

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	EDU/19/23

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>7 September 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Statutory Consultation: Gergask Primary School: Proposal to Proceed to Consultation on Closure</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Executive Chief Officer, Education</b>

## 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 Gergask Primary School.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree to proceed to statutory consultation, on the basis of the Proposal attached to this Report.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - The financial implications of the Proposal are set out at **Appendix E**.
- 3.2 Legal - The Proposal will be issued for statutory consultation as required by The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - Equalities and rural issues are considered at sections 15 and 16 of **Appendix A**. There are no specific poverty related issues to consider.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - **Appendix A** 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.
- 3.5 Risk - The main risks associated with the recommendation relate to the potential for call-in by Scottish Ministers. Officials have sought to mitigate the risk through review and evaluation to ensure that procedurally the requirements of the Act and statutory consultation process have been met.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – None

3.7 Gaelic - None

#### **4. Overview**

4.1 Gergask Primary School has been mothballed since September 2022, when the roll fell to 2. At the time of writing, there are no children of P1-7 age within the school catchment whose parents have expressed a wish to attend Gergask Primary School.

4.2 This proposal is being brought forward following informal consultation with local stakeholders and Elected Members and having examined viable alternatives that could be considered. The results of informal consultation suggest that there are currently no children of primary school age whose parents wish them to attend Gergask Primary School. Whilst the Community Council were of the view that a permanent closure would be disappointing to the community, they felt that a statutory consultation would resolve the current uncertainty around the future of the school and the building. Further details are provided in the Paper at **Appendix A**, which sets out the basis of the proposal, and related information, including the educational, community and transport implications associated with the proposal.

#### **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Subject to a Committee decision to proceed to statutory consultation, a public meeting will be held in Laggan to discuss the Council's proposal. 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 May or June 2024, though this may be subject to change to ensure the Council has sufficient time to consider and respond to matters arising from the consultation.

**Designation:** Executive Chief Officer, Education

**Date:** 1 August 2023

**Author:** Ian Jackson, Education Officer (Resources)

**Appendices:** Appendix A - Proposal Paper to issue for consultation  
Appendix B - Gergask PS catchment  
Appendix C - Proposed Newtonmore PS catchment  
Appendix D - School Roll Forecasts – Kingussie ASG  
Appendix Di - School Roll Forecasts – Methodology  
Appendix E - Financial Analysis

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Gergask Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Newtonmore 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 Gergask Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Newtonmore Primary School. A map of the current Gergask Primary School catchment is at **Appendix B**, and a map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix C**.
- 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 Newtonmore Primary School should be taken as a reference to both the primary and nursery classes.
- The proposed change, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.

## **SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **PUBLICATION INFORMATION**

#### **Proposal Paper Published**

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

Newtonmore Primary School, Main Street, Newtonmore PH 20 1DN

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

Education Support

Highland Council

Headquarters Building

Inverness

IV3 5NX

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 contact The Business Support Team

Education Support, Highland Council, Headquarters Building, Inverness, IV3 5NX

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/carers of pupils attending Newtonmore Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) The Parent Councils of Newtonmore Primary School and Kingussie High School.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (iv) Staff of Newtonmore Primary School.
- (v) Laggan Community Council
- (vi) Newtonmore Community Council
- (vii) Trade Union representatives.

## **Advertisement in Local Media**

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the local press and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

## **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 18 September 2023 and will end on 10 November 2023. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

## **Public Meeting**

A public meeting will be held at 6.30pm on 3 October 2023 at Laggan Community Hall. Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

## **Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

School staff will arrange to discuss the proposal with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. Questions, responses and views will be taken down and the results published in the Consultation Report.

## **Responses to the Proposals**

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Business Support Team  
Care and Learning  
Highland Council  
Headquarters Building  
Inverness  
IV3 5NX  
E-mail: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

Or via an online form, to be found at:

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

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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, 10 November 2023 at 5.00pm.

### **Involvement of Education Scotland**

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 20 November 2023, a copy of any written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 8 December 2023. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

### **Review of Consultation Exercise**

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website and at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council’s considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Education Committee of Highland Council, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in the spring of 2024, prior to submission to the Education Committee in May/June 2024. 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.

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Any proposal approved at the Education Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

As the proposal involves the closure of a school, Highland Council would be required to notify Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers would have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. Within the first three weeks of that eight-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person.

### **Note on Corrections**

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised.

## **DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

### **Legislative Background**

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Gergask 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 Gergask Primary School, taking into account the current pattern of enrolments, has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 6-9 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 15 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Gergask catchment (Section 11 below).

### **Reasons for the Proposal**

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - Gergask Primary School has been mothballed since September 2022, after the total roll fell to 2 pupils.
  - Consequently, no children have attended the school since September 2022.
  - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 In April 2023 informal discussions were held with local parents and with Laggan Community Council about the future of the school. There was little interest from local parents in attending the meeting, and the Community Council were of the view that a statutory consultation would be appropriate, in order to come to a decision on the school's future.
- 2.3 There are a very small number of children resident with the Gergask Primary School catchment, all of whom have alternative arrangements for their education. The results of the informal discussions would suggest there is no demand for children to attend Gergask Primary School, and that the school is no longer viable.

### **Current Details – Gergask Primary School**

- 3.1 Gergask School serves a sparsely populated rural area, with the small local population mainly concentrated in the village of Laggan, where the school is located. The school is a traditional granite building consisting of an entrance hall and three classrooms. An office and a general purpose room which was



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also used as a dinner canteen is located in Spey Lodge, a spacious demountable building which was installed in the playground in 2007.

- 3.2 The school has been mothballed since September 2022 when the remaining pupils transferred to Newtonmore Primary School.
- 3.3 There were no nursery children at Gergask Primary School prior to mothballing, but the school did operate a nursery class when there were children to attend it. As mentioned above, this closure proposal encompasses both the primary school and nursery class stages.
- 3.4 The school has a registered permanent capacity of 44.
- 3.5 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, in line with the Scottish Government's School Estate Management guidelines. Schools are assessed on a scale with the ratings "A" (good) "B" (satisfactory), "C" (poor) and "D" (bad). Prior to mothballing, Gergask Primary School was rated as "C" for the educational suitability of the building and "B" for building condition.
- 3.6. In the five sessions from 2019-20 to 2023-24, there were 5 placing requests to leave Gergask Primary School, and 1 placing request to join.
- 3.7 No current HMle Report is available.
- 3.8 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions from the Gergask Primary School building are estimated at 13.3 tonnes.

### **Current Details – Newtonmore Primary School**

- 4.1 Newtonmore Primary School is located in the large village of same name, which has a population of around 1100-1200. Only schools located in communities with a population of 3,000 or more are not classed as rural schools, so Newtonmore Primary falls within the category of a "very remote" rural school. It provides education in both English (EM) and Gàidhlig (GM). Its English Medium catchment formerly drew pupils mainly from Newtonmore and its immediate surrounds, but since 2016 the catchment has also included that of the former Dalwhinnie Primary, which closed at that time. The school's Gàidhlig Medium catchment covers a still wider area, including the EM catchments of all of the other primary schools in the Kingussie Associated School Group (ASG), Alvie Primary, Aviemore Primary, Kingussie Primary and Gergask Primary.
- 4.2 Newtonmore Primary School, situated in the middle of Newtonmore, was completely modernised in 1991. The building offers spacious accommodation of a very high standard with a tarred and paved play area and an enclosed grass playing area to the rear. There is a seated area for outdoor classroom activities. The school hall offers a multi-purpose area for the school and community.

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- 4.3 At the time of writing, the anticipated roll for 2023-24 is 111 pupils within P1-7, with 66 in English Medium (EM) education and 45 in Gaelic Medium (GM). There are further 23 children in the two nursery classes, 9 in English Medium and 14 in Gaelic Medium.
- 4.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 122. The 2023-24 roll of 111 therefore represents 91% use of capacity.
- 4.5 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Newtonmore Primary School is attached at **Appendix D**, alongside the forecasts for the other schools in the Kingussie High School group, whilst a copy of the Council's methodology for calculating the forecasts can be found at **Appendix Di**.
- 4.6 It can be seen from Appendix D that the roll at Newtonmore Primary School is forecast to see a modest decline over the course the rest of the current decade.
- 4.7 The accommodation at Newtonmore Primary School is rated as "C" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 4.8 In the 5 sessions from 2019-20 to 2023-24, there were 4 placing requests to leave Newtonmore Primary School, and 15 requests to join.
- 4.9 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 4.10 Annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from Newtonmore Primary School building from April 2021 to March 2022 are estimated at 7.3 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Gergask Primary School.

## 5 Examination of Alternatives

- 5.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must give due consideration of alternative courses of action that could be considered. The following reasonable alternatives to closure have been considered:
- i. To continue with the current "mothballing" arrangement.
  - ii. To re-open Gergask Primary School with its current catchment area.
  - iii. To re-open Gergask Primary School with an expanded catchment area.
- 5.2 As part of the consideration of alternatives, the Council has investigated the long-term roll projections.
- 5.3 The detail of the Council's consideration of the reasonable alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and its appendices.

### Option 1 – Continued Mothballing

- 6.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current "mothballing" arrangement, Highland Council does not consider that would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community. The very low number of

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children in the Gergask Primary School catchment indicates strongly that the school is no longer viable. “Mothballing” would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school and would prevent the community from developing options for the future use of the accommodation. Informal discussions suggest that the local community does not favour a lengthy “mothballing” arrangement.

- 6.2 In the past, Highland Council has left schools mothballed for a number of years before they have been finally closed. One disadvantage has been that the empty building has deteriorated, limiting limitations for the community, in terms of making use of the building following closure. Continued mothballing would also leave the Council burdened with the costs of maintaining the empty building.
- 6.3 Scottish Government guidance relating to the mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation. The status of mothballed schools should be regularly reviewed. Having undertaken such a review, Highland Council does not see continued mothballing as a realistic alternative to closure.
- 6.4 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.

### **Option 2 - Re-Opening of Gergask Primary School with its Current Catchment Area**

- 7.1 The results of informal consultation suggest there is insufficient parental interest in re-opening Gergask Primary School. The number of children within the catchment is now insufficient to enable the school to continue.

### **Option 3 - Re-Opening of Gergask Primary School with an Expanded Catchment Area**

- 8.1 The Gergask Primary School catchment is linked by road to the Newtonmore and Spean Bridge catchments, the latter being part of the Lochaber ASG. Spean Bridge Primary School is located 31 miles from Laggan, which is the main population centre for the Gergask catchment. It would not be a realistic option to change the catchment boundary in favour of Gergask Primary School. Any such proposal would of course require a statutory consultation.
- 8.2 At present the Gergask/Newtonmore catchment boundary is at a point roughly equidistant from the two schools. Within the Newtonmore catchment, there is no substantial population until the village of Newtonmore itself, so a catchment change would not be practical suggestion of improving the roll at Gergask. Any such proposal would of course require a statutory consultation.
- 8.2 It should also be borne in mind that Newtonmore Primary is also a very remote rural school. Spean Bridge Primary School is also on the Rural Schools list.

- 8.3 Taking all the above into account, it would not be appropriate to alter either catchment boundary in order to expand the Gergask Primary School catchment.

### **Educational Benefits**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Highland Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing its' school estate:
- Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
  - Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
  - Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
  - Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
  - Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural council area such as Highland.
  - School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
  - School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
  - Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
  - Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
  - The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
  - Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built-up community.
- 9.3 As mentioned above, evidence gathered by Highland Council to date suggests that there is no realistic prospect of a viable roll at Gergask Primary School.
- 9.4 Children at Newtonmore Primary School regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of a re-opened Gergask Primary School would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static, since there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. A very small roll would also limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.

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- 9.5 A larger school roll makes it easier for the school to attract visiting speakers and other external partners to work with the children. In many cases external partners look for a certain threshold in the number of children they will be working with.
- 9.6 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 9.7 The existence of pre-school classes at Newtonmore Primary School enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 9.8 The language programme at Newtonmore Primary School aims to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills. Listening is developed by games, stories, radio & television programmes, music, and use of ICT. The school aims to develop fluency and clarity of expression and to extend vocabulary. Talking is developed by role playing, mime, reporting, interviewing etc. They are also used for the teaching of other languages, which are introduced to pupils as part of the 1+2 language initiative. Once again, the emphasis is on oral work and role play. In all cases, working with others plays an important role.
- 9.9 It is self-evident that an overall school roll in single figures restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in neighbouring schools, that in itself involves time out of school in travelling.
- 9.10 As with sports, the larger roll at Newtonmore provides a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of group musical and artistic opportunities, events that are more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers.
- 9.11 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.
- 9.12 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Gergask Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at Newtonmore Primary. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities can all benefit from the greater numbers that are available. Conversely, the roll of a re-opened Gergask Primary School would be insufficient to keep the school viable.

## **Re-allocation of Gergask Primary School Catchment**

- 10.1 A map of the current Gergask Primary School catchment is at Appendix B.
- 10.2 In the event that Gergask Primary School closes, its catchment will be transferred to that of Newtonmore Primary School. The proposed merged catchment is shown at Appendix C.

## **Effect of Differing Transport Arrangements**

- 11.1 As there are currently no children attending Gergask Primary School, no differing transport arrangement would need to be applied in the event of the formal closure of the school.
- 11.2 The driving time between Gergask Primary School and Newtonmore Primary School is given as 13 minutes (source: Google Maps). There may, in the future, be children undertaking this travel time. It is appreciated that potential driving times from the extreme ends of the catchment would be longer.
- 11.4 Calculations of the additional emissions of greenhouse gases arising from the current transport arrangements from Gergask to Newtonmore Primary suggest that the mothballing, and by extension the formal closure of, Gergask Primary, is currently resulting in about 0.9 tonnes per annum of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions. The figures can however only be estimates as emissions are affected by the type of vehicle used for the transport contract, the speed at which vehicles are driven and the type of road travelled.

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

- 12.1 As the school is already “mothballed” there will be no impact on school management arrangements at Newtonmore Primary School from a formal closure of Gergask Primary School.
- 12.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements.

## **Effect on the Local Community**

- 13.1 The community of Laggan does have a village hall and therefore has a public space where the community can meet.
- 13.2 Gergask Primary School was not used for school lets prior to mothballing, as this would have taken income away from the community hall.
- 13.3 There are two areas of land adjacent to the school, that have been used by the school under lease agreements. However these will revert to the landowners when the school closes.
- 13.4 Subject to the Council not having any operational need for the building, Highland Council would be keen to work with the local community over the future use of the building and site. Any such proposal would however have to

be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management arrangements.

### **Financial Consequences**

14.1 The Table at **Appendix E** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger. As the school is currently mothballed, the savings identified are already being made and no additional saving would arise to the Council from closure.

### **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 a primary school 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 school provision.

### **Rural Impact Assessment**

16.1 Gergask Primary School and Newtonmore Primary School are classed by the Scottish Government as "very remote rural schools". Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since September 2022. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.

16.2 The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Laggan to Newtonmore, a distance of 8 miles.

16.3 As set out in Section 9 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.

16.4 The maximum additional travel time for school pupils from the Gergask Primay School site to Newtonmore Primary School is 13 minutes (source: Google

## Appendix A

Maps). As school transport is provided by the Council, the proposal would not be expected to have any impact on accessibility to education or on fuel poverty.

### **Mitigation of Adverse Effects**

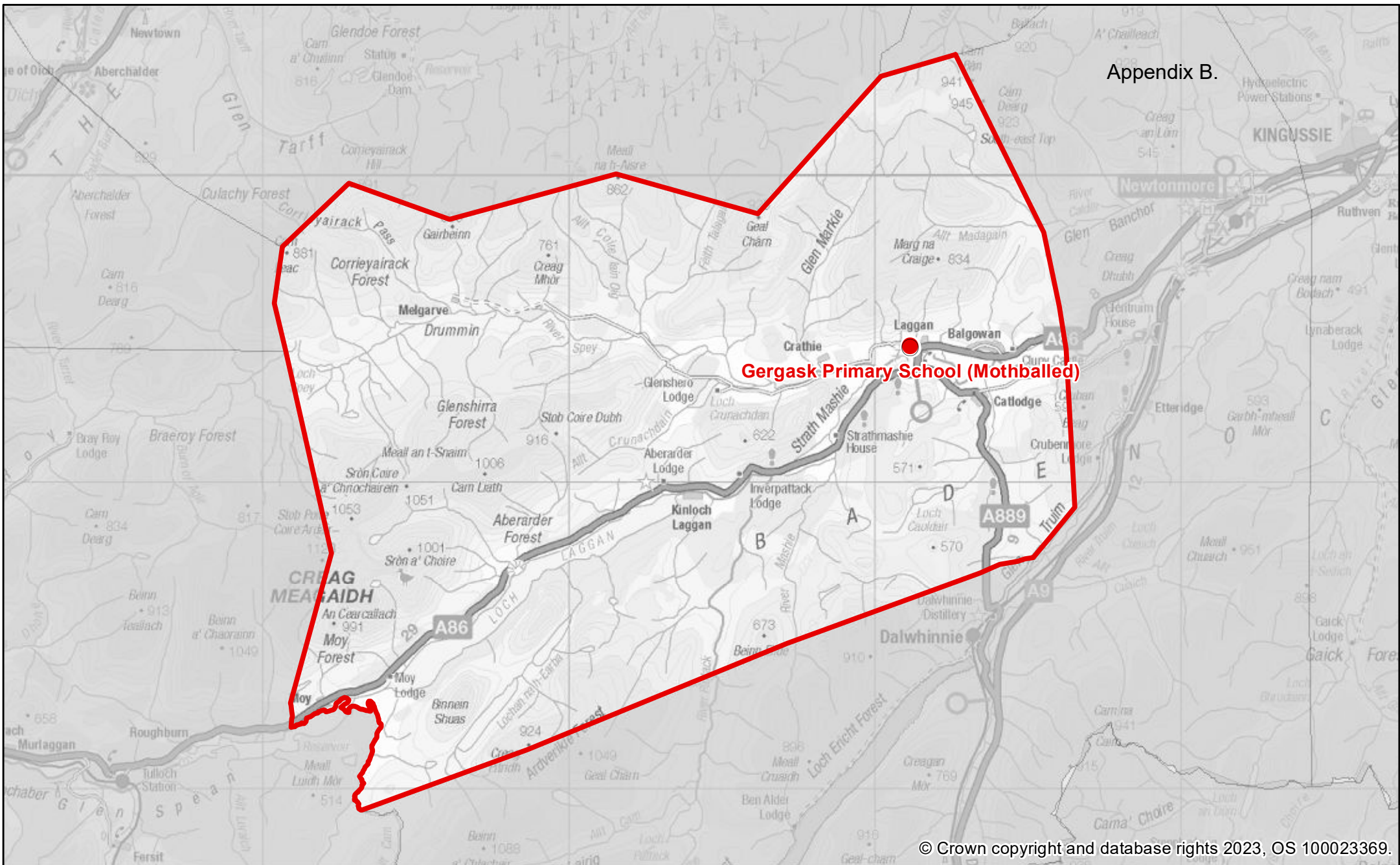
- 17.1 As all the pupils within the Gergask Primary School catchment are already attending Newtonmore Primary School, no adverse effects arise in respect of current pupils.
- 17.2 There is a potential adverse effect for future children in the length of journey from the Gergask catchment to Newtonmore, details of which are provided above, which would not arise if Gergask Primary remained open. As the school has been mothballed since 2022, 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 the Gergask Primary School catchment who are attending Newtonmore Primary.

### **Recommendation**

- 18.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Gergask Primary School, currently “mothballed,” is closed and the catchment area re-assigned that of Newtonmore Primary School.
- 18.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority’s procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education Committee of the Highland Council.

### **END OF PROPOSAL PAPER**





**Gergask Primary School (Mothballed)**

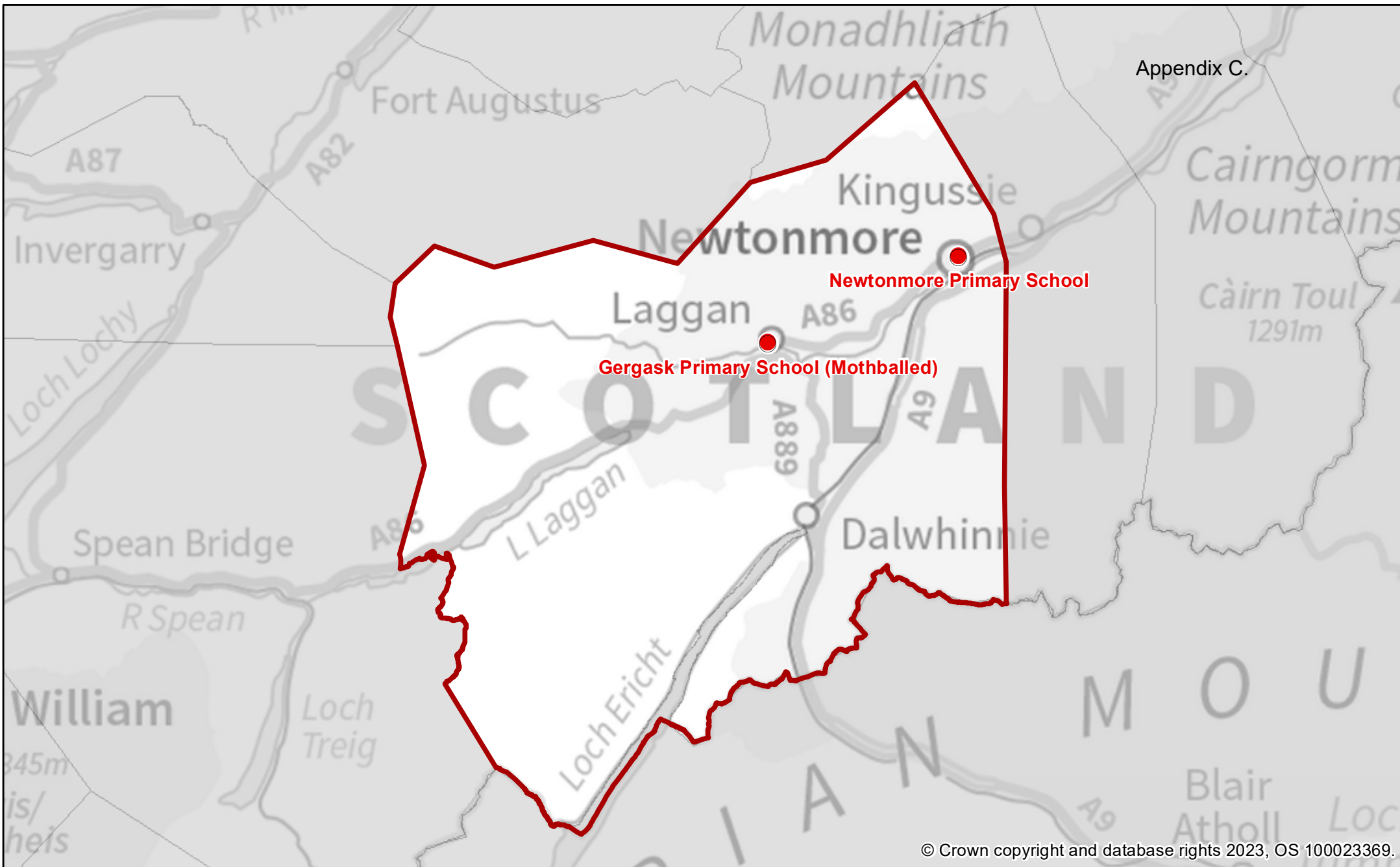
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# Gergask Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2737  
Date: 11/May/2023

N  
1:160,000





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# Proposed Newtonmore Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2737  
Date: 11/May/2023

N  
1:270,000



5146038	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
S 1	69	97	69	84	81	57	78	68	68	64	78	71	72	72	73	73
S 2	77	70	99	71	85	82	58	79	69	68	65	79	72	72	73	73
S 3	61	78	72	101	72	86	83	59	80	70	69	65	79	72	73	73
S 4	88	62	80	74	102	73	87	84	60	81	71	70	65	79	73	73
S 5	65	77	55	71	65	90	64	76	73	53	71	62	61	57	69	63
S 6	51	43	51	37	47	43	59	42	50	48	35	47	40	40	37	45
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>660</b>
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-249	-233	-234	-222	-208	-229	-231	-252	-260	-276	-271	-266	-271	-268	-262	-260
<b>Used Capacity (%)</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>61%</b>





**School Roll Forecast**  
Kingussie High School  
Kingussie Primary

<b>5146224</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>	<b>2030/31</b>	<b>2031/32</b>	<b>2032/33</b>	<b>2033/34</b>	<b>2034/35</b>	<b>2035/36</b>	<b>2036/37</b>	<b>2037/38</b>
Catchment Flow	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%	78.3%
New Housing (Catchment Only)		14	19	17	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
P1 New Housing Pupils (All Catchments)		0.2	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.2
P1 CHI Pupils		6.7	11.4	9.4	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
P 1	7	7	12	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12	12
P 2	13	7	7	12	10	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
P 3	9	13	7	7	12	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
P 4	9	9	13	8	8	12	11	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
P 5	12	9	9	14	8	8	13	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
P 6	14	12	10	10	14	8	8	13	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
P 7	17	14	12	10	10	14	8	8	13	11	11	11	12	12	12	12
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-44	-54	-55	-54	-53	-53	-55	-49	-46	-48	-48	-47	-41	-41	-41	-41
<b>Used Capacity (%)</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>67%</b>

**School Roll Forecast**  
Kingussie High School  
Newtonmore Primary

5145929	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
Catchment Flow	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%
New Housing (Catchment Only)		4	14	14	14	14	17	17	17	17	17	8	8	8	8	8
P1 New Housing Pupils (All Catchments)		0.1	0.3	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.7
P1 CHI Pupils		12.2	6.3	13.7	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.8
P 1	16	12	7	14	12	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14	14
P 2	20	16	13	7	15	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14	14
P 3	16	20	16	13	7	15	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14
P 4	13	16	20	17	13	7	15	12	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14
P 5	14	13	16	21	17	13	8	15	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14
P 6	12	14	13	17	21	17	14	8	16	13	14	14	14	14	14	14
P 7	23	12	14	14	17	21	17	14	8	16	14	14	14	14	14	14
<b>Total Roll</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-8	-19	-23	-19	-20	-25	-32	-35	-33	-28	-27	-24	-24	-24	-24	-24
<b>Used Capacity (%)</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This background paper describes the high level approach taken in preparing school roll forecasts for primary and secondary schools in Highland. It describes the basic methodology used and changes introduced to the processes to improve transparency and ease of use of the forecasts.
- 1.2 The existing school roll forecasting methodology has been iteratively developed over several decades with improvements and adjustments to account for circumstances in Highland. Given the school capacity pressures experienced in recent years, Highland Council's Development and Infrastructure - Information and Research department, together with Care and Learning, took the opportunity to look afresh at the forecasting process. This research has informed the 2017/18 School Roll Forecasts and the preparation of the draft Developer Contributions Supplementary guidance (consultation 2018).
- 1.3 It has been recognised that there is a need for a simplified approach to determining the effect of residential development on the school estate. In preparing the forecasts, a key consideration was the usability of these forecasts to easily identify all anticipated residential developments which feed into the forecasts and undertake development scenario modelling. This information is critical for effective planning of the school estate and assessing Local Development Plan site allocations as well as individual development proposals.
- 1.4 An integrated primary and secondary school Excel spreadsheet based approach has been developed to give confidence in school roll forecasting. A baseline forecast is updated and published annually, which also acts as a template that can now be used for modelling future school rolls based on testing various potential development and school estate management scenarios.

## **2 Input Datasets and Factors**

- 2.1 A key factor in school roll forecasting is a detailed and accurate assessment of the likely residential build-out timescales for new developments. The annual Housing Land Audit (HLA) provides this base information. Since 2016, the HLA has been prepared in parallel with the creation of the annual School Roll Forecasts. In addition to programmed build out rates for Local Development Plan site allocations, allowance for smaller scale 'windfall' development sites is also applied to the forecasts. This windfall rate is based on the prevailing average for the primary school catchment in the previous two years. The build out and delivery of multiple residential developments, which often take place within a similar timeframe, contribute to cumulative pressures on the school estate.



- 2.2 The ratio of additional pupils expected to derive from newly constructed housing (the Pupil Product Ratio or PPR) is the major influence on increasing school rolls. The rates used in Highland are 0.3 primary pupils and 0.13 secondary per new home. These figures are comparable with those used across many Scottish Local Authorities and have been found to be accurate and reliable as recently assessed and reported in the School Pupil Product Ratio Review, prepared by The Highland Council - Information and Research, September 2017.
- 2.3 Forecasts are informed by an annual school pupil census, combined with information on current school capacities to provide the baseline and start point for forecasting and roll pressure analysis. These are provided by Care and Learning and are updated regularly to comply with the latest legislation and regulatory requirements.
- 2.4 Pre-school year group values are populated using GP registration figures supplied by the NHS, to identify children which are not yet of school age. These will be included in the calculation of future P1 intakes for Primary Schools.
- 2.5 A significant exercise was undertaken in 2017 to increase the accuracy of pupil flow modelling. We analyse the current flow of pupils attending schools outwith their catchment area school to determine future roll adjustments from Placing Request applications, as well as calculate intake numbers for Gaelic and Denominational schools.

### **3 Methodology**

- 3.1 Once the input datasets have been refreshed with the latest values, the spreadsheet can be used to forecast school rolls for the next 15 years. As a baseline, each projection sheet shows the number of pupils in each year group for the current school year.
- 3.2 For every additional year to be forecast, the number of pupils expected in each year group will be updated to take account of the influences from the various input datasets, including additional pupils from new housing development completions.
- 3.3 Using the residential development information, estimated build out rates are aggregated by primary catchment and an updated windfall contribution is added to give a year by year additional housing count for each. These values are combined with the Pupil Product Ratios to predict the number of additional pupils expected per school for each year forecast.

- 3.4 These anticipated new housing yields are combined with expected Placing Request numbers and are used to adjust the pupil numbers moving through the education system. Primary School P1 rolls are based on the Pre-school figures collected from the NHS and Secondary School S1 rolls use the product of last years Primary P7 pupils. All other Primary and Secondary year groups are based on the number of pupils expected to progress through from the previous school year. Adjusted year group figures for each projected year are displayed alongside baseline roll figures.
- 3.5 Total school rolls forecasted are reported against school capacities to highlight current and future school's capacity constraints or where schools have excess capacity.

## **4 Outputs**

- 4.1 Forecasts are aggregated into a single summary sheet for each Associated School Group (ASG) and published annually via the Highland Council's Website. From 2018, we will also be publishing mid-year update sheets to reflect any significant changes to the school estate.
- 4.2 The published School Roll Forecast is used internally as a baseline to enable effective management of the school estate and forms an essential part of the Council's evidence base for informing planning decision making.

END

The Highland Council - Information and Research  
Development and Infrastructure  
September 2017

# Appendix E.

## Financial Template

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	<b>Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure</b>			
Row 2	Name of School Gergask Primary School	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school Newtonmore Primary School	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 3	<b>School costs</b>			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 5	teaching staff	£117,020	£46,564	£70,456
Row 6	support staff	£10,649	£0	£10,649
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	£254	£8	£246
Row 8	support staff training	£0	£0	£0
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	£4,022	£0	£4,022
Row 10				
Row 11	<b>Building costs:</b>			
Row 12	property insurance	£240	£0	£240
Row 13	non domestic rates	£0	£0	£0
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	£1,102	£0	£1,102
Row 15	energy costs	£26,481	£0	£26,481
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£8,587	£0	£8,587
Row 17	building repair & maintenance	£139	£11	£128
Row 18	grounds maintenance	£0	£0	£0
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	£4,944	£0	£4,944
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital	£0	£0	£0
Row 21	other	£0	£0	£0
Row 22				
Row 23	<b>School operational costs:</b>			
Row 24	learning materials	£1,220	£110	£1,110
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	£13,497	£0	£13,497
Row 26	SQA costs	£0	£0	£0
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licence)	£0	£0	£0
Row 28				
Row 29	<b>Transport costs: note 3</b>			
Row 30	home to school	£0	£15,200	-£15,200
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	£0	£0	£0
Row 32	staff travel	£174	£34	£140
Row 33	<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>£188,329</b>	<b>£61,927</b>	<b>£126,402</b>
Row 34				
Row 35	<b>Income:</b>			
Row 36	Sale of meals	£0	£0	£0
Row 37	Lets	£0	£0	£0
Row 38	External care provider	£0	£0	£0
Row 39	Other	£0	£0	£0
Row 40	<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>
Row 41				
Row 42	<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHO</b>	<b>£188,329</b>	<b>£61,927</b>	<b>£126,402</b>
Row 43				
Row 44	<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>94,164</b>	<b>30,964</b>	<b>63,201</b>

Note: As Gergask PS is currently mothballed the costs in column 2 of table 1 above reflect the estimated costs of running the school if it were to reopen, as the school is currently mothballed these

Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
<b>Table 2</b>		
Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7	£15,000	£0
Third party contributions to capital costs		

<b>Table 3</b>	
<b>Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal</b>	
property insurance	£240
non domestic rates	£0
water & sewerage charges	£359
energy costs	£9,998
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£0
security costs	£0
building repair & maintenance	£0
grounds maintenance	£0
facilities management costs	£0
other	£0
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	<b>£10,597</b>

<b>Table 4</b>	
<b>Non-recurring revenue costs</b>	
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	<b>£3,500.00</b>

<b>Table 5</b>	
<b>Impact on GAE - note 5</b>	
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	<b>-£4,514</b>

### Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the *additional* cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring.

For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff.

Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services.

For support staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.

3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc

4. Row 30 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.

5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document that accompany this template.

6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.

7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.