockbreck consistently scores EXCELLENT in terms of performance and is one of the best primary schools on Skye. We do not agree that a new, larger school and larger class sizes in Dunvegan will improve upon this standard of education and are yet to be provided with any coherent, substantiated proof that this will be the case. Caledonian Economics appear to be being taken more seriously by the Council, rather than the actual people that inspect Highland Schools in the first place.

CALEDONIAN ECONOMICS REPORT

- Caledonian Economics report appears to be treated as 'fact' by the Highland Council when in reality it lacks any substance at all in terms of statistical research, or large samples of school achievement data to back up its claim that a larger school providing 3 classes will result in a better education than children attending the kinds of smaller schools like Knockbreck, Edinbane, Dunvegan and Struan. For something so critical to children's futures, you would have thought they would have at least taken evidence in terms of how children had done in different size schools to justify their claims? Reading their report you would think that children at small schools would be in some way noticeably different to those from a larger school. If they met any of the children from a school like Knockbreck, they would see how well educated, articulate, happy and confident they are.

NEW SCHOOL ROLL AND THE THREE CLASS PRINCIPLE

- The 'three class' policy that been championed by the Council and Caledonian Economics and is also fundamental to their whole argument about improving education, is unlikely to even be achieved at a new Dunvegan School. The proposed roll at the new school does not take into account placing requests from the Edinbane and Struan catchments to McDiarmid Primary and Carbost Primary respectively. Parents have from day one told the council that their children will not attend the new school and the projected roll figure is highly optimistic

at best, in which case the new school will fail to meet the council's own policy and the whole crux of the expensive Caledonian Economics idea. It is very likely the children will simply end up in a larger composite class than they are in now.

NURSERY EDUCATION

- Removal of local nursery provision is a direct impact of closure of small local schools. The nursery stage in a child's education is extremely important and yet this appears not to be the opinion of the Highland Council despite all evidence to the contrary. By removing local nurseries, parents are forced to make a financial choice as to whether their child will go to nursery. This is happening already on Skye where nurseries at Edinbane and Struan have been lost. In these economic times, some families simply cannot afford the travel costs associated with taking children to nurseries some distance from their local community, and in other cases there is no public transport at all. The Council are undermining the ability of these rural areas to attract and retain young families, which are the life blood for an Island like Skye and also making some children miss out on the first vital step in their education.

STANDARD OF EDUCATION

- Education standards are claimed to be better under one larger school such as the one proposed in Dunvegan. If the schools are amalgamated there will actually be fewer teachers than there are currently, teaching those same children. The closure of the smaller schools will result in an increase in the ratio of pupils to teachers, which is surely completely at odds with any supposed improvement?

MAINTAINENCE OF KNOCKBRECK SCHOOL AND ITS CONDITION

- The condition (and no doubt the cost of maintaining them) of some of these traditional smaller schools is often brought up as a reason why they fall short in terms of education provision. Knockbreck for example scored below the Council's recommendation in one of the assessments a few years ago. However, despite the buildings being apparently less suitable, Knockbreck as one example, still consistently scores excellent in terms of education for children. Surely if the buildings were inadequate we would see a negative impact upon education provision, borne out in HMIE ratings? Knockbreck School incidentally has earned Green Flag status and has modern renewable technology such as solar panels and a wind turbine on site. You can have all the modern teaching facilities in the world, but in the end of the day it is the teacher that really matters and the children at the small schools are testament to that.

We hope you take the time to read our letter and understand how strongly against closing our local school we are. We see the small schools as necessary in a place like this, and more importantly they are AN ASSET, providing excellent education. If the Council votes to close them down, we feel you will be giving the go ahead to further closures of other small schools, and who knows, maybe Secondary Education will be next, and we will see children back in boarding schools away from their families. We really hope you vote to keep our local schools open for children of the families in these areas, and by doing so, put a stop to this wave of closures threatening to sweep across the Highlands.

Yours sincerely
Mathew and Deborah Bradshaw

Contact: Frances Maclean



To: Highland Council
Care and Learning Service
ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk

12 January 2015

Dear Mr Jackson

Response to Final Report on NW Skye School Proposal
Proposed Community Development Project, Edinbane

We note that the statutory consultation did not lead to any amendment of the NW Skye School Proposal. We also note that the SSER did not explore or discuss other options with communities.

As a result, we held a community meeting on 8/1/15 at Edinbane Primary School to discuss the future of the school and its building. The meeting was attended by 36 people. Following discussion, we wish to propose the following.

As background, the Edinbane Community Company (ECC) is seeking to develop affordable housing in Edinbane, and is working with the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust to take this forward. The school is an integral part of the community's development plans.

ECC requests prompt discussion with Highland Council, with a view to purchasing or leasing the building and grounds of Edinbane Primary. There is an extensive area of ground behind the school which lies in the Local Plan development zone and would be a suitable site for social housing.

ECC offers to take responsibility for the repair, maintenance and ultimate refurbishment of the school building. We request that Highland Council continues to provide an education service within the community-owned school building, while the community takes forward housing plans.

If feasible, other community initiatives might be accommodated within part of the community-owned school building (e.g. baby and toddler group) - we would like to explore this.

We realise this proposal is unprecedented. This would be a pilot project; we are happy to agree a trial period and a review date. Potentially the project provides a model for the sustainable delivery of rural education, which may be useful in other rural communities. It would also help Highland Council achieve policy on community empowerment.

By necessity, the proposal is in outline only. We would appreciate an early meeting with Council officials to discuss the project.

Yours sincerely

Edinbane Community Company
Edinbane Parent Council
Skeabost and District Community Council
Edinbane Village Hall Committee

Signed by

Derek Apps

Eleanor Apps

Philip Ashhurst

Ian Brown

Agnes Campbell

Lance Clutsom

Marsan Clutsom

Alistair Danter

Leaf Gould

Barbara Herbert

Trevor Herbert

Ruaraidh E M R Hilleary

Kathleen McCormack

Ronnie MacDonald

Alec MacFarlane

Liz MacFarlane

Mary Ann MacFarlane

Peggy MacFarlane

Roddy MacFarlane

Frances Maclean

Jim Maclean

Joan Maclean

Isobel Ann MacLeod

Katie Muir

Ross Muir

DD Nelson

Davie Nelson

Isabel Nelson

Roxanne Nelson

Fiona Oussaiden

Bob Paul

Samantha Peare

Jean Stretch

Helen Scott-Danter

Emma Shanks

Billy Shanks

Tim Spencer

Chris Whatley

Julie Whatley

Stuart Whatley

Karen Whelton

Rob Whelton

cc:

Alasdair Christie, Chair of ECAS Committee

ECAS Committee Members

Bill Alexander, Director of Care and Learning

Jim Steven, Head of Education

Brian Porter, Head of Resources

Steve Barron, Chief Executive of Highland Council

Norma Young, Area Education Office

Dave Thompson MSP

Dr Laura-Ann Currie, Education Scotland

West Highland Free Press

From: [Frances Maclean](#)
To: Laura-Ann.Currie@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk
Cc: [Jan Jackson](#)
Subject: NW Skye School proposal
Date: 12 January 2015 23:40:18

Dear Dr Currie

- a brief note regarding the Report by Education Scotland.

For the record:

1. Section 3 states that Edinbane's roll is not expected to increase beyond a maximum of six by 2027. I think this must be a mistake. Highland Council's final report shows that 21 children are forecast to be living in the Edinbane catchment by 2026 (Appendix 8). The projected roll for Edinbane primary is 12.
2. Section 2 of your report states that minutes of the public meeting were made available to stakeholders. They were not made available to Parent Councils until appended to the Final Report on 8/12/14.

Kind regards

Frances Maclean
Chair, Edinbane Parent Council

From: Davie McClymont [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 January 2015 15:01
To: Ian Jackson
Subject: knockbreck primary school, waternish

Dear Mr. Jackson,

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO BUILD A NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN DUNVEGAN, ISLE OF SKYE

I write in response to Norma Young's letter of 8th December 2014, in which she informed me of my opportunity of commenting on the proposal to close Knockbreck Primary School in Waternish, and transfer our local pupils to the planned, new school in Dunvegan. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity.

I have read the Consultation Report, and would like to thank you for having made that available locally. However, I can only say how utterly disappointing, and ill-presented a report it has proven to be. It has all the hallmarks of a bad report. It is riddled with inaccuracies: it begs many questions: it is most decidedly partial in its choice of argument: and it bases its primary finding on a totally false premise.

As you know, the community of Waternish rallied behind Knockbreck Primary School only a little over two years ago. At that time, we were fighting to save the local nursery class, and did so successfully. However, in the course of that fight, we were offered obstruction upon obstruction by Highland Council Education Department. Deliberately misleading figures were repeatedly quoted in relation to the school roll, constantly understating the actual numbers. Distances to be travelled by children, and parents, were continually misrepresented, to create the impression of how easy transport would be to the alternative facility being proffered in Dunvegan. At the time, we were given a categorical, and unequivocal, assurance by Norma Young, our Area Education Officer that there was no intention, no plan, no proposal, of closing Knockbreck Primary School, nor should we think that there was.

We now know that that that assurance was totally misleading. We now know that, at that time, Highland Council had already hired Economic Consultants to compile the required report.

In the present campaign, we find that Highland Council is repeating its tactics of the earlier exercise. The school roll, current and future, has been deliberately understated. There are now 7 pupils at the school, and there are now 13 children under the age of 5 on Waternish. The travelling distance quoted to the consultants carefully gave the distance between Knockbreck school and the

current school in Dunvegan, carefully ignoring the fact that the new school will not be built on the current site. Indeed, Highland Council's preferred site for the new facility at Lonemore is more than 2 kilometres further south.

The consultants report states that the proposal to close Knockbreck school is not an economic one, and then expounds all the economic arguments for the closure. Much is made of the savings to be made by not upgrading the existing schools, but no account is taken of the monies already spent on the upgrading and refurbishment of Knockbreck. Much of the needed investment has already been made. Specifically, the school has had solar panels installed; has had a wind turbine installed; has had a car park built; has had the required safety and security measures completed; and has had all necessary computing systems added. None of these costs have been defrayed in the report. Perhaps Highland Council omitted these facts from its brief to Economic Consultants.

But, if we take the report at its word, that the closure is to be made only on educational grounds, then it really is not worth the paper on which it is printed.

The sole argument put forward in support of this decision is that children receive a better, fuller education, only if they are taught in a school which has a minimum of three classes. I admit to being totally flummoxed by this bald assertion, never having heard this argument before. I searched in vain to find academic, or social support for this claim. I found none. I have recently been advised that the claim emanates from one of the consultants' own seminars. If this is the case, then it must be rejected as having no validity. It is not accepted practice to invent a theory, and then quote that theory, unattributed, to conclude a report.

The claim, of course, flies in the face of all evidence, ignores the proven success of every former pupil of every small school in Scotland, and elsewhere, and insults all teachers of every small school.

I will happily, here, recite the names of several former pupils of Skye schools who have progressed to world fame, and honour---John Kerr, Magnus MacLean, Robert Sangster Raitt, Sorley MacLean--all of these eminent men attended a one teacher, or two teacher school. I defy any consultant, or Highland Council Education Officer, to show any lack in the schooling of any of these successes.

But let me be specific about Knockbreck Primary School, and its educational attainment. It is the first school in Britain to have achieved 100% in 100% of subjects in an HMSO report. The "Press and Journal" has described Knockbreck as "the best school in Britain". Over the past twenty years, no school in Skye, save for Sleat Primary, has a comparable record of success from its former pupils than has Knockbreck, and Sleat has had all the advantages of its massive investments. Knockbreck students have achieved success in fields as diverse as academia, business, our Armed Forces. Waternish youngsters have gone on to be inter alia the best Economics student in Britain;

the best medical student in the University of Edinburgh; the best male graduate of the University of Glasgow; the leading student of the year in Duncan of Jordanstoune Art School in Dundee; winner of the Mathematics Medal in the University of Glasgow. Knockbreck youngsters have succeeded in fields as diverse as architecture, music, computing, oceanography, civil engineering.

It is not that our pupils are exceptional, in themselves. They are normal children of normal parents. What is exceptional is the start they have been given by their school. What is exceptional is the atmosphere in the community in which they have been raised. What is exceptional is that, at Knockbreck Primary School the abilities of each child has been recognised, the skills of each child have been developed, the enthusiasm of each child has been fostered, has been nurtured, and has borne fruit.

This has happened because of the particular circumstances prevailing in our community, where there is a continuous, symbiotic relationship between the school and the general population. That relationship must not be broken by the councillors we elect to represent our interests, and the interests of future generations. If the only consideration for or against closing our school is an academic one, then there can be only one conclusion. Our school must stay open.

Yours faithfully,

David H. McClymont

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Additional Submission Document to Meeting on 14th January 2014

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE EDUCATION PROVISION AT THE EXSITING DUNVEGAN, STRUAN, KNOCKBRECK AND EDINBANE PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND ESTABLISH A NEW AMALGAMATED PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR NORTH WEST SKYE, ON A NEW SITE IN THE VILLAGE OF DUNVEGAN

The Struan Community Council would like to make the following further comments in respect of the Proposal by The Highland Council, as noted above, I trust these comments will be taken into consideration prior to the final decision being made by both the Education, Adult and Children's Services Committee and ultimately the full Highland Council.

In respect of the responses provided by Highland Council within the Report issued subsequent to the Consultation Process, we believe these responses have not fully addressed the issues raised in our original Submission Document as follows:

Financial Information

"In respect of the Financial Information incorporated within the paper relating to the costs per pupil within the present Schools and the projected costs per pupil within the new School, it does not appear to be clear in respect of the proposal as costs for both Carbost and MacDiarmid Schools are incorporated within these figures. As neither Carbost nor MacDiarmid Schools are to be impacted by the Proposal it would seem that the figures produced should not have included these Schools, it would provide a clearer picture if only the relevant Schools Financial data had been used in this example of costings."

No answer was provided within any of the Financial Information Responses 18, 29, 36 or 39, as to why figures relating to Carbost and MacDiarmid Schools were included within the calculations provided.

Consultation Process

"The Paper indicates that the proposal was informed by an extensive engagement process, this appears to be slightly disingenuous, as in our opinion insufficient engagement was undertaken directly with parents of existing pupils and with parents of prospective pupils of the Schools that are to be effected. In that there were two meetings to which the chairs of Parent Councils and Community Councils were invited to be addressed by the Caledonian Economics Representative along with the Area Education Manager.

Surely it would have been extremely beneficial, due to such a dramatic change to the delivery of Education in North West Skye, meetings should have been held locally with Parents and Prospective Parents of each School affected to garner their views and opinions. The sole opportunity for these parents to voice their views was afforded at a Public Meeting in Dunvegan for all Schools on 16th June 2014, this again was deemed as not being sufficient, as with each School there are differing issues, for example, in the case of Dunvegan, it is not a closure, simply a moving from one building to another within the village, is it not obvious that the Dunvegan Community would be more than willing to accept such a proposal, as would any other community if a new School was being built in their village, so their opinion on the closures will be in the positive and this can clearly be understood.

Therefore, it would have been far more beneficial if meetings had been held with each individual community.”

The response provided to this issue indicated as Response 15, is wholly unsatisfactory, as it simply states that the consultation process was both formally & informally comprehensive. However, this does not take into consideration that each of the Schools in question had and have wholly different issues relating to closure. It would have been far more beneficial to hold Public Meetings within each Community, in particular giving prospective parents the opportunity to attend to express their views.

Re-Drawing of Primary School Catchment Areas

“It is our understanding that on the basis that the Proposal is approved there will be a re-drawing of the Catchment Area for the new School, understandable due to the removal of the existing facilities. In this regard, we are of the firm opinion that the Catchment Area for Struan as it stands at present should be merged into the Carbost Primary School Catchment Area in full.

There are a number of reasons for this request, presently the Struan Primary School has an Associate (Cluster) Head Teacher with responsibility for Struan and Carbost Schools, therefore, present Head Teacher has a full knowledge of the existing pupils who would ultimately leave the Struan School if the closure proceeded, making it more straightforward for planning these children’s educational needs going forward.

In addition, at present there is a close tie between the two Schools, they interact on a regular basis for Educational, Social and Sporting activities, the campus is well known to the existing Struan pupils and it would be a far simpler for them to integrate into this campus as opposed to the one being proposed for Dunvegan, not to mention the close ties between the communities of Dunvegan and Struan, we do not believe that the financial costs in respect of travel would be such that could preclude this from being a successful transition for pupils and their parents alike.

Ultimately, on an Educational, Community and Social basis this is clearly the best outcome for Pupils and Parents of Struan School should closure proceed as proposed, in addition, it would not then require the parents who would wish to have their children educated in Carbost financially burdened with the expense of Travel Costs due to action by Highland Council forcing them into Placing Requests.”

Once again we do not believe that Response 41 to this Issue is satisfactory, to state that “new schools constructed elsewhere in Highland have proven to be attractive to parents and the Council is confident this pattern will be repeated in Dunvegan” is pure supposition, in addition does not in any way provide a suitable response to the issues we have raised regards this point. In actual fact all existing parents and prospective parents have indicated their preference that if the School does close, that their children be educated in Carbost as opposed to Dunvegan.

Furthermore, within the response the Report states that consideration has been given by Caledonian Economics to merging Struan with Carbost referring to Appendix 1B to the Final Report Section 7.1, it would appear that Ideas C and E were favourable towards merging either the whole or part of Struan Catchment Area with Carbost, even looking at Idea M, the preferred option, it still leaves it open for Struan pupils to be merged with Carbost School.

Once again we would re-iterate our assertion that the Educational Benefit, the basis upon which the process has been undertaken as stated by Caledonian Economics and Highland Council, is for the children of Struan to be placed within the Carbost School catchment area, as outlined in our previous Submission, that to date have not be addressed fairly or satisfactorily.

Summary

As previously advised, the Community Council are fully supportive of the Struan Primary Parent Council and the prospective parents of pupils who wish to retain the School in Struan and would urge Highland Council to take full cognisance of their views, particularly prospective parents who have made their feelings known that they wish the retention of educational facilities in Struan.

Finally, it is without doubt the pupils who matter most in this process, their needs are paramount, to this end we are firmly of the belief that should the Proposal to close the School be adopted the best outcome for the Struan pupils is for them to be amalgamated into the Carbost Primary School.

On behalf of Struan Community Council