

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	EDU/6/24

Committee: Education

Date: 21 February 2024

Report Title: Statutory Consultation Exercise – Duror Primary School: Request to Proceed to Consultation on Permanent Closure

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 Duror Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ballachulish Primary School

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to proceed to statutory consultation, on the basis of the Proposal Paper attached to this Report (**Appendix A**)

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - These are set out at **Appendix E**.

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 17 and 18 of the Proposal Paper (**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 – This will be assessed during the public consultation process.

3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – None.

3.7 Gaelic – None.

4. Overview

- 4.1 Duror PS has a current roll of four pupils, but two are in P7 and no new P1 pupils are enrolled for August. The roll of the school is therefore expected to fall to two at the end of the current school session in June. Forecasts suggest there will be no significant rise in the number of children attending the school in the foreseeable future.
- 4.2 Council officials conducted informal discussions with parents and staff in November 2023. These discussions floated the idea of “mothballing” the school due to the low number of pupils. Parents strongly opposed either mothballing or permanent closure, and in this they were supported by Duror and Kentallen Community Council.
- 4.3 Highland Council believes that there are educational disadvantages to attending a school with a total roll of two, and that conversely, there would be educational benefits to closing Duror PS, and arranging for the remaining children to transfer to a neighbouring school. Appendix A sets out the basis of the closure proposal, including the educational, community and transport implications.
- 4.4 If Duror PS were to be closed, there would be a need to re-allocate the catchment to that of a neighbouring school. Ballachulish Primary School is the only Highland School with which Duror Primary shares a catchment boundary, and the Proposal is therefore to re-zone the Duror catchment to that of Ballachulish. Alternative suggestions have been made and the Council would be willing to listen to these during the consultation exercise.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to a Committee decision to proceed to statutory consultation, a public meeting will be held in Duror to discuss the Council’s proposal. There will be considerable opportunity for stakeholders to submit views to the Council in advance of any final decision being made. At this stage, it is expected the statutory consultation timeline would see a final recommendation being considered by this Committee in November 2024, though this may be subject to change to ensure the Council has sufficient time to consider and respond to matters arising from the consultation.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Education

Date: 25 January 2024

Author: Ian Jackson

Appendices: Appendix A – Proposal Paper
Appendix B – Note of Informal Meeting with Parents – 1 November 2023
Appendix Bi – Copy of Email Exchange with DKCC
Appendix C – Map of Duror PS catchment
Appendix Ci - Map of Proposed Merged Catchment Duror/Ballachulish
Appendix Cii – Map of Alternative Merged Catchment Duror/St.Bride’s
Appendix Ciii - Map of Alternative Merged Catchment Duror/Glencoe
Appendix D - Financial Analysis

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Duror Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Ballachulish 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 Duror Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Ballachulish Primary School.
- The Proposal considers other options in respect of the re-assignment of the catchment.
- The proposed change, if approved, will take place at the end of the school session following the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures. The earliest date is likely to be 3 July 2025, assuming the closure is approved.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

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

Duror Primary School

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

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

Area Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel

Fort William PH33 7NE

Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

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

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Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

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

- (i) Parents/carers of pupils attending Duror Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) Parents/carers of pupils attending Ballachulish Primary School; including parents/carers of pre-school pupils.
- (iii) The Parent Council of St. Bride's Primary School
- (iv) The Parent Council of Glencoe Primary School
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (vi) Staff of Duror School.
- (vii) Staff of Ballachulish Primary School
- (viii) Duror and Kentallen Community Council
- (ix) Ballachulish Community Council
- (x) Trade Union representatives.

Advertisement in Local Media

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

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 4 March 2024 and will end on 3 May 2024. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held at 6.30pm on 19 March 2024 at Duror Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Education Service.

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

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

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

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

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will be taken down and the results published in the Consultation Report.

Responses to the Proposals

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

Area Care and Learning Office, Camaghael Hostel. Fort William PH33 7NE

Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, to be found at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, 3 May 2024 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 13 May 2024, a copy of any written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 31 May 2024. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Review of Consultation Exercise

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

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

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At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in October 2024, prior to submission to the Education Committee in November 2024. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

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

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

Note on Corrections

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

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Duror Primary School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the school is classed as "remote rural") and the Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the special regard required for rural school closures. The Council has considered the school roll projections for Duror PS, taking into account the current pattern of enrolments, has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 7-10 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 15 below) and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Duror catchment (Section 13 below).

Reasons for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - The roll of Duror Primary School is expected to fall to two pupils in August 2024.
 - The Highland Council is of the view that a roll of two pupils provides barriers to education, and that closing Duror PS could provide educational benefits to the pupils.
 - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- 2.2 An informal discussion with current parents, about the future of the school, was held on 1 November 2023, and was followed up with an email informing Duror and Kentallen Community Council on 2 November.
- 2.3 A note of the discussion with parents can be found at **Appendix B**. The email exchange with the Community Council is at **Appendix Bi**.
- 3.1 Duror Primary School is at the southern edge of the Highland Council area, a few miles from the local authority boundary with Argyll and Bute Council. It serves the two small communities of Duror and Kentallen. The school lies just off the A828 trunk road between Fort William and Oban, and is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government. The original building was created in 1877. It's a small school with two main rooms. There is no pre-school provision at the school.
- 3.2 The school is managed as part of a "cluster" with 3 other schools, Ballachulish Primary, St. Bride's Primary, Onich, and Glencoe Primary.
- 3.3 As of the date of writing (January 2024) the total roll is four pupils, but this is expected to fall to two in August 2024.
- 3.4 There has never been a pre-school class at Duror PS. At one time there was pre-school provision in the community, operated by a private sector partner company from the local community hall. However this facility ceased operation some years ago. In recent years the nursery classes at either Ballachulish Primary School or St. Bride's Primary School have been available for pre-school

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children from the Duror PS catchment.

- 3.5 The school has a registered permanent capacity of 25, based on the availability of one classroom plus a GP room. The projected roll of two for August 2024 would therefore represent 8% 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). Duror Primary School is rated as "C" for the educational suitability of the building and "C" for building condition.
- 3.7 In the last two school sessions, there have been 3 placing requests to leave Duror PS, and none to join.
- 3.8 The school was last inspected in 2019 when it was rated "weak" for learning, teaching and assessment and "unsatisfactory" for raising attainment and achievement. A follow-up inspection in 2022 noted that the school and cluster now had a new Head Teacher and Principal Teacher who had made a significant impact on the school. Together with staff, they had made very good progress in improving the school and addressing gaps in learning due to COVID-19.
- 3.9 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 the CO₂ equivalent emissions from the Duror Primary School building are estimated at just over 4 tonnes.

Current Details – Ballachulish Primary School

- 4.1 This school has been in existence since the late 1800s. The current school has three main classrooms and an external classroom. The ELC (nursery) has a separate playroom, garden and entrance. The children across the ELC and school have access to a large gym hall which doubles as a dining hall and assembly hall. The children attending the school are mainly from Ballachulish village and nearby areas. It is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government.
- 4.2 The 2023-24 roll is 32 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 17 children enrolled for the nursery class.
- 4.3 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 75. The 2022-23 roll of 32 therefore represents 43% use of capacity.
- 4.4 The present Ballachulish Primary School building is rated as "C" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 4.5 In the last 2 school sessions, there were 15 placing requests to leave Ballachulish Primary School, and 2 requests to join.
- 4.6 There is no current HMLe Report for the school.
- 4.7 Annual CO₂e emissions from Ballachulish Primary School building from April 2022 to March 2023 were just under 29 tonnes. This figure would not be significantly affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

Current Details – St. Bride's Primary School

- 5.1 St. Bride's Primary School is classed by the Scottish Government as an "accessible rural" school. The catchment area extends from the Ballachulish Bridge to Corrychurrachan, and along the north side of Loch Leven towards Kinlochleven.
- 5.2 The school building contains two classrooms and a nursery extension opened in 2007. There is a large school garden area, large grass area with planted tubs

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and a MUGA (multi-use games area) play area.

- 5.3 The 2022-23 roll is 28 pupils within P1-7. There are a further 15 children enrolled in the nursery class.
- 5.4 The school (excluding the nursery) has a registered capacity of 50. The 2022- 23 roll of 28 therefore represents 56% use of capacity.
- 5.5 The St. Bride's Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 5.6 In the five school sessions from 2017-18 to 2021-22, there was 1 placing request to leave St. Bride's Primary School, and 8 to join.
- 5.7 The school was inspected in June 2023 and was rated "good" for learning, teaching and assessment and "good" for raising attainment and achievement.
- 5.8 Annual CO₂e emissions from St. Bride's Primary School building from April 2020 to March 2021 were just under 18 tonnes. This figure would not be affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

Current Details – Glencoe Primary School

- 6.1 The present Glencoe Primary was formed in the late 1960s through a merger of two previous schools. It has an extensive catchment area extending from Glencoe Village to beyond the Kingshouse Hotel to the Highland Council boundary near Loch Tulla, and also to the foot of Glen Etive, a distance of around 21 miles from the school. Within the building are two large classrooms. The larger room doubles with the Dining Room by means of a sliding partition to form an extensive General Purposes area for drama, concerts, etc. The foyer area has a library area and an area for small group work. P.E. is held in the Glencoe Village Hall. Pupils walk to the Hall for lessons. There is no ELC facility. The school does have a purpose-built outdoor classroom with school garden, polytunnel etc. It is classed as a "remote rural" school by the Scottish Government.
- 6.2 The 2023-24 roll is 22 pupils within P1-7.
- 6.3 The school has a registered capacity of 50. The 2023-24 roll of 22 therefore represents 44% use of capacity.
- 6.4 The present Glencoe Primary School building is rated as "B" for educational suitability and "B" for Condition.
- 6.5 In the last 2 school sessions, there was 1 placing request to leave Glencoe Primary School, and 7 requests to join.
- 6.6 There is no current HMle Report for the school.
- 6.7 Annual CO₂e emissions from Glencoe Primary School building from April 2022 to March 2023 were just over 10 tonnes. This figure would not be significantly affected by the closure of Duror Primary School.

Examination of Alternatives

- 7.1 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. The Status Quo.
 - ii. To mothball Duror PS
 - iii. To expand the catchment area of Duror PS

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7.2 The detail of the Council's consideration of the reasonable alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and its appendices.

Option 1 – The Status Quo

- 8.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the status quo, the very low number of children attending Duror PS indicates strongly that the school is no longer viable. This issue is explored further in Section 11 below.
- 8.2 There are no forecast housing deliveries in the most up to date Housing Land Audit (which contains sites of 4 or more either with planning permission or housing land allocations). In the last 5 years, permissions for 12 houses on sites of 1-3 units have been permitted in the catchment area.

Option 2 – Mothball Duror PS

- 9.1 The possibility of mothballing Duror PS an alternative to closure was discussed with the parents of Duror PS but was strongly opposed by them. Statutory Guidance to the 2010 Act suggests that decisions on mothballing should be taken in consultation with the parents involved and if the majority of parents oppose mothballing, it would be appropriate to move to statutory consultation on closure as soon as possible.

Option 3 - Re-Opening of Duror Primary School with an expanded Catchment Area

- 10.1 The southern edge of the school's catchment area abuts the Council boundary between Highland, and Argyll and Bute, so there is no realistic prospect of a change to that aspect of the school catchment.
- 10.2 The only Highland school with which Duror PS shares a catchment boundary is Ballachulish PS. The area of Glenachulish, in the Ballachulish PS catchment, is located approximately 3 miles, (8 minutes travel time) from Ballachulish and 5 miles (10 minutes) from Duror PS. An analysis of the addresses of pupils currently attending Ballachulish PS and pre-school class indicates that moving Glenachulish into the Duror PS catchment would have no effect on the roll at Duror PS.
- 10.3 Taking all of the above into account, the Council's review suggests there would be no merit in altering the catchment boundary of Ballachulish PS, in favour of Duror PS
- 10.4 Altering the catchment of Ballachulish PS in favour of Duror would of course require a statutory consultation in its own right.

Educational Benefits

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 Highland Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing its' school estate:
- Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
 - Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
 - Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama

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and art.

- Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
- Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural council area such as Highland.
- School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
- School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
- Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
- Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
- The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
- Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built-up community.

- 11.3 As mentioned above, evidence gathered by Highland Council to date suggests that there is no realistic prospect of a viable roll at Duror PS. Currently there are four pupils attending the school, with the roll expected to fall to two in August 2024. It is the Council's view that there are educational disadvantages to attending school with one other pupil.
- 11.4 Currently, Duror Primary School is managed by a single Head Teacher as part of a "cluster" arrangement, with four schools overall – Ballachulish, St. Bride's and Glencoe being the other three. There is thus a commonality of approach to learning and teaching within the four cluster schools.
- 11.5 Children at the other cluster schools regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes. The very small roll of Duror PS from August 2024 would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static, since there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. A very small roll would also limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.
- 11.6 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 11.7 The existence of pre-school classes at Ballachulish PS, and St. Bride's PS enables a strong transition process for children moving into P1.
- 11.8 Similarly, moving into high school from a primary school with a roll of two creates additional pressures in respect of transition. It is likely any child would be the only one from their primary school joining high school that year.

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- 11.9 The language programmes at Ballachulish PS, St. Bride's PS, and Glencoe PS, aim to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills. Listening is developed by games, stories, radio & television programmes, music, and use of ICT. The school aims to develop fluency and clarity of expression and to extend vocabulary. Talking is developed by role playing, interviewing etc. The emphasis is on oral work and role play. In all cases, working with others plays an important role.
- 11.10 It is self-evident that an overall school roll of two restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in neighbouring schools, that in itself involves time out of school in travelling.
- 11.11 As with sports, the larger rolls at the neighbouring cluster schools provides a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of group musical and artistic opportunities, events that are more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers.
- 11.12 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.
- 11.13 In summary, there are positive educational benefits to be derived from the closure of Duror Primary School, due to the significantly increased opportunities that can be provided at any of the other schools in the cluster. Collaborative working within the classroom, language learning, and artistic and sports activities, and socialisation, can all benefit from the greater numbers that are available in other local schools. Overall, the opportunities provided by the larger numbers at Ballachulish, St. Bride's, or Glencoe would allow access to a fuller and more consistent curriculum.

Re-allocation of Duror PS Catchment

- 12.1 A map of the current Duror PS catchment is **Appendix C**.
- 12.2 Paragraph 8.2 above highlighted that Ballachulish PS is the only Highland school with which Duror PS shares a catchment boundary. This provides a strong argument for re-allocating the Duror PS catchment to that of Ballachulish PS, in the event that Duror PS was to close. A map of the proposed merged catchment is at **Appendix Ci**.
- 12.3 During informal discussions with parents, suggestions were made that the Duror catchment should be re-allocated to that of either St. Bride's PS or Glencoe PS, in the event that Duror Primary was closed.
- 12.4 Either of the above options would have the disadvantage of creating a primary school catchment with an exclave – see the maps at **Appendices Cii and Ciii**. In the case of St. Bride's PS, it might be possible to amend the Ballachulish PS catchment to transfer Glenachulish into the new St. Bride's catchment, thereby creating a more geographically coherent catchment. However, this would require a statutory consultation on changing the Ballachulish PS catchment.
- 12.5 The three schools are located close together, so the differences in travel time would be trivial. However, it should be noted, that re-zoning the Duror PS

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catchment to that of Glencoe PS, would require Duror pupils to travel past Ballachulish PS on their way to Glencoe.

- 12.6 Taking the above into account, Highland Council proposes that the Duror PS catchment should be transferred entirely to that of Ballachulish Primary School, in the event the closure of Duror is approved. The Council would however welcome views on this aspect of the proposal.

Effect of Differing Transport Arrangements

- 13.1 The travel distance and time between Duror PS and Ballachulish PS is approximately 8 miles/14 minutes (source: Google Maps). The comparative figures would be approximately 7 miles/11 minutes to St. Bride's PS and 9 miles/13 minutes to Glencoe PS. All these figures are well within the normal range for school travel in the Highland Council area. The schools, and the routes between them, are all located on the coast and only rarely affected by winter weather.
- 13.2 Given the distances involved, any additional CO₂e emissions arising from transport would be negligible and would in any case be set against the annual emissions of around 4 tonnes that could be expected from the Duror Primary School building itself were it operational.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 14.1 As mentioned above, Duror PS is currently managed as part of a 4-school cluster. In the event that the school closed, the Head Teacher and cluster Principal Teacher posts would be unaffected, as they would continue with managing the remaining 3 schools in the cluster.
- 14.2 The school also has a class teacher, part-time clerical assistant, and part-time cleaner, whose posts would be affected by closure. The staff affected would be eligible for redeployment in line with Council policy. Staff would be eligible for transfer into any vacant posts within reasonable travel distance.

Effect on the Local Community

- 15.1 The community of Duror and Kentallen has a good-sized Community Centre, which appears to be well-used. Facilities include a large open hall with a stage, a small hall set out in a café style, a good size kitchen with modern appliances, plus male, female and accessible toilets. Outside facilities include a playing field, a children's play area, and BBQ facilities with picnic benches. There is free parking directly outside the hall, with accessible access into and throughout the building.
- 15.2 Subject to the Council not having any operational need for the building, Highland Council would be keen to work with the local community over the future use of the Duror School building and site. Any such proposal would however have to be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management arrangements.

Financial Consequences

- 16.1 The Table at **Appendix D** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 17.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no impact on the following Equality

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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

17.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to a primary school and as such primarily affects children in the 3-12 age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit to the children in the area concerned. No negative age-related effects arise. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of school provision.

Rural Impact Assessment

- 18.1 Duror PS is classed by the Scottish Government as a “remote rural” school, as are Ballachulish PS and Glencoe PS. St. Bride’s PS is classed as an “accessible rural” school, as it is a few miles closer to Fort William.
- 18.2 The relocation of service would involve moving local school provision from Duror to Ballachulish, a distance of 8 miles.
- 18.3 As set out in Section 11 above, the Highland Council believes that the proposal offers educational benefits.
- 18.4 The additional travel time for school pupils from the Duror PS site to Ballachulish PS is 14 minutes (source: Google Maps). As school transport is provided by the Council, the proposal would not be expected to have any impact on accessibility to education or on fuel poverty.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 19.1 The main adverse effect from the Proposal is the additional journey time for pupils who live within the Duror PS catchment area. The journey time is however well within the normal range for pupils living in Highland. Funded school transport would be provided to all children of school age.

Recommendation

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

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER

Appendix A

Note of an Informal Meeting with Parents at Duror PS – 1 November 2023

From: Ian Jackson (Resources) <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>

Sent: 02 November 2023 10:29

To: Anne MacPherson (Resources) <Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk>; Mhairi MacDonald (Area Education West) <Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk>; Hayley Brown (Primary and ELC) <Hayley.Brown@highland.gov.uk>

Cc: Sarah Fanet (Councillor) <Sarah.Fanet.cllr@highland.gov.uk>; Angus MacDonald (Councillor) <Angus.MacDonald.cllr@highland.gov.uk>; Thomas MacLennan (Councillor) <thomas.maclennan.cllr@highland.gov.uk>; Kate Willis (Councillor) <kate.willis.cllr@highland.gov.uk>; Dot Ferguson (Community Support & Ward Management) <Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk>; Malcolm McGregor (Duror & Glencoe & St Bride's & Ballachulish) <Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk>; Jean MacKinnon (Workforce Planning) <Jean.MacKinnon@highland.gov.uk>

Subject: Future of Duror Primary School

Further to recent discussions, I met with the parents and staff of Duror PS yesterday afternoon. Malcolm McGregor, HT, also attended as did Katie Russell, PT for the cluster.

The upshot of the meeting is that parents did not agree that Duror PS should be mothballed in the summer of 2024. They felt strongly that the school should remain open.

I explained that the anticipated roll for August was two pupils, and that we didn't feel a roll of that size was sustainable. I commented on some of the educational disadvantages.

Parents countered that their children had "the best of both worlds" in that they had the benefits (as they saw it) of the small numbers at Duror, but that collaborative learning, socialisation, team sports etc were available through the fact they travelled regularly to other schools in the cluster. Obviously I didn't agree but ultimately the parents had their opinions.

One parent asked for a nursery class to be created at Duror Primary, and argued that the lack of a nursery was one reason why the school roll was so low. I advised that realistically there was no chance of an EY class being created.

I was also asked why the Council had not invested in a new school for South Lochaber, which would allow the 4 current schools to be merged into a new build. Reference was made to the "new" schools built for Kinlochleven and in Fort William. I acknowledged that the suggestion for a 4-school merger had been discussed for more than 20 years, but that the Council simply did not have the capital funding to realise such a project, at least not in the foreseeable future. Parents commented that they and the wider community would only agree to the closure of Duror where that was balanced by the offer of investment into the local community – i.e., a new school to replace the 4 current schools.

I think the parents were conscious that if they agreed to mothballing, that was the effective end of Duror School, and they did not wish that decision to fall on their shoulders. They commented there were pre-school children in the community, and that their parents would want to have a say on the future of the school, as would the wider community.

I advised that, given parental views, we would not mothball the school, but that we might proceed to a formal closure consultation. A paper might be taken to a future education Committee, (February?) and that the process would take about a year to complete. We would not however,

close the school mid-session. So, if the process were completed in the spring of 2025, the school would close at the end of that session - the summer of 2025. I assured parents the consultation process for closure did not mean a decision to close had already been taken.

Future action would be for discussion within the Council.

Copy of Email correspondence between Highland Council and Duror and Kentallen Community Council – November 2023

Dear Audra

Thanks for the feedback, which will assist the HC in coming to a view about the future of the school.

As mentioned, should a formal closure proposal be made, the Community Council would be a statutory consultee.

Ian Jackson
Education Officer
Highland Council
07435 982557

From: Info DKCC <dkccinfo@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2023 8:29 AM
To: Ian Jackson (Resources) <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: Anne MacPherson (Resources) <Anne.MacPherson@highland.gov.uk>; Dot Ferguson (Community Support & Ward Management) <Dot.Ferguson@highland.gov.uk>; Malcolm McGregor (Duror & Glencoe & St Bride's & Ballachulish) <Malcolm.McGregor@highland.gov.uk>; Mhairi MacDonald (Area Education West) <Mhairi.MacDonald3@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Future of Duror PS

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Ian

Following the DKCC meeting on Monday night I wanted to inform you that the community council would insist the Duror school remains open.

Kind regards
Audra Sheffield
Secretary, Duror and Kentallen Community Council

On Thu, 2 Nov 2023 at 11:31, Ian Jackson (Resources) <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Secretary/Chairperson

I am writing to update you on some informal discussions that were held yesterday with parents and staff at Duror PS, concerning the future of the school. The roll of the school has recently fallen to four pupils, two of whom are in P7. In August 2024 the school is expected to have only two pupils.

I met with parents and staff to advise that Highland Council sees a number of educational disadvantages to a school with two pupils, and to find out how parents felt about the roll falling so

low. We discussed the possibility of “mothballing” the school – closing the school on a temporary basis, to see whether the roll might recover.

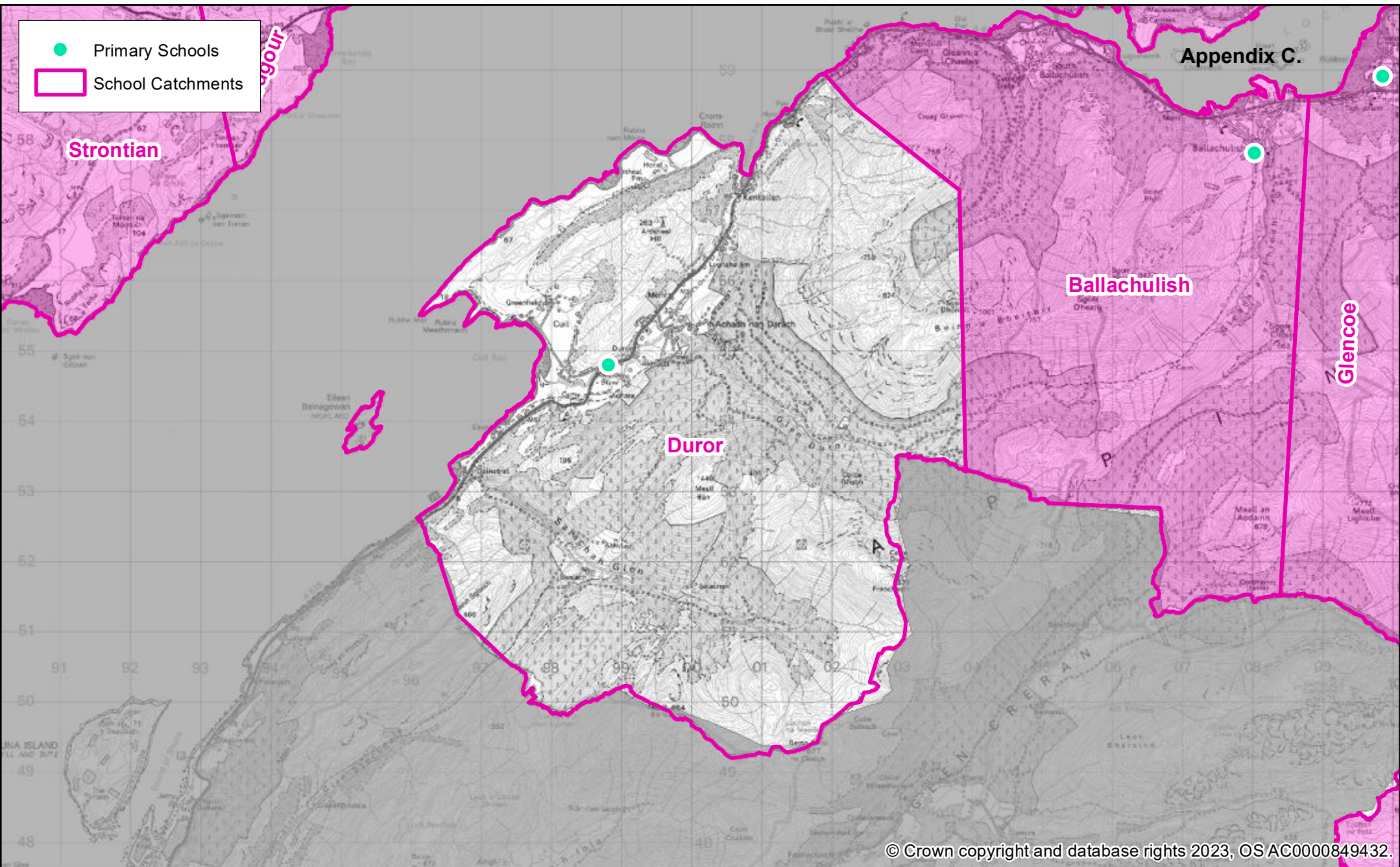
Parents and staff were opposed to mothballing and were of the view that the school should remain open.

I was grateful to hear the views of parents, and advised that the Council would consider the issue further. It is *possible* that we may formally consult on a proposal to close the school, but the decision to launch such a consultation would be subject to approval by the Council’s Education Committee, as indeed would any decision taken following consultation. In addition, all school closures in Scotland must be ratified by Scottish Ministers.

If a consultation on closing the school were to take place, the Community Council would be a statutory consultee.

I would stress however, that no decisions have yet been taken on whether to conduct such a consultation.

Please contact me if you have any queries about the above.



- Primary Schools
- School Catchments

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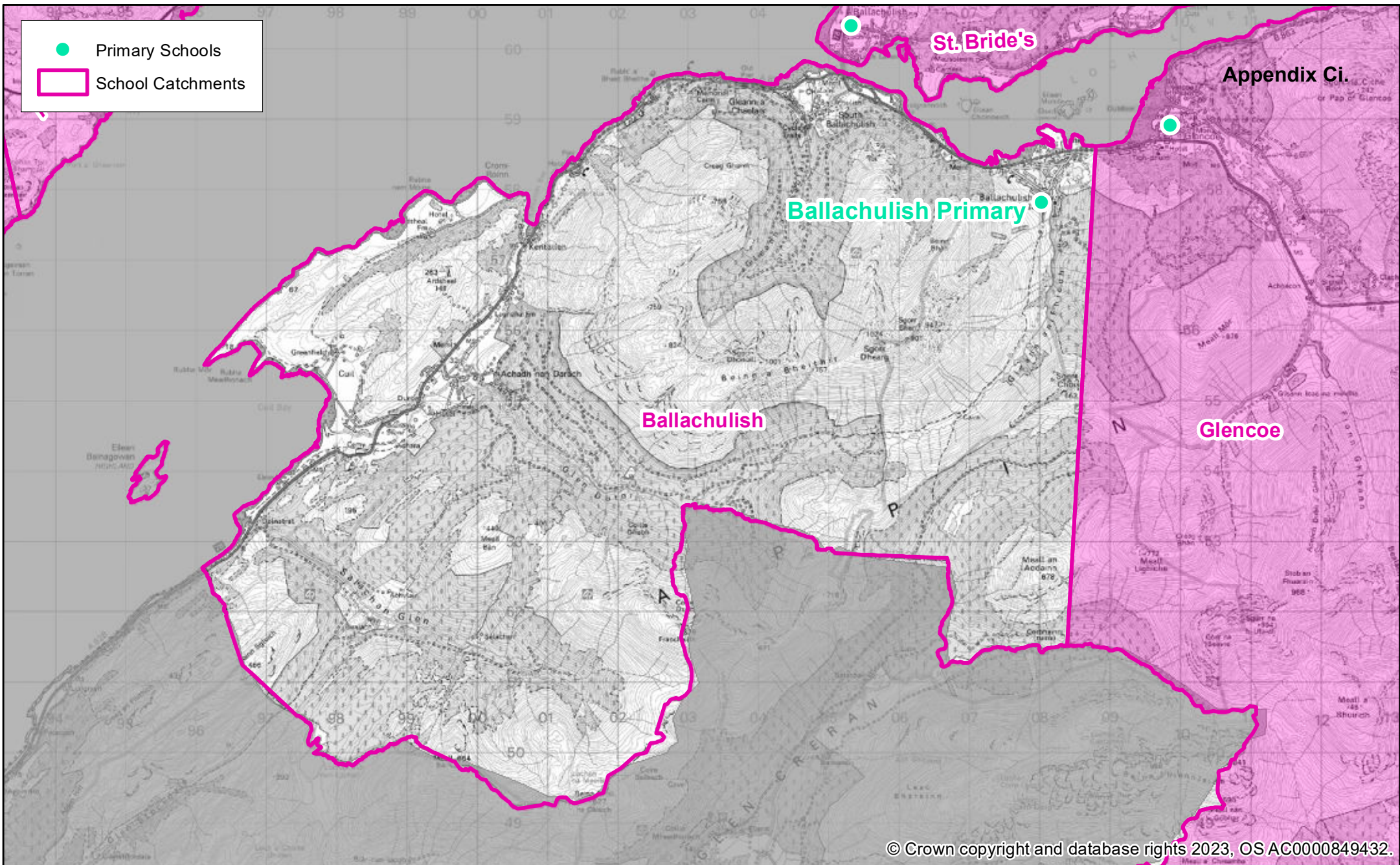
Ref: gis2850
Date: Dec2023

Duror Primary School Existing Catchment

N
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- Primary Schools
- ▭ School Catchments



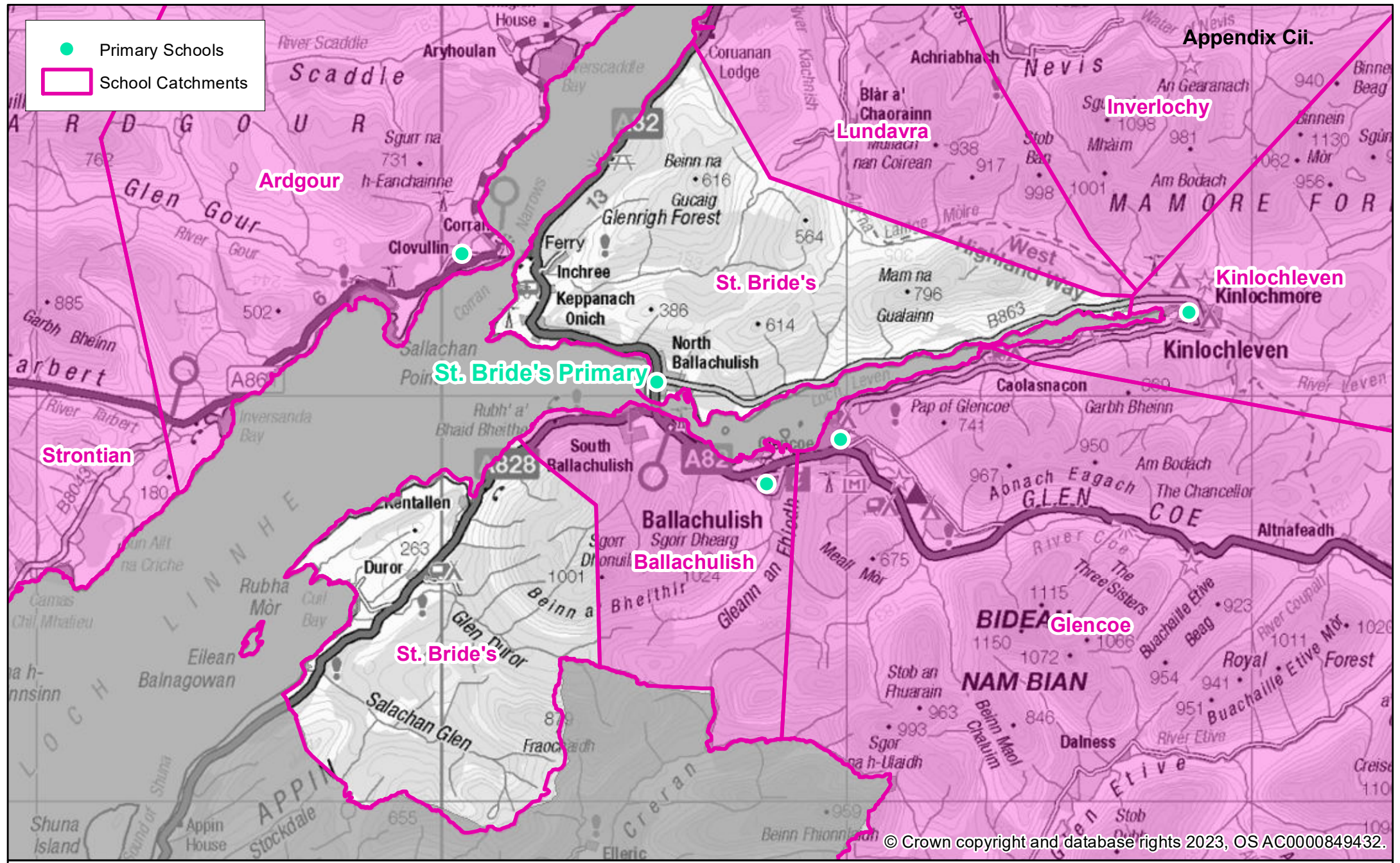
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Duror Merged with Ballachulish Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2850
Date: Dec2023



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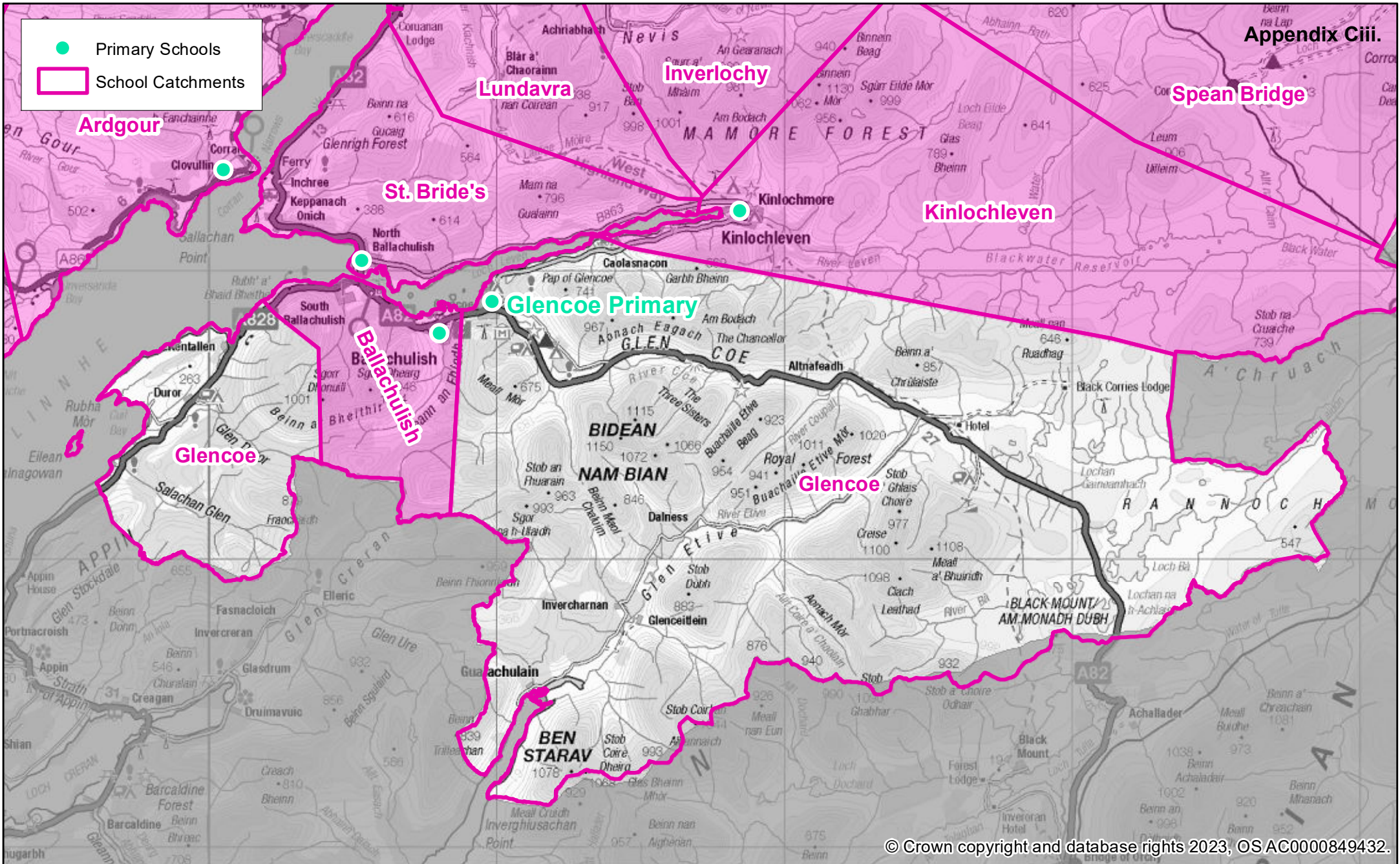
Duror Merged with St. Bride's Primary School Catchment

Ref: gis2850
Date: Dec2023

N
1:120,000



- Primary Schools
- ▭ School Catchments



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Ref: gis2850
Date: Dec2023

Duror Merged with Glencoe Primary School Catchment

N
1:170,000



Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
	Name of School	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school Ballachulish Primary School	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 2	Duror Primary School			
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 5	teaching staff	99,422	21,920	77,502
Row 6	support staff	10,033	-	10,033
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	263	13	250
Row 8	support staff training	-	-	-
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	4,082	-	4,082
Row 10				
Row 11	<i>Building costs:</i>			
Row 12	property insurance	298	-	298
Row 13	non domestic rates	-	-	-
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	1,099	-	1,099
Row 15	energy costs	3,392	-	3,392
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,525	-	4,525
Row 17	building repair & maintenance	115	40	75
Row 18	grounds maintenance	-	-	-
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	-	-	-
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital	-	-	-
Row 21	other	-	-	-
Row 22				
Row 23	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials	1,494	389	1,105
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	15,184	1,375	13,809
Row 26	SQA costs	-	-	-
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	923	-	923
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
Row 30	home to school	-	11,400	- 11,400
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	-	-	-
Row 32	staff travel	344	-	344
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	141,174	35,137	106,037
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 SCHOOL	141,174	35,137	106,037
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	141,174	35,137	106,037

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 until disposal	
	property insurance	298
	non domestic rates	-
	water & sewerage charges	-
	energy costs	-
	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	-
	security costs	-
	building repair & maintenance	115
	grounds maintenance	-
	facilities management costs	-
	other	-
	TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	413

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

Table 5	Impact on GAE - note 5	
	GAE IMPACT	0