

Name of consultation: Roy Bridge Primary School

Your comments: Following the proposal which was run between the 24th November 2021 to 21 January 2022, to discontinue the Education provision at Roy Bridge primary school, I would like to raise the following comments:

Transport

Pupils transported to Spean Bridge by Shiel buses at what cost. This not being a public service. Children as young as 4-5 years being transported without supervision. The only adult on board being the driver.

Accolades

Roy Bridge Primary school was a high performing school in Education, multiple sports, music and various other activities including winning a cricket competition and athletics during inter school competitions. Participating in inter school triathlons where pupils were recognised for outstanding support to others. One pupil jeopardised his chances of winning by stopping to assist a pupil from another school who had fallen. In addition they played shinty as part of a joint team with Spean Bridge and won many completions. That is why the team was known as Lochaber.

. Regularly pupils from the school participated in the local music festival where they frequently won many categories and represented the school at the showcase ceremony at the end of the festival.

We also attended the Festival of Music for youth in London and as a winning prize played at the Royal Albert Hall for their endeavour.

Enrolment

At certain times, parents were unable to enrol their children in Roy Bridge school and had to travel to Spean Bridge for this to occur. Some parents took exception to this and took their children to Fort William to attend school. This depleted the number of children who could be enrolled at Roy Bridge the local school in their catchment area. The choice given by Highland Council also depleted the numbers of children who would be attending Roy Bridge due to the "ambiguity" of the catchment areas. With that only being reviewed in 2021. When the teacher at Roy Bridge took a sabbatical the school was provided with multiple supply teachers which provided little continuity for the children at a key point in their education development. It left the parents of the remaining pupils no choice but to move their children to ensure appropriate education for the children was achieved.

Inclusivity

With regards to the well-being and wellness of pupils who would attend Spean Bridge and who come from Roy Bridge, after school clubs, cycling to school, walking to school initiatives would deprive Roy Bridge pupils from taking part. This will segregate them from opportunities and provided limited inclusivity. This is compounded by the lack of safety and infrastructure to support participation of all pupils from both geographical areas.

Communication

At a meeting in Roy Bridge village hall in 2019 the community, walking who had not learned

about this from Highland Council , turned out in great numbers to support the school and to give the indication they wanted the school to remain open. It seems like this has been disregarded.

Furthermore , the report that was compiled following the consultation can be located in Spean Bridge and Fort William. There is no accessible document located in Roy Bridge even though the information is more pertinent to the parents of children from this area/village. This emphasises the lack of consideration to these residents and the willingness to have open and honest communication while keeping key parties abreast and involved in the welfare and education of their children.

It had been communicated that there was sufficient infrastructure at Spean Bridge School to accommodate new housing developments as well as children from Roy Bridge. However if sufficient space is available to house pupils from new developments then why are the school obtaining grants and fundraising for another classroom when there is a school in Roy Bridge.

If Roy Bridge school had been maintained like it was supposed to be, even during the mothballed timelines , the school could be utilised and facilitate the education of children of primary school age from the area. Unfortunately Roy Bridge school does not seem to have been maintained and up until very recently lights had been left on in the classroom for months on end without due regard to the cost / environment impact. The money spent on transporting the children could be spent bringing the school to the way it once was. Communication and information has been lacking for Roy Bridge parents of children who are up and coming to school age as well as the rest of the community. With limited resources within the village, attracting new residents would be potentially be difficult even though the infrastructure is available to facilitate education within the village.

Upload documents or letters :

I am commenting as: Local resident

I am commenting on behalf of: A member of the community of Roy Bridge and a grandparent

Name:

Title	First name	Last name
Mrs	Janis	Matheson

Address:

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Yes



SPEAN BRIDGE, ROY BRIDGE AND ACHNACARRY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

2nd September 2022

Education Committee,
Highland Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref: Closure of Roy Bridge Primary School

Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council consider that Highland Council have failed to engage adequately with our community as required for the closure of a rural school in contravention of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act of 2010.

Had they at the start of the consultation on 24th November 2021 used the village noticeboard, organised a mail drop, placed an advert in the Lochaber Times or sent an email to the Community Council email address we could have no complaint about being consulted.

They did none of these, but claim that given their wide circulation they were surprised those in our rural areas were unaware of the proposal. As a local activist, Chairman of the Community Council and other bodies, I can assure you that neither the Highland Council website, Fort William Library nor Spean Bridge Primary School are sites I would regularly visit, and if I don't, what is the likelihood that other community members would use these formats.

I trust the Education Committee during their deliberation on this matter will probe the past history of Highland Council's attempts to close this school in 2007 and examine whether the Education Department were complicit in persuading parents to change allegiance from the village school to Spean Bridge.

In my original submission I corrected the contention that the school bus service was a public service that would be retained if Roy Bridge was to be reopened and it would appear that the Education Department may have erred in their reference to the disposal of the building. We have been advised that the conditions relating to the gift of land to build the school might restrict Highland Council's ability to dispose of it.

The Community Council is not impressed by the handling of this closure proposal. If a parent and chairperson of the school council has to ask at the Public Meeting 50 days after it was published where she can get a copy of the consultation report then Nicky Grant's colleagues have failed in their primary objective to inform the community. We therefore ask the Education Committee to reject the proposal and instruct the Education Department to start again and fully comply with their legal obligations in relation to community engagement.

Yours sincerely

John W Fotheringham

Chairman: John Fotheringham, [REDACTED] email: sbrbacc@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary: Christine Clephan, [REDACTED] email: sbrbacc@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer: Alison Munro, [REDACTED] email: sbrbacc@yahoo.co.uk