

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	EDU/21/23

Committee:	Education
Date:	7 September 2023
Report Title:	Review of Statutory Consultation Exercise – Closure of Torridon Primary School
Report By:	Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report seeks Members' agreement to a recommendation to discontinue the provision of education at Torridon Primary School, which has been "mothballed" since June 2012.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Recommend that the Highland Council discontinues education at Torridon Primary School, transferring its catchment to that of Shieldaig Primary School. Torridon Primary School has not been operational since 2012, and a closure decision would formalise the current operational situation.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – These are set out at **Appendix E** of the original proposal issued for consultation.
- 3.2 Legal – The proposed closure has been taken forward under the provisions of The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 1980
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - The Equalities and Rural impacts were assessed at Sections 16 and 17 of the original Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**). The Proposal is not anticipated as having any effect on poverty issues. The Proposal Paper at **Appendix A** also assesses the community implications – See Section 14 of **Appendix A**.
- 3.4 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.
- 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 **Appendix 1** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal for consultation, and relevant documents for consideration by the Committee, are all also circulated as appendices to this Paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 4.2 The views of pupils attending Shieldaig Primary School (including the Torridon pupils) can be viewed at Appendix 3i. There were 20 responses from pupils. Six pupils thought the Council should re-open Torridon Primary School, whilst 14 thought the school should continue to be mothballed. None of the pupils whose views were recorded in the questionnaires supported closing the school. Education Scotland Inspectors who visited the school reported that children from the Torridon school catchment area who met with HM Inspectors had mixed views about the proposal. They liked the idea of Torridon Primary School re-opening but did feel that if that were to happen, they would miss their friends who attend Shieldaig Primary School. They are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and spoke positively about their teachers.
- 4.3 There were 4 written responses received from other stakeholders. One of these requested that their response be treated as confidential to Highland councillors and officials, so has been circulated separately from the appendices to this Report. All four responses expressed reservations about, or varying degrees of opposition to, the closure proposal. Concerns were expressed over a range of issues including the effect of the closure on the community, pre-school provision, travel times to Shieldaig from the outlying parts of the Torridon catchment, the possibility of an increase in the number of local children, the condition of the Torridon school building and its future use, and building/design issues at Shieldaig Primary School. Two of the respondents raised concerns about historical issues around the mothballing of the school in 2012.
- 4.4 The public meeting was attended by a total of 24 people, including 20 parents and other members of the local community (see **Appendix 2**). A total of 19 questions are recorded in the note along with the associated answers.
- 4.5 In their report, Education Scotland agree that the council has made a clear and reasonable case for the permanent closure of Torridon Primary School and Nursery. Children from the area are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery. They enjoy learning alongside peers from the wider area. Stakeholders now largely accept the closure of the school.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further representations. The proposal was published on 4 August 2023. Any further

representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.

5.2 Following consideration by the Committee, if the recommendation is agreed, the following timeline will be followed as required by the legislation.

- The recommendation of the Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council.
- If ratified by full Council, the Council must, within 6 working days of the Committee decision, advise Scottish Ministers of the decision it has reached, provide them with the proposal paper and consultation report, and publish a notice stating that Ministers have been advised and the process through which representations may be made to Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal.
- From the date of the Council decision, there is a period of 3 weeks in which representations to Scottish Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal can be made by any interested party.
- Scottish Ministers then have a further up to 5 weeks in which to decide whether they will issue a call-in notice.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Education

Date: 23 August 2023

Author: Ian Jackson, Education Officer (Resources)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Review of Consultation Report

Appendix 2 – Note of Public Meeting

Appendix 3 – List of Respondents to the Consultation

Appendix 3i - Summary of responses from Shieldaig PS children

Appendix 3ia - Comments from Shieldaig PS children

Appendix 3ii - Response from Torridon and Kinlochewe CC

Appendix 3iii - Response from Niall MacKinnon

Appendix 3iv - Response from Anne MacRae

Appendix 3v - Redacted from Website at the Author's Request

Appendix 4 – Report from Education Scotland (English Version)

Appendix 5 – Report from Education Scotland (Gàidhlig Version)

Appendix A – Proposal Paper issued February 2023

Appendix B – Torridon PS catchment

Appendix C – Note of an exploratory meeting with parents in Torridon on
12 June 2019

Appendix Ci - Community Council minutes – 12 June 2019

Appendix Cii - HC note of Community Council discussion of 12 June 2019

Appendix Ciii - Note of an exploratory meeting with parents in Torridon on
11 November 2020

Appendix Civ - Note of an exploratory meeting with Torridon and
Kinlochewe CC on 8 December 2020

Appendix D – Gairloch High School ASG roll forecasts

Appendix Di - School Roll Forecasts Methodology

Appendix E – Financial Analysis



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT TORRIDON PRIMARY SCHOOL, RE-ASSIGNING ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO THAT OF SHIELDAIG PRIMARY SCHOOL

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal:

- To discontinue education provision at Torridon Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Shieldaig Primary School.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting held at Torridon Community Centre on 28 March 2023.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

CONTENTS

1.0 Background

2.0 Consultation process

3.0 Review of the proposals following the consultation period

4.0 Responses received

5.0 Overview of Issues Raised During the Consultation Period

6.0 Summary of issues raised during the consultation period, and Highland Council's responses

- 7.0 Summary of issues raised by Education Scotland, and Highland Council's responses
- 8.0 Effects on the Community
- 9.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies
- 10.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure
- 11.0 Procedure for Ministerial Call-in
- 12.0 Legal issues
- 13.0 Financial implications
- 14.0 Equality Impact Assessment
- 15.0 Rural Impact Assessment
- 16.0 Effects on School Transport
- 17.0 Mitigation of Adverse Effects
- 18.0 Conclusion
- 19.0 Recommendation

Appendices:

Appendix 2	Minute of public meeting held on 28 March 2023
Appendix 3	List of written submissions received
Appendix 3i-3v	Copies of individual written responses
Appendix 4	Report from Education Scotland (English language version)
Appendix 5	Report from Education Scotland (Gàidhlig language version)
Appendix A	The proposal document
Appendix B	Map of Torridon Primary School catchment
Appendix Bi	Map of Shieldaig Primary School Catchment
Appendix C	Note of an Informal Discussion with Parents held on 12 June 2019
Appendix Ci	Community Council Minutes of 12 June 2019
Appendix Cii	HC note of meeting with TKCC 12 June 2019
Appendix Ciii	Note of an Exploratory Meeting with Parents 11 November 2020
Appendix Civ	Note of a Meeting with TKCC on 8 December 2020
Appendix D	Gairloch HS ASG roll forecasts
Appendix Di	School Roll Forecasts Methodology
Appendix E	Financial Analysis

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education Committee, at its meeting on 15 February 2023, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Torridon Primary School, re-assigning its catchment to that of Shieldaig Primary School.
- 1.2 **Appendix A** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices B - E** are the appendices to the original proposal.
- 1.3 Torridon Primary School has been mothballed since June 2012.
- 1.4 Having once again reviewed the status of Torridon Primary, it is the Council's view that there are insufficient children of suitable age within the Torridon catchment to provide for a viable school, and that consequently Torridon Primary School should close. Further details on this are provided in Sections 6 and 10 below.
- 1.5 Torridon Primary School is designated as a rural school under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In that context, the Council has had special regard to:
 - any viable alternative to the closure proposal; alternatives were considered at Sections 5-9 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and have been reconsidered again in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 6-10 below.
 - the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to (a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community. The effect on the local community was considered at Section 14 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix A**) and is further considered at Sections 8 and 10 below, taking into account representations received during consultation.
 - the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to;
 - the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact. The effects on school transport were considered at Section 12 of the Proposal Paper, (**Appendix A**) and reconsidered again in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 6 and 10 below.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period Monday 27 February 2023 to Friday 21 April 2023. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Shieldaig Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) The Parent Council of Shieldaig Primary School
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (iv) Staff of Shieldaig Primary Schools.
- (v) Trade Union representatives.
- (vi) Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council
- (vii) Shieldaig Community Council
- (viii) Garve and District Community Council
- (ix) Education Scotland

2.3 The proposal document was also advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held at Torridon Community Council on 28 March 2023. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website, Twitter Account and Facebook page, and in the *Ross-shire Journal*. The minute of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Review of proposals following the consultation period

3.1 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.

3.2 The feedback from the consultation was considered by a range of Council officials. This ensured that the Council met the requirements of the 2010 Act.

3.3 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

4.0 Responses received

4.1 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 3**. There were 4 written responses (not including the pupil questionnaires). Copies of three of these can also be found at Appendices 3ii-3iv. One respondent requested that their response be treated as confidential to Highland councillors and Council officials, so has been circulated separately from the appendices to this Report.

4.2 The views of pupils at Shieldaig Primary School (which included the pupils living within the Torridon catchment area) were sought by means of an age adapted questionnaire. Appendices 3i and 3ii summarises their views, which are also discussed at Section 5 below.

5.0 Overview of Issues raised during the consultation period

5.1 There were 20 responses from pupils. Six pupils thought the Council should re-open Torridon Primary School, whilst 14 thought the school should continue to

be mothballed. None of the pupils supported closing the school. The detailed comments from pupils can be viewed at Appendix 3ii.

- 5.2 Education Scotland Inspectors who visited the school reported that children from the Torridon school catchment area who met with HM Inspectors had mixed views about the proposal. They liked the idea of Torridon Primary School re-opening but did feel if that were to happen they would miss their friends who attend Shieldaig Primary School. They are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and spoke positively about their teachers.
- 5.3 The arguments advanced by the pupils in favour of re-opening the school, are set out at Issues 1-3 below, together with arguments put forward in support of closure. The responses encountered by Education Scotland are set out at paragraph 7.4 below.
- 5.4 There were 4 written responses received from other stakeholders. One of these requested that the response be treated as confidential to Highland councillors and officials, so has been circulated separately from the appendices to this Report. All four responses expressed reservations about, or varying degrees of opposition to, the closure proposal. Concerns were expressed over a range of issues including the effect of the closure on the community, pre-school provision, travel times to Shieldaig from the outlying parts of the Torridon catchment, the possibility of an increase in the number of local children, the condition of the Torridon school building and its future use, and building/design issues at Shieldaig Primary School. Two of the respondents raised concerns about historical issues around the mothballing of the school in 2012.
- 5.5 The public meeting was well-attended, given the small size of the local community. The issues raised at the meeting were similar to those expressed in the written responses.
- 5.6 The main arguments put forward are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. Where different responses raise similar issues, these have been “grouped” for the purposes of the response.

6.0 Responses to the Issues raised in Public Consultation

- 6.1 Arguments advanced by the children in favour of continued mothballing or re-opening are set out at Issues 1-3 below, and addressed at Responses 1-3.

Issue 1

Make the school into something we could use – toys, children’s space, after school club

Response 1

If the school closes, it is unlikely that Highland Council would wish to pursue any of the above options. However, the community might be able to take over the building, and pursue some of the ideas set out above.

Issue 2

Keep it mothballed – people have started moving to Torrison – maybe it will re-open.

Response 2

The school has now been mothballed for 11 years, without there being any significant rise in the number of children in the Torrison area. It is time to come to a final decision on the future of the school.

Issue 3

Torrison is much closer to Kinlochewe. There could be 12 kids if Kinlochewe pupils went to Torrison

Response 3

It's true that Kinlochewe is closer to Torrison than to Shialdaig, but Kinlochewe School was itself mothballed in 2022 when all of the parents moved their children to either Shialdaig or to Gairloch Primary. Since the parents felt the school in Kinlochewe was too small, there is nothing to suggest they would be interested in their children attending a re-opened Torrison Primary School.

- 6.3 The arguments advanced in written responses are set out at Issues 6-7 below, and addressed at Responses 4-23

Issue 4

We question why Torrison School has to close. It occupies a larger space than either Kinlochewe or Shialdaig schools and is in a more central location. Also there may not be many children living in our area currently, but demographics could change.

Be that as it may, TKCC is of the view that the situation needs to be resolved. The school was mothballed over 10 years ago and the building is deteriorating badly. The Highland Council itself acknowledges that maintenance has been low and there is a lot of damage.

Response 4

See Response 2 on the demographics of the area. Whilst it is possible the demographics could change; they have not done so over an extended period since 2012. The Council agrees that it is undesirable for schools to be mothballed for as long as Torrison Primary School has, and it is time to make a decision on the future of the school.

Issue 5

Whilst we understand the benefit of larger numbers of children attending a school, closing Torridon will have a negative impact on people looking to stay or move into the community. This in turn may affect the long-term sustainability of some of our villages.

Response 5

Many of our most rural schools in Highland have seen sharply declining rolls over the last decade, suggesting that the presence of a school does not necessarily have any significant effect on attracting families with young children.

The Scottish Government's Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, which reported in 2014, considered the impact of school closures on communities. They concluded that "...*there was a lack of robust evidence on how pre-school, childcare and school proximity (and freedom from threat of closure) links to the sustainability of communities.*" The Commission added that "*In some of the communities the Commission visited, it found evidence that while a school closure had been resisted and closure still took place, the impact had been less than was feared, with communities adjusting to different school provision and community focus continuing in individual villages. Rural communities and their economic base vary widely, as does their remoteness, and this will affect their resilience to school change.*"

Issue 6

We would like the Highland Council to recognise there will be a particular burden on people living in places such as Inveralligin, Wester Alligin and Diabaig, for whom Shieldaig school is a long way away (up to 50 minutes by car).

Response 6

Google Maps suggests that the normal travel time from Diabaig to Shieldaig is around 36 minutes. However the Council does agree that the journey times from these communities to Shieldaig are longer than would be desirable for primary school pupils. We understand there are currently no children of primary school age in these three locations.

Issue 7

If Torridon School is closed, TKCC considers that the buildings and playpark should be retained for community use. There are strong feelings in the community that they should not be made available for commercial development or become another holiday home.

Response 7

This response is noted. The issue will be one for determination if a decision is taken to close the school.

Any application for a Community Asset Transfer, following any future closure of the school, would need to demonstrate a level of community benefit commensurate with the value of the site.

The school playground is an amenity for local children. The land occupied by the playpark is owned by the Council and is classed as Housing Revenue Account Land. This means any transfer of the site would require the consent of the Council as well as the Scottish Government. There is, additionally, a clause of pre-emption which prevents any sale without first having offered the same to the National Trust for Scotland.

Issue 8

See pages 1-5 of Appendix 3iii set out some background to the mothballing of Torridon Primary School, as put forward in the personal view of the respondent, who was formerly a Head Teacher with Highland Council. This background is best read in its entirety at Appendix 3iii rather than in summary form in this document.

Response 8

The issue raised above is provided as relevant background to the author's substantive objections to the closure of Torridon Primary School.

Issue 9

The community from Diabaig to Torridon at Fasaig is a contiguous community. Shieldaig is quite distinct with a 'gap' along the south shore of Loch Torridon. As reported in documentation Torridon Primary School is a sound building. Diabaig and Alligin are too far from Shieldaig to enable viable family life of primary school age children. The lack of a school within the Torridon community has the effect of de-development and a knock-on preventing or deterring families from making their homes there. This then has a whole number of other knock-on effects marginalising the community and inhibiting economic development.

Response 9

Response 5 above also addresses this issue. It should also be noted that the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education also concluded that "A school alone cannot sustain a rural community. The Commission noted that other issues are likely to be as critical to maintaining a working age

population. The Commission received a strong message on its visits to communities that while they place great value on a school in their community, the two most important factors in sustaining the community are jobs and housing. Without employment opportunities and affordable housing, families can neither move to an area nor remain there. While local schools are strongly desirable in a similar way to local healthcare and a local post office, it seems likely that rural communities do generally manage to tolerate travelling a further distance to school. This finding is consistent with other Scottish rural studies.”

Issue 10

Pages 5-6 of Appendix 3iii set out the respondent's view that this proposal cannot proceed without due consideration of the Highland Council's treatment of staff in the lead-up to the school being mothballed. As with Issue 8 above, the argument is best read in its entirety at Appendix 3iii rather than in summary form in this document. The respondent draws particular attention to the paragraph in the Scots language at page 8 of Appendix 3iii.

Response 10

In considering the future of Torridon Primary School, the crucial consideration is whether the school is viable, and whether there are educational benefits to the children from their attendance at Shieldaig Primary, due to the larger numbers at that school. The Council's Proposal Paper set out the educational arguments in favour of the closure of the school, and our view is that the number of children within the Torridon Primary School catchment is insufficient for a re-opened Torridon Primary School to be viable. One of the factors the Council has taken into account is whether parents of children who already attend Shieldaig Primary School would be willing to remove those children to attend a re-opened school at Torridon.

Issue 11

The first page of Appendix 3iv sets out some background to the mothballing of Torridon Primary School, as put forward in the personal view of the respondent, who was formerly a Head Teacher with Highland Council. This background, which concerns personal issues, is best read in its entirety at Appendix 3iv rather than in summary form in this document.

The respondent also makes the point that, on mothballing Torridon School in June 2012, at least six jobs within the community were lost, a significant blow to a very small community.

Response 11

In June 2010 the very low roll at Torridon Primary School led officials to conduct informal discussions with parents about the future of the school. At that point the view of the very small number of parents was that the school

should continue to operate. The Highland Council took cognisance of this view – the identification of which was the entire purpose of the discussion - and the school remained open. The mothballing of Torridon Primary School in 2012 took place because by then the school roll had fallen still further and was too low to be viable. Most parents had already moved their children elsewhere on placing requests and it was clear that one of the two remaining children was also about to be moved.

The jobs referred to were mostly part-time, but it is nevertheless acknowledged that the loss of employment in a rural community is an adverse effect from a school closure.

Ultimately, schools need children to continue in operation.

Issue 12

A lack of affordable housing in area has hampered families wishing to stay in the area over the last 23 years. In 2000 the roll was down to a perspective 2 pupils from 19 in 1992 but quickly went up to 11 by end of the first term. The school rolls fluctuate in small rural schools and one family moving in or out can change things considerably.

In 2010 three families (9 children) who would have stayed in Torridon if they were able to, transferred to Shildaig after new family housing was built. Numbers of pupils at Shildaig School rising from 3 to 17 over that summer. There have been various assurances of new houses for Torridon over a number of years and in recent months The Community Housing Trust has again expressed interest in being in a position to help facilitate building more houses along from Torridon Primary by Darroch Park with the potential for higher numbers of children in Torridon.

There are now no primary school age children living in the outlying villages of Alligin, Wester Alligin or Diabaig 9 miles away from Torridon School and it is unlikely that families will ever move to these villages if there is no educational provision available at Torridon. Since mothballing in 2012, two families who had bought houses in Diabaig and Wester Alligin planning to live there, moved away. Travel and transport, 18 miles each way, from Diabaig to Kinlochewe proved a problem through Winter months when school was missed. Travel for preschool children to Nursery in Shildaig from villages like Wester Alligin, entailed parents providing transport at their own cost 26 miles twice a day. Time also an important factor as each journey there and back over an hour. No expenses and losing working time if having to drive. This has resulted in families not only leaving but keeping children at home rather than try to attend Nursery.

Response 12

The issue of the effect of school closures on communities is considered at Response 9 above.

The Council agrees that housing can be an issue in terms of retaining families in rural communities. It is clear however, that the number of children in the area is now so low that there is no realistic prospect of the school having sufficient children to become viable.

The Council's methodology for calculating school roll forecasts is available on our website:

[Developer Contributions | School Roll Forecast Methodology, September 2017 \(highland.gov.uk\)](https://www.highland.gov.uk/development/development-projects/developer-contributions/school-roll-forecast-methodology)

It can be seen from paragraphs 3.2 -3.4 of the PDF document on the above page, that the Council takes full account of the influence of new or potential housing development.

An analysis of school transport operation over the past few years has established that there were 3 dates during 2022-23 in which transport was cancelled due to adverse weather - 12th December 2022, 15th December 2022, and 20th January 2023.

Previous years had no cancellations as the area seldom has any frost. The coast of Wester Ross is known for its relatively mild oceanic climate and for the moderating effect of the Gulf Stream.

Issue 13

Since mothballing in 2012 families coming to Torridon have been told educational provision could only be in Shieldaig or Kinlochewe and that Torridon was not an option.

When parents requested that Nursery provision resume in Torridon where all resources were in place prior to the Pandemic, all requests were refused.

Kinlochewe Primary & Nursery was mothballed at short notice in June 2023 so Kinlochewe is no longer an option, the nearest Primary and Nursery Units being Shieldaig 16 miles from Diabaig or Gairloch 39 miles.

Families residing in Kinlochewe must now travel 17 miles to Shieldaig or 20 miles to Gairloch, again for pre-school at their own expense regarding time and fuel. Some choosing to opt for home education instead.

It has been noted that Torridon Primary is a central location, 10 miles from Kinlochewe School and 8 from Shieldaig.

Currently the 6 children from the Torridon area now attending Shieldaig, all live close and within walking distance of Torridon School, the journey to Shieldaig 8 miles each way in comparison to the outlying villages such as Diabaig being an additional 9 more.

With ever increasing distances to travel, more school days off are required in Winter and youngsters are less able obtain transport to travel to after school activities

Response 13

At the time of writing, there is only one child in the Torridon catchment who would qualify for attending a school nursery class. It is undesirable, both educationally and socially, for a child to be left on their own in a nursery setting. Where an alternative exists with more children, then there are educational advantages to children travelling to that provision.

The Council is trying to recruit more local childminders to deliver Early Years childcare and education. We would welcome any interest from the Torridon community.

Issue 14

In 1910, Duncan Darrach, owner of Torridon Estate signed over land within the stone dyke boundary at Torridon for the purpose of a school and teacher house to be built. In the deeds he stipulates that the building be used for educational use. or be offered back to his successors if not being used for continued educational purposes.

He also stipulated that boundary walls and paths be kept in good condition, something Highland Council have badly neglected in recent years.

Response 14

This issue was covered at S.14 of the Proposal Paper. The Council's Title to Torridon School (including the school grounds and schoolhouse) is a Feu Charter by Duncan Darroch of Gourock and Torridon in favour of The School Board of the Parish of Applecross recorded in the Division of the General Register of Sasines applicable to the County of Ross and Cromarty on 23rd August 1875. It is believed that The National Trust for Scotland is the current owner of the surrounding Torridon Estate. From an examination of the title, it would appear that there is nothing in terms of the Council's title which would prevent the Council transferring the property to another party.

Issue 15

As with Issues 8, 10, and 11 above, pages 2-3 of Appendix 3iv describes some background to the mothballing of Torridon Primary School, as put forward in the personal view of the respondent, who was formerly a Head Teacher with Highland Council. This background includes personal as well as more general issues, is best read in its entirety at Appendix 3iv rather than in summary form in this document.

Response 15

The Highland Council does not regard Torridon Primary School as closed.

Some resources were removed from the school on the following grounds – i. that some materials were actually owned by members of the community; ii. that some resources could be repurposed by Shieldaig School for the benefit of the children there (including the children from Torridon); and iii. other out of date resources were offered to the community rather than being thrown out. At no time were any of these arrangements linked to the school being closed.

The work undertaken at the school in the 1990s illustrated the commitment of the former Highland Regional Council to the school and the area, but this commitment did not arrest the decline in the school roll. The “good capacity” referred to was a result of the roll falling so low that only a small fraction of the school’s capacity was being utilised, something which represented an inefficient use of taxpayer resources.

As advised elsewhere, the Council’s view is that a decision on the closure of Torridon Primary is required to allow the building to move on to a new phase in its history.

The matter of the schoolhouse tenancy was settled at Sheriff court.

Issue 16

Claims have been made that children attending a very small rural school suffer socially and academically and that small numbers do not fit the Curriculum for Excellence ideas. Having taught three decades in various sized schools, Lochcarron, Ullapool and Torridon, with a mix of large class numbers, composite classes and then small numbers I found the one to one attention that staff were able to give a small number of pupils very beneficial. Each school has to be considered in its own right but for Torridon the numbers and spread of ages worked well for both individual and collaborative learning and fitted well into the new Curriculum strands. From 2000 on, families moved into the area especially, attracted by the low pupil/ staff ratio. The school was inclusive, giving additional support when needed. Achievements were celebrated with pupils going on to achieve National recognition in activities ranging from winning Gold medals at the National Mod to joining the Scottish National Sheepdog Trial Junior Team. Pupils enjoyed their own time but also mixed well with other local small schools, combining for sport team activities when needed. Academically pupils at Torridon Primary had 100% attainment from 2015 - 2012. Pupils from Torridon also went on to be Dux of Gairloch High School. Above all when going well, small schools enable a family feel and lifelong friendships to be created. They are a hub for the community, enabling a number of additional activities to take place. Within the last decade this has been remarked upon by a number of local villagers, saying they miss the sound of children's

laughter as time and again houses are sold for ever rising prices, often as holiday businesses with some owners now owning multiple properties.

Unfortunately, yes, small schools are expensive per pupil to run, one of the main background factors I believe when in 2010 attempts were made to close a number of West Highland and Island small schools including Torridon and on North Skye.

Response 16

Torridon School, was mothballed after the school roll fell to just one pupil, and largely as a result of parents opting to send their children elsewhere.

The Proposal Paper set out the detailed reasons why the Highland Council believes that there are educational benefits to the closure of Torridon Primary School, and why we feel the school is no longer viable.

Sadly, the phenomenon of a lack of children is something commented upon in many rural villages across Highland, whether the community has a school, or not. In the last two years five schools in Highland, all with formerly healthy rolls, have been mothballed due to a simple lack of children.

Issue 17

Torridon School is a bright, spacious building with a spectacular setting at the foot of a mountain and at the head of a loch with large sandy bay with surrounding croft land. After the extension built at considerable cost in 1992, the classroom has large windows and three doors leading into it. Ideal for plenty ventilation to combat Covid.

The school is in the centre of the village, not far from the Community Centre, Fire & Mountain Rescue Stations, Medical Centre and local Cafe & Store. It has ample parking nearby with parking space along the road at the front of the school and up the drive at the side.

This year has seen a positive change from Highland Council who now allow a number of mothballed school buildings to be used by the community on Skye in particular so helping keep them in better order until further decisions are made.

Torridon School and Schoolhouse require immediate attention and maintenance to save further deterioration and costs. The sad thing is that the building could have been used productively from 2012 till now and in a number of educational ways as Duncan Darrach wished. There are still options not explored for maintaining alongside Shieldaig and Kinlochewe even as a resource and outdoor learning centre.

Collaboration could be made with Highlife Highland, The National Trust or Wester Ross Biosphere as the building lies within their UNESCO accredited educational Buffer Zone to provide a range of educational resources and

activities whilst still maintaining the chance of a school if children numbers were to grow through additional housing.

Wester Ross also missed out on having a Newton Room to boost Science in the area.

Couldoran House near Kishorn was recently sold and is to become an exciting Rainforest Learning Centre.

Intergenerational Educational classes could also be held in collaboration with the Loch Torridon Community Centre to allow additional space for resident artists, life skill classes etc where equipment would not need to be tidied away each day. Torridon is also lacking a local Heritage Centre with the building having ample wall space for display too.

Response 17

The response above outlines a number of exciting ideas for the future life of the school building, that could be taken forward by the local community. None however, could move forward until a decision is taken on the future of Torridon Primary School as a primary school, operated by the local authority. It is high time that decision was taken.

The issue of “options not explored” is considered further at Section 10 below.

Issue 18

It was recently stated by a Highland Ward Councillor that if the Community asked for a Community Asset Transfer they would then have the option of retuning to a school if needed in future years. I do not believe this could happen if officially closed so think the statement misleading.

With such a scarcity of local housing it is terrible to see the Schoolhouse now lying empty and un-lived in. It could form additional living or office space combined with use of the school as an educational centre of some kind, so meeting Mr Darroch's wishes or be signed over to the Community in an Asset Transfer for local community housing. A separate gate would need to be opened up for the house, the old entrance having been blocked up by the Council many years ago.

Ideally the design and layout of the building and surrounding curtilage lends itself to a combined use.

As a school and home it worked well, much envied by many others visiting it. It would be very sad to see the building just sold off as yet another luxury holiday home.

With first Diabaig then Alligin Schools closing and the manner in which staff and parents were treated prior to and following the mothballing of Torridon there is a feeling of Community Clearances. Especially with Kinlochewe also now mothballed and Achnasheen School demolished leaving ever increasing distances and costs for families to have to travel, if they have actually been able to find a house they can afford to live in. This then also has an impact on High School numbers.

There is a need to think creatively, working together with better communication to explore all options to closure to help reverse the depopulation currently occurring.

A number of young families have now been able to return to Shildaig in recent years where the village is happily thriving. In danger of closure itself in 2010 with only 3 pupils, numbers are now heading to 30 demonstrating how quickly things can and do change. Torridon's loss being Shildaig's gain.

Response 18

The Highland Council is delighted at the growth in the roll of Shildaig Primary School in recent years. However Torridon Primary School has been mothballed for over a decade now, with no indication of any significant rise in the number of local children. As has been mentioned, Kinlochewe Primary School has also recently been mothballed due to a sharply falling roll, the speed of which came as a surprise to the Highland Council.

In its overall programme, the Highland Council has identified the place-based strategy approach to be one of its key strategic priorities, and a place-based Investment Fund has been created to address local priorities and combat rural depopulation.

It should be noted though, that Scotland's birth rate has declined since 2008, with inevitable consequences for school enrolments.

The efficient use of Council resources must be part of the Council's strategy for addressing the needs of communities.

Issue 19

The loss of the primary school will damage our community irrevocably and could have been avoided. However, we would like to focus on the realistic and viable steps the Highland Council can take to lessen the impact of the proposed closure.

Our experience is that the families with children that currently attend Shildaig school but who live outside the village of Shildaig (Torridon, Alligin, Annat, Kinlochewe and Applecross coast road) are socially disadvantaged due to the lack of transport provision outside normal school hours. There are currently after school sports, ballet and music classes and

play dates but these require parents to travel long distances to drop off, wait for and collect children. This social isolation could be significantly reduced by (i) making a minibus or some other form of group transport available for use by the school/ community/ parents or (ii) extending the current school transport contract to cover after school activities. The recent community consultation exercise in Torridon has raised the issue of community transport and it would be possible for the HC to partner with local charities or businesses to enhance transport provision.

Response 19

The Transport Co-Ordination Unit from within the Highland Council have begun discussions with the local community transport provider and other community representatives about the potential for transport that would allow for youngsters to have greater connectivity to extracurricular activities, which will minimise social disadvantage and isolation.

These discussions are still in early stages, with a number of issues to resolve; as a result, the outcome is as yet unclear as to what shape this transport provision will take. However, in the long-term, the intention is to ensure that there are viable community transport options for youngsters who would otherwise be at a disadvantage due to remoteness and lack of existing transport links.

Issue 20

There is a concern about safety at Shieldaig school drop off and pick up. The closure of Kinlochewe and Torridon schools means that increased numbers of parents have to pick up their children by car, especially those that have children attending nursery (who are ineligible for school transport) or those that wish their children to join in with after school activities or social events. There is not even adequate parking available for the number of staff working at the school. This concern could be reduced by the provision of additional transport and/or by allowing nursery children to use school transport. This would have additional environmental benefits. Alternatively, given the large budget the HC was able to allocate to the conversion of the Shieldaig school house, perhaps budget could be found to fund an extension of school parking facilities to make them adequate for a school/nursery of the current size. We believe that the current parking facilities at Shieldaig school are not compliant with the most basic planning requirements for a residential building, let alone a public facility.

Response 20

Children at Shieldaig Primary School are supervised at all times outside at the school by either support staff or teaching staff. The school have a good staffing ratio to allow for this.

There is a right of way through the school which does bring a lot of tourists walking through, particularly in the summer. Children are never outside alone.

The council has installed large gates at the entrance to discourage cars driving through. These are kept closed during the day and because of the school really only gets residents passing through in vehicles.

The HMI Report at Appendix 4 noted that the school grounds are secure (Paragraph 3.1)

The parking issue is covered at Response 23 below.

Issue 21

The kitchen facilities at Shieldaig school are not large enough to support the provision of meals to the increased number of pupils arising from the closure/mothballing of Torridon and Kinlochewe schools. In particular, the school is no longer able to offer a choice of meals which is the norm in most other schools. There is also no dedicated area where the children can eat, so staff/pupils have to move furniture in the classrooms and children have to eat in shifts, which means that some rush to eat their food and some miss out on playtime. The closure of Torridon school will permanently increase the number of pupils on the Shieldaig school roll and the catering facilities should be improved to meet this additional demand. If there are cost savings associated with the closure of Kinlochewe and Torridon schools, funds could be redirected to improve the catering/ dining facilities at Shieldaig. This might also assist with recruitment and retention of catering and cleaning staff who currently work in challenging conditions.

Response 21

The kitchen area did receive a significant upgrade at the time the former schoolhouse was converted into a classroom, with new equipment and surfaces, and new walls designed for easier cleaning.

Unfortunately there do not appear to be any suitable options for the Council in terms of creating a separate area for pupils to dine in within the existing school building. We agree that the current arrangement of the use of one of the two primary classrooms is far from ideal but there really isn't any other space available in the school and/or nursery that could be utilised.

In regard to the menu options, Highland Council is working on moving to a two-choice menu to replace the current single choice menu at the school. This may involve the recruitment of a Catering Assistant to support the Cook in Charge who currently is providing approx. 30 meals a day on her own. Generally, the Council only provides a single choice menu option in the schools with very small pupil numbers however other factors do impact on this including staffing levels, kitchen size, cooking equipment and storage space. Since the recent improvement works the kitchen at Shieldaig would be suitable for the provision of a two-choice menu. The challenges of moving to a two-choice menu would be more to do with staffing and the ability to recruit to a post.

Issue 22

Whilst we understand that in the current circumstances Torridon school is likely to close, we do not see why the community should also lose a well-loved and well-used playpark. The loss of the playpark will compound the social isolation felt by local families. We believe that in the event of closure of the school, any subsequent sale or transfer of the land should not take place without the prior provision of space for a playpark somewhere in Torridon.

Torridon school building sits at the heart of the community and has been long neglected. Recent community consultation has identified multiple possible opportunities for the building if it could be transferred to the community. We understand that the land currently used as a playing field and playpark is owned separately but, in the event of closure, we would urge the council to facilitate a concurrent process to allow the transfer of both the building and the adjacent land to the community at the same time in order to give the community the best opportunity to create the most viable project at the site. Whilst recognising the budget pressures faced by the Highland Council, we believe that any community asset transfer should include recompense to the community for the acknowledged failure to maintain and repair the school building since it was mothballed.

Response 22

Paragraph 14.4 of the Proposal Paper advised that the land occupied by the playpark is owned by the Council and is classed as Housing Revenue Account Land. This means any transfer of the site would require the consent of the Council as well as the Scottish Government. There is, additionally, a clause of pre-emption which prevents any sale without first having offered the same to the National Trust for Scotland.

The Council is particularly keen to support communities to take on former school buildings and any associated land and facilities.

Proposals from communities to do this can be taken forward on submission of a single community asset transfer application. This application can include multiple assets such as in this instance the school building and play park. The application process can be found here- www.highland.gov.uk/cat

Support with an application can be accessed from [Community Asset Transfer | DTAS Community Ownership Support Service](#)

It is not unusual for Council land and buildings to have a variety of conditions such as title burdens that dictate future use or a right of pre-emption (the original landowner having first refusal of any sale) or other legal elements that require to be worked through.

The Council is committed to helping prospective community asset transfer applicants work through these.

Unfortunately the Council is not in a position to fund work on former school buildings to enable a transfer.

A meeting with Council staff to advise on the asset transfer process could be arranged, if considered helpful.

Issue 23

We would welcome some reassurance from the Highland Council regarding the safeguarding and supervision measures that are in place to protect children when they are playing/working outside at Shieldaig school. Torridon school, like most modern primary schools, was in a completely enclosed playground with no public access. Shieldaig school has a right of way running between the school building and the outside play areas. The outside areas are not secure and anyone can drive or walk straight through the middle of the school grounds without passing disclosure checks or any of the other usual requirements for being in close proximity to school children. They can also drop litter or harmful waste (eg needles, broken glass) in areas frequented by children. If funding was made available to address the parking situation, the outside areas might also be redesigned to make the school grounds more secure. If funding were an issue, perhaps the parent council could assist in raising funds.

Response 23

As mentioned at Response 20 above, children at Shieldaig Primary School are supervised at all times outside at the school by either support staff or teaching staff. The school have a good staffing ratio to allow for this.

Highland Council is currently working with the Head Teacher on a survey of pupils / staff and parents / guardians regarding travel choices and any road safety issues they want to raise. At the time of writing there has been a poor response and the school is going to issue the survey again. Once this is done a summary will be collated for taking forward road safety and travel issues.

7.0 Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland

- 7.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 4**. A Gàidhlig language version is at Appendix 5.
- 7.2 In their report, Education Scotland agree that the council has made a clear and reasonable case for the permanent closure of Torridon Primary School and Nursery. Children from the area are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery. They enjoy learning alongside peers from the wider area. Stakeholders now largely accept the closure of the school.

- 7.3 Education Scotland noted that stakeholders are concerned about the lack of early learning and childcare in the Torridon and Kinlochewe areas. Stakeholders want to engage further with the council to look at children's access to educational opportunities and the provision of early learning and childcare across the wider Shieldaig, Torridon and Kinlochewe areas.
- 7.4 The following issues were identified for further consideration, and are set out below.

Issue 24

It will be important that the council work with community members, including children and young people, in regard to the future use of the site. The council should do this in a timely manner to avoid the condition of the building deteriorating further from not being used.

Response 24

The Council notes and agrees with this recommendation. A decision on the permanent closure of the school would be the quickest way of progressing, since in-depth discussion on the future of the site cannot take place until a decision is taken on the future of the school. The Council is keen to obtain a final decision on the school, to avoid another winter during which the building may deteriorate further.

8.0 Effects on the Community

- 8.1 Section 14 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council's assessment of the effects of closure on the local community,
- 8.2 The future of the site and building was one of the main issues that arose in the consultation exercise, along with the future of the adjacent playpark. As previously discussed, the Council cannot prejudge the outcome of the current consultation by agreeing any future use of the building at this stage. In the event the closure is approved, the Council would welcome a community bid for the future use of the building and site.
- 8.3 The other issue raised in consultation was over the fear that the closure of the school would be a disincentive for families to move to the community. This is addressed at Responses 5 and 9 above.

9.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

- 9.1 There were no alleged omissions or inaccuracies.

10.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure

- 10.1 Throughout the consultation the Council has had special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)

(Scotland) Act 2010. In particular, the Council has had special regard to the following:

- any viable alternative to the closure proposal;

Sections 5-9 of the Proposal Paper identified and discussed the following alternatives to closure:

- i. To continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.
- ii. To re-open Torridon Primary School with its current catchment area.
- iii. To re-open Torridon Primary School with an expanded catchment area.
- iv. To re-open Torridon Primary School as a specialist facility

10.2 Sections 6 and 7 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council’s consideration as to why Options i and ii above would not be viable options for Torridon Primary School.

10.3 Similarly, in respect of option (iii) in paragraph 10.1 above, Section 8 of the original Proposal Paper set out the reasons why an expanded catchment area would not be a viable option for Torridon Primary School.

10.4 Section 9 of the Proposal Paper set out why it is not be viable to re-open Torridon Primary School as a specialist facility.

10.5 Having reconsidered each of the alternatives identified at Sections 5-9 of the Proposal Paper, the Highland Council has concluded that the alternatives to closure would not deliver the educational benefits of the proposal.

10.6 Issue 17 above sets out an alternative approach suggested during the consultation exercise, which is that the Torridon School Building could be used for educational provision alongside the schools at Kinlochewe and Shieldaig. This might be simply as a resource or outdoor learning centre.

10.7 It should be noted that this suggestion would still require the completion of the legal process for the closure of Torridon Primary School. In strict terms it does not therefore represent an alternative to closure, but is more a suggestion of what should happen to the building following closure.

10.8 The Council has carefully considered the above suggestion, but has concluded that the distances between Shieldaig and Torridon would be a disincentive towards Shieldaig Primary School using the building for some additional purpose. Too much educational time would be utilised in travelling, and the cost of travel would be a significant drain on the budgets for such a small school. The level of use of the Torridon Primary School building would likely be small and would not justify its retention by the Council for educational use.

10.9 The Council has also reconsidered the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to; (a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school’s premises and its other facilities for use by the community. The potential

community impact of the proposal was considered at Section 14 of the Proposal Paper and is further considered at Section 8 above.

- 10.10 The Council has further reconsidered the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact, (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

The impact of the proposal on travel time was considered at Section 12 of the original proposal paper. Since Torridon Primary School has been mothballed since June 2012, implementation of the proposal would not require the introduction of any different travelling arrangements for pupils or staff.

11.0 Procedure for Call-in by the Scottish Ministers

- 11.1 As set out in The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Highland Council is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision on 14 September 2023 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. Therefore, anyone who wishes to make representations to the Scottish Ministers can do so up until midnight on 4 October 2023. The Scottish Ministers will have until midnight on 8 November 2023 to take a decision on the call-in of the Closure Proposal.
- 11.2 Anyone wishing to make a representation to the Scottish Ministers requesting them to call-in the decision to close Torridon Primary School is asked to email schoolclosure@gov.scot or to write to **School Infrastructure Unit, Learning Directorate, The Scottish Government, Area 2A South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ by midnight on 8 November 2023.**
- 11.3 Until the outcome of the eight-week call-in process has been notified to Highland Council, it will not proceed to implement the Proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, it will be referred to a School Closure Review Panel.

12.0 Legal issues

- 12.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 12.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland, such education to be directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children or young persons to their fullest potential (Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act

2000). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

13.0 Financial Implications

13.1 Advice on the financial implications of the proposal was issued as Appendix E to the Proposal Paper.

14.0 Equality Impact Assessment

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was issued with the proposal paper and can be found at Section 16 of the Proposal Paper. The consultation exercise did not identify any additional equality issues.

15.0 Rural Impact Assessment

15.1 A Rural Impact Assessment was issued with the proposal paper and can be found at Section 17 of the Proposal Paper. No additional rurality issues were identified.

16.0 Effects on School Transport

16.1 The effects on school transport were considered at Section 12 of the Proposal Paper. As there are no pupils currently attending Torridon Primary School, there are no differing school transport arrangements to take into account.

17.0 Mitigation of Adverse Effects

17.1 Adverse effects were considered at S.18 of the proposal Paper, and none were identified. Again, this assessment takes into account the fact that there are currently no pupils attending Torridon Primary School.

18.0 Conclusion

18.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 above. For the reasons set out in detail in sections 5-10 above, Highland Council considers that implementation of the closure proposal is the most appropriate response to the reasons for the proposal.

18.2 The most significant reason for closure is that all the available evidence suggests that the number of children who would attend a re-opened Torridon Primary School would be too low to make the school viable, and that there would consequently be educational disadvantages arising from such a decision. Lastly, Shieldaig Primary School is itself a rural school.

- 18.3 Education Scotland staff visited Shieldaig Primary School, to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses. They agree that The Highland Council's proposal will result in educational benefits for the children of Torridon Primary School catchment area.
- 18.4 The Executive Chief Officer (Education), on reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; and having had special regard to alternatives to closure, to the community impact and to the impact of travelling arrangements; concludes that the proposal offers educational benefits and that implementation of the Proposal in full is the most appropriate response to the reason for formulating the Proposal. The reasons for this conclusion are set out at Sections 5-10 above.

19.0 Recommendation

- 19.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council approves the proposal to discontinue education provision at Torridon Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Shieldaig Primary School.

Nicky Grant
Executive Chief Officer (Education)
4 August 2023

**MINUTE OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT TORRIDON COMMUNITY CENTRE ON 28
MARCH 2023**

**CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF
EDUCATION AT TORRIDON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Panel

Biz Campbell, Councillor (Chair)
Mhairi MacDonald, Area Education Manager (West)
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Highland Council

Thomas O'Halloran, Head Teacher, Shieldaig Primary School

20 members of the public attended the meeting.

The Chairperson began by welcoming everyone to the meeting and introducing the officials present. She advised that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposal to formally close Torrison Primary School, (as set out in the recommendation to the Proposal Paper). The proposed change, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures. Copies of the Proposal Paper and appendices were distributed. The Proposal Paper identified various options, and the Chairperson explained that we could also discuss any other options or alternatives to closure which those present would like to raise. The Chairperson then asked Ian Jackson to describe the consultation process.

Ian Jackson – As everyone knows Torrison PS has been “mothballed” for some considerable time, since 2012 in fact. A “mothballed” school is not operational, but neither is it permanently closed. The permanent closure of the school, which is what the Council is now proposing, is subject to a statutory consultation process, of which this meeting is part. We are currently in the initial phase of that consultation, which is due to end on Friday 21 April, and I would urge anyone who wants to submit views in writing to do so by that date. The purpose of tonight’s meeting is to gather views, and we will try to answer any questions that are raised.

My colleague Mhairi MacDonald will shortly set out the educational basis for the Council’s proposal to formally close Torrison PS, but before that I will briefly describe the rest of the consultation process.

The formal process has a number of stages. Once the public consultation ends on 21 April, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will look at the Proposal Paper, the note of the meeting tonight, and any written representations, and will form their own view on the educational benefits of the proposal. Education Scotland will contact the Head Teacher of Shieldaig Primary School – actually I think they already have - and they will be keen to hear from any parents who wish to make their views known. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland’s view on the educational benefits

and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. Following the completion of that stage, the Council will prepare a Report reviewing the consultation exercise and present it to the Council's Education Committee. The Review Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, and anyone who responded in writing to the initial consultation will be invited to make "further representations" during those 3 weeks. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Members will also see copies of the original responses and the note of this meeting.

After all that, there would still be a further opportunity for representations to be made to Scottish Ministers. All school closures in Scotland have to be ratified by Ministers, and they have 8 weeks from the date of the Council's decision to themselves decide whether to ratify the proposal or to refer it to what's called a school closure review panel. During the first 3 weeks of that 8-week period, Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person on whether the decision should be called in, or not called in, for review by a panel. Advice about how to make those representations will be provided at the relevant time.

In summary, I would say that the consultation process provides multiple opportunities for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made

The Chairperson then asked Mhairi MacDonald to explain the educational aspects of the proposal.

Mhairi MacDonald – In the Council's view, there are significant educational benefits that arise to the Torridon children from having the opportunity to mix with a larger group of children in Shieldaig Primary. As set out in the paper, the larger roll at Shieldaig allows more opportunities for collaborative working and team sports. One aspect of modern education is in promoting skills-based work – and a larger number of children allows for better team-building skills. I know that Thomas, the Head Teacher of Shieldaig who is here tonight, is very active in inviting people who have specialist skills into the school, to augment the skills of the core staff. This is easier to do and more effective with a larger roll. Furthermore, it is sometimes not just a matter of counting the raw numbers. For example, if there were a single family with four children, then the same issues would arise in terms of socialisation. I saw this happen myself at one of the schools where I was a cluster Head Teacher. Taken as a whole the Council feels that the educational benefits arising from this closure outweigh any gains that would be derived from re-opening the school.

The Chairperson then opened the meeting to the Q and A session.

Q1 – If the school is eventually closed, is there any possibility of the community making use of the building?

A1 (Ian Jackson) – We are getting a little ahead of ourselves here, as the first decision is whether to close the school. However, if, for the sake of argument, the school does close, then it's usual for the Council Service that owns the property – in this case the Education Service – to check with other Services whether they would wish to make use of the building. If the building is identified as surplus to Council requirements, then the community may have an opportunity to request an Asset Transfer – i.e., that the building is transferred to them. This is governed by Community Empowerment legislation introduced by the Scottish Government. It's not my area of work, but I understand it gives communities a fair amount of power in what use is made of a surplus public asset. I will say that it's not just a matter of the community asking for the asset to be handed over. Communities have to draw up a business plan demonstrating that the proposed use will represent good value.

If neither of the first two options are taken up, then the Council would dispose of the building on the open market, to realise a receipt for the Council taxpayer.

Q2 – What sort of timescale would we be looking at? You mentioned several different periods of time in your introduction, but could you clarify that again please?

A2 – (Ian Jackson) In terms of the school closure proposal, the current consultation ends on 21 April. That's followed by a consultation with Education Scotland – the school inspectors. This has to follow the public consultation, as Education Scotland receive the note of this meeting plus copies of any written responses received. That consultation is scheduled for 9-29 May, which leaves us just a month before the school holidays. What happens next depends on the number and the complexity of responses received, as the Council has to review those and address any points raised before going back to the Education Committee for a decision. At least three weeks before the Committee, we must publish the report and invite "further representations" from anyone who responded in writing to the public consultation.

There is an Education Committee scheduled for November 2023, and I would envisage the report for decision being submitted to that meeting. If the decision is to close the school, then it has to be ratified by the full Council, which meets in December. After that it has to go to Scottish Ministers, who will have 8 weeks to make their decision. So I would say that February 2024 is probably the earliest date by which the closure process could be concluded.

Q3 - Is any account taken of the impact on the community of the school being closed? I'm thinking in particular of the attractiveness of the village to new families. People are more likely to want to come here if there is a village school.

A3 – (Ian Jackson) The short answer is yes, we are expected to take account of that. It's mentioned in the Proposal Paper and we would welcome any comments from local people on that aspect of the proposal.

Q4 – How many children are there in the Torridon catchment at the present time, and how many are in the Kinlochewe catchment, since that school has also been mothballed?

A4 - (Ian Jackson) According to the information we have, there are currently 5 children aged P1-7 in the Torridon catchment. All these children currently attend Shieldaig Primary, and given that they have got used to that school and made friends there, I'm not clear whether any would wish to transfer back to a re-opened Torridon School.

In the case of Kinlochewe, there are children in the catchment, but their parents have all chosen to move them to other schools.

Q5 – Does the Highland Council have a minimum number of pupils, which it uses to decide whether a school is viable?

A5 – There isn't a minimum figure, due to the geography of Highland. We have a number of schools that are located either on remote islands or in parts of the mainland that are not served by the national road network. We keep those schools operating even where there are just one or two pupils, as there isn't really an alternative to doing so. However, where reasonable alternative provision exists and where the roll of a school has fallen to a very low level, we believe that children can benefit from learning in an environment with more of their peers.

Q6 – My question would be, why now? What is the urgency around closing the school at this time? Would it not be better to keep the school mothballed to see whether the number of children might increase? The preservation of rural schools is extremely important for the future of Scotland.

A6 – (Ian Jackson) – I would say that we've left this one a bit too long. It's good to allow a period during which the school could re-open if the number of children increases, but empty buildings do deteriorate and after a while re-opening becomes difficult. It's also important that the community can have their say as the result of a process like this one. Although we've had informal meetings since 2019, this the first chance the community have had to put over their view in this formal context. It's important that "mothballing" doesn't become a means of depriving the community of their say. The Scottish Government recommends that mothballing should not normally last more than 3 years unless the school is in a very rural location. Clearly, Torridon IS a very rural location, but still, the length of time the school has been mothballed is longer than is desirable. It's time for a decision one way or another.

Q7 – In previous discussions with parents and residents, the Council gave assurances that the building would be maintained. That hasn't happened, the exterior fabric of the building and the grounds is very poor. The gate is broken and the exterior grounds are unkempt.

A7 – (Ian Jackson) We do have an obligation to keep our buildings wind and watertight. Beyond that I would have to say the resources of our maintenance department are stretched, and empty buildings are not really a priority.

Q8 – (follow-up) – How much money has the Council spent on maintaining the building since it was mothballed?

A8 – (Ian Jackson) – I don't have that figure to hand. I'll ask within the Council and get back to you

Q9 – I am frankly shocked that you don't know the answer to that question. As Council taxpayers we pay your salaries, and I can't believe that you have come to this meeting so ill-equipped with the facts. I'm not even talking about the interior of the building which is even worse than the exterior – the ceiling of the schoolhouse has collapsed. It's shameful the way the building has been allowed to deteriorate.

A9 (Ian Jackson) – Although I don't know the figure, I would imagine it's not very large.

Q10 – Personally I would agree with the comments about the state of the building, and I would say that this consultation has been a very long time coming. However we have to move on from here. Once this decision is taken, we can all move on as a village.

A10 – (Ian Jackson) – This meeting is part of a process of establishing what the community wants.

Q11 – I have some concerns about road safety issues at Shieldaig Primary. I realise that the children get school transport, but there are some days where parents have to pick up their children, if there has been an excursion or other activity. Parents park their cars everywhere and children have to walk along roads with no pavements. I think there are some serious hazards.

A11 – (Mhairi MacDonald) – I can pick that issue up with Thomas (HT) separately from this meeting. We will look at ways of managing those situations.

(Ian Jackson) – The Council also has a Road Safety Unit. Part of their remit is to encourage walking and cycling by children, and the safety of walking/cycling routes is a factor in that. I will contact them to see whether they can assist.

Q12 – There are no catering facilities at Shieldaig, and the children have to eat their lunch in the classroom. They do this in shifts, which cuts down on their free play at lunchtimes. Is this common?

A12 – (Mhairi MacDonald) – It's more common than you might think, due to the design of our older rural schools.

Q13 – What about the playpark next to the school? Is the Council going to maintain the play equipment?

A13 – (Ian Jackson) The Council’s own lawyers have advised me that the land on which the playpark sits is classed as Housing Revenue Account land, and that this means any transfer of the site would require the consent of the Council’s Housing Department as well as the Scottish Government. There is also a clause of pre-emption which prevents any sale before the same has been offered to the National Trust for Scotland.

Q14 – I think the last question was more to do with whether the Council would maintain the current playpark.

The Chairperson (Cllr. Biz Campbell) referred to the Council’s current financial position and suggested that it would be better if the community took over responsibility for managing the playpark.

Q15 – More of a comment than a question, but the mothballing of the school, and the closure if confirmed, has a big negative impact on nursery education. The Council doesn’t provide transport to nursery education, so parents are forced to travel a considerable distance 4 times every day, if they want their children to attend nursery.

A15 – (Mhairi MacDonald) – The Council is trying to recruit more local childminders to deliver Early Years childcare and education. We would welcome any interest from the Torridon community.

Q16 - I would like to reiterate that point about nursery education, particularly for children who might live in Wester Alligan or Inveralligin. Parents there would have to make two return trips a day, of 20 miles or more each time.

Housing for families is a great problem in this area. I’m the ex-Head Teacher of the school and at one time there were 19 children at the school, then the roll fell away but then rose again. These numbers do fluctuate, but I think family housing is the key for the future.

A16 – (Ian Jackson) – We are seeing a worrying fall in the rolls of many of our rural schools. Across Highland the picture is uneven. Inverness is growing, as seems to be the case with some other locations in the east of our area, such as Aviemore and Grantown. The school rolls in our larger towns, like Fort William, Thurso, and Wick, seem to be quite stable, but we are seeing rolls fall across much of the rural west. It’s affecting not just primary schools but also the rolls at Ullapool High and Gairloch High.

Q17 – What’s the roll at Gairloch High now?

A17 – (Ian Jackson) – It’s down to around 100 now. I first started dealing with Ross-shire in 2008 and at that time the roll at Gairloch High was around 180. Our published school forecasts suggest the roll at Gairloch High will fall further to around 80, a decade from now.

Fortunately, Shieldaig Primary is one school that is maintaining a healthy roll.

Q18 – As others have said, the school building has been subject to shameful neglect. The ceiling of the schoolhouse has collapsed and there is grass growing through the carpet. The school room itself can still be saved, and needs to be saved.

The Proposal Paper refers to the school having one classroom but there was more than that. We had an office and a disabled toilet. We had a lovely school at one time.

Can I ask about the terms of the 1875 Feu Charter by Duncan Darroch of Gourrock and Torridon, that first allowed the school to be built? Do the terms of that not require that the site is handed back if it is no longer used for education?

A18 – (Ian Jackson) – The advice I have received suggests that there is nothing in that Title that would prevent the Council from transferring the property to another party.

Q19 – If the school is closed, I think it should be developed in a way that would allow it to be used as a school again.

A19 – The Chairperson commented that the Community Centre (where the meeting was being held) was a very impressive building and a credit to the community.

Discussion followed about the pressures on volunteers to create initiatives, maintain buildings etc. Torridon is a small community with a limited pool of people to draw on.

There being no other comments, the **Chairperson** thanked everyone for coming and for the thoughtful and measured comments made. She reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 21 April 2023 – and of where responses should be sent, either via letter or via email, or by using the online form. A record of this meeting would be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education Committee that considered the results of consultation. The members of the Committee would have a chance to see the note and all other representations before the meeting. Following the decision of the Committee, the minutes would be submitted to the full Council for ratification.

MEETING CLOSED

**List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation Exercise – Proposal to
Discontinue Education at Torrison Primary School**

1. Pupil responses – Shieldaig PS
 - 1a. Detailed comments from Shieldaig PS pupils
2. Torrison and Kinlochewe Community Council
3. Niall MacKinnon
4. Anne MacRae
5. Sally Cook and Robert Forshaw

HELLO EVERYONE!

CAN YOU HELP HIGHLAND COUNCIL WITH AN IMPORTANT DECISION?

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Torridon to go to Shieldaig Primary, instead of Torridon Primary.

Now we have to decide what to do for the future. We have 3 choices:

1. Close Torridon Primary for good, with children from Torridon going to Shieldaig Primary instead.
2. Re-open Torridon Primary, so any children from there would go to that school and not to Shieldaig.
3. Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer before we decide for good.

Which idea do you think is best? In the table below, place a tick next to which one you think is best.

Idea No. 1 – Close Torridon Primary for good.	
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Torridon Primary.	<p>/// Torridon children</p> <p> Shieldaig child</p>
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<p>// Torridon children</p> <p>/// /// // Shieldaig Children</p>



- Make the school into something we could use — toys, children's space, after school club.
- Keep it mothballed, people have started moving to Torricon — maybe it will reopen in the future...
- Much closer to Kintlochewe — could be 12 kids if Kintlochewe went there.
- My house is right next door to the school.

Sending from my personal email as well, as sometimes my tkcc emails go to junk.
Please send any response to chair@tkcc.scot
Caroline

From: Caroline Hamilton <chair@tkcc.scot>
Date: Wednesday, 12 April 2023 at 09:56
To: "Ian Jackson (Resources)" <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: Education Consultations <Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Response to consultation - closure of Torridon Primary School

Dear Ian,
Caroline Hamilton <cjh@arcticpoppymusic.com>

I am writing on behalf of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) to make the following comments on the Highland Council's consultative paper issued in relation to the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Torridon Primary School:

- First of all, we question why Torridon School has to close. It occupies a larger space than either Kinlochewe or Shieldaig schools and is in a more central location. Also there may not be many children living in our area currently, but demographics could change.
- Be that as it may, TKCC is of the view that the situation needs to be resolved. The school was mothballed over 10 years ago and the building is deteriorating badly. The Highland Council itself acknowledges that maintenance has been low and there is a lot of damage.
- Whilst we understand the benefit of larger numbers of children attending a school, closing Torridon will have a negative impact on people looking to stay or move into the community. This in turn may affect the long-term sustainability of some of our villages.
- We would like the Highland Council to recognise there will be a particular burden on people living in places such as Inveralligin, Wester Alligin and Diabaig, for whom Shieldaig school is a long way away (up to 50 minutes by car).
- If Torridon School is closed, TKCC considers that the buildings and playpark should be retained for community use. There are strong feelings in the community that they should not be made available for commercial development or become another holiday home.

We should be grateful if you would keep us informed of progress on this proposal. In particular, we would like to hear of any opportunities for a Community Asset Transfer as and when these may arise.

With thanks and kind regards,

Caroline

Caroline Hamilton
Chair – Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council

Name of consultation: Torridon Primary

Your comments: As Head teacher of Torridon Primary School at the time of mothballing I would like to make the following comments.

Loss of jobs within the community.

On mothballing Torridon School in June 2012, at least six jobs within the community were lost and Education Officials within Highland Council did not follow any of the agreed closure or redeployment procedures for promoted staff such as myself.

In June 2010 an attempt was made to force the mothballing of Torridon School causing considerable distress for all. Staff were told they would be out of work within weeks and parents of families told to decide which school they would prefer to move to, Kinlochewe or Shieldaig. After parents expressed a wish for their children to continue in Torridon the forced attempt to mothball did not go ahead. Instead in August 2010 the first day of term, the experienced Head teacher was suspended without reason, warning or investigation for two years, causing considerable upset and prompting parents to eventually move their children to Shieldaig, including parents of preschool children who had already signed up for Torridon earlier that Spring. Only after the last pupil was told he must move schools in April 2012 and the school then mothballed in June, was the Head teacher's told that having been able to mothball the school, the suspension was now 'all forgotten.' An offer of redeployment was made in July 2013 which was then not kept to, resulting in the Head teacher winning a claim for Unfair Dismissal in 2014. Staff such as the Cook, Cleaner, Secretary and support staff were all paid off with minimal notice. A huge blow to such a small community.

When a meeting was held with Education Officials and local Councillors in 2012 to discuss the mothballing of Torridon Primary, it was held in private behind locked doors with no members of the community associated with the school allowed to attend. The following day the school kitchen was cleared of all equipment and school cook told she was out of a job.

Housing and Fluctuating Pupil Numbers

A lack of affordable housing in area has hampered families wishing to stay in the area over the last 23 years. In 2000 the roll was down to a perspective 2 pupils from 19 in 1992 but quickly went up to 11 by end of the first term. The school rolls fluctuate in small rural schools and one family moving in or out can change things considerably.

In 2010 three families (9 children) who would have stayed in Torridon if they were able to, transferred to Shieldaig after new family housing was built. Numbers of pupils at Shieldaig School rising from 3 to 17 over that summer. There have been various assurances of new houses for Torridon over a number of years and in recent months The Community Housing Trust has again expressed interest in being in a position to help facilitate building more houses along from Torridon Primary by Darroch Park with the potential for higher numbers of children in Torridon.

There are now no primary school age children living in the outlying villages of Alligin, Wester Alligin or Diabaig 9 miles away from Torridon School and it is unlikely that families will ever move to these villages if there is no educational provision available at Torridon. Since mothballing in 2012, two families who had bought houses in Diabaig and Wester Alligin

planning to live there, moved away. Travel and transport, 18 miles each way , from Diabaig to Kinlochewe proved a problem through Winter months when school was missed. Travel for pre school children to Nursery in Shieldaig from villages like Wester Alligin, entailed parents providing transport at their own cost 26 miles twice a day. Time also an important factor as each journey there and back over an hour. No expenses and losing working time if having to drive. This has resulted in families not only leaving but keeping children at home rather than try to attend Nursery.

Pre school education

Since mothballing in 2012 families coming to Torridon have been told educational provision could only be in Shieldaig or Kinlochewe and that Torridon was not an option.

When parents requested that Nursery provision resume in Torridon where all resources were in place prior to the Pandemic, all requests were refused.

Kinlochewe Primary & Nursery was mothballed at short notice in June 2023 so Kinlochewe is no longer an option, the nearest Primary and Nursery Units being Shieldaig 16 miles from Diabaig or Gairloch 39 miles.

Families residing in Kinlochewe must now travel 17 miles to Shieldaig or 20 miles to Gairloch, again for pre school at their own expense regarding time and fuel. Some choosing to opt for home education instead.

It has been noted that Torridon Primary is a central location, 10 miles from Kinlochewe School and 8 from Shieldaig.

Currently the 6 children from the Torridon area now attending Shieldaig , all live close and within walking distance of Torridon School, the journey to Shieldaig 8 miles each way in comparison to the outlying villages such as Diabaig being an additional 9 more.

With ever increasing distances to travel, more school days off are required in Winter and youngsters are less able obtain transport to travel to after school activities

Duncan Darrach Deeds

In 1910, Duncan Darrach , owner of Torridon Estate signed over land within the stone dyke boundary at Torridon for the purpose of a school and teacher house to be built. In the deeds he stipulates that the building be used for educational use. or be offered back to his successors if not being used for continued educational purposes.

He also stipulated that boundary walls and paths be kept in good condition, something Highland Council have badly neglected in recent years.

The Building

In June 1992 , a new extension to the school was completed, creating double the classroom space, a new spacious office, walk in store cupboard and disabled toilet. Ceilings were lowered leaving ample loft space and the school kitchen updated. Considerable work was also completed in the adjoining Schoolhouse cottage with a new heating system installed and ceilings lowered. In 2010 when the first attempt to mothball the school was made, Torridon Primary topped the list of local schools with little maintenance costs and good capacity. 20 solar panels were also installed on the schoolhouse roof in April 2011. The head teacher carried out a lot of routine and regular maintenance jobs as there was never any janitor.

Sadly, all requests to make use of the school building by community groups from 2012 on

were refused. These included for playgroup, youth and community activities or exhibition space. Instead all heating was turned off throughout winter months despite the solar panels creating energy. All maintenance needs both in and outside of the building ignored.

In January 2018, all play equipment was ripped out from the adjacent popular outdoor play area without any warning or explanation. This was particularly disappointing for the Community Council (2015 - 2019) who at the time had invested in improvements, having a new gate and picnic table built with promises of funding to replace the main gates and replace a wooden seat bench.

In January 2020, with the school still mothballed with minimal discussion, the head teacher was told to vacate the Schoolhouse, Highland Council claiming to have lost the lease after 28 years. There were no plans for any alternative use so from then on the house and school building were left cold and neglected. Unheated, a ceiling roof in one of the schoolhouse rooms collapsed and the house has been left 2 years now with carpets sodden, damp spreading up walls and no attempt to clear any of the water or plaster work away. It is noted the same thing was allowed to happen in nearby Kinlochewe Schoolhouse before the Council sold the schoolhouse off as a holiday home. Torridon Schoolhouse is linked to the school with a door through the kitchens but this neglect will have a negative effect on the school building which has survived remarkably well. Contrary to information given to the Community Council, there are no leaks within the school itself which remains ready for use though in August 2022, members of local communities were invited to take any resources they wished with word that the school was officially closed. The surrounding playground is now a mess with collapsed fences and sawn down bushes left lying across it restricting access. Entrance gates to the adjoining play park and green space have been left hanging causing safety concerns for youngsters so near to the road.

Small Rural Schools

Claims have been made that children attending a very small rural school suffer socially and academically and that small numbers do not fit the Curriculum for Excellence ideas. Having taught three decades in various sized schools, Lochcarron, Ullapool and Torridon, with a mix of large class numbers, composite classes and then small numbers I found the one to one attention that staff were able to give a small number of pupils very beneficial. Each school has to be considered in its own right but for Torridon the numbers and spread of ages worked well for both individual and collaborative learning and fitted well into the new Curriculum strands. From 2000 on, families moved into the area especially, attracted by the low pupil/ staff ratio. The school was inclusive, giving additional support when needed. Achievements were celebrated with pupils going on to achieve National recognition in activities ranging from winning Gold medals at the National Mod to joining the Scottish National Sheepdog Trial Junior Team. Pupils enjoyed their own time but also mixed well with other local small schools, combining for sport team activities when needed.

Academically pupils at Torridon Primary had 100% attainment from 2015 - 2012. Pupils from Torridon also went on to be Dux of Gairloch High School. Above all when going well, small schools enable a family feel and lifelong friendships to be created. They are a hub for the community, enabling a number of additional activities to take place. Within the last decade this has been remarked upon by a number of local villagers, saying they miss the sound of children's laughter as time and again houses are sold for ever rising prices, often as holiday businesses with some owners now owning multiple properties.

Unfortunately, yes, small schools are expensive per pupil to run, one of the main

background factors I believe when in 2010 attempts were made to close a number of West Highland and Island small schools including Torridon and on North Skye.

The Future

Torridon School is a bright , spacious building with a spectacular setting at the foot of a mountain and at the head of a loch with large sandy bay with surrounding croft land. After the extension built at considerable cost in 1992, the classroom has large windows and three doors leading into it. Ideal for plenty ventilation to combat Covid.

The school is in the centre of the village, not far from the Community Centre, Fire & Mountain Rescue Stations, Medical Centre and local Cafe & Store. It has ample parking nearby with parking space along the road at the front of the school and up the drive at the side.

This year has seen a positive change from Highland Council who now allow a number of mothballed school buildings to be used by the community on Skye in particular so helping keep them in better order until further decisions are made.

Torridon School and Schoolhouse require immediate attention and maintenance to save further deterioration and costs. The sad thing is that the building could have been used productively from 2012 till now and in a number of educational ways as Duncan Darrach wished. There are still options not explored for maintaining alongside Shieldaig and Kinlochewe even as a resource and outdoor learning centre.

Collaboration could be made with Highlife Highland, The National Trust or Wester Ross Biosphere as the building lies within their UNESCO accredited educational Buffer Zone to provide a range of educational resources and activities whilst still maintaining the chance of a school if children numbers were to grow through additional housing.

Wester Ross also missed out on having a Newton Room to boost Science in the area.

Couldoran House near Kishorn was recently sold and is to become an exciting Rainforest Learning Centre.

Intergenerational Educational classes could also be held in collaboration with the Loch Torridon Community Centre to allow additional space for resident artists, life skill classes etc where equipment would not need to be tidied away each day. Torridon is also lacking a local Heritage Centre with the building having ample wall space for display too.

Asset Transfer

It was recently stated by a Highland Ward Councillor that if the Community asked for a Community Asset Transfer they would then have the option of retuning to a school if needed in future years. I do not believe this could happen if officially closed so think the statement misleading.

With such a scarcity of local housing it is terrible to see the Schoolhouse now lying empty and un-lived in. It could form additional living or office space combined with use of the school as an educational centre of some kind, so meeting Mr Darroch's wishes or be signed over to the Community in an Asset Transfer for local community housing. A separate gate would need to be opened up for the house, the old entrance having been blocked up by the Council many years ago.

Ideally the design and layout of the building and surrounding curtilage lends itself to a combined use.

As a school and home it worked well, much envied by many others visiting it.

It would be very sad to see the building just sold off as yet another luxury holiday home. With first Diabaig then Alligin Schools closing and the manner in which staff and parents were treated prior to and following the mothballing of Torridon there is a feeling of Community Clearances. Especially with Kinlochewe also now mothballed and Achnasheen School demolished leaving ever increasing distances and costs for families to have to travel, if they have actually been able to find a house they can afford to live in. This then also has an impact on High School numbers.

We need to think creatively, working together with better communication to explore all options to closure to help reverse the depopulation currently occurring.

A number of young families have now been able to return to Shieldaig in recent years where the village is happily thriving. In danger of closure itself in 2010 with only 3 pupils, numbers are now heading to 30 demonstrating how quickly things can and do change. Torridon's loss being Shieldaig's gain.

Upload documents or letters :

I am commenting as: Teacher or school staff

Which school do you work in?: Torridon Primary School

I am commenting on behalf of:

Name:

Title	First name	Last name
Miss	Anne	Macrae

Address:

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
IV54 8LN	2, Craite Barn, Applecross, IV54 8LN	Yes

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Torridon Primary School and Nursery.

May 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Torridon Primary School and Nursery. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; other children and young people in the council area; and in the community;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Shieldaig Primary School, Gairloch High School and Torridon Community Centre including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Torridon Primary School and Nursery, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 Torridon Primary School is a remote, rural school. The council mothballed Torridon Primary School and Nursery in 2012. The school has remained mothballed since that time. The Highland

Council's school roll predication shows there are five children of primary school age and one pre-school child in the catchment this year. Children from the area currently attend Shieldaig Primary School which is seven miles from Torridon Primary School. From 2019, The Highland Council have engaged with local residents and community organisations about the potential closure of the school. In November 2022, The Highland Council contacted parents in the area to say they were considering a formal closure consultation and invited comments.

2.3 The statutory consultation for the closure of Torridon Primary School ran from 27 February to 21 April 2023. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders including parents of all pupils attending Shieldaig Primary School and community organisations in the area. A public meeting was held on 28 March 2023, which was attended by 20 members of the public. Four responses were received by the council from individuals and organisations in the area. Several stakeholders expressed concerns about aspects of the original decision and process to mothball the school and how well the council has maintained the site since 2012. Stakeholders expressed concerns about whether closing the school would make the area less desirable for families to move into, although stakeholders also noted that a lack of affordable housing and good employment opportunities are also a barrier. Pupils at Shieldaig Primary School took part in a consultation exercise. In this exercise, a majority of children from the Torridon area felt the school should be re-opened. They think more families might move to the area if the school were open. If the school is closed they would like the site changed into a facility they can use for after school activities.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors consider that the council has set out a reasonable case for the permanent closure of Torridon Primary School. The council has outlined a range of educational benefits to the closure. Children from the Torridon area currently attend Shieldaig Primary School where they are experiencing opportunities to play and work with their peers from the wider area. Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery was recently refurbished and provides a pleasant learning environment. A few stakeholders expressed some concerns about the arrangements for dining, the lack of parking and levels of traffic on the road beside the school. However, the school grounds are secure and in addition to the play area children have access to a community all weather pitch just beside the school. Shieldaig Primary School has a more consistent roll than Torridon Primary School could offer if it were to re-open. HM Inspectors agree that children from the Torridon area are benefiting from learning alongside the peers from the Shieldaig area. However, in its proposal the council has stated that the size of the school provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. HM Inspectors do not support the view that the a small school roll is, in itself, a significant impediment to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

3.2 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors understand the challenges the council faces in providing education in remote rural areas. Overall, almost all accept the proposal to move from Torridon Primary School being mothballed to permanently closed. Children from the Torridon school catchment area who met with HM Inspectors had mixed views about the proposal. They liked the idea of Torridon Primary School re-opening but did feel that if that were to happen they would miss their friends who attend Shieldaig Primary School. They are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and spoke positively about their teachers.

3.3 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors spoke about the need for the council to work with the community to establish wider plans for services across the area. They have concerns about the pattern of school provision in the area of which this proposal to permanently close Torridon Primary School and Nursery is a part. Torridon Primary School is located between Shieldaig Primary School, where the children from the area now go to school, and Kinlochewe Primary

School. Kinlochewe Primary School was mothballed in summer 2022. Several stakeholders expressed the view that on paper the Torrison school building and location look like the best option if only one of the three are to remain open. However, they understand that, at least for now, most of the children across this wider area live in the Shieldaig catchment area. The proposal paper states that the Torrison site has capacity for 25 children, less than the projected roll at Shieldaig Primary School in coming years. A few stakeholders are concerned about the lack of early learning and childcare in the Torrison and Kinlochewe areas. Stakeholders want to engage further with the council to look at children's access to educational opportunities and the provision of early learning and childcare across the wider Shieldaig, Torrison and Kinlochewe areas.

3.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also considered the factors to which the council should give special regard. Children and young people from the Torrison catchment area who met with HM Inspectors expressed frustration about how a lack of transport limits their opportunities to take part in out of school activities. They also spoke about occasionally having very challenging journeys to school, especially in the winter. However, they see this as an issue that the re-opening of Torrison Primary School would not fully resolve. A small number of children that attend Shieldaig Primary School from the Torrison and Kinlochewe catchment areas can face journeys to school of over 30 minutes especially in poor weather. The council state that should Torrison Primary School re-open only one of the five children in the area would be entitled to school transport as opposed to all five in the area who currently receive transport. They would all have shorter school journeys. However, it is likely that use of energy in re-opening and running the school would offset the environment benefits from these shorter journeys.

3.5 The council has engaged with the community in regard to this proposal and alternatives to closure. The site has been unused for years and community representatives now want the situation resolved. Community organisations want to ensure that the building and surrounding land is used for community benefit and not sold for commercial use. Torrison and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) are being pro-active in considering how the site of Torrison Primary School and Nursery could best be used if this proposal is agreed. Torrison has an existing community centre which provides a range of services including a cafe. TKCC are exploring whether the school site could be used, at least in part, to provide educational opportunities to build on what is offered at the community centre. They would welcome working with the council and local schools to explore this further.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that the council has made a clear and reasonable case for the permanent closure of Torrison Primary School and Nursery. Children from the area are settled in Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery. They enjoy learning alongside peers from the wider area. Stakeholders now largely accept the closure of the school. However, they want to work with the council to explore how best the provision of early learning and childcare, and school provision across the wider area, can be sustained and developed. Children from the Torrison catchment area would like more support to engage in out of school learning and social opportunities. This includes having more opportunities in the Torrison area and better transport to enable them to participate in activities in Shieldaig and Gairloch. Community organisations are taking a pro-active approach to considering how the building could be used for community benefit. If this proposal is

agreed it will be important that the council work with community members, including children and young people, in regard to the future use of the site. The council should do this in a timely manner to avoid the condition of the building deteriorating further from not being used.

HM Inspectors
May 2023

Achd Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairle) (Alba) 2010

Aithisg le Foghlam Alba a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim den mholadh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus solar foghlaim a thoirt gu ceann aig Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain.

An Cèitean 2023

1. Ro-ràdh

1.1 Chaidh an aithisg seo le Foghlam Alba ullachadh le Luchd-sgrùdaidh Foghlaim an Rìgh (Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh) a rèir teirmichean [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairle\) \(Alba\) 2010](#) (“Achd 2010”). 'S e adhbhar na h-aithisg seo beachdachadh neo-eisimeileach agus neo-phàirteach a libhrigeadh air moladh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus solar foghlaim a thoirt gu ceann aig Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain. Tha fiosrachadh goirid ann an Roinn 2 den aithisg air a' phròiseas conaltraidh. Tha Roinn 3 den aithisg ag innse beachdachadh Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh air taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh, a' gabhail a-steach beachdan sònraichte air an toirt seachad le luchd-co-chomhairle. Tha Roinn 4 a' toirt geàrr-chunntas air sealladh iomlan Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh air a' mholadh. Nuair a gheibhear an aithisg seo, tha an Achd ag òrdachadh gum beachdaich a' chomhairle air agus an uair sin gun ullaich iad aithisg co-chomhairle dheireannach. Bu chòir an aithisg seo a bhith an lùib aithisg co-chomhairle dheireannach na comhairle, còmhla ri mìneachadh air ciamar, ann an dèanamh a' mholaidh dheireannaich, a rinneadh ath-sgrùdadh air a' chiad mholadh, a' gabhail a-steach geàrr-chunntas air puingean a chaidh a thogail anns a' phròiseas co-chomhairle agus freagairt na comhairle fhèin riutha. Feumaidh a' chomhairle an aithisg co-chomhairle dheireannach aca fhoillseachadh trì seachdainean mus dèan iad an co-dhùnadh mu dheireadh. Far a bheil comhairle a' moladh sgoil a dhùnadh, feumaidh iad na dleastanasan reachdail air fad a tha ann an Achd 2010 a leantainn. Tha seo a' gabhail a-steach fios gu Ministearan taobh a-staigh sia làithean obrach an dèidh dhaibh a thighinn chun a' cho-dhùnaidh dheireannaich agus mìneachadh do luchd-co-chomhairle gu bheil cothrom aca air riochdachaidhean a dhèanamh chun nam Ministearan agus na h-ullachaidhean spèisealta a tha co-cheangailte ri molaidhean a thaobh sgoil dhùthchail a dhùnadh.

1.2 Bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh air:

- na buaidhean a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aig a' mholadh air clann agus òganaich san sgoil; agus luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; clann a bhios nan sgoilearan taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna bho chaidh am pàipear molaidh fhoillseachadh; agus clann agus òganaich eile ann an sgìre na comhairle; agus anns a' choimhearsnachd;
- buaidhean buailteach sam bith eile aig a' mholadh;
- ciamar a tha a' chomhairle an dùil droch bhuaidhean sam bith a dh'fhaodadh tighinn am bàrr bhon mholadh a lùghdachadh no a sheachnadh; agus
- na buannachdan foghlaim a tha a' chomhairle an dùil a thig bho bhuileachadh a' mholaidh, agus adhbharan na comhairle airson nam beachdan seo a ruigsinn.

1.3 Ann a bhith ag ullachadh na h-aithisg seo, ghabh Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh na gnìomhan a leanas os làimh:

- beachdachadh air a h-uile sgrìobhainn iomchaidh a chaidh a sholarachadh leis a' chomhairle a thaobh a' mholaidh, gu sònraichte aithris nan sochairean foghlaim agus sgrìobhainnean co-chomhairle co-cheangailte, freagairtean sgrìobhte agus labhairteach bho phàrantan is eile; agus
- tursan gu Bun-sgoil Shìldeig, Àrd-sgoil Gheàrrloch agus Ionad Coimhearsnachd Thoirbheartain a' gabhail a-steach conaltradh ri luchd-co-chomhairle iomchaidh.

1.4 Leis gum bi am moladh a' leantainn air adhart gu dùnadh sgoil dhùthchail, thug Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh fa-near beachdachadh na comhairle mu roghainnean reusanta sam bith eile seach a bhith a' dùnadh Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain, a' bhuaidh a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aige air a' choimhearsnachd ionadail agus a' bhuaidh a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aig an dùnadh air ullachaidhean siubhail eadar-dhealaichte sam bith.

2. Pròiseas Co-chomhairle

2.1 Ghabh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd co-chomhairle air na molaidhean aca os làimh a thaobh [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairle\) \(Alba\) 2010](#).

2.2 'S e sgoil dhùthchail iomallach a th' ann am Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain. Dhùin a' chomhairle Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain gu sealach ann an 2012. Tha an sgoil air a bhith dùinte bhon àm sin. Tha ro-innse clàr-sgoile Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' sealltainn gu bheil còignear cloinne de aois bun-sgoile agus aon phàiste ro-sgoile san sgìre-sgoile am-bliadhna. Tha clann às an sgìre an-dràsta a' frithealadh Bun-sgoil Shìldeig a tha seachd mìle bho Bhun-sgoil Thoirbheartain. Bho 2019, tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air conaltradh le muinntir na sgìre agus buidhnean coimhearsnachd mu dhùnadh na sgoile. San t-Samhain 2022, dh'innis Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd do phàrantan na sgìre gun robh iad a' beachdachadh air co-chomhairle fhoirmeil a dhèanamh mu dhùnadh agus dh'iarr iad am beachdan.

2.3 Ruith a' cho-chomhairle reachdail airson dùnadh Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain eadar 27 Gearran agus 21 Giblean 2023. Chaidh lethbhreac den mholadh a thoirt do luchd-ùidh, a' gabhail a-steach pàrantan a h-uile sgoileir a bha a' frithealadh Bun-sgoil Shìldeig, agus buidhnean coimhearsnachd san sgìre. Chaidh coinneamh phoblach a chumail air 28 Màrt 2023, far an robh 20 ball den phoball an làthair. Fhuair a' chomhairle ceithir freagairtean bho dhaoine fa leth agus bho bhuidhnean san sgìre. Thog grunn luchd-ùidh draghan mu thaobhan den cho-dhùnadh agus pròiseas tùsail gus an sgoil a dhùnadh gu sealach agus dè cho math 's a tha a' chomhairle air an làrach a chumail suas bho 2012. Thog luchd-ùidh dragh am biodh dùnadh na sgoile a' ciallachadh nach robh an sgìre cho tarraingeach do theaghlachan a' gluasad a-steach, ged a thug luchd-ùidh fa-near cuideachd gu bheil gainnead thaighean aig prìs reusanta agus deagh chothroman cosnaidh cuideachd nan cnap-starra. Ghabh sgoilearan Bun-sgoil Shìldeig pàirt ann an eacarsaich co-chomhairle. San eacarsaich seo, bha mòr-chuid de chlann sgìre Thoirbheartain a' faireachdainn gum bu chòir an sgoil ath-fhosgladh. Shaoil iad gum faodadh barrachd theaghlachan gluasad don sgìre nam biodh an sgoil fosgailte. Ma thèid an sgoil a dhùnadh bu mhath leotha an làrach atharrachadh gu goireas far an dèan iad gnìomhachdan às dèidh na sgoile.

3. Taobhan foghlaim den mholadh

3.1 Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh den bheachd gu bheil a' chomhairle air cùis reusanta a mhìneachadh airson Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain a dhùnadh gu maireannach. Tha a' chomhairle air grunn bhuannachdan foghlaim a mhìneachadh a thig an lùib an dùnadh. Tha clann à sgìre Thoirbheartain an-dràsta a' frithealadh Bun-sgoil Shìldeig far a bheil iad a' faighinn cothrom cluich agus obair còmhla rin co-aoisean bho sgìre nas fharsaing. Chaidh Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Shìldeig ùrachadh o chionn ghoirid agus tha i a' tabhann àrainneachd ionnsachaidh thaitneach. Thog cuid de luchd-ùidh beagan dragh mu na h-ullachaidhean airson biadh, gainnead pàircidh agus an uiread trafaig air an rathad ri taobh na sgoile. Ach, tha fearann na sgoile tèarainte agus a bharrachd air an raon-cluiche tha cothrom aig clann air raon-cluiche coimhearsnachd airson gach aimsir dìreach ri taobh na sgoile. Tha clàr sgoilearan nas cunbhalaiche aig Bun-sgoil Shìldeig na bhiodh aig Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain nam fosgladh i a-rithist. Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh ag aontachadh gu bheil clann à sgìre Thoirbheartain a' faighinn buannachd bho bhith ag ionnsachadh còmhla rin co-aoisean à sgìre Shìldeig. Ach, na mholadh dh'inns a' chomhairle gu bheil meud na sgoile a' cur bacaidhean mòra air buileachadh soirbheachail a' Churraicealaim airson Sàr-mhathais. Chan eil Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh ag aontachadh gu bheil clàr-sgoile beag ann fhèin na bhacadh subsainteach air buileachadh a' Churraicealaim airson Sàr-mhathais.

3.2 Tha luchd-ùidh a choinnich ri Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh a' tuigsinn nan dùbhlain a tha mu choinneamh na comhairle ann a bhith a' toirt seachad foghlam ann an sgìrean dùthchail iomallach.

Uile gu lèir, tha cha mhòr na h-uile a' gabhail ris a' mholadh Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain a dhùnadh gu maireannach. Bha beachdan measgaichte aig clann à sgìre-sgoile Thoirbheartain a choinnich ri Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh mun mholadh. Bha iad toilichte smaoinichadh air Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain ag ath-fhosgladh ach cuideachd bha iad a' faireachdainn gum biodh iad ag ionndrainn an caraidean aig Bun-sgoil Shìldeig nan tachradh sin. Tha iad socraichte ann am Bun-sgoil Shìldeig agus bhruidhinn iad gu toilichte mun luchd-teagaisg aca.

3.3 Bhruidhinn luchd-ùidh a choinnich ri Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh mun fheum gum biodh a' chomhairle ag obair leis a' choimhearsnachd gus planaichean nas fharsainghe a stèidheachadh airson sheirbheisean air feadh na sgìre. Tha dragh orra mun phàtran de sholarachadh sgoiltean san sgìre leis a' mholadh seo airson Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain a dhùnadh gu maireannach na phàirt dheth. Tha Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain suidhichte eadar Bun-sgoil Shìldeig, far a bheil clann na sgìre a-nis a' dol don sgoil, agus Bun-sgoil Cheann Loch lù. Chaidh Bun-sgoil Cheann Loch lù a dhùnadh gu sealach as t-samhradh 2022. Thuir grunn luchd-ùidh gu bheil coltas ann gur e togalach agus suidheachadh sgoil Thoirbheartain an roghainn as fheàrr mura biodh ach aon de na trì fosgailte. Ach, tha iad a' tuigsinn gu bheil, co-dhiù an-dràsta, a' mhòr-chuid den chloinn air feadh na sgìre fharsaing seo a' fuireach ann an sgìre Shìldeig. Tha am pàipear molaidh ag ràdh gu bheil comas aig làrach Thoirbheartain airson 25 pàiste, nas lugha na an clàr sgoilearan a thathar an dùil aig Bun-sgoil Shìldeig sna bliadhnaichean ri teachd. Tha dragh air cuid de luchd-ùidh mu dheidhinn dìth tràth-ionnsachaidh agus cùraim-chloinne ann an sgìrean Thoirbheartain agus Cheann Loch lù. Tha luchd-ùidh ag iarraidh a dhol an sàs barrachd leis a' chomhairle gus coimhead air cothroman foghlaim agus solar tràth-ionnsachaidh agus cùraim-chloinne thar sgìrean Shìldeig, Thoirbheartain agus Cheann Loch lù san fharsaingeachd.

3.4 Leis gum bi am moladh a' leantainn gu dùnadh sgoil dhùthchail, bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh cuideachd air na nithean air am bu chòir don chomhairle aire shònraichte a gabhail. Bha clann agus daoine òga à sgìre-sgoile Thoirbheartain a choinnich ri Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh diombach a thaobh mar a tha dìth còmhhdail a' cur bacadh air na cothroman aca pàirt a gabhail ann an gnìomhachdan taobh a-muigh na sgoile. Bhruidhinn iad cuideachd mu thursan gu math duilich don sgoil bho àm gu àm, gu sònraichte sa gheamhradh. Ach, chan eil iad den bheachd gum biodh ath-fhosgladh Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain na fhuasgladh iomlan air seo. Faodaidh beagan cloinne a tha a' frithealadh Bun-sgoil Shìldeig bho sgìrean-foghlaim Thoirbheartain agus Cheann Loch lù a bhith a' siubhal nas fhaide na 30 mionaid don sgoil, gu sònraichte ann an droch shìde. Tha a' chomhairle ag ràdh nam biodh Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartain ag ath-fhosgladh nach biodh ach aonan den chòignear cloinne san sgìre airidh air còmhhdail sgoile seach an còignear gu lèir san sgìre a tha ga faighinn an-dràsta. Bhiodh tursan sgoile nas giorra aca uile. Ach, tha coltas ann gun cuireadh cleachdadh lùtha ann a bhith ag ath-fhosgladh agus a' ruith na sgoile a' lughdachadh nam buannachdan àrainneachdail a thigeadh bho na tursan nas giorra seo.

3.5 Tha a' chomhairle air conaltradh leis a' choimhearsnachd a thaobh a' mholaidh seo agus roghainnean eile seach dùnadh. Tha an làrach air a bhith gun chleachdadh airson bhliadhnaichean agus tha riochdairean coimhearsnachd a-nis ag iarraidh gun tèid an suidheachadh fhuasgladh. Tha buidhnean coimhearsnachd airson dèanamh cinnteach gun tèid an togalach agus am fearann mun cuairt a chleachdadh air leas na coimhearsnachd agus nach tèid a reic airson cleachdadh malairteach. Tha Comhairle Choimhearsnachd Thoirbheartain agus Cheann Loch lù (TKCC) for-ghnìomhach ann a bhith a' beachdachadh air an dòigh a b' fheàrr làrach Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain a chleachdadh ma thèid am moladh seo aontachadh. Tha ionad coimhearsnachd ann an Thoirbheartain a tha a' tabhann grunnan sheirbheisean, leithid cafaidh. Tha TKCC a' rannsachadh an gabhadh làrach na sgoile a chleachdadh, gu ìre co-dhiù, gus cothroman foghlaim a sholarachadh agus a thogadh air na

thathar a' tabhann aig an ionad coimhearsnachd. Chuireadh iad fàilte air obair leis a' chomhairle agus sgoiltean ionadail gus seo a rannsachadh tuilleadh.

4. Geàrr-chunntas

Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh den bheachd gu bheil a' chomhairle air cùis reusanta a mhìneachadh airson Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Thoirbheartain a dhùnadh gu maireannach. Tha clann às an sgìre socraichte ann am Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-àraich Shìldeig. Is toil leotha a bhith ag ionnsachadh còmhla ri co-aoisean bhon sgìre fharsaing. Tha luchd-ùidh a-nis gu ìre mhòr a' gabhail ri dùnadh na sgoile. Ach, tha iad airson obair leis a' chomhairle gus sgrùdadh ciamar as fheàrr a ghabhas solar tràth-ionnsachaidh agus cùraim-chloinne, agus solar sgoile air feadh na sgìre san fharsaingeachd, a chumail suas agus a leasachadh. Bu toil le clann à sgìre-foghlaim Thoirbheartain barrachd taic gus a dhol an sàs ann an ionnsachadh agus cothroman sòisealta taobh a-muigh na sgoile. Tha seo a' gabhail a-steach barrachd cothroman a bhith ann an sgìre Thoirbheartain agus còmhail nas fheàrr gus an urrainn dhaibh pàirt a gabhail ann an gnìomhachdan ann an Sìldeag agus Geàrrloch. Tha buidhnean coimhearsnachd a' gabhail dòigh-obrach for-ghnìomhach a thaobh beachdachadh air mar a ghabhadh an togalach a chleachdadh air leas na coimhearsnachd. Ma thèid gabhail ris a' mholadh seo, bidh e cudromach gun obraich a' chomhairle le buill na coimhearsnachd, clann agus daoine òga nam measg, a thaobh cleachdadh na làraich san àm ri teachd. Bu chòir don chomhairle seo a dhèanamh ann an deagh àm gus nach tèid staid an togalaich am mìosad bho dhìth cleachdaidh.

Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh An Cèitean 2023

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Torrison Primary School and Nursery, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Shieldaig 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 Torrison Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Shieldaig Primary School. (Maps of the current catchment areas 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 Torrison 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:

- Torricon Community Centre
- Shieldaig Primary School
- Gairloch Community Library
- West Ross Mobile Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

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

Business Support Team
Highland Council
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

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

E-mail: 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 Shieldaig Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) The Parent Council of Shieldaig PS.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) Staff of Shieldaig Primary School;
- (v) Trade union representatives;
- (vi) Torricon and Kinlochewe Community Council
- (vii) Shieldaig Community Council;
- (viii) Garve and District Community Council
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (xxii) Highland Youth Convenor.

Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meetings 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 Monday 27 February 2023 and will end on Friday 21 April 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, the detail of which are set out below:

Torrison Community Centre, 28 March 2023 at 6.30pm.

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken 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 Proposals to:

Ian Jackson
Education Officer (Resources)
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
Email: Education. Consultations@highland.gov.uk

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “parent of child in the area”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in local 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, 21 April 2023 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 9 May 2023, 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 – 29 May 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 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 People 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 November 2018, prior to submission to the Council's People Committee on 6 December 2018. 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 People 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

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 Torridon Primary School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 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 Torridon Primary (see Section 3 below); has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 5-9 below); to the educational benefits arising from closure (Section 10 below), to the effect of closure on the community (Section 14 below) and to the impact of differing travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Torridon catchment (Section 12 below) but who currently attend Shieldaig Primary.

Reasons for the Proposal/Chronology

- 2.1 The proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - Torridon Primary School has been mothballed since the end of session 2011-12, and no children have attended the school since that time.
 - Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of either 5 or 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).
 - A school roll of 5-6 pupils hampers social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age.
- 2.2 At the time the school was mothballed, there was a tenanted schoolhouse which formed part of the overall property (i.e., the school and schoolhouse had a shared external entrance, and were joined by an internal door). The resolution of the tenancy was a protracted process.
- 2.3 During 2019 the Council began informal discussions with the community about the status of the school – see details at paragraph 2.4 below. Queries were raised about the legal title to the land on which the school sits, and to the adjacent land used as a children's play park. These queries also took time to resolve. In addition, some members of the community did not favour a closure proposal, arguing instead for continued mothballing whilst attempts were made to find a longer-term solution for the school. Lastly, the sudden arrival of the COVID19 pandemic in the UK in March 2020 led to a postponement of action, due to the diversion of Council resources to address the outbreak.

- 2.4 During 2019 and 2020 several informal discussions were held with parents and with the local community council, concerning the future of Torridon School. Notes of these discussions have been appended as follows

Appendix C – Highland Council note of an informal meeting with parents held on 12 June 2019

Appendix Ci – Minutes of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council meeting of 12 June 2019. The Highland Council does not agree that these minutes are an accurate record of the discussion regarding Torridon Primary School.

Appendix Cii – Highland Council record of the discussion at the Community Council on 12 June 2019.

Appendix Ciii - Highland Council note of an informal meeting with parents held on 11 November 2020.

Appendix Civ – Highland Council note of a discussion with Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council on 8 December 2020.

- 2.5 Highland Council again contacted each of the parents in Torridon via email on 24 November 2022, to explain that the Council was considering moved to a formal closure consultation and to invite further comments. A similar email was sent to the local Community Council, who responded by indicating support for a statutory consultation exercise, particularly since the school buildings have been left empty for a long time and are deteriorating.

Current Details – Torridon Primary School

- 3.1 Torridon Primary School is situated within the village of the same name. It is classed by the Scottish Government as a “very remote” rural school. The area historically served by the school includes the village of Torridon and the communities on the north side of Loch Torridon, as far as and including Lower Diabaig. The school has been mothballed since the end of session 2011-12.
- 3.2 When the school was first mothballed, pupils from Torridon attended either Shieldaig Primary or Kinlochewe Primary, although the majority attended Shieldaig. Kinlochewe Primary was mothballed in the summer of 2022, after the school roll dropped to one following a number of placing requests.
- 3.2 For the 2022-23 school session, there will be five pupils of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school. There is one pre-school child in the catchment, who would enter P1 in August 2024.
- 3.3 The above figures suggest that, were Torridon School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the P1-7 roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be:
- 2023-24 – 5
- 2024-25 – 6
- 2025-26 – 5
- 2026-27 - 5
- 3.4 The school has one classroom plus a further room, which when the school last operated was set up as a nursery.

- 3.5 The school has a permanent capacity of 25. Based on the permanent capacity available, the notional 2023-24 roll of 5 pupils would represent 20% use of capacity.
- 3.6 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). Torridon Primary School is currently rated as "B" for educational suitability and "C" for building condition.
- 3.7 Given the length of time the school has been mothballed, there is no current HMIE Report.
- 3.8 The P1-7 pupils from Torridon who attend Shieldaig PS travel on school transport, at a cost of £155 per day, or £29,450 per school year. Were Torridon Primary to re-open, only one of the current pupils would be entitled to school transport over a distance of 2.5 miles. The potential annual cost can be estimated at £5 per day, or £950 per school year.

Current Details – Shieldaig Primary

- 4.1 Shieldaig Primary School is situated within the village of the same name. It is classed by the Scottish Government as a "very remote" rural school. The area served by the school includes the village of Shieldaig and the area from Balgy to Cuaig along Loch Torridon. Since the mothballing of Torridon School it has, for practical purposes, also taken pupils from that school's catchment. Since the mothballing of Kinlochewe PS in June 2022, it has also taken some pupils from that school's catchment.
- 4.2 The school building dates from well over one hundred years ago, but has recently undergone extensive modernisation with the conversion of the school house into a purpose-built Nursery accommodation. There are two classrooms, a Nursery room, a school kitchen, an office and several toilets. Adjacent to the school, there is an enclosed grassy playground, plus the Community football pitch and multi-use games area, which are located directly behind the school. These areas are all used by the children during outdoor breaks and P.E. The local church hall is also used for P.E. and as a performance venue.
- 4.3 For session 2022-23, the school has a roll of 25 pupils, with represents a significant increase on the typical school roll for Shieldaig earlier in the century. The current roll includes five pupils from within the Torridon catchment and three from within the Kinlochewe catchment. There are a further 7 children in the nursery class, including one from Torridon and two from Kinlochewe.
- 4.4 The Council publishes roll projections for each of its currently operational schools. The latest forecast for Shieldaig PS is attached at **Appendix D**, whilst a copy of the Council's methodology for calculating the forecasts can be found at **Appendix Di**. The projected roll forecast suggests the roll will continue to rise to 34 pupils by 2026-27, and thereafter stabilise.
- 4.5 The school has a permanent capacity of 50. The 2022-23 roll of 25 pupils represents 50% use of capacity.

- 4.5 Shieldaig Primary is currently assessed as “C” for Suitability and “B” for Condition.
- 4.6 No current HMle report is available.

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 Torridon PS with its current catchment area.
 - iii. To re-open Torridon PS with an expanded catchment area.
 - iv. To re-open Torridon PS as a form of specialist facility
- 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 school has now been mothballed for 10 years and it is necessary to decide on its future.
- 6.2 A further period of “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. The Council would also be burdened with the costs of maintaining a “mothballed” 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 for Torridon Primary.
- 6.4 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.
- 6.5 A continuation of mothballing would have no impact on the community.

Option 2 - Re-Opening of Torridon Primary School with its Current Catchment Area

- 7.1 As set out in Section 3 above, if Torridon 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 10 below.
- 7.2 When Torridon Primary was last in operation, it was managed by a Head Teacher with class teaching responsibilities. Since then Highland Council has moved to an arrangement where small schools are managed as part of a “cluster” with other schools within the ASG. However, alternative management arrangements would not address the wider population issues within the Torridon area.
- 7.3 There has been no significant rise to the school age population of the Torridon area since the school was mothballed in 2012. Section 9 below discusses in detail the educational issues arising from the low local school roll figures.

Option 3 - Re-Opening of Torridon Primary School with an Expanded Catchment Area

- 8.1 The Torridon PS catchment is linked by road to two other primary school catchments. To the east the school catchment borders that of Kinlochewe PS, which is itself mothballed after the roll fell to one at the end of session 2021-22. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to alter this catchment boundary in favour of Torridon PS, nor would such a change achieve anything in terms of boosting the potential roll at Torridon Primary.
- 8.2 To the south the Torridon catchment borders that of Shialdaig, the receiving school for the Torridon children. The schools are located around 7 miles apart.
- 8.3 An analysis of the home addresses of the Shialdaig pupils reveals that there are no current pupils located in addresses to the west of Shialdaig village itself. Moving the Torridon boundary to the east would not therefore add any pupils to the Torridon catchment, without extending it into Shialdaig itself.
- 8.4 Altering the catchment of Shialdaig PS in favour of Torridon would of course require a statutory consultation in its own right. Taking all the circumstances into account, it would not be appropriate to alter this catchment boundary in favour of Torridon Primary School.

Option 4 – Re-Opening Torridon Primary as Specialist Facility

- 9.1 This was something suggested by local parents at an informal discussion held with Council officials in June 2019 – see Appendix C. Some parents expressed an interest in an educational facility in the village that would concentrate on Gaelic, music, and cultural education. Officials advised that in terms of school provision, Highland Council officials advised at the meeting

that, in operating its schools, the Council does not deviate from the Curriculum for Excellence, but that parents could develop a private facility if that were financially sustainable. There were no firm proposals about what sort of facility might be offered, but Council officials indicated that all options could be considered. It was agreed that parents would work on their proposals over the course of the next year, and that officials would return for a meeting in the summer term of 2020.

- 9.2 At the meeting between officials and parents in November 2020 – see appendix Ciii – it was noted that there had been no further developments on this suggestion.
- 9.3 Given the very small numbers of children in the Torridon area, the very limited facilities available at the school building, the lack of detail, and the need for Highland Council to follow CfE, the Council does not see this suggestion as a reasonable alternative to closure. The formal closure of Torridon Primary as a local authority school could however allow local parents to further develop such a proposal.

Educational Benefits

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.

- 10.3 It is Highland Council's view that the pupils from the Torridon Primary catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at Shieldaig Primary School.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5. 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. The children at Shieldaig Primary School are able to work collaboratively on various topics and activities.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 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.
- 10.8 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.
- 10.9 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. Larger pupil numbers also provide more opportunities for after school activities.
- 10.10 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.
- 10.11 In summary, a number of positive benefits have derived from the operational merger of Torridon Primary with Shieldaig Primary.

Re-Allocation of Catchment

- 11.1 Following the mothballing of Kinlochewe PS in the summer of 2022, Shieldaig Primary School provides the only reasonable option for re-allocating the Torridon PS catchment.

Effects on Differing Transport Arrangements

- 12.1 As there are currently no children attending Torridon Primary School, no differing transport arrangement would need to be applied in the event of the formal closure of the school.
- 12.2 For the 2022-23 school session, there are four primary age pupils and one nursery age child travelling to Shieldaig Primary, who have longer journeys than would be necessary if Torridon Primary School were still operational. Some of these pupils are within walking distance of Torridon Primary, and others would have a shorter car journey were the school to re-open.
- 12.3 The driving time between Torridon Primary School and Shieldaig Primary School is given as 16 minutes (source: Google Maps). It is appreciated that potential driving times from the extreme ends of the catchment would be longer.
- 12.4 Calculations of the additional emissions of greenhouse gases arising from the current transport arrangements from Torridon to Shieldaig Primary suggest that the mothballing, and by extension the formal closure of, Torridon Primary, is currently resulting in just over 17 tonnes per annum of CO₂ 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

- 13.1 As Torridon Primary has not operated since the end of school session 2011-12, there will be no impact on staff and school management arrangements from a formal closure.

Effect on the Local Community

- 14.1 The village of Torridon has a first-class community centre located a short walk from the school building.
- 14.2 During informal discussions with local stakeholders, the Community Council in particular wished to have further information about the Title to the land currently occupied by Torridon Primary School and schoolhouse. In response the Council's legal team has undertaken extensive research to clarify the title and ownership aspects, which has taken time but which has ensured that whatever is ultimately decided, the path for any future use of the building is clearer. The Council's Title to Torridon School (including the school grounds and schoolhouse) is a Feu Charter by Duncan Darroch of Gourock and Torridon in favour of The School Board of the Parish of Applecross recorded in the Division of the General Register of Sasines applicable to the County of Ross and Cromarty on 23rd August 1875. It is believed that The National Trust for Scotland is the current owner of the surrounding Torridon Estate.
- 14.3 From an examination of the title it would appear that there is nothing in terms of the Council's title which would prevent the Council transferring the property to another party. Any application for a Community Asset Transfer, following any future closure of the school, would need to demonstrate a level of community benefit commensurate with the value of the site.

- 14.4 The school playground is an amenity for local children. The land occupied by the playpark is owned by the Council and is classed as Housing Revenue Account Land. This means any transfer of the site would require the consent of the Council as well as the Scottish Government. There is, additionally, a clause of pre-emption which prevents any sale without first having offered the same to the National Trust for Scotland.

Financial Consequences

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 The table does not include property costs that would arise if Torridon PS were to become operational once more. At the present time this figure can only be a very rough estimate.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 16.1 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
- 16.2 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

- 17.1 Both Torridon Primary School and Shildaig 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 June 2012. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.
- 17.2 The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Torridon to Shildaig, a distance of 7.5 miles.
- 17.3 As set out in Section 11 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.

- 17.4 The maximum additional travel time for school pupils from the Torridon PS site to Shieldaig is 16 minutes (source: Google Maps). As school transport is provided by the Council for pupils aged P1 and above, the proposal would not be expected to have any significant impact on fuel poverty.

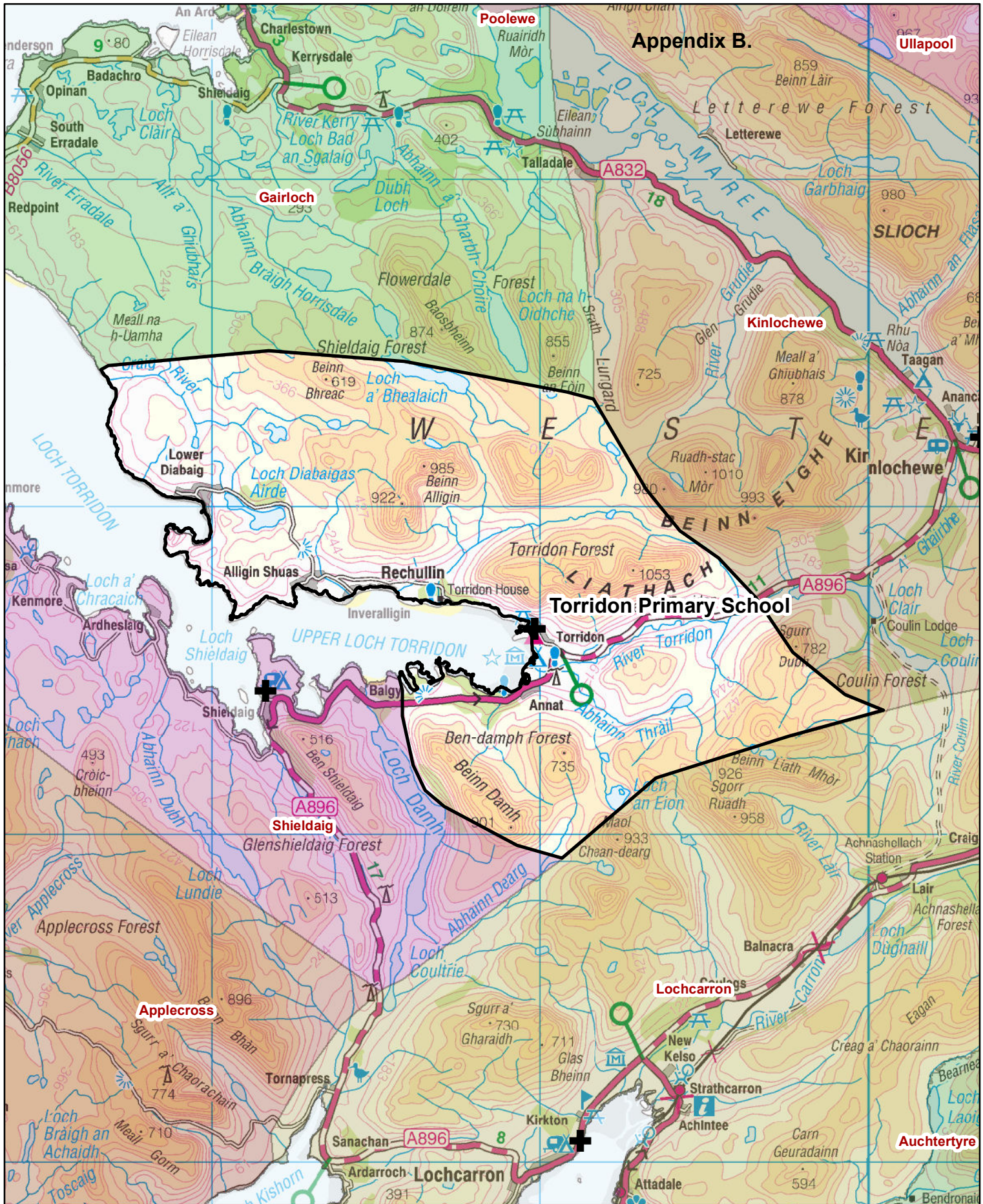
Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 18.1 The main adverse effect for children is the additional travel from Torridon to Shieldaig, details of which are provided above. In practice this is already taking place and has done since 2012. Funded school transport is and will continue to be provided to P1-7 pupils from the Torridon catchment who attend Shieldaig Primary School.

Recommendation

- 19.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that Torridon Primary School, currently “mothballed,” is closed and the catchment area assigned either to Shieldaig Primary School.
- 19.2 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 Education Committee of the Highland Council.

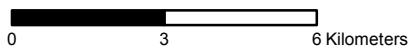
END OF PROPOSAL PAPER



Torridon Primary School

**Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013**

1:149,000



1 cm = 1,490 metres

© Crown copyright.

All rights reserved 100023369



Planning & Development Service

Note of an Exploratory Meeting with Parents in Torrington held at Torrington Community Centre at 5pm on 12 June 2019, to discuss the Future of Torrington Primary School

Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager (West)

Ian Jackson (Education Officer – Resources)

Felix and Sarah von Racknitz

Clare Thorburn

Joanne Mitchell

Sally Cook

Local parents had been invited to the meeting by individual letter, and Ms Cook had been invited as HC staff had been advised she was the parent of a pre-school child, who was likely to move to the area.

The invite letter specified that the meeting was with local parents. A separate meeting had been arranged with the Community Council. However, 3 community representatives, Terry Doe, Anne Macrae and Andrew Peacock, sought entry to the parents' meeting. NY advised them that only parents had been invited to the 5pm meeting, but undertook to discuss their request with the parents.

NY explained to the parents that several community representatives wanted to join the meeting. She advised that she had no objection to this but that, as the meeting had originally been arranged for parents, she wished to know whether this was acceptable to them. The parents advised they would rather have an initial discussion between themselves and THC, with the community representatives joining in 30 minutes' time. NY advised the community representatives of this decision. Both NY and IJ checked outside several times between 5.30pm and 5.45pm to invite the community representatives in, but there was no-one in sight.

NY introduced the meeting by explaining the purpose, and the difference between mothballing and formal closure. There was an extensive process around the latter, which IJ could outline.

IJ commented that there were only 4 children of P1-7 age in the Torrington catchment at present, and one of those would be moving to S1 in August 2019. THC did not consider that a roll of 3 was enough to justify re-opening Torrington PS. Another factor for the Council to consider was the very small roll at Kinlochewe Primary. Currently it had only 4 pupils in P1-7, of whom two were from Torrington. A closure proposal for Torrington was one option and he could explain the process, but first of all he sought the views of parents.

One parent commented that Torridon was centrally located between Kinlochewe and Shieldaig, and on that basis there might be less reason to close Torridon. NY acknowledged the geography although noted that the Kinlochewe catchment included Achnasheen, which was a long journey from Torridon.

All the parents confirmed they had no intention of taking the current P1-7 pupils out of their current schools. There would be no pupils to enrol in Torridon in Aug 2019. The intention was to look at a longer-term solution. In the meantime the parents thought that the school should continue to be mothballed.

IJ asked about pre-school children in the community. There were two 3 year-olds plus a younger child, with a possibility of two more children currently aged 2-3 years, should planned moves to the area take place. There was thus a possibility of 4 children entering P1 for August 2021 or 2022, though only two of these were currently in the community.

One parent suggested that a community with an attractive school would be a draw to people from elsewhere. Without disagreeing, others commented that the availability of employment and housing were also significant issues.

Some parents were interested in an educational facility in the village that would concentrate on Gaelic, music, and cultural education. NY advised that THC does not deviate from the Curriculum for Excellence, but that parents could develop a private facility, if that were financially sustainable.

It was agreed that parents would work on their proposals over the course of the next year, and that NY and IJ would return for a meeting in the summer term of 2020.

As yet there were no firm proposals about what sort of facility might be offered, but all options could be considered.

It might be the case that THC would undertake a statutory consultation to close the school, on the basis of its replacement by a community facility. Parents asked about the nature of the lease for the school site and whether “reversionary rights” would apply if the building were no longer used for educational purposes. IJ undertook to enquire about this with HC legal staff.

Concerns were expressed about the condition of the Torridon PS building, and parents asked for assurances that the building would be maintained.

One parent asked whether the school building could be used for a Parent and Toddler Group, or as a pre-school nursery. Highland Council did not offer transport for nursery, so it was difficult for parents to access pre-school provision. NY commented that THC was not opening any new nurseries. In terms of a Parent and Toddler Group, the village already had a community centre that could be used for this purpose.

Parents commented that the Community Centre was not a good location for the group, as the Centre would not allow the parents to place displays of artwork, or to store equipment.

IJ undertook to send his contact details to those parents who didn't have them.

Minutes of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council Meeting held in Torridon Hall on Wednesday 12th June 2019 from 7pm - 8.15pm

Our thanks to Celtman for allowing us space and time in the main hall when they had already booked it and for trusting us with their supplies.

Present : Terry Doe (Chairman) Anne Macrae (Secretary) Margaret Smith , Colin Stevenson, Carol MacIver,

Cllr. Alex MacInnes, Seamus MacNally - NTS Manager , 5 Members of the public, Ian Jackson - Education Officer , Norma Young - Area Education Manager West.

Apologies : Andrew Peacock, Jonnie Petrie, Cllr. Derek MacLeod

1. Welcome from the Chair.

Terry welcomed all to the meeting, getting going swiftly

2. **Financial Report** As Andrew was not able to return to the hall no financial update was available.

3. Correspondence

Minutes from other Ward 6 Community Councils continue to be circulated by Kenny MacLean.

E mails to and from Alistair Christie regarding the planned Joint CC Meeting on Saturday 8th June at Inverness HQ which has now been cancelled.

E mail regarding proposed Windfarm at Kirkan. Any comments need to be in by 14th June.

E mails to and from Ian Jackson regarding meeting up to consult on future options for Torridon School.

4. Updated Minutes of the May meeting, including Wester Alligin Grazing Committee's comments of concern over wild camping were agreed and signed.

5. **Matters arising**

Roads

Jonnie had been unable to contact Ian MonCrieff in order to set a date for him to come out to visit Kinlochewe regarding proposed traffic calming measures. Cllr. Alex MacInnes will try to speak to him.

The poor condition of cattle grids close to Glen Cottage is continuing to cause concern.

Three bars are now loose and drivers are advised to go round through the open gates if possible. We need to find out if there are plans to fill the grids in or repair them.

Memorial Bench

As we have now been waiting over nine months for a reply on whether the Hickman Trustees are willing to contribute towards the cost of a new memorial bench by the Kinlochewe War Memorial , Terry took the opportunity to ask Fiona Price , the Chair of the Trust if any decision had been made by the four Trustees.

Fiona replied that no decision had been reached though the Trust were not saying no.

She would now like the Community Council to present a quote of how much would be needed before the Trustees made any decision.

Fiona referred to an e mail she had sent our Chair at the beginning of September 2018, questioning the use of how a £500 donation we had received from a film company working in the area was to be used and in which she had falsely accused the Community Council of misappropriating funds. Our Chairman, Terry had responded immediately confirming that the £500 was banked. There were no stipulations on how the money would be used but it would be for the good of both Torridon and Kinlochewe. At our last meeting in May it had been agreed that £250 would be donated to the Out West Community Trust to help towards improvements planned for Kinlochewe Toilets including baby changing facilities and a new hot water boiler. NB. Our Treasurer keeps a detailed account of all money coming in and out and all Community Councils publish audited accounts on an annual basis.

6. **Future of Torridon School and Play Park** Living in the Schoolhouse , Anne declared an interest.

For a number of years there has been growing concern that there has been no review of Torridon School as promised in 2012 when mothballed and at the lack of any maintenance to the building by Highland Council. Earlier this year parents approached Norma Young, Area Manager (West) wishing to make use of the school for Playgroup sessions and to have the Nursery reopened. Mrs Young had not responded to a Nursery

Placement request but an apology was later made by the Acting Director of Education, Mrs Campbell, who promised it would be looked into. (*NB. Mrs Campbell has since resigned and is still to be replaced.*)

At our March meeting held in Torridon, a parent had attended to bring up the subject of reopening the Nursery in Torridon School and ask for our support. We had noted her concern, also keen to review and discuss the use of Torridon School and Play Park with Highland Council officials.

Mr Ian Jackson then wrote to parents to arrange a meeting at 5pm on 12th June to discuss future options for the school saying that he was also informing locally elected members which we took to be The Community Council. Mr Jackson then contacted us by e mail, confirming the 5pm meeting and saying that he and Mrs Young were willing to stay on to attend the Community Council meeting at 7pm to meet the public and to help facilitate this, we had moved our meeting from Kinlochewe to Torridon. As this was seen as a follow up to our March meeting when parents had requested support, it was agreed that Terry our Chair and other Office Bearers Anne and Andrew would attend the 5pm meeting to have an accurate picture of parents' wishes and options being proposed by education officials for the future of Torridon School.

The meeting held between the previous Community Council and Mrs Young in 2012 had been behind locked doors with members of the community, staff and parents refused entry. Seven years on we still seek clarification on many points raised then and promises made but not kept to, so we had welcomed the chance for open honest discussion regarding the school and future options for its use.

Parents had indicated that with older children settled in both Shildaig and Kinlochewe Schools now for most of their years, they were content to continue till leaving in p7 but that there was a wish to make use of the building for preschool and nursery education.

Currently families with children in both school and nursery are required to make up to three 20 mile return journeys a day due to different times for starting and stopping. New families have indicated their wish to move into the area if the school or nursery were reopened.

It was with some shock therefore, that on arriving at the hall with parents for 5pm, Community Council Officials found themselves refused entry to the building by Mrs Young and the Centre Manager who locked the door in our faces stating we were not welcome. Mrs Young then returned to open the door stating she would speak to us in first 5 minutes, then 90mins then 30. Disgusted at the rude reception and being told we were not welcome, Community Councillors left to return at 7pm for the usual monthly meeting. Terry outlined how members had given up their own time earlier in the hope of a productive open discussion and had been left wondering what was going on and what could be so secret about the options being outlined by Education Officials. Having given up work to attend at 5pm Andrew was unable to return at 7pm but Terry stated that like others Andrew himself may be a parent in the future and the Community Council felt let down that any discussion had been far from open. Seven years on and Mrs Young was once again meeting behind locked doors.

Mrs Young denied this, saying that it had been a surprise to her that locally elected members had turned up and that then had not waited outside for the next half hour. She claimed parents were unanimous in saying they wanted a private meeting, however this was later denied by parents who felt a deliberate wedge was being driven to separate the community with which we agree. It was noted that doors were locked on our arrival, prior to Mrs Young even speaking to parents who had a good relationship with Community Councillors. Once again the community were left wondering what the situation was.

No formal minutes were taken but Ian Jackson agreed to send on a record of his notes.

Sally Cooke who attended the meeting, had also taken notes and would share them once written up.

It was Mrs Young's opinion that it would be detrimental to other local schools to reopen Torridon and she stated that Highland Council did not intend to open any new nursery units, She considered preschool provision could be made at the village hall. However it was pointed out that Torridon School already accommodates a Nursery class with excellent space and resources, including child sized toilets. Previous Playgroup resources at the Torridon Centre had been thrown out by the hall manager, into an old container and damaged to make room for larger more profitable functions such as Weddings and Celtman.

The play park by Torridon School offers attractive surroundings for young children to enjoy play and learning whereas the hall is surrounded by roads with the danger of cars coming and going by all doors. Current

management also restrict use of the extended Centre rooms and toilet facilities are not as appropriate for little ones to use. Play equipment and displays could not be set up for prolonged periods as they can be within the school building where facilities and resources are more appropriate for young children.

It was pointed out that families wishing to move to the Torrison area have been put off by the lack of education facilities. Lack of affordable housing is a problem for the area but there are plans to build more family houses. Mrs Cooke was a perfect example of someone ready to move to Torrison now if there was nursery provision for her child. Far from being 'new', Nursery provision had existed in Torrison School since the idea was established in the 1990s with children from Shialdaig and Kinlochewe also attending sessions. There were now concerns over lack of available space in Shialdaig School due to rising number of children.

In 2012 we were led to believe that Torrison catchment area was to be included in that of Shialdaig School. Mr Jackson clarified that as Torrison School is not officially closed the catchment area remains the same as it was for all surrounding schools. Since 2012 parents have been given no option but to transport their children to Shialdaig or Kinlochewe or to home school. Any family in Diabaig would be required to make at least two 36 mile round journeys each day which with winter maintenance cuts had proved not to be sustainable. Anne asked why parents transporting children to Shialdaig were being paid but those taking children to Kinlochewe were not being refused any allowance towards cost of fuel, expensive if having to make three 20 mile journeys a day. Mrs Young claimed to be unaware of the situation and said the parents should get in touch with her to sort this out.

A member of the public who had previously been Chair of Torrison Primary when mothballed in 2012 asked for clarification on required maintenance of the school building, pointing out that Torrison School was one of the best maintained when mothballed and the fabric was suffering since due to neglect, despite assurances made by Highland Council in 2012 that the building would be cared for. Mrs Young acknowledged that all heating had been turned off and she would ask for this to be looked at. She felt the storage heating was not financially viable within the classroom though no mention was made of the overhead fan heaters which are most needed by the toilets in the old wing, nor that the school is connected to twenty solar panels placed on the Schoolhouse roof generating power that could be used.

Mrs Young stated her intention that the school continue to be mothballed for another year before further discussion in June 2020 to allow for any changes in population, housing etc.

There was the possibility the building could be transferred to the community as a Community Asset in the future but it would need to be formally closed first, a process that can take up to a year.

Colin asked how this tied in with Duncan Darroch's wishes in the 1910 Deed Charter stating that the building should only be used for teacher housing and educational use. It was Mrs Young's view that Highland Council might be able to get round this using a Scottish Government Act from 2001 but neither she nor Mr Jackson knew more about this when asked to clarify.

Mrs Young then asked Seamus MacNally, NTS Ranger whether he knew anything about the Act or the Estate affirming interest in the Feu Charter stipulations but as this was the first he had heard of such an Act, he was of course not in any position to answer her.

Anne pointed out that it was Highland Council themselves who had presented the Charter which both educational officials agreed.

There then followed a discussion on the high number of vacancies and changes within senior management of Highland Council and who we should get in touch with for information. Following the resignation of Shialda Campbell, there is no current Director of Education but Mrs Young indicated any queries can be addressed to Donna Manson, Chief Executive or James Vance, Interim Head of Education.

She said Robert Campbell, Estates Manager and Robbie Bain, Ward Manager can give advice on building or infrastructure issues.

Eight new Chief Executive posts are to be filled with a salary of £91,500 each.

We will await notes from Ian Jackson and Sally Cooke before consulting the community and Council further as we wish to have open, honest discussion as promised and see the building maintained properly and used productively now instead of being left to deteriorate further.

6. Any Other Business

Mess at Glen Docherty Viewpoint Bin

There continues to be a problem with mess and litter spread at the Glen Docherty Viewpoint Car Park. There is currently one small green bin with a hole in the lid to deposit small articles. People are leaving bags of rubbish by this bin which then get spread by wind and birds. Discussion on what to do included suggestions of more regular collections on a weekly basis, having a bigger bin or no bin there at all. It was noted that one of the new style funnel bins has been placed at Inverewe Garden Car Park which is wider and might be better in windy conditions but it is not thought this can be emptied into the Council lorries. Cllr. Alex MacInnes will look into options available across the area.

Noise from Clay Pigeon Shooting at Torridon Hotel

Terry will contact the Hotel regarding residents concerns about increased noise from Clay Pigeon Shooting.

Kinlochewe Toilets

It was noted that the donations tin by the toilets had been broken into on the same night that the Gairloch Golf Course Café was broken into. It is not thought that much would have been gained as the tin is emptied on a regular basis throughout each day. A new stronger box will be put in its place.

A member of the public, Tom, recalled the ground where the picnic tables are situated being handed over for £1 many years ago and he thought it should be recorded in past Community Council minutes. We will try to find out whether this was the case and if so who is responsible for the picnic area.

Road Safety

A member of the public, Alan, let us know that he still has a supply of pamphlets detailing how to drive safely. It was suggested some could be dropped off at the shop and that car hire should also give them out.

Overhanging trees and bushes are needing trimmed so that road signs can be clearly seen, especially the blue ones giving advice on using passing places. Road verges by Cromasaig remain a concern to the residents there with soft ground beginning to collapse alongside the fence.

A Torridon resident commented on the number of camper vans parking, worrying that caravans or campers might use the campsite. It was confirmed that the campsite, run by Highlife Highland is for tents only. Some do park by the junction, still close to the toilet facilities which include showers.

More advice needs to be available to campervan drivers on where within the area it is acceptable to park, fill up with water and discharge waste. Diabaig saw to its cost the results of damage caused by wildfire last year.

It was pointed out that the sign saying Annat 1 mile is too close to the junction when approaching from Kinlochewe, leading some people to turn right expecting Annat to be 1 mile down the Torridon road. Colin will look at seeing if it can be shifted.

7. Date of next meeting

It was agreed we would continue with the schedule of dates noted at our AGM.

14th August and 9th October in Torridon and 11th September in Kinlochewe.

As there will be no meeting held in July our next meeting is planned for Wednesday 14th August 2019 at 7pm in Torridon Hall.

Note of a Discussion during the meeting of Torridon and Kinlochewe CC at 7pm on 12 June 2019, to discuss the Future of Torridon Primary School

Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager (West), and Ian Jackson (Education Officer – Resources) attended the above meeting of the Community Council. An earlier meeting had been held with parents (see separate note).

The Chairperson, Terry Doe, expressed anger and dismay at how CC representatives had been denied entry to what he termed the “secret” meeting with parents at 5pm. He suggested that NY had described the meeting as “secret” and asked what it was that was discussed, that could not be shared with the Community Council.

NY advised that, when conducting informal consultation, it was standard practice for THC to meet separately with parents and with the CC, often on the same evening. She dismissed as false the allegation that she had described the meeting as “secret” and challenged Mr Doe over this claim. She made it clear that it had been the parents’ own decision to initially meet with Highland Council officials without the CC being present. The CC representatives had been invited to the parents meeting at 5.30pm.

NY said she wished to have the above paragraph recorded. She was content that the CC record their own interpretation, as long as the HC’s reply was also recorded.

Anne Macrae asked whether they could see minutes from the meeting with parents, and this was agreed.

A member of the public asked whether the school was to be re-opened, adding that people needed to know why it had closed in the first place. NY responded that HC was not in attendance at the meeting to discuss the historical issues around the mothballing of the school.

NY advised that parents had asked that the school continue to be mothballed, and that HC had agreed to this. NY and IJ would return for a meeting in the summer term of 2020.

A member of the public commented that HC should have consulted with the community before now. The school has been mothballed for 7 years.

The CC asked about the nature of the lease for the school site and whether “reversionary rights” would apply if the building were no longer used for educational purposes. IJ undertook to enquire about this with HC legal staff, and to liaise with the National Trust for Scotland.

Concerns were expressed about the condition of the Torridon PS building, and the CC asked for assurances that the building would be maintained.

The CC asked whether the school building could be used for a Parent and Toddler Group. NY advised the village already had a community centre that could be used for this purpose, and THC would not wish to undercut the Community Centre.

Several persons commented that the Community Centre was not a good location for the group, as the Centre would not allow the parents to place displays of artwork, or to store equipment.

NY commented that the school building was not presently available for hire or rent.

A question was raised about the future of the play area adjacent to the school. NY advised this should be taken up with Robert Campbell, Head of School Estates.

Note of an Exploratory Meeting with Parents in Torridon held via Microsoft Teams at 7pm on 11 November 2020, to discuss the Future of Torridon Primary School

Ian Jackson (Education Officer – Resources)

Don Esson, Area Education and Learning Manager (West)

Claire Thorburn

Joanne Mitchell

Sally Cook

Louise Gray

Felix von Racknitz (joined towards the end of the meeting)

Ian Jackson began by referring to the meeting in June 2019. Norma Young had retired in July 2020 and Don Esson had just taken up post (on Monday 9 November) as her replacement. Don had asked Ian to chair the meeting, given his knowledge of previous discussions.

Don explained his appointment was an interim one until the end of the 2020/21 school session, as the Council was presently restructuring.

Ian commented that Torridon School had now been mothballed for 8 years. This was an unusually long time for mothballing. A school should not be kept in a “mothballed” condition indefinitely. Eventually we should come to a decision, either to re-open or to close.

Ian continued by referring to last year’s discussion. He and Norma had advised that the Council considered there were insufficient children in the Torridon catchment to justify re-opening the school. The parents who had been present had asked for another 12 months to work on their own ideas for making Torridon a viable school again. Ian asked whether any proposals had emerged from that.

Joanne Mitchell commented that at last year’s meeting it was Felix and Sarah who had put forward the idea of a community led proposal to retain the school in some form. She hadn’t heard anything since.

Louise Gray introduced herself as someone who was looking to move to Torridon. She had a daughter who was coming up to two years old, and she was very keen on the idea of re-opening the school.

Ian and Don advised that the Council considers there are some disadvantages in having very small schools. Put simply, the Education Service thinks that children benefit from being with other children their own age. The skills learned by children through social interaction are very important throughout life. Aside from the social side, cooperative learning and working between pupils is an important part of classroom work today, and very small numbers have obvious disadvantages for team sports, choirs etc.

Claire Thorburn agreed that the social side of things was very important. Her oldest daughter was in P7 at Kinlochewe PS. She had been enrolled there when the numbers at Kinlochewe had been higher, but since then a number of families had left and her daughter was now the only girl in the school. She was desperate to get to High School.

Sally Cook commented that last year she had been in the position Louise is in, but now she was a permanent resident of the area with a daughter in Shildaig Nursery. She made the point that Shildaig was a school bursting at the seams.

Don Esson advised that the Council is currently planning an extensive refurbishment of Shildaig Primary School, which includes converting the existing schoolhouse to create a new Nursery with ancillary accommodation, allowing the existing Nursery classroom in the main school building to become additional Primary education space to meet future capacity needs. Once completed, the Primary school will have the potential to accommodate up to 45 pupils. Work is expected to be completed for the new school year in August 2021. There should therefore be no concerns about the long-term capacity of Shildaig PS. Don also noted that Shildaig Nursery was scheduled to go to 1140 hours provision from August 2021.

Sally continued by commenting that as a parent, she was continually forced to transport her daughter to Shildaig for after-school events. There were never any reciprocal visits to Torridon, despite the fantastic environment that Torridon has. It's also the case the Shildaig School has a lack of outdoor space. Could there be opportunities to use the Torridon School building as a base for outdoor education?

Don commented that a new Head Teacher, Thomas O'Halloran, had just been appointed to take over the Shildaig and Kinlochewe cluster, and that he was very keen on outdoor education and links with the community. The parents were unanimous in welcoming Thomas' appointment and the prospect of more outdoor based education, but were still concerned that there was a one-way flow of traffic, with children from Torridon attending Shildaig but never any sign of Shildaig children visiting Torridon.

Sally asked about our school roll projections, and whether these took account of the impact of the COVID pandemic. There was much talk in the media about home working, and people moving from the cities out to the countryside. How might that affect our projections?

Ian said he had seen those discussions, and whilst the ideas sounded plausible there was no hard evidence about whether the changes would actually happen. The Council does calculate future school rolls for schools, and the methodology for the calculation is on the Council website. He would forward the relevant links. However, there was no current projection for Torridon, as the school had not been operational for 8 years.

Sally asked whether the Torridon school building could be used as an outdoor centre for schools across Highland. Ian and Don commented that decisions on school trips and excursions were taken by individual Head Teachers, and the Council did not direct HTs into using particular locations for excursions. In normal times schools use outdoor facilities frequently, but there are plenty of existing centres in Highland, such as “Outward Bound” centres; the Abernethy Trust; Lagganlia; and Loch Insh Watersports. There’s also a privately-run outdoor centre in Dalguise in Perthshire, which seems to be used a lot by schools. There would no problem with setting Torridon up as an outdoor centre aimed at school excursions, but it’s a crowded market.

Louise Gray commented that Felix and Sarah were world class musicians and that music could be another option to be delivered from the Torridon School building.

Joanne commented that, whilst she agreed with the aim of having more activity in Torridon, the community already had a very good facility in the Village Hall. She questioned why there would also be a need to keep the school building.

Ian added that if Torridon PS was re-opened as a school, we would expect it to follow the Curriculum for Excellence, and for children to be taught in the same way as in any other school. He didn’t have the impression that this was what was being suggested. The discussion seemed similar to that held in June 2019, and he was concerned that things had not moved on since then. Sally Cook and Felix von Racknitz both commented that the COVID outbreak had clearly disrupted the community’s ability to work together.

Sally asked about maintenance to the Torridon building, which had been raised at the 2019 meeting. What had been done since then, and what work was planned? Ian undertook to seek advice from colleagues in the Council’s Estates Team.

There was extensive discussion about the possibility of Torridon School becoming a community facility in the event it was closed as a school. Ian advised that when a Council service such as Education declares it has a building that is surplus to requirements, the first step is to check whether any other Service wishes to make use of the building or the site. If not, it might be possible for the community to arrange a Community Asset Transfer (CAT). He wasn’t familiar with the process in detail, although he understood the community would need to prepare a business plan. He would forward contact details for the Council’s Community Engagement Team, who could provide advice.

Louise observed that, given its small size, the local community would need support in preparing a bid for a CAT. Was there any deadline? Ian responded by explaining that a CAT could only happen after the school were closed. However, if the community were working on ideas it would be best to keep the Council informed. If we didn't hear anything we might assume no work was being undertaken. Ian added, that, if a CAT bid was not made or was unsuccessful, the building would be sold on the open market.

Ian asked Sally about meeting the local Community Council. There had been a rather fraught meeting in 2019, at which the CC members had been unhappy that he and Norma had met separately with parents. Ian added that the Council made no apology for making sure the voices of parents were heard, but that we were also more than happy to discuss matters with the wider community.

Sally responded by advising that the CC membership had changed somewhat since 2019. She asked if the new CC could have the notes of the 2019 meeting. Ian undertook to send his own notes of that discussion, but added that these were not the formal minutes of the CC itself. The new CC should be able to obtain copies of past minutes from the Ward Manager.

Ian added that the members of the CC could be reassured about the formal process of closing Torriddon PS for good. That process would involve a statutory consultation in which all parents and staff from any affected school would be notified, and in which the local Community Council would also be a statutory consultee. We would also need to gather the views of the children. We would be required to hold a public meeting and to consult Education Scotland – the School Inspectors – who would assess the “educational merits” of the closure proposal and who would also want to talk to parents. After the completion of the consultation exercise the Council would respond to all points raised and there would be a 3-week window for people to make further representations. Lastly, if there were any concerns about the consultation exercise itself, there would be an opportunity to raise them with Scottish Ministers.

Louise asked that parents be given notice of the start of any formal consultation.

Sally suggested that Ian should contact the Chair and Secretary of the Community Council, once she had provided them with feedback from this meeting. The CC felt that the Torriddon community and environment had a lot to offer, and were keen to play a constructive part in discussions.

Ian summarised the discussion by saying that some parents had expressed a wish to retain a form of educational facility in Torriddon. This might not be a re-opened school but a commitment to use the building as a sort of annex to Shieldaig PS. Alternatively, if Torriddon School were closed, there should be a CAT to allow the community to take over the facility.

Ian and Don thanked everyone for attending and for their input.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.20pm.

Note of an Exploratory Meeting with Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council held via Microsoft Teams at 7pm on 8 December 2020, to discuss the Future of Torridon Primary School

Don Esson, Area Education and Learning Manager (West)

Ian Jackson (Education Officer – Resources)

Caroline Hamilton, Chair of TKCC

Chris Davies, Secretary of TKCC

Sally Cook, Member of TKCC

Matt Webster, Member of TKCC

Cllr. Ian Cockburn, Ex-officio member of TKCC

Cllr. Alex MacInnes, Ex-officio member of TKCC

Don Esson set out the background to the meeting, highlighting that Torridon Primary had now been mothballed for 8 years. It was highly unusual for a school to be mothballed for as long as a period as this, and in most cases the Council would have taken a decision on the future of the school after 4-5 years, either to re-open or to close. He referred to the meetings of June 2019, when Norma Young and Ian Jackson had met with parents and with the Community Council, at which it had been agreed to continue with mothballing for another year whilst the community developed further proposals for the use of the school building. Last month we had met with the parents again, and tonight's meeting was another in which the Council was seeking an understanding of local opinion.

Sally Cook advised that the Torridon community wished to retain the school as an educational facility, possibly in a partnership capacity with the NTS. Ideas that had been suggested were around its use as a forest school, for music, and for arts and crafts. Since the meeting in November, the Torridon parents had formed an unofficial association, and had started reaching out to other organisations about a potential future for the school. Would we consider using the school building as part of Shildaig School, for the provision of education for one or two days per week?

Don thought that a number of issues could arise, particularly around transport and staffing. It might be difficult to obtain staff for a school on this basis. Shildaig PS does not have a minibus, so there could well be logistical issues with transporting pupils to Torridon. At the very least it would be expensive to do so. He doubted that the footfall and usage of the school building would be sufficient to justify keeping it as an annex to Shildaig PS.

Don added that Pablo Mascarenhas, the Council's Community Engagement Manager, would be a good contact for the parents/community, in terms of other possible uses.

Matt Webster commented that, in his view, the community really wanted to see something done with the building. At the moment the building and grounds were being neglected and that was the key concern of local residents,

Questions were raised about whether the play park adjacent to the school was part of the Title to the school, and also about the "reversionary rights" question which had been raised in 2019, and to which the community had not received an answer. Ian Jackson commented that he had made enquiries internally last year but hadn't been entirely clear about the response. He undertook to follow this up. The community representatives also expressed concern about the level of maintenance in the building. Don explained that the Council was required to keep the property wind and watertight, and he was aware of several recent visits by staff of the Council's Property Service.

Sally also asked whether there was any possibility of the schoolhouse being used as key worker housing, pending any longer-term solution. Don and Ian both commented that the schoolhouse would need considerable investment to bring it to the level required for re-letting. Cllr. Cockburn agreed and suggested that was no prospect of the Council agreeing to such investment for a property that would only be let for the short-term.

Don asked Ian to run through the process of statutory consultation. Ian advised it would involve a statutory consultation over a period of 6 weeks, which must include 30 school days. All parents and staff from any affected school would be notified, and the Community Council would also be a statutory consultee. We would also need to gather the views of the children. This would probably be done through the class teachers as the children would be more comfortable working with them. We would be careful to ensure that questions were put to the children in a neutral way. We would also be required to hold a public meeting and to consult Education Scotland – the School Inspectors – who would assess the "educational merits" of the closure proposal and who would also want to talk to parents. After the completion of the consultation exercise the Council would respond to all points raised and there would be a 3-week window for people to make further representations. Lastly, if there were any concerns about the consultation exercise itself, there would be an opportunity to raise them with Scottish Ministers.

Caroline Hamilton asked why we would consult only about closure. Why not a consultation on re-opening the school? Ian replied that, as Torridon PS was mothballed, there would not need to be a formal consultation on re-opening it. If the Council had concluded that the school were viable, it would simply be a case of re-opening it on an agreed date. A statutory consultation was required in any case where the Council were proposing to create a brand-new school, and we carried out such a consultation in relation to a new school in Inverness in 2018.

The statutory consultation, if approved, would set out a proposal from the Council, in this case a school closure. However, anyone could submit views that suggested another course of action, and these would be given full consideration.

The CC representatives saw potential in the idea of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) after the closure of the school, but they felt it would be vital to establish the details of the Title and in particular whether the local Estate possessed “reversionary rights”. There would be no point in the community putting in huge amounts of work for a building they might not get access to. This was a crucial point.

Matt Webster asked for an outline of the possible timetable for a statutory consultation. Ian advised that the Scottish Government were currently advising that the public meeting required had to be face to face. For this reason, the Council were thinking of waiting until the Education Committee meeting in May before seeking permission for a statutory consultation. That might allow for a public meeting in August. If the vaccine programme was underway by then it might allow a better chance of a safe public meeting.

Statutory consultations normally took around 12 months to complete.

Cllrs Cockburn and MacInnes both described examples of successful CATs that have taken place elsewhere in Highland. One was at the former Achiltibuie Schoolhouse, which was adjacent to the still-operating school but where the building had been turned into 2 self-contained flats. Another was the former Diabaig School which had been turned into a restaurant. Members could put the CC in touch with other development associations, who could provide information.

Cllr. Cockburn felt it was time to come to a decision on the school. Cllr. MacInnes agreed, commenting that it would be useful to retain the building for use by the community. There was general agreement to this suggestion, and that the building could no longer afford to be left idle. The main aim would be to maximise the local benefit.

There being no other questions, Don thanked everyone for attending and for their input.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.20pm.

5139120	2021/22	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
S 1	20	17	12	22	23	17	22	26	17	14	16	16	17	17	17	18
S 2	18	20	18	12	23	23	18	22	26	17	14	16	16	17	17	18
S 3	12	18	21	18	13	23	23	18	22	27	17	14	16	17	17	17
S 4	28	12	19	21	18	13	23	24	18	22	27	17	14	16	17	17
S 5	18	24	11	16	18	16	11	20	20	15	19	23	15	12	14	14
S 6	11	14	18	8	12	14	12	8	15	15	12	14	17	11	9	11
Total Roll	107	105	99	97	107	106	109	118	118	110	105	100	95	90	91	95
Total Capacity	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-233	-235	-241	-243	-233	-234	-231	-222	-222	-230	-235	-240	-245	-250	-249	-245
(Tot Roll/Tot Cap)%	31%	31%	29%	29%	31%	31%	32%	35%	35%	32%	31%	29%	28%	26%	27%	28%

School Roll Forecast
 Gairloch High School
 Gairloch Primary

5153425	2021/22	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
P 1	9	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 2	7	9	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 3	6	7	10	3	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 4	8	6	8	10	4	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 5	9	8	7	8	10	4	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 6	6	9	9	7	8	10	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
P 7	7	6	10	9	7	8	11	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
Total Roll	52	48	51	47	44	42	40	36	37	42	42	42	42	42	49	49
Total Capacity	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-72	-76	-73	-77	-80	-82	-84	-88	-87	-82	-82	-82	-82	-82	-75	-75
(Tot Roll/Tot Cap)%	42%	39%	41%	38%	35%	34%	32%	29%	30%	34%	34%	34%	34%	34%	40%	40%

School Roll Forecast

Gairloch High School

Poolewe Primary

5117429	2021/22	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
P 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 3	6	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 4	3	6	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 5	1	3	6	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 6	1	1	3	6	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
P 7	5	1	1	3	6	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Total Roll	19	15	15	15	14	9	8	8	7	7	7	7	14	14	14	14
Total Capacity	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Tot Roll - Tot Cap	-31	-35	-35	-35	-36	-41	-42	-42	-43	-43	-43	-43	-36	-36	-36	-36
(Tot Roll/Tot Cap)%	38%	30%	30%	30%	28%	18%	16%	16%	14%	14%	14%	14%	28%	28%	28%	28%

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

Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
		Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school Shieldaig Primary School	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 2	Name of School Torridon Primary School			
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 5	teaching staff	101,218	31,280	69,938
Row 6	support staff	9,784	612	9,172
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	268	18	250
Row 8	support staff training	-	-	-
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	2,428	1,210	1,218
Row 10				
Row 11	<i>Building costs:</i>			
Row 12	property insurance	173	-	173
Row 13	non domestic rates	797	-	797
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	349	-	349
Row 15	energy costs	14,184	-	14,184
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	2,910	-	2,910
Row 17	building repair & maintenance	107	36	71
Row 18	grounds maintenance	-	-	-
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	1,924	-	1,924
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital	-	-	-
Row 21	other	-	-	-
Row 22				
Row 23	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials	1,440	333	1,107
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	11,199	1,261	9,938
Row 26	SQA costs	-	-	-
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licen	-	-	-
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
Row 30	home to school	-	28,500	- 28,500
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	-	-	-
Row 32	staff travel	83	49	34
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	146,864	63,298	83,566
Row 34				
Row 35	<i>Income:</i>			
Row 36	Sale of meals	-	-	-
Row 37	Lets	-	-	-
Row 38	External care provider	-	-	-
Row 39	Other	-	-	-
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-	-	-
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHD	146,864	63,298	83,566
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	146,864	63,298	83,566

Table 2	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
	Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
	Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7		
	Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3	Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
	property insurance	173
	non domestic rates	797
	water & sewerage charges	64
	energy costs	102
	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	-
	security costs	-
	building repair & maintenance	-
	grounds maintenance	-
	facilities management costs	-
	other	-
	TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	1,136

Table 4	Non-recurring revenue costs	
	TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5	Impact on GAE - note 5	
	GAE IMPACT	