

Agenda Item	17.
Report No	CLH 39/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing Committee

**Date:** 29 May 2019

**Report Title:** **Statutory Consultation – Stoer Primary School - Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure**

**Report By:** **Interim Director of Care and Learning**

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' agreement to proceed to a statutory consultation, under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, for formal closure of Stoer Primary School.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree to proceed to statutory consultation, on the basis of the Proposal attached to this Report.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Stoer Primary School has been mothballed since July 2016. Current projections suggest a maximum roll of six P1-7 pupils within the school's catchment over the next few years.
- 3.2 The Council proposes to proceed to statutory consultation for formal closure of Stoer Primary School. If approved, the Stoer PS catchment area would be re-assigned to that of Lochinver Primary School.
- 3.3 This proposal is being brought forward following informal consultation with local stakeholders and elected members, and having examined viable alternatives that could be considered.
- 3.4 The Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and other appendices attached to this Report set out the basis of the proposal, including the educational, community and transport implications associated with it.
- 3.5 Subject to a Committee decision to proceed to statutory consultation, a public meeting will be held in Stoer to discuss the Council's proposal, and there will be considerable opportunity for stakeholders to submit views to the Council in advance of any final decision being made. At this stage, it is expected the statutory consultation timeline would see a final recommendation being considered by this Committee in early 2020, though this may be subject to change to ensure the Council has sufficient time to consider and respond to matters arising from the consultation.

### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 Resource - The financial implications of the Proposal are set out at Appendix C.
- 4.2 Legal - The Proposal will be issued for statutory consultation as required by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 4.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The Equalities impact is assessed at Section 15 of Appendix A. The Proposal is not anticipated as having any effect on poverty issues. The Proposal Paper at Appendix A also gives full consideration to the rural school and community issues.
- 4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – The attached report details the implications in relation to school buildings and school transport. It is estimated that in terms of the Council's carbon emissions, the proposal will see a net reduction.
- 4.5 Risk – These will be assessed as part of the statutory consultation process.
- 4.6 Gaelic – None.

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

Date: 25 April 2019

Authors: Brian Porter, Head of Resources  
Ian Jackson, Education Officer

Background Papers: Appendix A – Proposal Paper

Appendix B – Map of Existing catchment areas

Appendix Bi – Map of Proposed Revised Lochinver PS catchment

Appendix C – Financial implications

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**CARE, LEARNING AND HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Stoer Primary School and Nursery, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Lochinver 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 Stoer Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Lochinver Primary School. (Maps of the current catchment area are at **Appendices B - Bi**).

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 Stoer Primary School should be taken as a reference to both the primary and nursery classes that operated prior to the mothballing of the school.

The proposed changes, 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:

- Lochinver Primary School
- Far North Mobile Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Business Support Team  
Care and Learning Office  
Camaghael Hostel  
Fort William  
PH33 7NE  
E-mail: [education.consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:education.consultations@highland.gov.uk)

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please also contact the Business Support Team, Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel, Fort William, PH33 7NE.

E-mail: [education.consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:education.consultations@highland.gov.uk)

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Lochinver Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Ms A Kinnaird, pre-school parent
- (iii) The Parent Council of Lochinver Primary School.
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) Staff of Lochinver Primary School;
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) Assynt Community Council;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (viii) Highland Youth Convenor.

#### Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meetings will be placed in the *Northern Times*, on the Highland Council's website, and on its Facebook page.

## **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from Tuesday 4 June 2019 and will end on Friday 30 August 2019. 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 detail of which is set out below:

Rhu Stoer Hall – 24 June 2019 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 Care and Learning 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. 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 Proposal to:

Ian Jackson  
Care and Learning Office  
Camaghael Hostel  
Fort William  
PH33 7NE  
Email: [education.consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:education.consultations@highland.gov.uk)

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

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://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 30 August 2019 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 23 September 2019, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period, as well as 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, to be completed not later than 3 weeks after they receive the consultation papers – 11 October 2019. 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 as well as at the affected schools 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 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 Care, Learning and Housing 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.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in December 2019, prior to submission to the Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee on in March 2020. 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 by the Care, Learning and Housing Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

## **Scottish Ministers Call-in**

In the event that the Council decides to close the school at this stage, it is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Document and Consultation Report in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 within 6 working days of the decision being made, and to publish on its website a notice that it has done so, detailing the opportunity to make further representations within 3 weeks. The Scottish Ministers have an 8-week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, it will be referred to a School Closure Review Panel. Within the first 3 weeks of the 8-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8-week call-in process has been notified to the Council, the Council will not proceed to implement the proposal.

## **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**

### **Rationale**

- 1.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
- No children have attended Stoer Primary School since the end of session 2015-16
  - Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of around 6 pupils over the next 5 years.
  - A school roll of this size provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence (details below) and;
  - A school roll of 6 pupils hampers social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age.
  - The neighbouring school, Lochinver Primary, is itself projected to experience a falling roll over the next few years.

### **Informal Consultation**

- 2.1 The Proposal has been prepared following informal consultation with local elected members; with Assynt Community Council; Lochinver Primary School Parent Council and with parents and residents within the Stoer catchment. That exercise has suggested that there is a widespread, though not unanimous, acceptance in the community that the school is no longer viable.
- 2.2 Informal discussions with community representatives suggest that some within the community feel the school should remain mothballed in case of a future rise in the roll. One parent of a pre-school child argued that the nursery should re-open.

### **Legislative Background**

- 3.1 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).
- 3.2 Stoer 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 Stoer Primary (see Section 4 below); has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 7-10 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 13 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Stoer catchment (Section 11 below). At present the pupils who live within the Stoer catchment attend Lochinver Primary.

## Current Details – Stoer Primary School

- 4.1 Stoer Primary School is a small, rural school situated in a remote part of North West Sutherland. The area served by the school extends from Drumbeg to Stoer Point and then to Clachtoll. The school has been mothballed since the end of session 2015-16, since when pupils from the area have attended Lochinver Primary.
- 4.2 Current numbers indicate that, at the start of the new school session in August 2019, there will be four pupils of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school. Two more children from the Stoer catchment are due to enter P1 in August 2020, with a further child due to enter P1 in August 2021
- 4.3 The year group numbers for the 2019-20 session are anticipated as follows:
- P1 – 1
  - P2 – 1
  - P3 – 1
  - P4 – 0
  - P5 – 0
  - P6 – 1
  - P7 – 0
- 4.4 The above figures suggest that, were Stoer Primary School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the P1-7 roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be:
- 2019-20 - 4
  - 2020-21 - 6
  - 2021-22 - 6
  - 2022-23 - 6
- 4.5 If Stoer Primary were re-opened, it would therefore be as a single teacher school with a total roll in single figures. Highland Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching, particularly in terms of the requirements of the current curriculum. Further detail is provided at Section 5.
- 4.6 The school has one classroom plus a further room, which when the school last operated was set up as a nursery.
- 4.7 The school has a permanent capacity of 25. Based on the permanent capacity available, the notional 2019-20 of 4 pupils would represent 16% use of capacity. The notional projected roll of 6 in 2022-23 would represent 24% use of capacity.
- 4.8 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). The Stoer Primary School building is currently rated as "C" for educational suitability and "B" for building condition.
- 4.9 The school has not been inspected by HMIE in recent years.

- 4.10 Were the school to re-open with the roll figures indicated, the staffing entitlement would be as follows;

Cluster Head Teacher of 1.00FTE, shared with at least 2 other schools,  
notional entitlement 0.33FTE

Class Teacher – 1.00 FTE

Clerical Assistant – 16 hours per week

Early Years Practitioner – 23 hpw

In addition ASN teaching and non-teaching staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need.

A Cleaning Operative would also be employed at around 5 hours per week.

Prior to the school being mothballed, meals were cooked and served in the school. If the school were re-opened it is likely a Cook 2 would be employed, with the hours required depending on number of pupils having school dinners. Prior to closure it was 15hpw Mon – Friday.

- 4.11 Were Stoer Primary to be re-opened, one potential pupil within the catchment would qualify for school transport.
- 4.12 Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Stoer School building are estimated at just over 20 tonnes.

### **Current Details – Lochinver Primary**

- 5.1 Lochinver Primary School is a small rural school. The catchment extends along the coast from Achmelvich to Inverkirkaig. Inland the area served by the school extends from just south of Unapool to just north of Ledmore junction, and includes the village of Inchnadamph. Since the mothballing of Stoer School it has, for practical purposes, also taken pupils from that school's catchment.
- 5.2 The accommodation consists of 2 classrooms, a GP Room, a library, a small First Aid/GP room, an office, staffroom and dining/canteen. There are extensive tarred playgrounds and some grassy and wildlife areas. Within the grounds of the school is the Lochinver Early learning Centre, where 2-5 year olds are provided for by staff operating the facility as a Partner Centre.
- 5.3 The school will have an anticipated P1-7 roll of 29 pupils at the start of session 2019-20, in two classes. This will be a fall from a roll of 35 for the current year. The expected roll of 29 will include 4 pupils from within the Stoer catchment. The school roll is expected to remain around the current figure until 2023-24. A small rise in the roll is projected thereafter, although the figures become more and more uncertain the farther into the future they are projected.
- 5.4 The school has a permanent capacity of 75. The expected 2019-20 roll of 29 pupils therefore represents 39% use of capacity.

5.5 The Lochinver Primary School building is currently assessed as “C” for educational suitability and “B” for building condition.

5.6 The school has not been inspected by HMle in recent years.

5.7 The anticipated year group numbers for 2019-20 are as follows:

P1 – 1

P2 – 3

P3 – 5

P4 – 3

P5 – 6

P6 – 5

P7 – 6

5.8 The school’s 2018-19 staffing entitlement is as follows;

Cluster Head Teacher – 1.00FTE, shared with 1 other school, notional entitlement 0.5FTE

Class Teacher – 2.00FTE

Class Contact Time – 0.2 FTE

Clerical Assistant – 16 hours per week

Early Years Practitioner – 23 hours per week

In addition ASN teaching and non-teaching staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need.

The Catering and Cleaning Service employs the following staff at the school;

Cook 2 -15.00 hours per week

Cleaning Operative – 10.00 hours per week.

5.9 Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from Lochinver Primary School building from August 2017 to August 2018 were 56.5 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Stoer Primary School.

### **Educational Benefits**

6.1 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.

6.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the following 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.
- 6.3 It is Highland Council's view that the pupils from the Stoer Primary catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at Lochinver Primary School. Formalising the current arrangements would provide a number of such benefits, judged against the Highland criteria set out above.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the modern 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. Lochinver Primary has sufficient pupils to allow the children to work collaboratively on various topics and activities. The class teachers will work with both individuals and groups at each stage of the curriculum, and the group working allows pupils to develop different skills from those that are developed during individual work. For example, pupils in the upper stages at Lochinver Primary have the opportunity to try out conversational French.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 Very small learning groups have a number of disadvantages. They are not only limited in size but also static, since there is no possibility of changing the membership. Very small rolls 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.
- 6.8 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills, including team working, leadership and working with others. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition would very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 6.9 A healthy school roll of pupils at varying ages allows opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual

sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing of experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. At Lochinver Primary, the school are able to use Assynt Leisure Centre for indoor PE, as well as the Culag Playing Field for outdoor sports.

- 6.10 As with sports, larger rolls provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. School shows, plays and public performances are events that that are much more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers.
- 6.11 The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.
- 6.12 Pupils at Lochinver Primary can access a wide range of additional opportunities in and out of the classroom. These opportunities help to stimulate and motivate the children, and provide them with skills for life. Over the past years these opportunities have included:
- Annual residential trip for P7 to the Abernethy Outdoor Centre
  - Drama/ dance workshops – some out of school and weekend events
  - Save a Life lessons from the Scottish Ambulance Service / P7s Safe Highlanders
  - Green gym + Forest school events/ Target Zero event
  - Orienteering / Kayaking sessions + ASG P7 mountain climb
  - 3 weekly access to the mobile library service
  - After school club run between the Assynt Leisure and the Active Schools Co-ordinator
  - Pottery Plate painting for P3s/7s
  - Kodaly and Youth Music Initiative sessions + access to Feis events
  - Music workshops / plays etc
  - Instrumental tuition – chanter/ drumming/ accordion/guitar/ whistle/ ocarina
  - Visits to the Macphail Centre and Eden Court Theatre
- 6.13 In summary, a number of positive benefits have derived from the operational merger of Lochinver and Stoer Primary. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities have all benefited from the greater numbers available through the operational merger of the two schools.
- 6.14 The projected roll of 29 for Lochinver Primary in 2019-20 includes 4 pupils from within the Stoer Primary catchment. Clearly therefore, a decision to re-open Stoer Primary would cause the roll at Lochinver to fall to 25 in 2019-20 and 27 in 2020-21. Splitting such small overall numbers between two schools would be of benefit to neither group of children.

## **Examination of Alternatives to the Proposal**

7.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure. The alternatives to closure would be:

- to re-open Stoer Primary School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or;
- to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.

### **Re-opening of Stoer Primary School with its current catchment**

8.1 Although there has been a slight rise in the school age population of the Stoer area since the school was mothballed, it is clear that if Stoer Primary re-opened it would always be a school with a total roll in single figures. Section 6 above discusses in detail the educational issues arising from the low local school roll figures.

8.2 If the school were to re-open, the potential pupils would have shorter journey times to school than they do at present. Further details on travel journeys to school are provided at Sections 11 and 16 below.

### **Re-Opening of Stoer Primary School with Expanded Catchment Area**

9.1 Any extension to the catchment area for Stoer Primary could only come at the expense of the Lochinver PS catchment. As Lochinver PS is itself projected to see a falling roll, any expansion of the Stoer catchment risks undermining Lochinver Primary without increasing the roll at Stoer to a viable number. Any such move would also cause considerable disruption to pupils within the current Lochinver PS catchment.

9.2 Currently, the Stoer Primary catchment extends almost to Achmelvich, which is 4.5 miles/14 minutes from Lochinver Primary and 9.1 miles/23 minutes from Stoer Primary. Moving Achmelvich into the Stoer catchment would mean parents and pupils would be faced with a considerable increase in travel time to school.

### **Continuation of “Mothballing”**

10.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement, Highland Council does not consider that that would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community. The school has already been mothballed since July 2016 and there is no realistic prospect of a significant rise in the local population of school age children that would allow Stoer PS to become viable. “Mothballing” would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school.

10.2 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.

- 10.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.
- 10.4 A continuation of mothballing would have no impact on the community.

### **Effects on School Transport**

- 11.1 As all of the pupils from Stoer are currently travelling to Lochinver, the Proposal will have no impact in terms of creating any differing transport arrangements.
- 11.2 The cost of transporting pupils between Stoer and Lochinver is currently £23,212 per year. Were Stoer Primary to re-open, the cost would fall to an estimated £950 per year, an annual estimated saving of £22, 262. The annual cost of transport to both schools would vary across time according to where individual pupils lived, but so far the mothballing of Stoer Primary has resulted in additional annual costs of over £20K, and this would continue in the event the school were closed.
- 11.3 It is estimated that the current arrangements for transporting pupils from Stoer to Lochinver result in additional CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of 4.573kg per day, compared to a scenario in which Stoer PS was re-opened. Based on 190 school days per session, this represents 0.869 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions per school year. The figure can only ever be an estimate as emissions are affected by the speed at which vehicles are driven and the type of road travelled.
- 11.4 The increased annual CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions from the provision of transport (less than 1 tonne) should be set against the annual emissions of approximately 20 tonnes from the Stoer Primary School building itself (see paragraph 3.12 above).
- 11.5 During the last full school session there was no days in which the school was open but where the education of the Stoer children was disrupted due to the unavailability of school transport in bad weather.

### **Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

- 12.1 As Stoer Primary has not operated since the end of school session 2016-17, there will be no impact on staff and school management arrangements from a formal closure.
- 12.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements.
- 12.3 The staffing implications of re-opening Stoer Primary School are set out at Paragraph 4.10 above, whilst the financial implications are set out at Section 14 below, and the associated **Appendix C**.

### **Effect on the Local Community**

- 13.1 The community of Stoer has a village hall to provide a focus for community activities.



- 13.2 The mothballed school building at Stoer is currently being used by the Lochinver Community Association, who lease the building on a month-by-month basis and currently use it for storage. The Association are included as a statutory consultee for this Proposal.

### **Financial Consequences**

- 14.1 The Table at **Appendix C** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger.
- 14.2 It can be seen from the paper that re-opening Stoer Primary as a school would lead to an increased cost of around £90,000 per year, in comparison to the current arrangement.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 15.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality areas:
- Disability
  - Gender
  - Gender reassignment
  - Pregnancy or Maternity
  - Marriage/Civil Partnership
  - Race
  - Religion or Belief
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Looked After Children
  - Young Carers
  - Children and Young People Living in Deprivation
- 15.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to 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. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of schools provision.

### **Rural Impact Assessment**

- 16.1 Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since the summer of 2016. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position. The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Stoer to Lochinver, a distance of 7.7 miles.
- 16.2 Stoer School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 2. Details of the potential future rolls are provided at paragraph 4.4 above. Section 6 above sets out the educational benefits of closing Stoer Primary
- 16.3 At present Lochinver Primary School has a pupil roll of less than 50% of the school's capacity. The school is comfortably able to accommodate the pupils from Stoer and no adverse effects for Lochinver Primary are expected to arise.

On the contrary, including the pupils from Stoer within the Lochinver catchment will help to maintain a healthy roll at Lochinver.

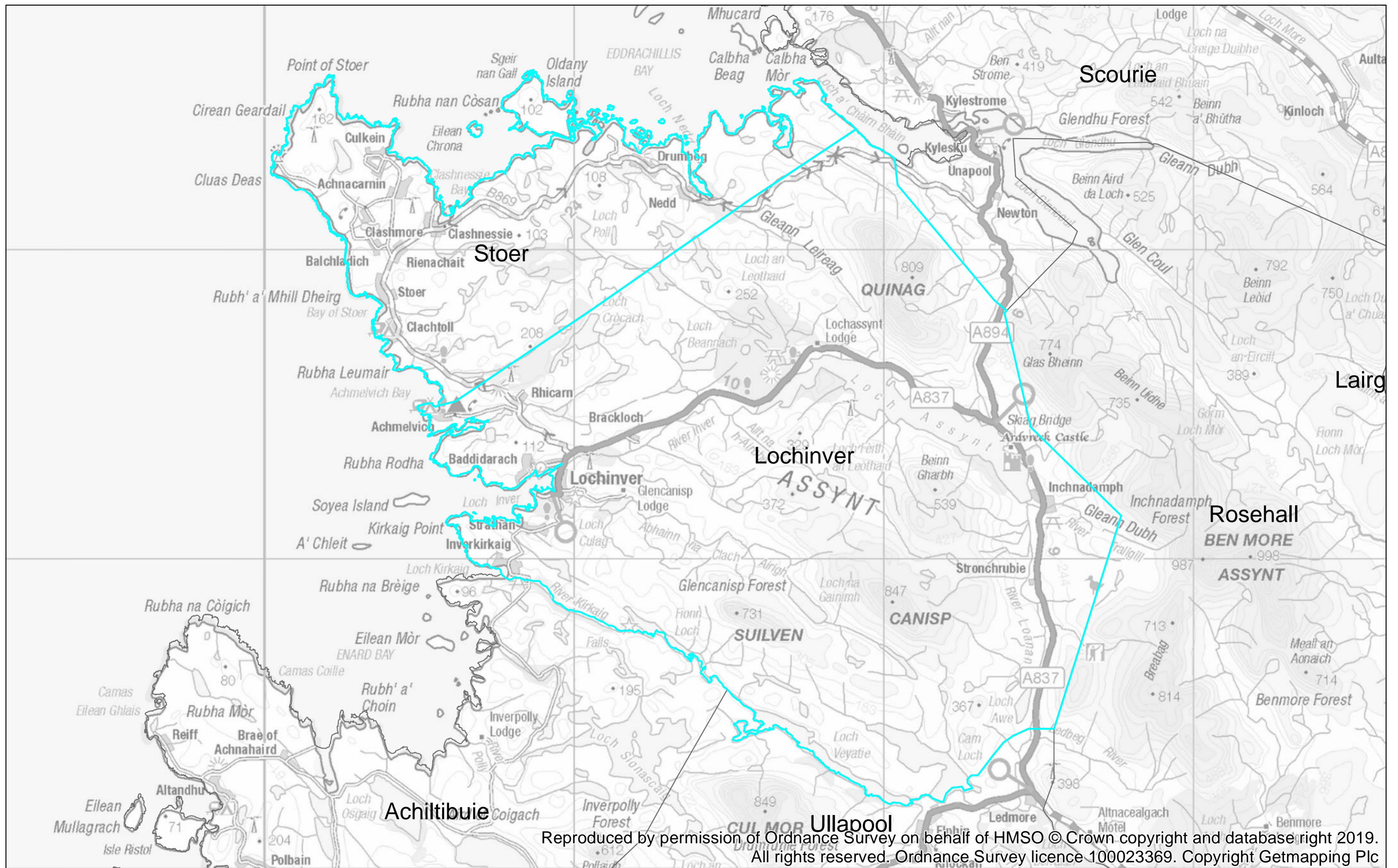
### **Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

- 17.1 The main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from the Stoer catchment to Lochinver, details of which are provided above. The maximum additional travel time for school pupils to Lochinver is 20 minutes (source: Google Maps). However, as the school has been mothballed since 2016, the current pupils are already making this journey. The population in this area is accustomed to making long journeys to access things that people in urban areas take for granted.
- 17.2 Funded school transport will be provided to P1-7 pupils from Stoer attending Lochinver Primary.
- 17.3 Although funded transport is not provided for nursery age children, these children can attend Lochinver Pre-School Centre for their pre-school education.
- 17.4 There would undoubtedly be an adverse effect on any parent of pre-school children in Stoer who did not have access to school transport. The geography of Highland Council, and the very low population densities across much of the Highland Council area, means that it is not possible to provide pre-school facilities close to every parent in the area.
- 17.5 In overall terms, the adverse effects arising from the additional travelling time for pupils must be balanced against the educational benefits that will arise for pupils set out at section 5 above.

### **Recommendation**

- 18.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Stoer Primary School, currently "mothballed," is closed and the catchment area assigned to Lochinver Primary.
- 18.2 The Council must formally consult on changes to provision. This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's agreed procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee of the Highland Council.

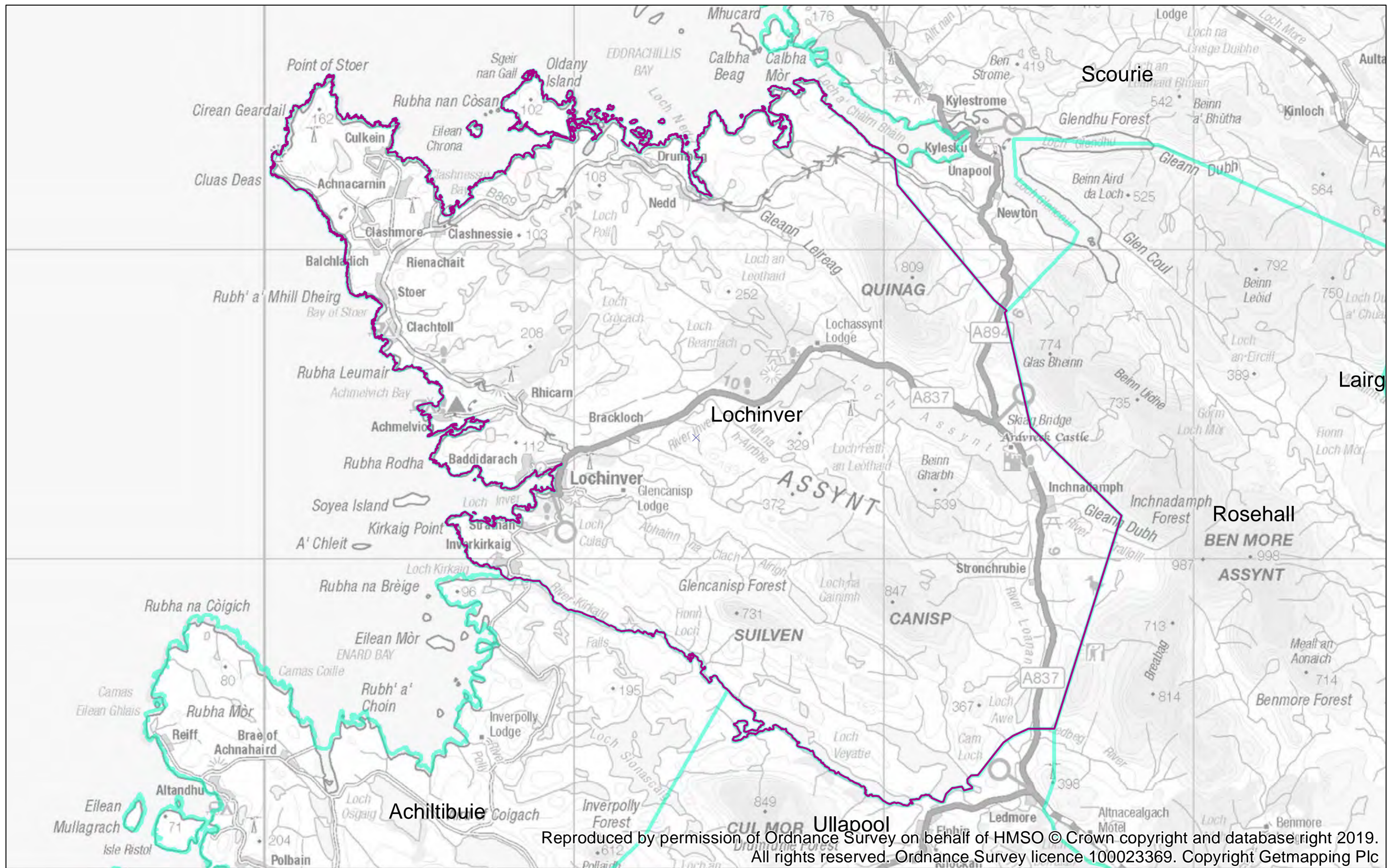
**END OF PROPOSAL PAPER**



# Stoer PS & Lochinver PS Existing Catchment Areas DRAFT

Date: 06/02/2019





# Lochinver PS Proposed Catchment Area DRAFT

Date: 06/02/2019



## Financial Template - Stoer PS Closure

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Forecast revenue costs for Stoer PS			
	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving schools	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 1)
<b>STOER PRIMARY SCHOOL</b>			
<i>School costs</i>			
<i>Employee costs:</i>			
teaching staff	72,880	21,390	-51,490
support staff	40,418		-40,418
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	291	41	-250
support staff training			0
Supply costs	2,459		-2,459
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	31		-31
non domestic rates	0		0
water & sewerage charges	313		-313
energy costs	5,065		-5,065
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	2,373		-2,373
building repair & maintenance	156	33	-123
grounds maintenance			0
facilities management costs			0
revenue costs arising from capital			0
other			0
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	2,462	329	-2,133
catering (contract or inhouse)	8,427	550	-7,877
SQA costs			0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			0
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	950	23,212	22,262
other pupil transport costs			0
staff travel	199	24	-175
<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>136,024</b>	<b>45,580</b>	<b>-90,444</b>
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals			
Lets			
External care provider			
Other			
<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL</b>	<b>136,024</b>	<b>45,580</b>	<b>-90,444</b>
<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>136,024</b>	<b>45,580</b>	<b>-90,444</b>

Table 2

Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost		
Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	31
non domestic rates	0
water & sewerage charges	221
energy costs	5,065
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	0
grounds maintenance	0
facilities management costs	0
other	121
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	<b>5437</b>

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
none	0
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
none	0
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	

Note: As Stoer PS is currently mothballed the costs in column 1 of table 1 above reflect the estimated costs of running the school if it were to reopen. As the school is currently mothballed these savings are already being realised.