



**Argyll and Bute Council: Education**

## **CONSULTATION REPORT**

Report on the outcome of the consultation relating to the proposal to close Minard  
Primary School

**February 2024**

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in regard to a proposal in  
terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended.

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## **1. Summary of the Proposal**

- 1.1 It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.
- 1.2 The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools respectively (as detailed at Paragraph 2.2, and Appendix 3 of the Proposal Paper) will be extended to include the current catchment area for Minard Primary School.

## **2. Reasons for the Proposal**

- 2.1 The above is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:
  - Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
  - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. In June 2023 there were 8.59fte primary school teaching vacancies in Argyll and Bute.
  - Whilst Minard Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382.

## **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 This is a Consultation Report prepared in compliance with the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended (the 2010 Act) on the above proposal.
- 3.2 The purpose of this Report is to:
  - Provide a record of the total number of written responses made during the statutory consultation period;
  - Provide a summary of the written responses;
  - Provide a summary of oral representations made at the public meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00 pm;
  - Provide a statement of the Council's response to those written and oral representations;
  - Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of the Council's response to this report;

- State how the Council reviewed the proposal following the representations received during the statutory consultation period and receipt of the report from Education Scotland;
- Provide details of any omission from, or inaccuracy in, the Proposal Paper and state how the Council acted upon those;
- State how the Council has complied with Sections 11A to 13 of the 2010 Act when reviewing the proposal; and
- Explain the opportunity that may arise to make representations to the Scottish Ministers in connection with Section 15(4) of the 2010 Act.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Argyll and Bute Council approved the continued mothballing of Minard Primary School on a temporary basis until December 2020, and that the School premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MIId=8513&Ver=4> (Agenda Item 11)

- 4.2 Further to this, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Community Services Committee agreed that Minard Primary School would continue to be mothballed on a temporary basis until May 2021 and that the school premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis. It was also agreed by the Community Services Committee that in the intervening period, Education Services would undertake a pre-consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and Options Appraisal process when it was permissible under the Coronavirus Regulations relating to public gatherings. The Education Service intended to undertake the required preliminary consultation, and an Options Appraisal, for Minard Primary School in May 2021, but due to the restrictions of the pandemic were unable to complete this work until the last term. The Community Services Committee received a report presenting and outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* (as amended) and a broad timeline of this process:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MIId=13970&Ver=4> (Agenda Item 13b)

- 4.3 Following the preliminary engagement exercise, the Education Service prepared an Options Appraisal in respect of Minard Primary School, which was considered by the Community Services Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022. Members noted the outcome of the Options Appraisal (which identified closure of the school as the most reasonable option in the circumstances); and agreed that Officers now formulate a draft closure proposal that would come back to the June 2023 meeting of the Committee for consideration by Members which,

if approved, would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the 2010 Act.

[Agenda for Community Services Committee on Thursday, 25 August 2022, 10:00 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 8).

- 4.4 On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023, the Community Services Committee agreed to adopt the draft closure proposal in respect of Minard Primary School as a “relevant proposal” that would proceed to a statutory consultation in terms of the 2010 Act.

[Agenda for Community Services Committee on Thursday, 8 June 2023, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 10b)

- 4.5 Full details of the proposal, reasons for the proposal, the reasonable alternatives to the proposal that were identified, an assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives, and an assessment of the educational benefits to the proposal and each of the alternatives are set out in the Proposal Paper, which is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## 5. Equality and Socio-Economic Impact

- 5.1 The Council, as a public authority, has a duty under the *Equality Act 2010*, the *Public Sector Equality Duty 2011*, the *Fairer Scotland Duty* and the *Islands (Scotland) Act 2018* to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs). The full EQSEIA in respect to the proposal to close Minard Primary School is attached as **Appendix 2**.

- 5.2 The EQSEIA identifies no negative impact.

## 6. The Consultation Process

- 6.1 Following the Council’s decision of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 where it agreed to adopt the proposal as a “relevant proposal” in terms of the 2010 Act and issue it as a basis for consultation, the Proposal Paper was made available on the Argyll and Bute Council website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/school-consultations-and-proposals>

- 6.2 A summary of that document was also provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within two years of the date of publication of the Proposal Paper

- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors (Ward 3 - Mid Argyll)
- Furnace Community Council
- West Loch Fyne Community Council
- Lochgilphead Community Council
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

6.3 A hard copy of the full Proposal Paper was also made available for inspection at the following locations:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ
- Lochgilphead Library, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8AA
- Inveraray Primary School (incorporating Furnace Primary School), Inveraray, PA32 8XU

6.4 The document was also publicised on Argyll & Bute Council's weekly online Newsround for the duration of the consultation period. The Newsround is coordinated by the Council's Communications Team and is sent, via email, directly to around 4,000 contacts weekly. This was further supported by social media postings about the consultation exercise, and the associated public meeting, on Twitter (X) and Facebook. Physical posters were also situated in the affected schools (Lochgilphead, Furnace and Inveraray Primary Schools) and within local shops in Inveraray.

6.5 The document was available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English.

6.6 Summaries of the Proposal (containing a link to where the full Proposal Paper could be read) were emailed to notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees (as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act) of the proposal and invited them to make representations as part of the consultation process.

- 6.7 The consultation ran from 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 until the close of business on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – which was over the minimum of six weeks including at least 30 school days, as required by Section 6(4) of the 2010 Act.
- 6.8 A public meeting was held at Minard Primary School on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate was welcome to do so. Advance written notice of this meeting was given to all the “relevant consultees” in terms of the 2010 Act. The meeting was convened by the Education Authority who presented reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There was an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made.
- 6.9 This Consultation Report is the Council’s response to the issues raised regarding the proposal during the consultation exercise. It will be published on the Council’s website for a period of no less than three weeks prior to final consideration of the proposal by the Council’s Community Services Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

## 7. Pupil Engagement

- 7.1 The proposal to close Minard Primary School could have an impact on pupils, parents and the local community. Pupils’ views are a significant part of the consultation process. To that regard, pupils from the Minard Primary School catchment area took part in focus groups with officers from the Education Service to share their views on the proposal.
- 7.2 The focus group at Lochgilphead Primary consisted of four pupils, aged from Primary 4 to Primary 7 that live within the current Minard Primary School catchment area, and was held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 7.3 The focus group at Furnace/Inveraray Primary Schools consisted of four pupils, aged from Primary 2 to Primary 6 that live within the current Minard Primary School catchment area, and was held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 7.4 Primary pupils at both Lochgilphead and Furnace/Inveraray Primary Schools, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, were provided with a PowerPoint that was presented by their class teacher and were offered an opportunity to give their views and have these recorded as part of the consultation process.
- 7.5 The pupils were given information regarding the Council’s proposal and asked for their thoughts and ideas through a series of questions.
- 7.6 Pupils in the focus group held at Lochgilphead Primary School said:
- *“New houses could be built.”*

- *“The building could be given to Minard Community Council to be used as a community building.”*
- *“It could be used as a football pitch or play park.”*
- *“It would mean that there would be no local school as an option for any new children in the village.”*
- *“Other people in the village have said they would rather it closed.”*
- *“There is already a bus to take children to school in Lochgilphead. However, there needs to be a safer crossing to the bus stop.”*
- *“The school needs cleaned up and made safe.”*
- *“There should be security cameras and ‘no littering’ signs put up.”*
- *“Children can go to a bigger school in Lochgilphead where there are more opportunities.”*

7.7 Pupils in the focus group held at Furnace/Inveraray Primary School said:

- “Children have better opportunities for learning in a bigger primary school.”
- “The building could be used for something else, a hotel, meeting place or supporting the community.”
- “Children will make more friends in bigger schools.”
- “It would save money and the money could be used for other schools.”
- “I wonder what would happen to the building.”
- “Could we use some of the resources that are there as it would be a shame to waste them?”
- “I worry that there are not many families or children in Minard.”
- “Having to drive to other schools is an issue. If Minard was open, they could walk to school.”
- “Provide a school bus for children but this would add to climate change and pollution.”
- “If it was closed we could play football there.”
- “If Minard children come to Inveraray, we would make them feel welcome.”

7.8 A summary of the pupil focus group responses is attached as **Appendix 6**.

## **8. Responses to the Consultation Exercise**

8.1 There were five written responses received during the consultation period which were all emailed to [argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk). They are summarised below and four of the written responses can be viewed in full at **Appendix 3**.

8.2 One of the respondents did not give consent for their written response to be made publicly available. Therefore, their written response is not included within **Appendix 3**. They submitted that it does not seem logical to re-open or continue

mothballing the School due to lack of pupils. Pre-school children mostly attend Inveraray ELC (or Lochgilphead Joint Campus ELC) and most parents choose to continue their children's Primary 1 education at the same establishments – to maintain the friendship groups that they established in their pre-school years. This respondent further submitted that children from the Minard Primary School catchment area attending Furnace Primary School have the opportunity to learn in a multi-composite class alongside their sister school – Inveraray Primary School (as there is a joint head teacher arrangement in place). Moreover, children who attend Furnace Primary School benefit from the rural environment and strengths that a small village primary school can offer (e.g. access to beach/forest school, horse riding lessons at Argyll Adventure, and community events such as singing at local shops, restaurants and social housing. Accordingly the respondent concluded by stating that, for the above reasons, it makes most sense to close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools – confirming that they are in agreement with the proposal.

8.3 Oral responses to the proposal were gathered at the public meeting, convened by the Education Authority and held at Minard Primary School on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Nine representatives from the local community attended along with two local Councillors. Minutes of the public meeting are attached as **Appendix 4**. The nine members of the public present generally intimated an acceptance of the proposal to close Minard Primary School and identified the potential for the vacant Minard Primary School premises to be used as an asset for the community.

8.4 The written and oral responses to the consultation can be broadly grouped as follows:

8.4.1 Four out of the five written responses were in favour of the proposal to close Minard Primary School. One response was against closure and moved for re-opening. At the public meeting those present intimated an acceptance of the closure proposal, with potential use of the building as a community asset.

8.4.2 Three out of the five written responses expressed concerns over the proposed realignment of the catchment area to both Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools. All three of those responses have indicated a strong preference for one receiving school to avoid 'splitting' the community. Two of those responses state a clear preference for the Minard Primary School catchment area to be subsumed in its entirety by Furnace Primary School, rather than Lochgilphead Primary, on the grounds of less travel time, travel safety, historical links (a previous shared headship arrangement being in place between Minard and Furnace Primary Schools) and maintaining the smaller, village school model. The other respondent, having indicated a strong preference for one receiving school, did not indicate any preference between

Lochgilphead Primary or Furnace Primary. Similar concerns were identified by stakeholders attending the public meeting.

## 9. Education Authority's Response to Written/Oral Representations

9.1 Questions raised, and representations made, through the consultation process fell into five main themes: catchment areas and receiving schools; reopening of Minard Primary School; transport; process and response to consultation; and community interest.

### 9.2 Catchment Areas and Receiving Schools

**Question:** Why is the Minard catchment area being split to two receiving schools?

**Response:** Based on the discussions previously held with families when the school was initially mothballed, this approach was deemed to have regard to those views, allowing a degree of choice of school. The proposed split in catchment area would not affect a parent or carer's right to make a placing request to another school outwith their catchment area. If there is a clear view from the consultation responses suggesting an alternative position in terms of what happens to Minard Primary School's catchment area if the school were to close, then this is something that the Education Authority are required to examine when the proposal is being reviewed (see Section 12, below).

### 9.3 Re-opening of Minard Primary School

**Statement:** Minard Primary School should be re-opened as it is a 'halfway house' in between the larger Inveraray and Lochgilphead Primary Schools. Too many smaller schools are being closed to the detriment of communities and children who would thrive in a smaller, more nurturing environment.

**Response:** Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years and, taking account of the projected school roll, it is unlikely to become viable for re-opening in the near future. One of the proposed receiving schools is Furnace Primary School, which is a small school similar to Minard Primary School, and could be considered to provide a smaller, more nurturing environment.

### 9.4 Transport

**Question:** If children were not transported by parents to school, would pupils re-zoned to Lochgilphead Primary School (should the proposal as consulted on be implemented) travel on the service bus to Lochgilphead Joint Campus along with the secondary pupils?

**Response:** The Council's School Transport Team would advise on transport arrangements available for the children to receiving schools. Assessments, if required, can be carried out for a child who has additional support needs. The Education Service work closely with colleagues in the Transport Team to ensure whatever is put in place will be safe and legally compliant.

#### 9.5 Process and Response to the Consultation

**Question:** The proposed implementation date is May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 - why is this? and what how will the Council respond to the consultation?

**Response:** The *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* sets out the specific statutory requirements which the Council are required to follow. This includes the timeframes for reports to be produced and agreed by the Council and Education Scotland, as well as a period for the Scottish Ministers to consider call-in of any closure decision that the Council may make. The proposed implementation date 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024 therefore allows for the entire process to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.

**Question:** What will the Council do following the consultation exercise?

**Response:** After the consultation closes, the Council are obliged to review the proposal, and all of the identified reasonable alternatives, in light of the consultation feedback, and Education Scotland's independent report on the proposal. This Consultation Report contains the Council's responses to the issues raised during the consultation period, as well as its review of the proposal and all the identified reasonable alternatives. The Consultation Report will be published on the Council's website for a period of no less than 3 weeks prior to consideration of the same by the Council's Community Services Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

#### 9.6 Community Interest

**Question:** What will happen to the school premises if closure of the school is taken forward?

**Response:** The Council would be happy to hear from any group or individual within the community that may wish to come forward with proposals for the future of the building, should it be permanently discontinued as an educational establishment. If there is an interest in the community taking over the building discussions can be opened up in anticipation of a proposed closure. If there is a clear expression of desire from the community to take over the building then that is a route which can be explored further. The Council has, in the past, transferred a previous school building over to the community following its formal closure.

## 10. Education Scotland Report

- 10.1 In accordance with Section 8(2) of the 2010 Act, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.
- 10.2 In preparing their report, Education Scotland considered all relevant documentation in relation to the proposal. They also visited Lochgilphead and Furnace/Inveraray Primary Schools to seek the views of relevant consultees. An additional online meeting was offered for those unable to attend the in-person meetings.
- 10.3 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full at **Appendix 5**.
- 10.4 This report is generally supportive of the proposal and its findings can be summarised as follows:
- a. Education Scotland agrees that there are potential educational benefits for children arising from the Council's proposal to close Minard Primary School. For example, that there can be more opportunities for them to learn, develop and socialise with a wider group of their peers.
  - b. Education Scotland found that almost all staff, parents and children, which HM Inspectors met with, agree with the Council's proposal to permanently close Minard Primary School. However, a few stakeholders have questioned the proposal to split the Minard catchment. The Council should take these views into consideration when finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries.
  - c. In finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries, the Council may wish to consider the alternative suggestion to realign the whole of the Minard catchment area to Furnace Primary School.
  - d. Education Scotland notes that should the Council decide to implement the closure proposal, it should continue to engage with the Minard community to explore options for the future use of the school building.

## 11. Education Authority Response to Education Scotland Report

- 11.1 The Education Service welcomes the report from Education Scotland and agrees with its findings.
- 11.2 The Education Service's response to the findings contained within the Education Scotland Report is as follows:

***(a) Education Scotland agrees that there are potential educational benefits for children arising from the Council's proposal to close Minard***

***Primary School. For example, that there can be more opportunities for them to learn, develop and socialise with a wider group of their peers.***

- 11.3 The Council agrees that the educational benefits of the proposal for current and future pupils are clear. Children also benefit from opportunities to work with a wider number of peers and children at other stages, helping to develop social skills. Throughout the consultation process, stakeholders have identified the strength of the educational benefits and opportunities for pupils at Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools.

***(b) Education Scotland found that almost all staff, parents and children, which HM Inspectors met with, agree with the Council's proposal to permanently close Minard Primary School. However, a few stakeholders have questioned the proposal to split the Minard catchment. The Council should take these views into consideration when finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries,***

***(c) In finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries, the Council may wish to consider the alternative suggestion to realign the whole of the Minard catchment area to Furnace Primary School.***

- 11.4 The Education Service notes the views expressed by almost all stakeholders which HM Inspectors met with that Minard Primary School should close permanently. The Service further notes that views regarding an alternative catchment area solution were expressed to HM Inspectors (as well as within the consultation responses) and will review that alternative to the proposal in order to further explore the best solution for how the School's catchment area should be realigned should it be permanently closed. This review and assessment is conducted within Section 12, below.

***(d) Education Scotland notes that should the Council decide to implement the closure proposal, it should continue to engage with the Minard community to explore options for the future use of the school building.***

- 11.5 Argyll and Bute Council is open to engaging with the local community on any plans or proposals that they may come forward with to develop a sustainable community facility.

## **12. Rural Schools – Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

- 12.1 After the Education Authority received Education Scotland's report, officers carried out a further review of the proposal following the close of the consultation, having regard (in particular) to:

- Written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the Consultation period;

- Views of Lochgilphead and Furnace/Inveraray Primary pupils as gathered during the consultation exercise,
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting, and
- Education Scotland's report.

12.2 The feedback from the Consultation was considered by officers. Data and factual information was checked where required and advice sought from other Council services where necessary. This ensured that the Council met the requirements to review the proposal under Sections 9(1) and 13(5) of the 2010 Act.

12.3 One of the underlying reasons for the Proposal thus far has been, in common with many other Scottish local authorities, the challenge of teacher recruitment in Argyll and Bute. At the time the Proposal was issued as a basis for statutory consultation (June 2023) there were 8.59fte vacancies for primary teachers in Argyll and Bute. Given that this is a fluid figure, it has been reviewed and as of the end of January 2024 it is now 10.84fte. This update shows that teacher recruitment continues to be a challenge for the Council and an important factor to consider in relation to the ability to staff all of our schools.

12.4 In addition, officers carried out a further assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives to it as set out in the Proposal Paper, having particular regard to the preliminary requirements for rural school closures as set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act.

12.5 The Options Appraisal (carried out in satisfaction of the preliminary requirements of the 2010 Act) and Proposal Paper (which formed a basis for statutory consultation) identified three options:

- a) Re-open Minard Primary School,
- b) Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary with pupils zoned to Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace Primary schools.
- c) Close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace Primary schools (The Proposal).

12.6 Each of these options have been further reviewed and assessed, below, in light of the consultation responses:

12.7 Re-open Minard Primary School

12.7.1 Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years. The school roll is zero, and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.

12.7.2 Re-opening the School would incur an economic impact with respect to the considerable expenditure needed to bring the

building up to standard. There would also be costs relating to staffing, and ongoing maintenance.

12.7.3 Whilst community concerns about a village school being the heart of a community and a valuable amenity are recognised, there are no specific educational benefits from re-opening this particular mothballed School - as all schools, including Furnace and Lochgilphead, implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

12.7.4 Re-opening the school could have a positive environmental impact in terms of pupils living in the village being able to walk to school, as opposed to travelling by car/bus (as per the current arrangements since the school has been mothballed). However, there would also be an environmental impact in terms of re-opening/heating the school building, particularly if it were only for a very small number of pupils.

12.7.5 The above-mentioned potential positive impact on environment (with regards to travelling arrangements) has been weighed up against the very low projected pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard. In addition, only one stakeholder response supported re-opening the School. For all of these reasons, and following a review of the Proposal and all reasonable alternatives in light of the consultation feedback, re-opening Minard Primary School is still not considered to be the best option to address the underlying reasons for the Proposal.

## 12.8 Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary School with pupils zoned to Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace Primary schools.

12.8.1 Minard Primary School has now been mothballed for over four years. The School roll is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future, with no indication (based on the evidence currently available) that the School could become viable or sustainable in the near future.

12.8.2 Continued mothballing would incur an economic impact with respect to the annual expenditure needed maintain the building. If the mothballing of Minard Primary was to continue, the building would likely deteriorate further and incur additional costs.

- 12.8.3 Continued mothballing of Minard Primary School would have a neutral environmental impact on the current transport position, and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils.
- 12.8.4 There are no specific educational benefits from continuing to mothball the school as children from the Minard Primary School catchment area, presently attending Furnace, Lochgilphead and Inveraray Primary Schools are benefitting from the rural broader environment, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment. The small number of children involved has minimal effect on staffing within the receiving primary schools.
- 12.8.5 Almost all stakeholders from the local community who participated in the consultation were not in favour of further mothballing Minard Primary School, identifying waste due to deterioration of the property and potentially the sustainability of the community. Continued mothballing is not assessed to have any positive impacts on the underlying reasons for the Proposal.
- 12.8.6 On the basis that pupil numbers are currently zero and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future; having regard to the significant ongoing costs of maintaining the School premises whilst it is mothballed; and that continued mothballing of the School does not generate any benefits to the local community or the Council or otherwise address the underlying reasons for the Proposal – it has therefore been assessed that the continued mothballing of Minard Primary School is still not considered to be the best option to address the underlying reasons for the Proposal.
- 12.9 Close Minard Primary School and re-align its catchment area to Lochgilphead Primary School and Furnace Primary School (The Proposal).
- 12.9.1 Almost all stakeholders who responded to the consultation accepted that re-opening Minard Primary School was not viable or sustainable due to the very low projected pupil numbers within the catchment area.
- 12.9.2 The majority of stakeholders agreed that a decision on the future of Minard Primary should be made, with the building potentially being thereafter transferred for community use. Almost all

stakeholders agreed that the School premises should not be allowed to fall into a state of disrepair (which would likely occur as a result of prolonged mothballing). Formal closure of the school would mean that any plans for alternative use of the premises could potentially be progressed by the community or any third parties. Such alternative uses of the premises have a greater chance of generating benefits to the local community in contrast to a mothballed school.

- 12.9.3 If Minard Primary School were to be permanently closed, it would generate savings to the Council of approximately £10,382, which is the current annual cost of mothballing. This was considered to be a drain on the resources of the Council by many stakeholders, and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils.
- 12.9.4 The current travelling arrangements have been in place for more than four years, and transport costs taking pupils to alternative schools since mothballing are approximately £1,482. Implementation of the Proposal would have a neutral environmental impact on the current transport position, and would have no additional impact on the travel arrangements for staff and pupils.
- 12.9.5 The Proposal identifies two receiving schools: Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace primary. Both schools offer a curriculum which includes a broad range of experiences to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work. The main difference between the schools is size of roll and local context: Furnace Primary School is a small rural school with a modest roll; and Lochgilphead Primary is part of a 3-18 campus situated in a rural small town.
- 12.9.6 Furnace Primary School is a small, rural, village school where children may be taught in classes composed of more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group.
- 12.9.7 Travel time to Furnace Primary is approximately 7 minutes by car (3.82 miles).

12.9.8 Furnace Primary was considered by some of the respondents as the 'preferred' school due to its small school rural context and better replicating the previous Minard Primary School experience, prior to its mothballing. Reduced travel time and historical links of shared Headship between Furnace and Minard Primary Schools were also highlighted by stakeholders in their responses to the Consultation.

12.9.9 At Lochgilphead Primary children are taught in single year groups and there is a wide range of expertise within a larger staff team. The school has strong community links and children learn in a variety of contexts and groups including ability, co-operative and social. The 3-18 school provides a number of wider curricular activities and pupils transition within the campus from Pre-5 to secondary education.

12.9.10 Travel time from Minard to Lochgilphead Primary School is approximately 19 minutes by car (13.13 miles). Consultation feedback indicated that the additional travel time, and some perceived safety issues, was a disadvantage for younger pupils and did not realise the wishes of some members of the community to retain a small rural school model for the catchment area of Minard.

12.9.11 Much of the consultation feedback and findings continue to support the position that permanent closure of Minard Primary School is the best option to address the underlying reasons why the future of the School is in the process of being examined. However, the majority of stakeholder responses and concerns raised during the consultation exercise centred on the suggestion of implementing two receiving schools and catchment boundaries which could have the outcome of "dividing" the village. This part of the Proposal was perceived by many to have the potential to fracture the local community. Taking account of these views, a new reasonable alternative to the Proposal has surfaced as a result of the consultation exercise (i.e. to close the School and have its catchment area subsumed in its entirety by Furnace Primary School) and this is reviewed further, below.

## 12.10 Close Minard Primary School and Re-align its Catchment area to Furnace Primary School

12.10.1 Whilst the vast majority of consultation feedback supported the closure of Minard Primary School, concerns were raised by

stakeholders about the possible “split” in the School’s catchment area following proposed closure, and the negative impacts that this could have on the local community. As such, many of those stakeholders suggested closing Minard Primary School and re-aligning its catchment area *in its entirety* to Furnace Primary School.

12.10.2 In reviewing this new alternative to the Proposal, raised as part of the consultation exercise, officers have taken into account the rural school factors, as well as a number of other relevant considerations, as set out below.

12.10.3 The following table sets out the schools that primary aged pupils residing within the Minard Primary School catchment area currently attend:

<i>School</i>	<i>P1</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>P5</i>	<i>P6</i>	<i>P7</i>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Furnace Primary School						1	<b>1</b>
Inveraray Primary School	1	2	1	1	1		<b>6</b>
Lochgilphead Primary School			1			2	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b><u>10</u></b>

12.10.4 At the time of the proposed closure of Minard Primary School (31<sup>st</sup> May 2024), three of the existing pupils residing in the Minard Primary School catchment area will transition to secondary school, leaving a total of six primary pupils attending Inveraray Primary and just one pupil at Lochgilphead Primary. As can be seen from the above, over time, the majority of children from the Minard Primary School catchment area have been placed in Inveraray Primary School by virtue of placing requests.

12.10.5 Since Minard Primary School’s mothballing, the picture of alternative school provision and parental choice since that time has been complex. However, it is clear from the above figures that the preferred direction for existing parents of primary school aged children in Minard is *geographically* towards Inveraray, rather than to Lochgilphead. The reasons for parental choice to Inveraray Primary School is inconclusive, but may include reasons such as access to ELC, straightforward transition from there to Primary School, and/or work arrangements of parents.

12.10.6 Officers further examined the proposed “split” in Minard Primary School’s catchment area which would be a result of the Proposal,

as consulted on, with reference to the relevant postcodes, as set out in the below table:

Postcode	PA32 8YA	PA32 8YB	PA32 8YD	PA32 8YE	PA32 8YG	PA32 8YR
Proposed Catchment Area	Furnace PS	Furnace PS	Furnace PS	Furnace PS	Lochgilphead PS	Furnace PS

12.10.7 As can be seen from the above, the existing Minard Primary School catchment area covers six individual postcodes. As per the Proposal as consulted on, children living in the north section of the existing catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay would be re-zoned to Furnace Primary School (with that section of Minard’s catchment area being subsumed by Furnace Primary School) and children in the south section of the catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg would be re-zoned to Lochgilphead Joint Campus (with that section of Minard’s catchment area being subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School). As a result of this division, five out of six Minard postcodes would be re-zoned to Furnace Primary School, whilst only one postcode would be re-zoned to Lochgilphead Primary School. Although the delineation of catchment areas cannot anticipate future enrolments, or affect the rights of parents to make placing requests, the above demonstrates that the majority of Minard postcodes would be re-aligned to Furnace Primary School under the Proposal as consulted on. It therefore seems reasonable and appropriate to officers to have all Minard Postcodes re-aligned to the same catchment area.

12.10.8 Three of the five written consultation responses identified concerns regarding the proposed two receiving schools of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools under the proposal as consulted on. All three of those responses indicated a strong preference for one receiving school to avoid “splitting” the local community. Two of those responses stated a clear preference for the Minard Primary School catchment to be subsumed in its entirety by Furnace Primary School, rather than Lochgilphead Primary School, on the grounds of less travel time, travel safety, historical links (i.e. a previous shared headship arrangement between Minard and Furnace Primary Schools) and maintaining the smaller, village school model. Officers have reviewed the proposal in light of this consultation feedback and the views expressed regarding concerns about “splitting” the village under the proposed re-alignment of the catchment area are considered by officers to be valid. Re-aligning the catchment of area of Minard Primary School to only one school would avoid such a split, which on review, officers agree could have a negative impact on the local community and sustainability of that community. Therefore, Furnace Primary School had been identified by

stakeholders and officers as the preferred option to realign the entire Minard Primary School catchment area to. In addition, as identified in the earlier Options Appraisal and Proposal Paper, the travelling time from Minard to Furnace Primary School is shorter than to Lochgilphead Primary School. A shorter journey is considered to be of benefit to pupils, families and to the environment.

12.10.9 At the time of publication of this Consultation Report, the headship of Furnace Primary School is a shared headship arrangement with Inveraray Primary School. Present staffing circumstances at Furnace Primary School have resulted, with parental agreement, in children attending Inveraray Primary School as a temporary solution. Previously, Furnace and Minard Primary Schools had a shared head teacher arrangement in place – meaning that there are historical ties between the two communities. Accordingly, officers have assessed this alternative to the Proposal and consider that re-zoning the entire Minard Primary School catchment area to Furnace Primary School may act as a measure to support the future school roll of Furnace Primary School; acknowledges the pre-existing/ongoing links between the Furnace and Minard communities; recognises the community preference (via consultation feedback) for the small rural school model, and has potential to build on the links, teaching and learning experiences that are already established through the shared headship arrangement between Furnace and Inveraray Primary Schools.

12.10.10 In considering the Educational Benefits in relation to this alternative to the Proposal, officers reviewed the Educational Benefits Statement that was prepared in relation to Furnace Primary School (see Sections 15 – 24 of the Proposal Paper at **Appendix 1**). That review has concluded that the educational benefits, and effects as identified therein are still valid, and that there are positive educational benefits to be derived from all relevant groups (pupils in particular) should education provision at Minard Primary School be permanently discontinued, and if its catchment area was to be subsumed by Furnace Primary School. The consultation feedback received has not led officers to the view that it is necessary to reconsider that Educational Benefits Statement.

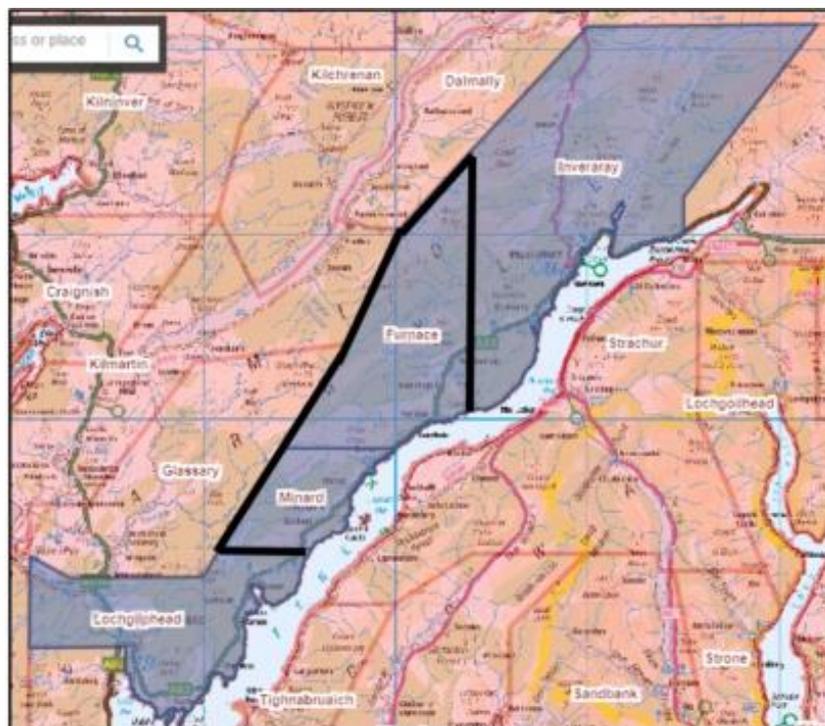
12.11 Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made by stakeholders at the public meeting, and have considered equally carefully the Education Scotland report and the online and written representations. As set out above, the Proposal has been reviewed to consider whether any of the consultation feedback has led the Education Service to reconsider any other options as being reasonable alternatives to

the Proposal. As part of the consultation process, representations were received which led officers to conclude that a new option, suggested around a single receiving school, should be considered as a new reasonable alternative to the Proposal. This review had special regard to the likely effect on the local community, and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements. Having reviewed the Education Scotland report, and feedback from consultees in respect of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives, officers have concluded that the proposal should be altered to reflect the new alternative raised by stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

- 12.12 This review has concluded that education provision at Minard Primary School should be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. However, that assessment has also led the Education Service to the view that the Proposal should be amended, with reference to the re-alignment of Minard Primary School's catchment area, to the following:

**Education provision at Minard Primary School shall be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024; and the catchment area of Furnace Primary School shall be extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Minard Primary School.**

- 12.13 The below diagram therefore sets out the new proposed catchment area for Furnace Primary School:



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- 12.14 Formal closure of the school would allow any plans to acquire the building to be progressed by the local community, which in turn would increase the availability of the premises to the community and even benefit the sustainability of the community. The overwhelming majority of consultation were not in support of the school being reopened for education provision. Education Scotland's report is also supportive of the Council's proposal being implemented.
- 12.15 Therefore, the Council has had regard to the points made at the public meeting, the written consultation responses and Education Scotland's report. It thereafter carried out a review of the Proposal and all the reasonable alternatives and has concluded that the Proposal should be altered with regards to the catchment area to reflect the alternative raised as part of the consultation feedback. Implementation of this alternative to the Proposal will allow children to have access to increased learning opportunities, wider experiences and better socialisation through being part of a larger school. The current number of children within the Minard Primary School catchment area is insufficient to make the school viable, but that stakeholder views on a single receiving school for the Minard catchment area can be actioned through implementation of this alternative to the Proposal as consulted on. If the school were to remain mothballed this would be a continuing drain on the Council's resources. Implementation of the identified alternative to the Proposal (as per Paragraph 12.12, above) will assist the Council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. Furthermore, the Council will engage with the Minard community to explore options for future use of the mothballed school should they wish to progress this.

### **13. Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies**

- 13.1 Section 10(3) of the 2010 Act places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission in the Proposal Paper which has either been identified by the Council or raised by consultees. This provision also requires the Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.
- 13.2 In the course of the statutory consultation, there were no areas identified by the respondents as being inaccurate or omitted from the Proposal Paper.

### **14. Opportunity to Make Representations to the Scottish Ministers**

- 14.1 If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied

that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

- 14.2 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the Ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.
- 14.3 If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.
- 14.4 If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report the Education Authority decides not to implement the closure proposal, the Education Authority cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

## **15. Conclusion**

- 15.1 Following a review of the Proposal (as per Section 12, above) it is now proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School shall be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024, and the catchment area of Furnace Primary School shall be extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Minard Primary School.
- 15.2 This is considered to be the best option to address the underlying reasons for this consultation, which are:
- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over 4 years. The school roll is currently zero, and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
  - Whilst Minard Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance. The annual cost to the Council of the mothballing of the building is approximately £10,382;
  - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. As of the end of January 2024, there were 10.84fte primary teacher vacancies in Argyll and Bute.

## **16. Recommendation**

- 16.1 On the basis of the consultation responses received, Education Scotland's report, and having particular regard to the specific factors for rural school closures, it is recommended that education provision at Minard Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024; and that the delineated catchment area of Furnace Primary School shall be extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Minard Primary School.



**Argyll and Bute Council**



**Education**

**PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: June 2023**

Review of Education Provision

Minard Primary School

## Proposal for the closure of Minard Primary School

### **SUMMARY PROPOSAL**

It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

The catchment areas of Lochgilphead Primary School and Furnace Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School.

### **Reasons for this proposal**

This is the best option to address the reasons for the proposals which are;

- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over 4 years. The school roll is zero and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte primary vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382.

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in regard to a proposal in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. This document has been prepared by the Council's Education Service with input from other Council Services.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

A copy of this document is available on the Argyll and Bute Council website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/school-consultations-and-proposals>

A summary of this document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document

- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors (Ward 3 Mid Argyll)
- Furnace Community Council
- West Loch Fyne Community Council
- Lochgilphead Community Council
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Lochgilphead Library, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8AA
- Furnace Primary Furnace, By Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XU
- Inveraray Primary, Inveraray, Argyll

This document is available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English.

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please apply to the Executive Director, Argyll and Bute Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT.

Jezeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymaO ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeeli potrzebna jest pomoc Uumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

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Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh an sgrìobhainn seo ann an cànan no riochd eile, no ma tha sibh a' feumachdainn seirbheis eadar, feuch gun leig sibh fios thugainn.

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

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ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو براۓ مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Argyll and Bute Council approved the continued mothballing of Minard Primary School on a temporary basis until December 2020, and that the School premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.

Minard Primary School – Mothballing Decision:  
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MIId=8513&Ver=4> (Agenda Item 11)

- 1.2 Further to this, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Community Services Committee agreed that Minard Primary School would continue to be mothballed on a temporary basis until May 2021 and that the school premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis. It was also agreed by the Community Services Committee that in the intervening period, Education Services would undertake a pre consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and options appraisal process when it was permissible under the Coronavirus Regulations relating to public gatherings. The Education Service intended to undertake the required preliminary consultation, and an options appraisal, for Minard Primary School in May 2021 but due to the restrictions of the pandemic were unable to complete this work until the last term. The Community Services Committee received a report presenting and outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010 (as amended) and a broad timeline of this process.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MIId=13970&Ver=4> (Agenda Item 13b)

Following the preliminary engagement exercise, the Education Service prepared an Options Appraisal in respect of Minard Primary School, which was considered by the Community Services Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022. Members noted the outcome of the Options Appraisal (which identified closure of the school as the most reasonable option in the circumstances); and agreed that Officers now formulate a draft closure proposal that would come back to the June 2023 meeting of the Committee for approval by Members which would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010.

[Agenda for Community Services Committee on Thursday, 25 August 2022, 10:00 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 8)

- 1.3 The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of certain preliminary requirements which must be satisfied prior to the formulation of a proposal.
- 1.4 In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a new right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. This may be something that the Community wish to consider as part of or as a consequence of this process. Public bodies including Councils must consider such requests and make a decision within six months of receiving a valid request.
- 1.5 Minard Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.
- 1.6 There is a requirement to have special regard to the rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in the preliminary requirements which were undertaken prior to this proposal being written. A full assessment of the preliminary requirements is set out in the Options Appraisal, which is attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 1.7 The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan identifies Argyll and Bute as an area of Scotland with outstanding places, people and potential for a prosperous future for everyone. Our Council, along with our Community Planning Partners, is committed to ensuring that Argyll and Bute's economic success is built on a growing population. At the time of writing new Council Priorities re Argyll & Bute's Corporate Plan for 2022-2027 are still in the process of being finalised and considered.
- 1.8 At the time of writing, our agreed Council Priorities are to ensure that:
- The education we provide meets the needs of all our young people and their families
  - We make the most of our assets to build the local economy
  - We support individual and community wellbeing
  - We strengthen and empower our communities
  - We ensure there are homes for all, we tackle poverty and build opportunity
  - We have greener and cleaner communities
  - We are an employer of choice
  - We manage our finances prudently

- 1.9 The Council, as an Education Authority, has a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in “Our Children, Their Future” which is the Education Vision and Strategy for Argyll and Bute Council.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead Primary School and Furnace Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School as identified in 2.2 and illustrated in **Appendix 3**.
- 2.2 It is proposed that children in the Minard catchment area would be directed to Lochgilphead Joint Campus or Furnace Primary, depending on where they live in the catchment area. The proposal is that children living in the north section of catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay attend Furnace Primary (with that section of Minard’s catchment area being subsumed by Furnace Primary School) and children in the south section of the catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus (with that section of Minard’s catchment area being subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School). A map illustrating the proposed new catchment areas within Minard is attached in **Appendix 3**.

### **Reasons for this proposal**

- 2.3 This is the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:
- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over 4 years. The school roll is zero and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
  - Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte primary vacancies for Head Teachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute.
  - Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382.

### **Additional Considerations**

- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services;

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future. This proposal document contains an Educational Benefits Statement;
- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;
- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils; and
- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

### **3 Preliminary requirements**

- 3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Minard Primary School, as it has been mothballed for over 4 years. The Council have considered the reasons for making this proposal, and have also considered other viable alternatives, the likely effect on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a consequence of this proposal. Financial implications were also considered. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was produced.
- 3.2 The Council considered how the implementation of this proposal would impact on the education of the children affected. The Council also considered the impact on the children who currently live in the catchment area but attend other schools, as well as children who may potentially live in the catchment area in the future.
- 3.3 The place of the school in the community was also considered, in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. The school has not been used by the local community since it has been mothballed.
- 3.4 Impact on the environment was taken into account during the initial pre-consultation process. This included a consideration of the transport implications if this proposal was to be implemented, as children would have to travel by bus to attend Lochgilphead or Furnace Primary Schools.
- 3.5 Three options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase, as required by section 12A of the 2010 Act.

- 3.6 Of the three options which were considered by the community and the Council; (c) is the favoured option by the Council, as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.
- a) Re-open Minard Primary School,
  - b) Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary with pupils zoned to Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace Primary schools.
  - c) Close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochgilphead Primary and Furnace Primary schools (The Proposal).
- 3.7 When considering the above options; the positive educational benefits of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools alongside the factors of projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard at Minard Primary School, in addition the lack of local support for reopening Minard Primary School, option (c) was considered the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons behind consideration of this proposal.
- 3.8 Following from an initial Options Appraisal which was presented to the Council's Community Services Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements were satisfied enabling the draft closure proposal to be formulated, with the option to close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools (in the manner described at Paragraph 2.2, and Appendix 3, of this Paper) being identified as the most adequate means of addressing the reasons for possible proposal.
- 3.9 During the preliminary engagement regarding the future options for Minard Primary School there were a range of viewpoints gathered from parents, young people and members of the community.
- 3.10 The community reflected that Minard Primary School had been an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Minard Primary School.
- 3.11 Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel from the current arrangement. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

### **Alternatives to the Proposal**

- 3.12 The community engagement process prior to the drafting of this proposal considered the views of members of the community and also considered any other alternatives to the closure of Minard Primary School. Full details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, including assessment of the reasonable alternatives, are attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 3.13 In conclusion, after the pre-consultation with the community, the Council feels that the proposal to close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area

to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools (as described at Paragraph 2.2 & Appendix 3) is the most reasonable means to address the underlying reasons for considering the future of Minard Primary School. Further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

#### **4 Assessment of the Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School as detailed at Paragraph 2.2 and **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over 4 years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and although there is a small increase in pupils within the catchment area projected, this is not significant enough to make the school viable again. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382.
- 4.3 Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 10.84 fte primary vacancies for Head Teachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- 4.4 The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services.
- 4.5 This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future.
- 4.6 The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high.
- 4.7 Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils.
- 4.8 There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.
- 4.9 As part of the preliminary requirements in the drafting of this proposal, the Council considered three options. The favoured option by the Council is (c), as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.

- a) Re-open Minard Primary School;

- b) Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools;
- c) Close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools (The Proposal).

4.10 Having considered these other alternatives the Council has made a decision that these are not viable alternatives to the closure proposal, and will proceed with the option to consult on the proposal to close Minard Primary School and extend the catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools respectively (as detailed at Paragraph 2.2, and Appendix 3) to include the current catchment area for Minard Primary School.

4.11 The Council has undertaken an appraisal on impact if this proposal was to be implemented.

4.12 This includes an assessment of:

- The school roll and predicted school roll;
- Teacher numbers; and
- The condition of the building.

4.13 The Council has carefully considered and reviewed the steps it has taken to address the underlying reasons for the proposal (as outlined at Section 2.3, above), prior to formulating this Proposal Paper.

4.13.1 In relation to the decline in the school roll, and no material increase being predicted in the forthcoming years, the School was mothballed over four years ago as a result of a change to the School's circumstances – i.e. the school roll falling to zero. The Education Authority therefore decided to mothball the school as a temporary measure – in order to monitor the situation and assess whether there was any likelihood of the school roll increasing to the extent that the School became viable again in the near future. The mothballing was subject to review at least annually and the Education Service undertook to review the position should any further school age pupils move into the catchment area and/or if they demonstrated a sufficient level of demand for the School to justify its re-opening. As mentioned above, the School has been mothballed for over four years, and its roll is not predicted to rise in the forthcoming years to a level which would make the School suitable for re-opening. As there has been no material change in circumstance evidenced, and having kept the position under review via mothballing for several years, the Education Service are of the view that matters should now move forward in the form of a statutory closure consultation in order to determine the future of Minard Primary School. This approach aligns with that suggested by the Statutory Guidance for the 2010 Act, and Paragraphs 63-65 in particular. Further

details in relation to the School roll are set out at Section 5 of this Proposal Paper

4.13.2 In relation to the underlying reason for this proposal in regards to recruitment of teachers, the issues that have been faced by the Education Service regarding the recruitment of teachers to Minard Primary School are detailed at Section 6 of this Proposal Paper. Since the School's mothballing, in order to address this particular issue, and prior to formulating this proposal, the Education Service have offered a number of posts across the Authority area on a permanent basis to a locality, rather than to a temporary school, as an attempt to increase the likelihood of attracting a permanent post. The Council has also entered into a strategic housing agreement with social housing partners to support staff with sourcing accommodation (which is a particular pressure in remote areas of Argyll and Bute), as well as offering relocation packages. Furthermore, the Education Service continues to work with UHI Argyll to recruit more local candidates for teacher training. Notwithstanding these efforts, the recruitment of teaching staff within Argyll and Bute remains a considerable challenge, hence why it is still a main underlying reason for this closure proposal.

4.13.3 In relation to the underlying reason for this proposal concerning the condition of the school premises, the school property will continue to deteriorate whilst it remains mothballed. As mentioned at Paragraph 4.13.1, above, there is currently no evidence to suggest that the School will become viable for re-opening in the near future. Whilst the School remains mothballed, it costs the Council £10,382 annually. Accordingly, the Education Service are now seeking approval to proceed with a statutory closure consultation which, if subsequently implemented, will allow the Education Service to use any savings generated to the benefit of the other occupied schools and pupils within the Education Authority's area. It may also allow for any plans for other uses of the School property to be progressed, as it will need to be permanently discontinued as an educational establishment in the first instance. Further information about the condition of the School building and premises can be found at Section 7 of this Proposal Paper.

4.14 The Council has also undertaken an assessment of likely educational benefits or effects which this proposal may have if implemented on:

- The pupils of any affected school;
- Any other users of the school's facilities;

- Any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school; and
- The pupils of any other schools in the Council area.

4.15 In addition, the Council has also considered how to minimise or avoid any adverse educational effects that may arise from the implementation of this proposal.

4.16 The Council has also taken special regard to the following factors if this proposal was to be implemented, as Minard Primary School is classified as a very remote rural school:

- Likely effect on the local community to be assessed by reference to:
  - The sustainability of the community; and
  - Availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the school community.
- Likely effect caused by different travelling arrangements by reference to the effect caused by such arrangements on:
  - Environmental impact; and
  - The schools pupils and staff and other users of the schools facilities.

4.17 Finally, the Council has also considered the financial implications of implementation of the proposal and information on this is set out later in this document.

## 5 School Roll

5.1 The information in relation to the school roll as shown below is drawn from the yearly pupil census, which takes place in September each year. School rolls by their very nature may fluctuate slightly on an ongoing basis due to changes in pupil numbers as a result of pupils moving to and from the catchment area.

The school roll of Minard Primary School has seen a steady decline since 2012.

<b>Table 2:</b>	<b>Minard PS</b>	<b>Furnace PS</b>	<b>Lochgilphead PS</b>
	Roll	Roll	Roll
<b>Capacity</b>	33	50	249
<b>2011-2012</b>	10	21	213
<b>2012-2013</b>	9	18	221

<b>2013-2014</b>	6	12	231
<b>2014-2015</b>	8	10	230
<b>2015-2016</b>	6	7	233
<b>2016-2017</b>	5	7	221
<b>2017-2018</b>	1	6	221
<b>2018-2019</b>	3	13	227
<b>2019-2020</b>	0	10	226
<b>2020-2021</b>	0	12	207
<b>2021-2022</b>	0	9	212
<b>2022-2023</b>	0	3	210

#### Predicted Roll\*

<b>Table 3:</b>	<b>Minard PS</b>	<b>Furnace PS</b>	<b>Lochgilphead PS</b>
	Roll	Roll	Roll
<b>Capacity</b>	33	50	249
<b>2023-2024</b>	0(1)	3	203
<b>2024-2025</b>	2	5	198
<b>2025-2026</b>	1	4	188

\*based on calculations available at February 2023

(NB 2023-24 Primary 1 Minard catchment registration to attend Inveraray Primary by Placing Request.)

- 5.2 In 2022-2023 there are 9 primary school aged children who live in the Minard Primary School catchment area and who attend other schools. One pupil attends Furnace Primary; three pupils attend Lochgilphead Primary. The remaining five pupils attend Inveraray Primary (by way of placing requests).
- 5.3 The school roll is not predicted to rise significantly in the future. The area around Minard is a small settlement and is not identified for growth in the Local Development Plan: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp>.

5.4 Within the Minard Primary School catchment there is one housing allocation identified in both the Adopted Local Development Plan 2015 and in the emerging Proposed Local Development Plan 2. This is site H-AL 12/19 (re-referenced to H3023 in LDP2). The allocation has a remaining capacity of 13 units with an extant planning permission (16/02279/PP). The Proposed Local Development Plan 2 is currently at Examination with the Examination Report anticipated within the month (at April 2023). Allocation H3023 received objections relating to the capacity of the Allocation and this is currently being considered by the Reporter. There is a consent for a single dwelling outwith the Allocation but within the Minard Primary School Catchment Area.

## **6 Teacher numbers**

- 6.1 Teacher numbers been improving nationally 2016 - 2021. In 2022 there was a small reduction of 0.2% in the total number of teachers in Scotland. In Argyll and Bute there has been a 5% reduction in the fte number of teachers from 2021 and 2022.
- 6.2 As the school has been mothballed for over 4 years, the issue of recruitment of staff has not improved. At the time of writing this report there are 8.59 fte primary vacancies for Head Teachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute. Despite a sustained effort to secure permanent staff, there is no reason to think that staffing would not continue to be a considerable challenge for Minard Primary School
- 6.3 At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted and implemented following consultation, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools.

## **7 Condition of the building**

- 7.1 Outlined in the Options Appraisal (**Appendix 5** – section 6.3) are the full financial details in reference to costs for the re-opening the building or continuing to retain the building as mothballed.
- 7.2 As part of the consultation process the Council would be open to exploring with the community options in regard to the future of the school building. This might involve consideration of matters around the possibility to transfer the building to a recognised community group through the provisions of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* or some other agreed mechanism. Such a route may provide the community with an opportunity to utilise the building as a driver for community benefit and potential regeneration that could also enhance the sustainability of the community.

## **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT – LOCHGILPHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **8 Assessment of likely educational benefits on pupils**

- 8.1 If this proposal is implemented, the Council believes that there will be considerable educational benefits arising from this. These centre around:
- Learning and teaching;
  - Meeting learners needs;
  - Broadening the range of opportunities; and
  - The environment for learning.

- 8.2 This initial statement focusses on **Lochgilphead Primary School**, which is one of the schools that pupils from the Minard Primary School catchment area could potentially attend.
- 8.3 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening Minard Primary School as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the school and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.
- 8.4 Minard and Lochgilphead Primary Schools are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Although there are currently 9 school aged children in the Minard Primary School catchment area, children from Minard Primary School area who previously attended Lochgilphead Primary School continued to benefit from education in a locality familiar to them, and still relatively close to home.
- 8.5 The co-location of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Lochgilphead Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and school.
- 8.6 Lochgilphead Joint Campus offers a 3-18 education experience which is seamless at transition points between ELC to Primary and Primary to Secondary. Children, young people and their parents/ carers benefit from familiar and established relationships with their peers and teaching staff across the sectors.

## **9 Learning and Teaching**

- 9.1 The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work. In Lochgilphead Primary School, children are encouraged to be eager and active participants who are engaged, resilient and highly motivated during their learning. Children know that their views are sought, valued and acted upon.
- 9.2 The learning environment encourages high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning. In Lochgilphead Primary School children may be

taught in classes composed of children from one year group or in some cases a composite class covering two year groups. Lochgilphead Joint Campus also encompasses a Learning Centre to support specific needs. Children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children, take part in team activities and move with their peers seamlessly to secondary school within the Lochgilphead Joint Campus.

- 9.3 There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
- 9.4 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community.
- 9.5 At Lochgilphead Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. Lochgilphead Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll and Kintyre Cluster, which means that staff can be supported across the area, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within Lochgilphead Primary School are able to support and challenge each other on a daily basis. The whole staff are able to bring a range of talents and skills to benefit outcomes for learners.
- 9.6 Lochgilphead Primary School encourages nurturing and positivity. The co-location of the nursery and the primary classes at Lochgilphead Joint Campus enhance the transition process for children moving from Nursery to Primary one, through joint educational processes and liaison between the two settings.

## **10 Meeting learners' needs**

- 10.1 Through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work.

- 10.2 The school also has planned meetings and discussions with parents. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met. In the primary classes, the majority of children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. All of the schools in Mid Argyll continue to develop within the PATHS program supporting positive behaviours and relationship within the school.
- 10.3 The staff, parent body and partner groups also bring opportunities for increased collaborative working. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

## **11 Broadening the Range of Opportunities**

- 11.1 Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.
- 11.2 There is also a strong transition process between Lochgilphead Primary School and Lochgilphead High School, due to the nature of the through school 3-18 arrangements where young people benefit from continuity in relationships and connections.
- 11.3 Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude.
- 11.4 Across the school children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons. A strong sense of community exists with pupils and staff co-operating, communicating and working collaboratively across the sectors to create a vibrant centre of learning for all.

## **12 Environment for Learning**

- 12.1 Lochgilphead Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the town of Lochgilphead. The entire 3-18 campus, opened in 2007, is modern, well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for Lochgilphead Primary School within Lochgilphead Joint Campus. The school has an all-weather pitch adjacent to the school, which is well utilised. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

- 12.2 The children maintain links with friends who live in their own village as well as creating links with children from other rural communities.
- 12.3 Any mitigating effects around the adverse weather and transport issues are outweighed by the benefits of this proposal. There is no change to the travel arrangements that are currently in place nor to the environmental impact from these. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Lochgilphead Primary is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years.
- 12.4 In summary, there are a range of educational benefits for pupils if this proposal was to be implemented, as summarised in the paragraphs above. There are benefits for the development of social and emotional skills, as well as the educational benefits resulting from access to a more diverse curriculum. The learning environment in Lochgilphead Primary School also offers children the opportunity to participate in a wider range of active learning strategies.

### **13 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities**

#### **Implications for staff**

- 13.1 If this proposal is implemented, there will be no new implications for teaching and ancillary staff in Lochgilphead Primary School.
- 13.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal in respect of staffing. Should issues arise however, these will be mitigated through the Council Educational Management Team support structure.

#### **Early Learning Centre Users – Pre Five Children**

- 13.3 The co-location for the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Lochgilphead Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and the school and includes joint educational processes and liaison between the two settings.

### **14 Assessment of likely educational benefits on any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school.**

#### **Existing and future pupils**

- 14.1 Children who may live in this catchment area in the future will benefit from the broad range of educational opportunities which are presented through this proposal, as detailed above.

- 14.2 There would be positive educational benefits associated with this proposal particularly in opportunities for increasing the range of the curriculum and increasing the use of active pedagogies.
- 14.3 The proposal could increase the roll of Lochgilphead Primary School and would thus extend the peer group for all pupils, present and future. The larger school should be able to support a wider range of social and extra-curricular activities.
- 14.4 Pupils who would otherwise have attended Minard Primary School, which consists of one classroom with dining area, corridor with cloakroom, toilets and office, would benefit from access to modern purpose built accommodation including dedicated sport facilities and specialist areas. Pupils would have access to access daily interaction in a larger peer group and from improved educational arrangements as described above. Pupils in the combined school will have more shared experiences and opportunity for friendships. This will enhance their confidence and make the transition to secondary school seamless through the Joint Campus arrangements. Larger year groups make the provision of specialist services more viable and provide enhanced opportunities for school trips. Lochgilphead Primary School meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **15 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT – FURNACE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

This second statement focusses on **Furnace Primary School**, which is one of the other schools that pupils from the Minard Primary School catchment area could potentially attend.

### **Learning & Teaching**

- 15.1 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening Minard Primary School as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the school and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.
- 15.2 Furnace Primary Schools is a remote rural school and set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Minard Primary School area, who previously attended Furnace Primary School, continued to benefit from education in a locality familiar to them and still relatively close to home.

- 15.3 Furnace primary is presently staffed by a full time Principal Teacher and class teacher (0.2FTE) which supports personalised learning in a supportive environment. The school is also currently in a new and changed shared headship arrangement with Inveraray Primary School.

## **16 Learning and Teaching**

- 16.1 The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work. In Furnace Primary School, children experience good quality, personalised learning taught in a single multi-composite class bringing with that the opportunity to share learning experiences between the youngest and oldest pupils, as well as within the immediate peer group. Furnace Primary is part of a shared Headship arrangement with Inveraray Primary School, benefiting from close links with the larger school around educational experience and planning tasks and activities that are matched to children's varying needs. The children at Furnace Primary are able to enhance their social skills and confidence by interacting with a wider range of peers through opportunities to learn at Inveraray Primary School in many aspects of their learning including Science, Physical Education and weekly outdoor learning.
- 16.2 The learning environment encourages high level of achievement, providing a range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning. In Furnace Primary School children will be taught in a small class composed of children from more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a small social context in which they can build relationships, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and connect with other children through shared Headship arrangement with Inveraray Primary. The Headteacher is committed to making proactive connections between the schools and the respective local communities.
- 16.3 There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
- 16.4 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community.

- 16.5 At Furnace Primary School, the small staffing complement are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with colleagues at Inveraray Primary School. Furnace Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll and Kintyre Cluster, which means that staff can be further supported to collaborate, moderate and track pupil progress and work with other colleagues to support children's progress.
- 16.6 Furnace Primary School encourages positivity and an inclusive ethos through the individual support and attention delivered in a small school.

### **17 Meeting learners' needs**

- 17.1 Through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom and assessment of pupil work.
- 17.2 The school also has planned meetings and discussions with parents. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met. Children are achieving appropriate national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy.

### **18 Broadening the Range of Opportunities**

- 18.1 Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.
- 18.2 There is also a strong transition process between Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead High School, where staff link closely with colleagues from Lochgilphead Joint Campus, to support smooth transitions for children moving on to secondary school.
- 18.3 Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude. Opportunities to learn at Inveraray Primary School in aspects of their learning including Science, Physical Education and weekly outdoor learning expand those experiences beyond Furnace Primary School.

- 18.4 In Furnace Primary children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons. A strong sense of community exists with pupils and staff co-operating, communicating and working collaboratively to create a calm, positive centre of learning.

## **19 Environment for Learning**

- 19.1 Furnace Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the rural village of Furnace. The building is a small traditional school, well maintained and along with the surrounding forest areas and access to the beach excellent opportunities for outdoor learning are available. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.
- 19.2 In Furnace Primary School the children maintain links with friends who live in their own village as well as creating links with children from other rural communities.
- 19.3 Any mitigating effects around the adverse weather and transport issues are outweighed by the benefits of this proposal. There is no change to the travel arrangements that are currently in place nor to the environmental impact from these. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 7 minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years.
- 19.4 In summary, there are a range of educational benefits for pupils if this proposal was to be implemented, as summarised in the paragraphs above. The learning environment in Furnace Primary School offers children the opportunity to learn within a school with a strong sense of community and personalised learning, whilst benefiting from opportunities to expand those experiences with established links to Inveraray Primary.

## **20 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities**

### **Implications for staff**

- 20.1 If this proposal is implemented, there will be no new implications for teaching and ancillary staff in Furnace Primary School.
- 20.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal in respect of staffing. Should issues arise however, these will be mitigated through the Council Educational Management Team support structure.

## **21 Assessment of likely educational benefits on any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school.**

### **Existing and future pupils**

- 21.1 Children who may live in this catchment area in the future will benefit from the range of educational opportunities which are presented through this proposal, as detailed above.
- 21.2 There would be positive educational benefits associated with this proposal. The management arrangements of the school would be strengthened and there would be opportunities for increasing the range of the curriculum and increasing the use of active pedagogies.
- 21.3 The proposal could support the roll of Furnace Primary School and would thus extend the peer group for all pupils, present and future. The larger school should be able to support a wider range of social and extra-curricular activities.
- 21.4 Pupils who would otherwise have attended Minard Primary School, which consists of one classroom with dining area, corridor with cloakroom, toilets and office, would benefit from a larger school building of two classrooms plus Hall, kitchen facilities, toilets and associated offices for Reception and Head Teacher. Pupils in the combined school will have more shared experiences and opportunity for friendships across the two rural villages. Developing connections with Inveraray Primary support the Furnace rural school identity while benefiting from the extended opportunity links with Inveraray Primary School. Furnace Primary School meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **22 Assessment of likely educational benefits on the pupils of any other schools in the Council area**

- 22.1 The current mothballing of the school has had an indirect effect on other pupils in Argyll and Bute. The reduction in the running costs for the school means that this is a saving to the Council, which is not taken from elsewhere. However, the annual costs of keeping the school mothballed could feasibly be better allocated to the benefit of others.
- 22.2 There are no other significant impacts from this proposal on other pupils in the authority or who attend other schools, in either a positive or a negative way.

### **Placing requests**

- 22.3 This proposal will not affect the right of parents to request that their child attend a school of their choice rather than the designated school in whose catchment area the family lives as provided by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

## **23 Consideration of how to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the implementation of this proposal**

- 23.1 The main adverse effect from this proposal would be the length of the journey to school for children who live in the Minard Primary School catchment area. However, the current arrangements (children from the catchment area attending either Furnace Lochgilphead or Inveraray Primary Schools) have been in place since Minard Primary School was mothballed. Funded school transport would also continue to be provided for pupils to the new catchment schools should this proposal be implemented.

## **24 Summary of educational benefits statement**

- 24.1 Educational benefits of this proposal, such as the ability for children to participate in a broad range of experiences, the development of the strategic leadership of the acting head teacher in taking forward improvements in learning and teaching, and the ability to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the children are significant benefits to this proposal. During the pre-consultation phase, these benefits were explored in detail and details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, to include the alternative proposals and the authority's assessment of other likely effects of the proposal and the reasons for that assessment are attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 24.2 Whilst there are positive educational benefits, there is one negative aspect identified which arises from the children attending Lochgilphead or Furnace Primary Schools. This negative aspect is principally around the fact that children have to travel by either bus or car to school. However it is considered that the positive aspects of this proposal outweigh the negative aspect of some travelling for children.

## **25 Factors for rural school closures**

- 25.1 The Council has taken special regard to the following factors in relation to this proposal as Minard Primary School is classified as a rural school.

### **The likely effect on the local community if this proposal is implemented**

- 25.2 The Council has made an assessment on the sustainability of the community should this proposal be implemented and considers that this may have a positive impact.

- 25.3 The Scottish Government focuses on four key areas of importance to rural communities;
- a strong and diverse rural economy, harnessing traditional strengths and with an appetite for change,
  - thriving rural communities where everyone can enjoy a decent quality of life, where the young are not forced to leave their communities to get on and where the vulnerable are no longer excluded,
  - strong, community focused public services that are accessible, of the highest possible quality and with the greatest possible choice,
  - a rural Scotland whose natural and cultural heritage flourishes in all its diversity
- 25.4 In rural communities, the challenges and opportunities are largely defined by the local area and can often best be met by a bottom-up, community-led response. Strong community leadership is vital to articulating local priorities and driving forward change and growth.
- 25.5 There is the potential if this proposal is implemented to capitalise on the existing will and drive in this community, with opportunities for local leaders to enable them to organise, motivate and inspire their neighbours. A portion of the school grounds were previously acquired by the Minard Community Trust for purposes in furtherance of the community. In terms of the remainder of the School property, the Council would be willing to engage with any community bodies coming forward with an interest or proposals in relation to the same.
- 25.6 Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that when communities feel empowered, there is:
- greater participation in local democracy;
  - increased confidence and skills among local people;
  - more people volunteering in their communities; and
  - greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood.
- 25.7 Within Minard there is Minard Village Hall which is used for community events. Almost all people who attended the preliminary consultation strongly preferred that the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair.
- 25.8 Indeed, the school closure may help to empower the local community should the community thereafter wish to explore the possibility of an asset transfer process for the building. This could have a positive impact on community sustainability. A portion of the school grounds were previously acquired by the Minard Community Trust for purposes in furtherance of the community. In

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/>

terms of the remainder of the School property, the Council would be willing to engage with any community bodies coming forward with an interest or proposals in relation to the same.

### **On the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community**

- 25.9 During the pre-consultation phase, there were differing views on the closure of the school with the suggestion that the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. Recently, the Council has entered into a short term licence with an individual who is using the School's office space in connection with their academic studies. Within Minard there is Minard Village Hall which is used for community events. Most people who attended the pre-consultation meeting felt that the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the aesthetic of the community.
- 25.10 It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a community hub could be an asset to the community. This could have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community and in particular the availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the community. Formal closure of the school would mean that any developing plans for the future of the building could potentially be progressed.

### **The likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements**

- 25.11 The travel distance from Minard Primary to Lochgilphead Primary is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately nineteen minutes by car. Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community
- 25.12 Implementation of the proposal would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Minard Primary School, in terms of current travel arrangements would have a neutral effect on the environment. There would be no additional travel costs for children attending Lochgilphead 3-18 Campus as there is capacity in the current system.
- 25.13 It is anticipated that the effect on the travel arrangements of staff and other users of the facility would not differ materially from that of the pupils accessing the school.

### **Environmental impact**

- 25.14 Currently three children travel to Lochgilphead Primary School from the Minard Primary School Catchment area. One pupil travels to Furnace primary. Therefore, this option would have a neutral environmental impact on the

current position and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils.

25.15 If this proposal was to be implemented there would be little or no impact on the natural environment.

## 26 Financial Impact

- 26.1 The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in **Appendix 4**. Some of this information has been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was prepared. In particular the annual cost of mothballing the school has been recalculated from £8,956 to £10,382. This information gives details on the estimated cost if Minard Primary School was still to be an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Minard Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is estimated at £10,382 per year. Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £157,105.
- 26.2 Column 2 of Table 1 at **Appendix 4** shows the projected annual running costs of Minard whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on Furnace Primary as the receiving school at the time of mothballing. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.
- 26.3 The main elements included within a school budget are teacher employment costs (i.e. basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value.
- 26.4 In line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers, the Education Service operates on the basis that supernumerary teachers are redeployed and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. Some of the costs noted in column 3 of Table 1 will not directly impact on the receiving schools but they will be a cost to the Authority as a whole, for example school transport, and the costs of maintaining the teachers previously employed in Minard Primary School.
- 26.5 There are currently no annual transport costs for pupils to attend Lochgilphead Primary School. Transport costs per year to attend Minard Primary School, if it were to be reopened, are estimated at £1482 per year. Transport costs per

year to attend Furnace Primary School would be £1,482 although use of the service bus would incur no additional transport costs.

- 26.6 Table 2 contains the notional 30 year lifecycle costs that would arise based on the GIA of the various schools irrespective of the number of pupils accommodated. Lifecycle costs are representative of the cost needed to keep the building in a good state of repair. The cost over the next thirty years therefore to maintain Minard Primary School £238,140 and for Furnace Primary School this is £530,955.
- 26.7 Table 3 contains the annual running costs during mothballing of Minard Primary School and these are estimated at £10,382 per year. This includes non-domestic rates, utility costs, insurances, etc. If the school was to be formally closed, this would allow further consideration to be given to the future of the School premises and any transfer in ownership of the same.

## **27 Equality and Socio Economic Impact**

- 27.1 The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty (Part one of the Equality Act) and the Islands (Scotland) Act (2018) to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs).
- 27.2 The Council will undertake the process of assessment during the consultation process in respect of this proposal to ensure that due regard is given to such matters in the decision making process. A finalised EQSEIA will be produced alongside the Consultation Report.

## **28 Consultation arrangements**

- 28.1 Prior to formulating a rural school closure proposal under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* (the 2010 Act), as amended, the Education Authority must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act. The Authority has previously identified its reasons for formulating a possible proposal, considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives to the possible proposal as a response to those reasons, and assessed each of the options in accordance with Section 12A(2)(c) of the 2010 Act. After considering a paper addressing these preliminary requirements, the Education Authority decided on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Minard Primary School and redraw its catchment areas to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

- 28.2 This document was considered by the Council as Education Authority on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 when it was agreed that it should be adopted as a relevant proposal and issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in this paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.
- 28.3 A summary of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed on page 2 of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website:
- <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/school-consultations-and-proposals>
- 28.4 As part of a consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it and notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act, inviting them to make representations on the proposal. The consultation period will be from 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 until the close of business on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 which lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and includes at least 30 school days.
- 28.5 A public meeting will be held at Minard Primary School on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education Authority and the Education Authority will present reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered. However, the Education Authority will also consider written comments which should be sent to Education Services, School Consultations, Argyll & Bute Council, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ and should be received no later than 5.00pm on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 28.6 Written representations may be made on the proposal and the alternatives to the proposal. Written representations may also suggest other alternatives to the proposal.
- 28.7 Following the close of the consultation, the Education Authority will provide Education Scotland with copies of the written representations submitted, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting and any other relevant documentation. This will allow Education Scotland to prepare a report on the proposal within a period of 3 weeks.
- 28.8 After receiving Education Scotland's report, the Education Authority will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9, 10 and 13 of the 2010 Act. The Education Authority will thereafter make its final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be published a minimum of 3 weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the

Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

- 28.9 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.
- 28.10 If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.
- 28.11 If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report the Education Authority decides not to implement the closure proposal, the Education Authority cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

## 29 Conclusion

- 29.1 It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School as identified in Paragraph 2.2 and **Appendix 3**.
- 29.2 It has been assessed that the proposal is the most appropriate means of addressing the underlying reasons for formulating it, which are:
- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and although there is a small increase in pupils within the catchment area projected, this is not significant enough to make the school viable again. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382;
  - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are

8.59 fte primary vacancies for Head Teachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute; and

- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services.

#### **Other Considerations**

- This proposal will bring educational benefits to all present and future users of the affected schools and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future;
- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;
- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate;
- Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils;
- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

#### **DOUGLAS HENDRY**

Executive Director with responsibility for Education

#### **Wendy Brownlie**

Head of Education: Performance and Improvement

#### **Councillor Yvonne McNeilly**

Policy Lead for Education

#### **For further information contact:**

#### **Annette Trevelyan**

Education Officer

[annette.trevelyan2@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:annette.trevelyan2@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

16<sup>th</sup> May 2023

# APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Consultation Letter
- Appendix 2 - Response form
- Appendix 3 - Maps
- Appendix 4 - Financial template
- Appendix 5 - Options Appraisal

## APPENDIX 1

### ***Argyll and Bute Council***

Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry

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***Kilmory,  
Lochgilphead,  
Argyll,  
PA318RT***

**Telephone: 01546 605522**

**Our Ref:**

**E-mail: [annette.trevelyan2@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:annette.trevelyan2@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**

**Council Website: [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)**

**Minard Primary School**

Dear Consultee,

## **Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Minard Primary School Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010**

### **Background**

Argyll and Bute Council, through its Education Service, aims to realise ambition, excellence and equity for all.

The Council is consulting on a proposal to close Minard Primary School. This notice provides a summary of a proposal that you may have an interest in or are required to be notified of, giving you key information about the proposal.

The Council is conducting a public consultation process. This will commence on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and will conclude on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This is the period within which you will be able to make written representations to the Council in respect of the proposal. If you wish your view to be taken account of in the consultation exercise you must submit your written representation within this period. This notice and summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal may be obtained or referenced and also advises on how you can make written representations to the Council.

The Council will hold a meeting where officers will be able to provide information on the proposal. The details of the public meeting are contained in this notice and summary.

It is important that everyone we are consulting tells us what they think of the proposal. Please read this notice and summary and then consider the contents of the proposal document. You can then tell us what you think of the proposal by making written representation and/or by attending the public meeting. This notice and summary tell you how to do that.

### **The Proposal**

It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of both Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School. The proposal is that children living in the north section of catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay attend Furnace Primary (with that section of Minard's catchment area being subsumed by Furnace Primary School) and children in the south section of the catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus (with that section of Minard's catchment area being subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School).

## **Reasons for this proposal**

This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposals which are;

- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is zero and is not predicted to rise in the near future.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte primary vacancies for Head Teachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

## **The Council's education strategy Our Children Their Future**

Together we will realise ambition, excellence and equality for all.

- Raise educational attainment and achievement for all,
- Use performance information to secure improvement for children and young people,
- Ensure children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed,
- Equip young people to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life,
- Ensure high quality partnership working and community engagement,
- Strengthen leadership at all levels.

## **Alternatives to the Proposal**

The following alternatives to the proposal were considered at the preliminary pre-consultation stage of this process;

- a) Re-open Minard Primary School,
- b) Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools,
- c) Close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools (the Proposal).

Written representations may be made on those alternatives as well as on the proposal.

Written representations on the proposal may suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

### **What will we do?**

We will consult with people by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees **this is that notice and summary**
- Placing an advert in the local press
- Putting information on our website <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/schoolhttps://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/school-consultations-and-proposalsconsultations-and-proposals>
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal
- Ask parents, carers, children, young people, teachers, support staff and others to tell us what they think of the proposals.

### **What to do now?**

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00pm in Minard Primary School.
- Let us know what you think by:

Letter to: Education Services  
School Consultations  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Argyll House  
Alexandra Parade  
Dunoon  
PA23 8AJ

Returning the attached response sheet by post or by;

Email to: [argyllhoureception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhoureception@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

### **What next?**

Whilst the Council is engaging in a consultation process in relation to this proposal that does not mean that the proposal will go ahead. It does mean that the Council is engaging in a consultation process to seek your views on the proposal.

All the points raised during the consultation will be carefully considered and Elected Members will then decide if the plan should go ahead.

If the suggestion goes ahead, any children from Minard Primary School catchment area would be educated at Lochgilphead Primary School or Furnace Primary School.

Please note that this summary document is for convenience only. Full details of the consultation can be obtained from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
  - Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
  - Lochgilphead Library, Lochgilphead Community Centre, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ
  - Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
  - Lochgilphead Primary School, Manse Brae, **Lochgilphead**, Argyll PA31 8SY
  - Furnace Primary School, Furnace, By Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XU
  - Minard Village Hall, Minard, By Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8YB
- It is also available electronically via our website:  
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/school-consultations-and-proposals>

Yours faithfully,

**DOUGLAS HENDRY**

Executive Director with responsibility for Education



Argyll and Bute Council Education

**RESPONSE FORM**

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Argyll and Bute Council.

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School – to the extent that the north section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay) will be subsumed by Furnace Primary School; and the south section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg) is subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print)	Address:
	Post Code:
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature:	Date:

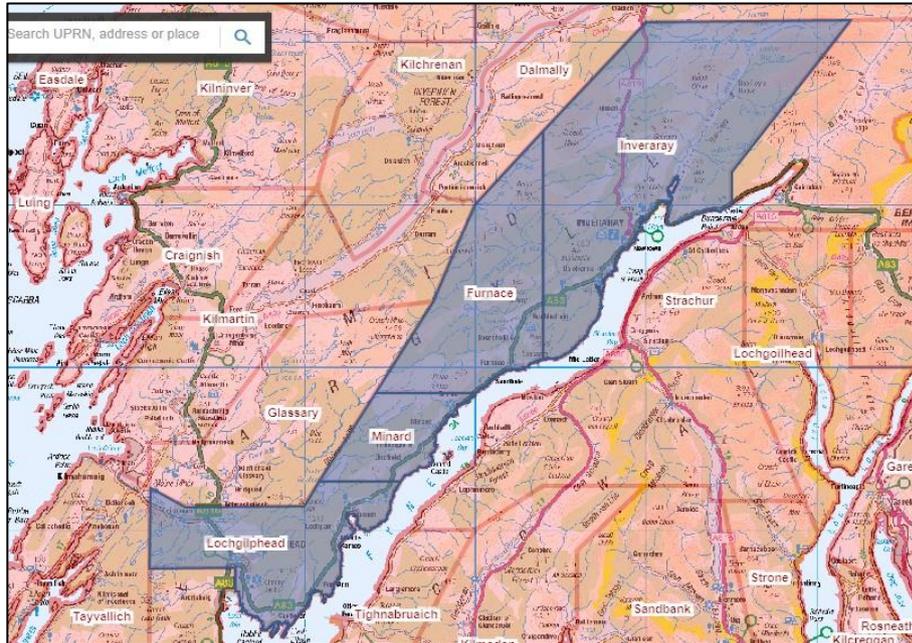
**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>		
*Other: (please specify)			

**Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)**

## APPENDIX 3 - MAPS

### MAP OF CURRENT PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS



### MAP OF PROPOSED MINARD CATCHMENT SUBSUMED TO FURNACE AND LOCHGILPHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOLS



— Existing Catchment Area - Minard

••••• New Catchment boundary:

North of Achagoyle Bay to Furnace Primary.

South of Achagoyle Bay to Lochgilphead Joint Campus.

## APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

**Table 1**

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<b>Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure</b>			
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)</b>	<b>Additional financial impact on receiving school Furnace Primary</b>	<b>Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)</b>
<b>Minard Primary</b>			
<b>School costs</b>			
<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
teaching staff	106,384	111,704	-5,320
support staff	20,131	0	20,131
teaching staff training (CPD etc)			0
support staff training			0
Supply costs - note 2	3,129	0	3,129
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	651	0	651
non domestic rates	1,648	0	1,648
water & sewerage charges	291	0	291
energy costs	8,474	0	8,474
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	278	0	278
building repair & maintenance	3,245	0	3,245
grounds maintenance	842	0	842
facilities management costs - note 6	122	0	122
revenue costs arising from capital			0
other - refuse collection; telephones	1,459	0	1,459
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	2,757	44	2,713
catering (contract or inhouse)	6,211	170	6,041
SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0	0	0
			0
<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			

home to school	0	0	0
other pupil transport costs	1,482	2,964	-1,482
staff travel	0		0
<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>157,105</b>	<b>114,882</b>	<b>42,223</b>
Income:			
Sale of meals	-105	-70	-35
Lets	0	0	0
External care provider	0	0	0
Other			0
<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>-105</b>	<b>-70</b>	<b>-35</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL</b>	<b>157,000</b>	<b>114,812</b>	<b>42,188</b>
<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>52,333</b>	<b>38,271</b>	<b>14,063</b>

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on current financial costs if transport was necessary to be provided.

**Table 2**

<b>Capital costs</b>	<b>School proposed for closure</b>	<b>Receiving school</b>
	Minard Primary	Furnace Primary
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7	238,140	530,955
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

**Table 3**

<b>Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal</b>	
property insurance	651
non domestic rates	1,648
water & sewerage charges	291
energy costs	2,542
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	0
grounds maintenance	842
facilities management costs	3,302

Other - Routinely check drainage (gutters, downpipes); cleaning equipment; phone lines	1,106
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	<b>10,382</b>

**Table 4**

<b>Non-recurring revenue costs</b>	
Securing building	7,150
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	<b>7,150</b>

**Table 5**

<b>Impact on GAE</b>	0
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	<b>0</b>



**EDUCATION**

**OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

**MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Argyll and Bute Council approved the continued mothballing on a temporary basis of Minard Primary School. There have been no pupils attending the school since October 2018, and as such, the school had been *de facto* mothballed since that time. The Council agreed at that time that the mothballing of Minard Primary School be continued on a temporary basis until December 2020, and that the School premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis. The Council further agreed that in the intervening period, Education Services would gather the necessary information, identify all reasonable options in order to consider the future of Minard Primary School in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8513&Ver=4>

Further to this, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Community Services Committee agreed that Minard Primary School would continue to be mothballed on a temporary basis until May 2021 and that the school premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis. It was also agreed by the Community Services Committee that in the intervening period, Education Services would undertake a pre consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and options appraisal process when it was permissible under the Coronavirus Regulations relating to public gatherings. The Education Service intended to undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal, for Minard Primary School in May 2021 but due to the restrictions of the pandemic were unable to complete this work until the last term.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=13970&Ver=4>

The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended by the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

The Act, as amended, contains a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of a preliminary consultation process.

In addition, the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* sets out a new right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. Public bodies, including councils, must consider such requests and respond to them within a reasonable timescale.

Minard Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since October 2018.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the preliminary requirements in relation to considering a rural school closure and look at an options appraisal for Minard Primary School. This review will enable the Education Service to identify and consider the options put forward.

The 2010 Act makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools that is in effect a presumption against their closure. There is a requirement to have special regard to the rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular, it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in this options appraisal.

## **2. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL**

**2.1** An authority that is contemplating formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the 2010 Act before starting to prepare its proposal paper. In particular, it must identify the underlying reasons why the future of the School is being considered, which are as follows:

1. Minard Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation.
2. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. In June 2022 there were 15.49 vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers.
3. Whilst the School is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

The Council is therefore considering the future of Minard Primary School. The various options are explored within this paper.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

Argyll and Bute is an area of outstanding natural beauty sitting within an ancient landscape with a strong cultural identity. Today, the culture of Argyll and Bute is reflected in its traditional industries of fishing, farming and crofting, sports such as shinty and in its world class musicians and artists as well as its modern commercial industries such as wind turbine production and fish farming. Tourism also lies at the centre of the economy.

Argyll and Bute is geographically the second largest authority in Scotland. Education is delivered in a range of settings including schools, partnerships and youth services.

### **3.1 Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan**

The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan identifies Argyll and Bute as an area of Scotland with outstanding places, people and potential for a prosperous future for everyone. Our Council along with our Community Planning Partners, is committed to ensuring that Argyll and Bute's Economic Success is built on a growing population.

This strategic approach embraces the vision for our area, our communities and our people as outlined in the Corporate Plan. Our key service priorities support the delivery of our commitments in the plans, helping to focus on local outcomes that will achieve meaningful improvements for the area, our local communities and our citizens.

Councils have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value. Our Community Services Asset Management Plan provides a review of the property assets used to deliver services. It incorporates the School Estate Management Plan which reflects the local implementation of Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future, the national school estate strategy developed by the Scottish Government in conjunction with local authorities.

The aspirations, guiding principles and objectives contained within Building Better Schools are reflected throughout Education and Children's Services Asset Management Plan (SAMP) for schools and public buildings, both in the management of the existing assets and in the design and construction of developments.

### **3.2 Our Children Their Future**

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980* to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Our Children, Their Future: Education Vision and Strategy.

### **3.3 Minard and the Local Area – the Minard Primary School Setting**

Minard lies on the western shore of Loch Fyne, with beautiful views and 4 miles southwest of Furnace. Minard Castle lies a mile to the south. Minard is a linear village of just under 2 miles long, with loch side bungalows, along the A83 road to the south is the school, church, village hall and several older cottages. Minard was originally part of the estate of Minard Castle before becoming an independent village.

Minard is approximately 13.13 miles away from Lochgilphead and 20 minutes travel time.

### 3.4 The School within the Community

Minard Primary School was previously very active within the community. Pupils would often use the local area for outdoor learning, including Crarae Gardens and also work with local businesses and other cluster schools. The school has not been used by the local community since it has been mothballed and there has been one request locally to use the grounds recently. The request was made in May 2022 by a representative of a local parent and baby/toddler group.

### 3.5 Population

Argyll and Bute has an average population density of just 0.13 persons per hectare. This coupled with the changing demographic profile of the area presents one of our greatest challenges. The table below refers directly to the Minard area showing the changing population from census 2001 to census 2011:

Table 1: Population Information

Minard Area Census Ref : Data from Scotland's Census website					
2001			2011		
Total Population	Resident	70	Total Population	Resident	71
% under 16		15.7 1	% under 16		14.1
% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)		57.1 4	% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)		59.2
% pensionable age and over		27.1 4	% pensionable age and over		26.8

It is recognised that the census area and the catchment area Minard Primary School differ slightly.

### 3.6 Development and House Building

A new Local Development Plan (LDP2) is now available, which sets out planning and development proposals for the next 10 years from 2020 and a vision for 20 years. The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan provides the local planning framework for the Council area, excluding the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park area. The Plan is divided into the written statement and proposals maps. The written statement provides the general policy context against which planning applications for new development proposals should be assessed. This is supported by the proposals maps which show the range of development opportunities and constraints within the area, for example:

- the key development areas i.e. the allocations for housing, industry and business, community facilities and infrastructure;
- the potential areas for future development (Potential Development Areas);

- areas requiring actions such as environmental improvement or regeneration (Areas for Action); and
- environmental designations such as national Scenic Areas, Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas and Local Nature Conservation Sites.

*Appendix 1* shows the LDP 2 for Minard.

*Appendix 2* shows the LDP 2 for Furnace.

*Appendix 3* shows the LDP 2 for Lochgilphead areas

*Appendix 4* provides the key for Local Development Plans.

### **3.7 Minard Primary School**

The school is situated in the village of Minard, on the shores of Loch Fyne, in Mid-Argyll, on the A83 between Inveraray and Lochgilphead.

The school, which was purpose built to deliver education, in 1871, is of traditional rural design.

The Council's title to the building was obtained from Thomas Owen Lloyd in favour of the School Board of the Parish of Glassary, dated 22 February and recorded GRS (Argyll) 19th March, both 1906. Legal Services and Estates indicate there is a burden in the title from 1906 to the effect that the subjects are to be used for educational purposes and for no other purpose. However Conveyancing Team within Legal Services have investigated and in providing a copy of the title plan it clearly shows that the area of ground in question was in fact within the Council's school title and it was transferred to the Community Trust in 2006.

The building itself comprises one classroom with dining area, corridor with cloakroom, toilets and office. The school is well equipped with disabled access and facilities.

The school is co-educational and non-denominational and has a catchment area extending from Crarae Gardens to Nursery Cottages in Minard village.

*Appendix 5* shows the Minard Primary School Floor Plan.

Minard Primary School is 13.13 miles from Lochgilphead Joint Campus. Minard Primary is 3.83 miles from Furnace Primary. The area is sparsely populated. All three schools are situated along the A83.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Minard Primary School as 'very remote rural'. This is defined as an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more. Minard Primary is one of 6 primary schools that has children transferring to secondary education at Lochgilphead High School.

### **3.8 Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus**

Following the mothballing of Minard Primary School, children living within the catchment area attended Furnace Primary School or Lochgilphead Joint Campus. Furnace Primary School is a non-denominational and co-educational school situated in the village of Furnace off the main A83 road. Furnace Primary school is a small rural school which occupies a central position in the village of Furnace. It currently has a significantly falling roll, with 8 children expected to be attending the school in August 2022. The school will have a shared Head Teacher with Inveraray Primary from August 2022.

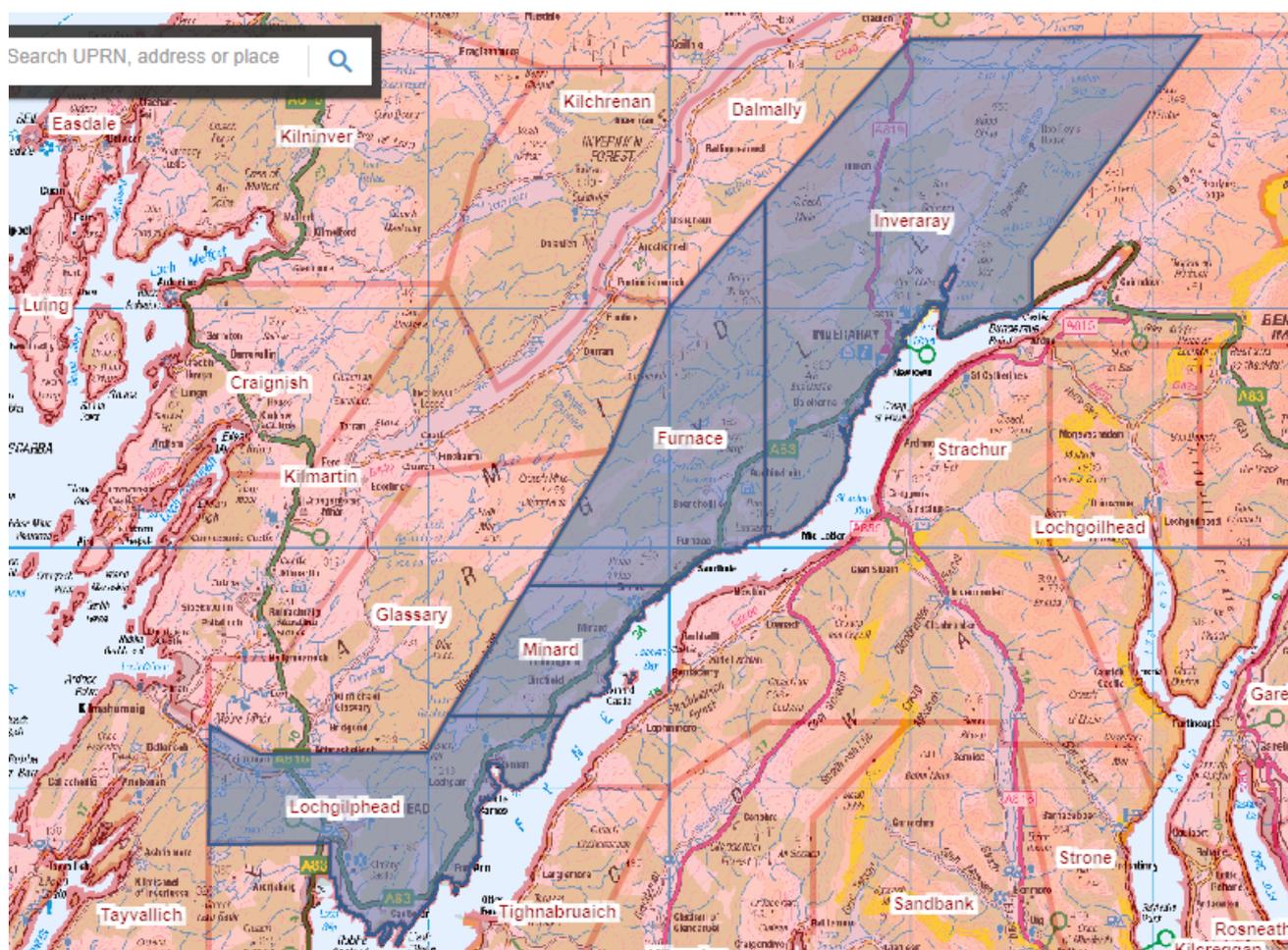
*Appendix 5* shows the Minard Primary Floor Plan

*Appendix 6* shows the Lochgilphead Joint Campus Floor Plan

*Appendix 7* shows the Furnace Primary Floor Plan

Furnace and Lochgilphead Joint Campus buildings have facilities for pupils, visitors and special access needs. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Furnace Primary School as 'very remote rural'. Lochgilphead Joint Campus is the associated Secondary School for Furnace and Minard Primary Schools and classified as 'remote rural'.

The Map below shows the adjoining catchment areas of Minard and Furnace Primary Schools and Lochgilphead Joint Campus Catchment Areas:



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### 3.9 Pupil Numbers

Pupil projections, and data for 2021-22 are based on the 2018 pupil census, a return prepared annually for the Scottish Government. Past pupil numbers are historic data from past pupil censuses. Pupil projections for future P1 intakes are from NHS data taken from children registered with GP practices in the area. This data is anonymised.

Table 2 shows the historic and current pupil numbers for Minard, Furnace and Lochgilhead Primary schools:

<b>Table 2:</b>	<b>Minard PS</b>	<b>Furnace PS</b>	<b>Lochgilhead PS</b>
	Roll	Roll	Roll
<b>Capacity</b>	33	50	249
<b>2011-2012</b>	10	21	213
<b>2012-2013</b>	9	18	221

<b>2013-2014</b>	6	12	231
<b>2014-2015</b>	8	10	230
<b>2015-2016</b>	6	7	233
<b>2016-2017</b>	5	7	221
<b>2017-2018</b>	1	6	221
<b>2018-19</b>	3	13	227
<b>2019-20</b>	0	10	226
<b>2020-21</b>	0	12	207

Table 3 shows projected rolls for Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools and estimated numbers of pupils in the Minard Primary School catchment area according to figures held by Argyll and Bute Council:

<b>Table 3:</b>	<b>Minard PS</b>	<b>Furnace PS</b>	<b>Lochgilphead PS</b>
	Roll	Roll	Roll
<b>Capacity</b>	33	50	249
<b>2022 -2023</b>	6	7	192
<b>2023 -2024</b>	4	7	189
<b>2024-2025</b>	2	10	191

\* A prediction based on information available June 2022

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **4.1 Meetings**

A Community 'drop in' Engagement session was held in Minard Primary School, on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 from 9.30am-6pm. This was to seek the views of the community on the future of Minard Primary School. Members of the community could 'drop in' throughout the day and give their views to Education Officers and receive information on the Pre-consultation process. This session was attended by 19 people. Notes from this session with comments from the community can be found in *Appendix 8*. There were also meetings in Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools to gather opinions from the young people from within the catchment area for Minard School. The Education Officer leading the Pre-consultation met with the children during May 2022 so that they could contribute to the process and their views are reflected in the paper.

### **4.2 Content of Meetings**

Attendees at the meetings were given an overview of the information that the Council would be using in this Options Appraisal, this included previous pupil rolls,

pupil projections, background information and details of the pre-consultation process.

The questions were as follows:

*Over the last three years, what has been the effect of mothballing Minard School on you, your family and community?*

*In your view what are the pros/cons of the following options:*

- *Continue with mothballing*
- *Re- open the school*
- *Close the school*

Attendees also noted questions regarding the future of the school, and points of information that should be considered in the Options Appraisal.

### **4.3 Feedback**

There was a range of viewpoints on the future of Minard School:

- **Community and Parents**

The majority of the community acknowledged how the future of the school needed to be considered now. Many understood that in order to be a viable option for schooling, there was an agreement that the low numbers of children did not make the re-opening of the school realistic. There was a small percentage of people in support of continued mothballing in order to retain the building in case of future need. One family of children currently attending another school locally were keen that the school should re-open; while other families are satisfied with the current arrangements of their children attending a bigger school.

- **Children/young people**

A few of the children expressed their desire to attend Minard Primary School however, the majority of children voiced they loved being at another primary school but that closing the Minard Primary School made sense to them, due to small numbers of children involved.

- **Staff**

Staff members were sad at the thought of the School being closed but acknowledged that without a significant number of pupils re-opening the school is not viable.

**General Comments:**

*“This was a vibrant school at the heart of the community. When my children came here – there were 30 children here. Those children have gone on to be very successful. They also have a community minded approach to life. Children gain so much from the community that is valuable. How can that be provided by a bigger community? When the children were here, they would feel the support from the other members of the community.”*

*“There was such a pride in the school – with different activities, including coffee mornings – the whole community supported the children in many ways. When you have an education in a school like this, it stays with you.”*

*“Not enough children in the locality for the school to be opened as an educational establishment.”*

## **5.0 THE PROPOSAL AND REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSAL AS CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Minard Primary School has been mothballed for 3 years. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. This continues to be the situation. There is concern about the future of the school and a collective wish within the community for it to re-open, but also an understanding that the numbers of young children locally means that this may not be viable.

Whilst the building is mothballed it continues to deteriorate. The Community would like to see the building put to good use. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. In June 2022 there were 15.49 fte vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers.

The Council is required to consider the future of Minard Primary School. The following options are explored within this paper:

- a) Re-open Minard Primary School.
- b) Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary with the pupils zoned to Furnace Primary School.
- c) Close Minard Primary School and realign its catchment area to Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary School.

## **6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **6.1 Community Feedback**

Ten community members who attended the Pre-consultation meeting were in favour of the school opening but felt it was linked to ensuring there is affordable housing in the area to attract more families. After school care was also a feature in meeting the needs of families and the feasibility of the school re-opening. The previous success of the school was recognised and there was some feeling that this should be

available for the next generation. There was recognition that the school was at the heart of the community and the community have lost local amenities and concern that the village will lose its vibrancy and become less sustainable. There were also community members who felt that the numbers of children on the roll were so low now and in the future that a local village school was sadly no longer viable.

*“There needs to be sufficient numbers of children in the school so that a child is not there on their own.”*

*“If folk know if there is a school in the village area – it may attract more people here – there were only ever good reports about the school and former pupils should be able to access the school. The village needs new life rather than the older demographic – we need to attract new younger members of the community.”*

*“There are not any children to make it viable at the moment.”*

*“As a parent, I would send my child to Minard PS. The community want the school to open but the question would be if other parents would send their child to Minard. After school provision is an issue. A school makes a community. Everything has already closed here. The sense of isolation as a young family.....I don’t see anyone in the community.”*

*Why has this happened? I find this very upsetting to look at the school like this – I know there are not a lot of children in the village but could the school be used for adult purposes too?*

## 6.2 Pupil Numbers

If the school were to reopen in August 2022, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be six. It has been stated that without a viable number of pupils for the school, some parents would not be considering placing their children at Minard Primary School if it were to re-open.

If the school were to re-open sustainability may not be viable due to the fact that pupil numbers over the next four years are not predicted to rise, indeed they would decline further and are well below the capacity of the school building.

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

Minard Primary	2021/202	2022/20	2023/202	2024/202	2025/2026
	2	23	4	5	
Approved Capacity	33	33	33	33	33

Roll Projectio n	6	6	4	2	1
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### 6.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£137,511**.

The annual cost of mothballing Minard Primary School is **£8,956**.

The cost to bring the educational building to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£36,500**. The cost to open the school house, if required, to an acceptable standard would be **£21,500**.

### 6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Minard Primary School to increase significantly without development in affordable housing. Minard Primary School is currently mothballed and at the time of writing, there are 7 current pupils in the Minard catchment area. To reopen the school would not necessarily increase the pupil numbers.

#### 6.4.1 Community Impact

The reopening of the school would more easily allow the school's premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community to specific events. The presence of a school and the facilities/activities that may be offered could make the area a more attractive place to live. Reopening the school may therefore encourage families with school age children to move to the community. This in turn may make the community more sustainable.

Many who attended the community engagement indicated the need for the school premises to be used for a community purpose in the future if it did not re-open.

Respondents noted the negative impact of the school mothballing on the community as:

- The continued deterioration of the building.
- Schooling not being available within the village may be a factor in not attracting and retaining young families to the area.
- A lack of focus for significant aspects of community life that the school previously provided for all generations within the community.

If the school were to reopen as an educational establishment there would be an economic impact with respect to the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard. There would also be costs relating to staffing, and ongoing maintenance. The reopening of the school and the potential relocation of families may have a positive effect on the wider economy of the community.

#### 6.4.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 7 minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint Campus is 13.13 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community.

If Minard Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The respective positive and negative impact may therefore balance.

### 6.5 **Educational Benefits**

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

With respect to outdoor learning community spaces could be used either in the school grounds or in the immediate neighbourhood if the school were to reopen. Outdoor learning is provided by all schools.

There would be issues with respect to the current condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities which would negatively impact learning and teaching.

## 6.6 Summary

Some community members, including some parents, are in favour of re-opening the school. Others recognised that the school may not be viable due to low pupil numbers. If the school reopened, pupil numbers would be low and are currently projected to decline further.

There are financial implications if the school is to be reopened. The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£137,511** with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£36,500**. The cost to open the school house, if required, to an acceptable standard would be £21,500.

If the School was to be reopened, the premises would be able to be used by the community, in addition to its use as an educational facility. The reopening of the School may encourage families with school age children to move to the community, which may make the community more sustainable.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 7 minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint Campus is 13.13 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. If Minard Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The respective positive and negative impact may therefore balance.

There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

When considering projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard, these need to be balanced against some members of the community's opinion on whether the school should re-open or not. For these reasons, this is not considered to be a reasonable option.

## **7. OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS ZONED TO FURNACE PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The Statutory Guidance for the 2010 Act, in relation to mothballing, states *“the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote.”* Minard Primary School has been mothballed for 4 years.

It should be noted that part of this time has been during a pandemic and the Council had hoped to consider options for the school previously, but this was curtailed due to restrictions.

### **7.1 Community Feedback**

There are many ideas for the future of the building being taken forward by the community as a hub for community life. Some members of the community felt that the school should continue to be mothballed to see if in the longer term more families would move into the area post-COVID. There was a significant view at the community meeting that mothballing the school over a long period is wasteful due to deterioration of the property and should not be prolonged. It was hoped that a decision about the future of the school, whatever it may be would be taken in the near future.

*“Mothballing the school has had a huge impact on community cohesion.”*

*“Families have been forced into going elsewhere and now they don’t know what they are missing.”*

*“No focal point left for the village.”*

*“Would encourage a decision to be made about the future of the building and grounds sooner rather than later.”*

*“Should we continue to mothball to see how post-pandemic living impacts on choices open to parents? The increase in home working could make the local school more viable?”*

*“Could the school be used by the community in a more productive way whilst mothballed?”*

### **7.2 Pupil Numbers**

Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next 4 years, they will be in decline, as per Table 4 above.

### 7.3 Financial Information

The current annual cost (2021/22) to the Council of the mothballed Minard Primary School is **£8,956**. This includes electricity, heating oil, and ground maintenance but does not include building maintenance and repair costs. Neither does it take account of the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school which is **£36,500**. Current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£1,482**.

### 7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Minard Primary School to increase significantly. Minard Primary School is currently mothballed and although there are currently no registered pupils, pupils would be rezoned to another local school. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers.

#### 7.4.1 Community Impact

If pupils are to continue their education in other primary schools whilst Minard Primary School remains mothballed there would be no change to the current impact on the community. While some families are satisfied with current arrangements, others report to feeling isolation. If the mothballing of Minard Primary was to continue the building would deteriorate further and eventually become unavailable. This could have a detrimental effect on the sustainability of the Minard community. At present the school grounds are available for community use. The community view the buildings and grounds as an opportunity to develop as a community and there were multiple suggestions for possible usage, as outlined in Appendix 8. This may make the area a more attractive place to live.

#### 7.4.2 Travel Arrangements

There is no change to the travel arrangements that are currently in place nor to the environmental impact from these. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 7 minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years.

Some parents in the current catchment area have chosen to have their children attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus as they work within that community. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Lochgilphead Joint Campus is 13.13 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. Continued mothballing of Minard Primary School

would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal effect on staffing within the receiving primary schools.

## 7.5 Educational Benefits

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

Minard, Furnace and Lochgilphead are remote rural schools. Minard and Furnace Primary Schools are set within a very remote rural area, Lochgilphead Primary is classified as a remote rural school (Scottish Government classification October 2021). Children from Minard area, attending Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary School are benefitting from the rural broader environment, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment.

The co-location of the nursery and the primary classes at Lochgilphead Primary enhances the transition process for the children moving from Nursery into Primary one, through joint educational processes and liaison between the two settings. Transition to secondary school is enhanced through joint planning and educational experiences.

## 7.6 Summary

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of further continuing the mothballing of Minard Primary School. A few people felt it would be beneficial to mothball for longer as there was a possibility of attracting more young families to the village post-COVID. There was a significant view at the community meetings that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful due to deterioration of the property and potentially affected sustainability of the community. Pupil numbers are not predicted to rise significantly in terms of pre-school children living within the catchment area, indeed they are in decline. Mothballing had no positive impact on the reasons for the proposal.

The current annual cost (2021/22) to the Council of the mothballed Minard Primary School is **£8,956**. This includes electricity, heating oil, and ground maintenance but does not include building maintenance and repair costs. Neither does it take account of the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school which is **£36,500**. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£1,482**.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years. Some parents in the current catchment area have chosen to have their children attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus as they work within that community. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Lochgilphead Joint Campus is 13.13 miles via the A83. Adverse weather can be a factor, however this is the same for other local schools and areas. Should the school continue to be mothballed these travel arrangements would continue.

There are no specific educational benefits from continuing the mothballing of Minard Primary school.

On the basis that pupil numbers are declining and the building's mothballing is not of benefit to the community or the Council, continued mothballing of Minard Primary School is not viewed as a reasonable option.

## **8. OPTION C: CLOSE MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR FURNACE AND LOCHGILPHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT MINARD CATCHMENT AREA**

### **9.1 Community Feedback**

Some people who attended the Options Appraisal meeting were not in favour of reopening Minard Primary as a school. They commented that there were not enough children to support re-opening the School. Additionally, with respect to low numbers in future school roll projections, the sustainability of the School did not support re-opening of the School. Comments in relation to the closure of Minard Primary School:

*There are positives and negatives around a small school and a big school. Quality of leadership is a factor and lack of staff is also an issue.*

*You lose culture when you lose a small school.*

Many community members commented on the school premises and potential for this to become a community asset:

*'The building to be used for a purpose to benefit the community for example a community hub with a shop and café.'*

*'The community has lost the shop, post office and now school, we feel it is crucially important that this building is retained to build the community.'*

Community members discussed pursuing options for use of the building as a community hub.

## 9.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 5: Schools Occupancy:

<i>Minard Primary</i>	<i>2022/2023</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
<i>Approved Capacity</i>	33	33	33
<i>Projected Roll</i>	6	4	2
<i>Occupancy</i>	18%	12%	6%

## 9.3 Financial Information

Transport costs taking pupils to alternative schools are **£1,482**. If Minard Primary School were to be closed it would generate savings of **£8,956** - the current annual cost of mothballing (2021/22) to the Council. This includes electricity, heating oil, ground maintenance, building maintenance and repair costs.

If parents choose to send their children to Lochgilphead Joint Campus, there will be no increase in costs regarding transport as there is capacity in the current system.

## 9.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being reviewed are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Minard Primary School to increase. Minard Primary School is currently mothballed and pupils are rezoned to other schools. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers, however some members of the community feel that a local school would attract families to the area.

### 9.4.1 Community Impact

The community had differing opinions on the closure of the school. Some would like the school to reopen, some reluctantly accepted that numbers were so low the school may not be viable in the long term. All agreed that they would want a decision made and that it would be retained for community use, and not be allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. Within Minard there is a village hall. While it is accepted that school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, a vibrant community hub could be an asset to a community. This could potentially have a very positive impact on sustainability of the community if this option were to progress. If the Community wished to create a community hub, they would require to find a mechanism to acquire the property from the Council and deliver that aspiration. The buildings forming the school premises are situated within

walking distance of the village. If the local plans for the building progress, this would have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

#### 9.4.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. However one family has expressed strongly that they are finding the travel arrangements in place for Furnace very difficult.

Transport costs for pupils to Furnace Primary are **£1,482**.

Other families in the Minard area have chosen to place their children at Lochgilphead Joint Campus due to their own work and family commitments and have made their own travel arrangements. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint campus is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff. There would be no additional travel costs for children attending Lochgilphead Joint Campus as there is capacity in the current system.

The closure of Minard Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment.

### 9.5 Educational Benefits

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

It is proposed that children in the Minard catchment area would be directed to Lochgilphead Joint Campus or Furnace Primary, depending on where they live in the catchment area. The proposal is that children living in the north section of catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay attend Furnace Primary (with the section of Minard's catchment area being subsumed by Furnace Primary School) and children in the south section of the catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus (with that section of Minard's catchment area being subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School).

Both Minard and Furnace are very remote rural schools. Lochgilphead Joint Campus is a remote rural school. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification).

#### *Furnace Primary*

Children from Minard area from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay who would attend Furnace Primary School are benefitting from the rural environment and the strengths that a small village primary can offer. Good quality outdoor learning is currently provided at Furnace Primary.

In Furnace Primary School children are taught in classes composed of children from more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a strong social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children of their own gender, take part in team activities and move with their peers as an established friendship group to secondary school at Lochgilphead Joint Campus.

#### *Lochgilphead Joint Campus*

Children from the Minard catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg who would attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus would benefit from learning within a bigger context and community. Children are taught in single year groups and there is a wide range of expertise within a larger staff team.

The school has strong community links and children learn in a variety of contexts and groups including ability, co-operative and social. The school provides a number of wider curricular activities and pupils transition within the campus from Pre-5 to secondary education.

## **9.6 Summary**

People who attended the consultation had differing opinions in relation to the closing of Minard Primary as a school, and realigning the catchment area of Minard Primary School due to the remote nature of the school's location. Some wanted the school to open for their families and become the heart of the community once again; others reluctantly accepted that such low numbers did not make the school viable in the future. The majority commented on the potential for the school premises to be used as a community asset.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for over three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. However one family has expressed strongly that they are finding the travel arrangements in place for Furnace very difficult. Other families in the Minard area have chosen to place their children

at Lochgilphead Joint Campus due to their own work and family commitments and have made their own travel arrangements. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint campus is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car.

This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff. The closure of Minard Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment. Transport costs for pupils are **£1,482**. Minard Primary School pupil numbers are not projected to increase significantly. Furnace and Lochgilphead Joint Campus have capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers.

In Furnace Primary and Lochgilphead Joint Campus children benefit from a positive learning environments with learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of the young people who attend each school. In addition, there are opportunities for personal and social development in these settings.

Taking all of the above into account, and considering how this option is likely to successfully address the underlying reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being considered, this has been identified as a reasonable option for further consideration.

## 10. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Option	Option Description	Outcome
A	Re-open Minard Primary School with the existing catchment area	Not a reasonable option.
B	Continued Mothballing of Minard Primary School with the pupils zoned to Furnace Primary School.	Not a reasonable option.
C	Close Minard Primary School and realign the catchment area of Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus to include the current catchment area for Minard Primary School.	A reasonable option.

## 11. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION: CLOSE MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR FURNACE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND LOCHGILPHEAD JOINT CAMPUS TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT MINARD CATCHMENT AREA

## 11.1 Pupil Projections

<i>Minard Primary</i>	<i>2022/2023</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
<i>Approved Capacity</i>	33	33	33
<i>Projected Roll</i>	6	4	2
<i>Occupancy</i>	18%	12%	6%

## 11.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools, which are the schools the proposal is focused on in terms of realigning the catchment area for Minard. Some pupils in the Minard area have been attending Furnace Primary since it was mothballed. Some pupils within the catchment area for Minard have always attended Lochgilphead Primary School as placing requests, these pupils have never attended Minard, even when it was open as the placement suited family work commitments.

### 11.2.1 Learning and Teaching at Furnace Primary

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

In Furnace Primary School, children are encouraged to be eager and active participants who are engaged, resilient and motivated during their learning. Children know that their views are sought, valued and acted upon. The learning environment encourages high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning.

In Furnace Primary School, children may be taught in classes composed of children from more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group.

There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement

Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Furnace Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. These schools are also part of the Mid Argyll Schools Cluster, supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within these schools are able to support and challenge each other on a daily basis. The whole staff teams are able to bring a range of talents and skills to benefit outcomes for learners.

From August 2022, Furnace Primary will be part of a shared headship with Inveraray Primary and it is anticipated that staff and children will benefit from working with other professionals and children from another context.

Furnace Primary School encourages nurturing and positivity. One aspect of this work is a successful Buddy System. Children from different stages work and learn together. This vertical support is particularly evident in a number of different planned activities when groups of children are together in a social context. This system develops and benefits both the 'buddy' and the 'buddied'. To implement this system there needs to be children across a range of stages in the school.

Furnace Primary School is a very remote rural school (Scottish Government classification). Children from the Minard area attending Furnace Primary would be benefitting from the rural environment and the strengths that a small village primary can offer. Good quality outdoor learning is currently provided at Furnace Primary.

#### 11.2.2

##### Outcomes

Through the GIRFEC practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning

discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met.

In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. All of the schools in Mid Argyll continue to develop within the PATHS program supporting positive behaviours and relationship within the school. A larger staff, parent body and partner group by nature increases the breadth of talent and interest that may be available to share within a school setting. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

#### 11.2.3 Experiences - Broadening the Range of Opportunities

Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.

#### 11.2.4 Environment for Learning

Furnace Primary is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the heart of the community. The building is well maintained and provide a fit for purpose accommodation for primary aged children. The school has access to outdoor areas that support pupil learning and wellbeing. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

### **11.3 Assessment of Rural Factors – Furnace Primary**

The reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being reviewed are stated at Section 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase at the School. Minard Primary School is mothballed with no current pupils. Having considered all the alternatives above, the option to close Minard Primary School and realign the catchment area for Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Primary School respectively to include the former Minard Primary School catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at Section 2 of this report.

11.3.1 Community Impact

The community offered differing views on the proposed closure of the school. There was a suggestion that should the school close, the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. There was a view from some community members that a local school would attract new families to the area. Within Minard there is a Village Hall which houses community events. All people who attended the Options Appraisal Meeting strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises and the visual impact of the village. It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a vibrant community hub could be an asset to the community. The school premises are situated within walking distance of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that plans for the future of the building could potentially be progressed by the community.

11.3.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than three years. This option will have no impact on staff travel. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. However one family has expressed strongly that they are finding the travel arrangements in place for Furnace very difficult. Transport costs for pupils to Furnace Primary are **£1,482**.

The closure of Minard Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment.

11.4 Learning and Teaching at Lochgilphead Joint Campus

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

In Lochgilphead Joint Campus, children are encouraged to be eager and active participants who are engaged, resilient and motivated during their learning. Children know that their views are sought, valued and acted upon. The learning environment encourages high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning.

Children are taught in single year groups and there is a wide range of expertise within a larger staff team. The school has strong community links and children learn in a variety of contexts and groups including ability, co-operative and social. The school provides a number of wider curricular activities and pupils transition within the campus from Pre-5 to secondary education.

There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Lochgilphead Joint Campus, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. These schools are also part of the Mid Argyll Schools Cluster, supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within these schools are able to support and challenge each other on a daily basis. The whole staff teams are able to bring a range of talents and skills to benefit outcomes for learners.

Lochgilphead is a remote rural school (Scottish Government classification). Lochgilphead Joint Campus has a welcoming and inclusive ethos of celebrating pupil achievement and prides itself in being big enough to offer a breadth of experience for pupils but small enough to strive to meet the needs of all pupils.

The co-location of the nursery and the primary classes at Lochgilphead Joint Campus enhance the transition process for children moving from Nursery in to Primary one, through joint educational processes and liaison between the two settings.

#### 11.4.2 Outcomes

Through the GIRFEC practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil

progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met.

In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. All of the schools in Mid Argyll continue to develop within the PATHS program supporting positive behaviours and relationship within the school. A larger staff, parent body and partner group by nature increases the breadth of talent and interest that may be available to share within a school setting. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

#### 11.4.3 Experiences - Broadening the Range of Opportunities

Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.

#### 11.4.4 Environment for Learning

Lochgilphead Joint Campus is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the heart of the community. The building is well maintained and provide a fit for purpose accommodation for primary aged children. The school has access to outdoor areas that support pupil learning and wellbeing. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

### **11.5 Assessment of Rural Factors – Lochgilphead**

The reasons why the future of Minard Primary School is being reviewed are stated at Section 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase at the School. Minard Primary School is mothballed with no current pupils. Having considered all the alternatives above, the option to close Minard Primary School and realign the catchment area for Lochgilphead to include a portion of the current Minard Primary School catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at Section 2 of this report.

#### 11.5.1 Community Impact

The community offered differing views on the proposed closure of the school. There was a suggestion that should the school close, the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. There was a view from some community members that a local school would attract new families to the area. Within Minard there is a Village Hall which houses community events. All people who attended the Options Appraisal Meeting strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises and the visual impact of the village. It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a vibrant community hub could be an asset to the community. The school premises are situated within walking distance of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that plans for the future of the building could potentially be progressed by the community.

#### 11.5.2 Travel Arrangements

Some families in the Minard area have chosen to place their children at Lochgilphead Joint Campus due to their own work and family commitments and have made their own travel arrangements, before Minard Primary was mothballed. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint campus is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff. There would be no additional travel costs for children attending Lochgilphead Joint Campus as there is capacity in the system.

The closure of Minard Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment.

### **11.6 Financial Impact**

The main elements included within a school budget are Teacher employment costs (i.e. basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the Primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the Teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR,

with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value. As a result of the authority's policy for no Teacher redundancies it is presumed that the staff are deployed elsewhere within the authority and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. This is also in line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers. This methodology also applies to the school's discretionary budget which again is formula based. The budget of the receiving school, in terms of any pupils being transferred, will have increased. The figures outlined below take account of the fact that the staffing and discretionary budgets have been adjusted to nil.

The annual running costs during mothballing of Minard Primary School are a total of **£8,956**.

Annual savings generated through closing Minard Primary School would be **£8,956**.

The costs/savings outlined above assumes all revenue expenditure would cease. This includes non-domestic rates, utility costs, insurances, etc. If the school was to be formally closed, this would allow the council to take steps towards selling the school to a third party or local community.

### **11.5 Environmental Impact**

Currently pupils travel to Furnace Primary and Lochgilphead Joint Campus. However this option would have a neutral environmental impact on the current position and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils. Families travelling to Lochgilphead Joint Campus do so for work and family commitments, and would continue to do so, even if Furnace Primary were to re-open. Travel is an accepted aspect of rural life.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

Three alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of Minard Primary School. For each option, information was collated and consideration was given to:

- Community feedback;
- Pupil numbers;
- Financial Information;
- Assessment of rural factors, including community impact, economic impact and travel arrangements, and
- Educational Benefits.

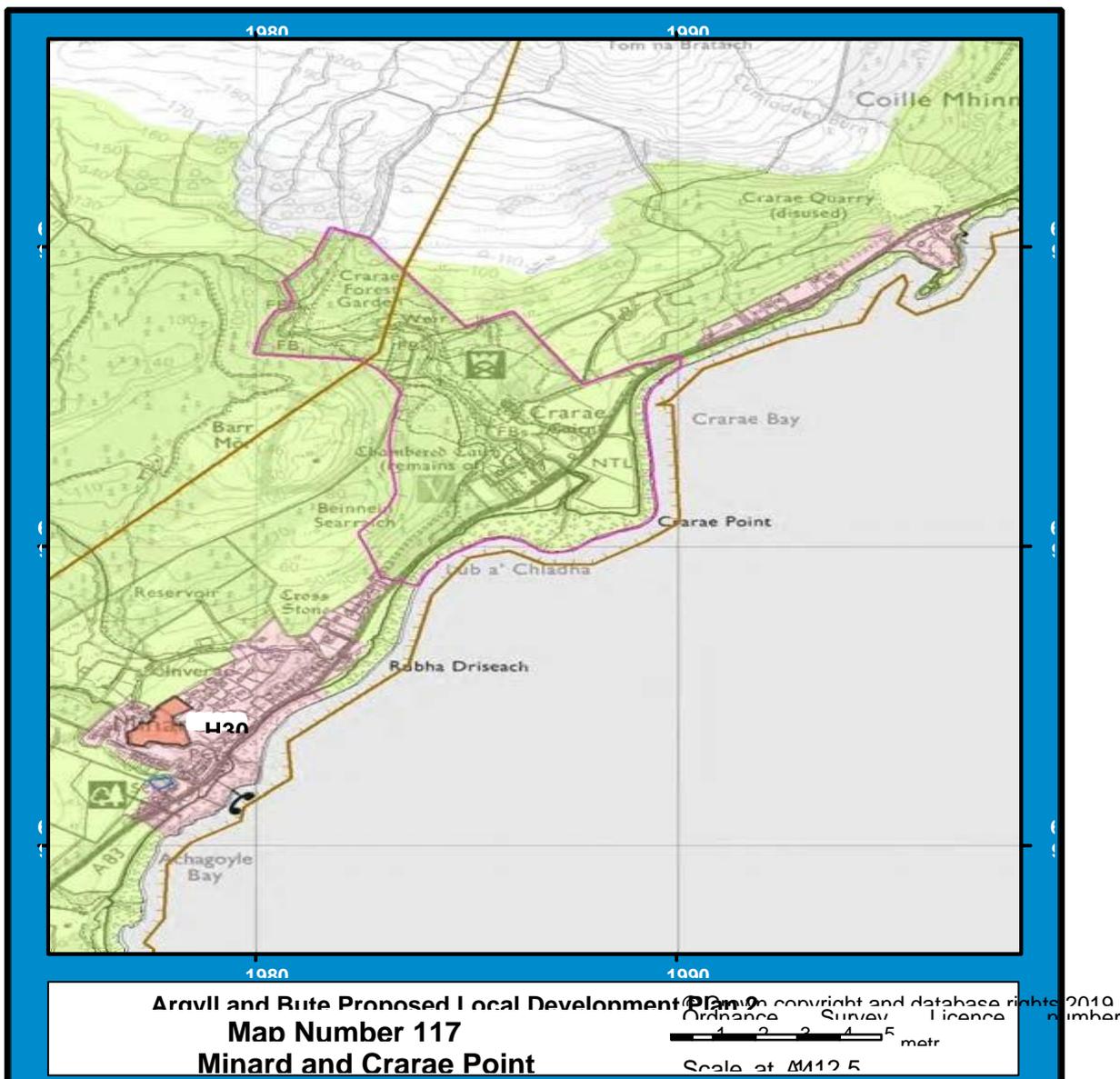
An authority that is contemplating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act before formulating a proposal.

After consideration of the preliminary requirements, as set out in the Act, and the options, and having regard to the specific reasons identified at Section 2 of this report, closing Minard Primary School and realigning the catchment area to Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus is the most reasonable option for consideration.

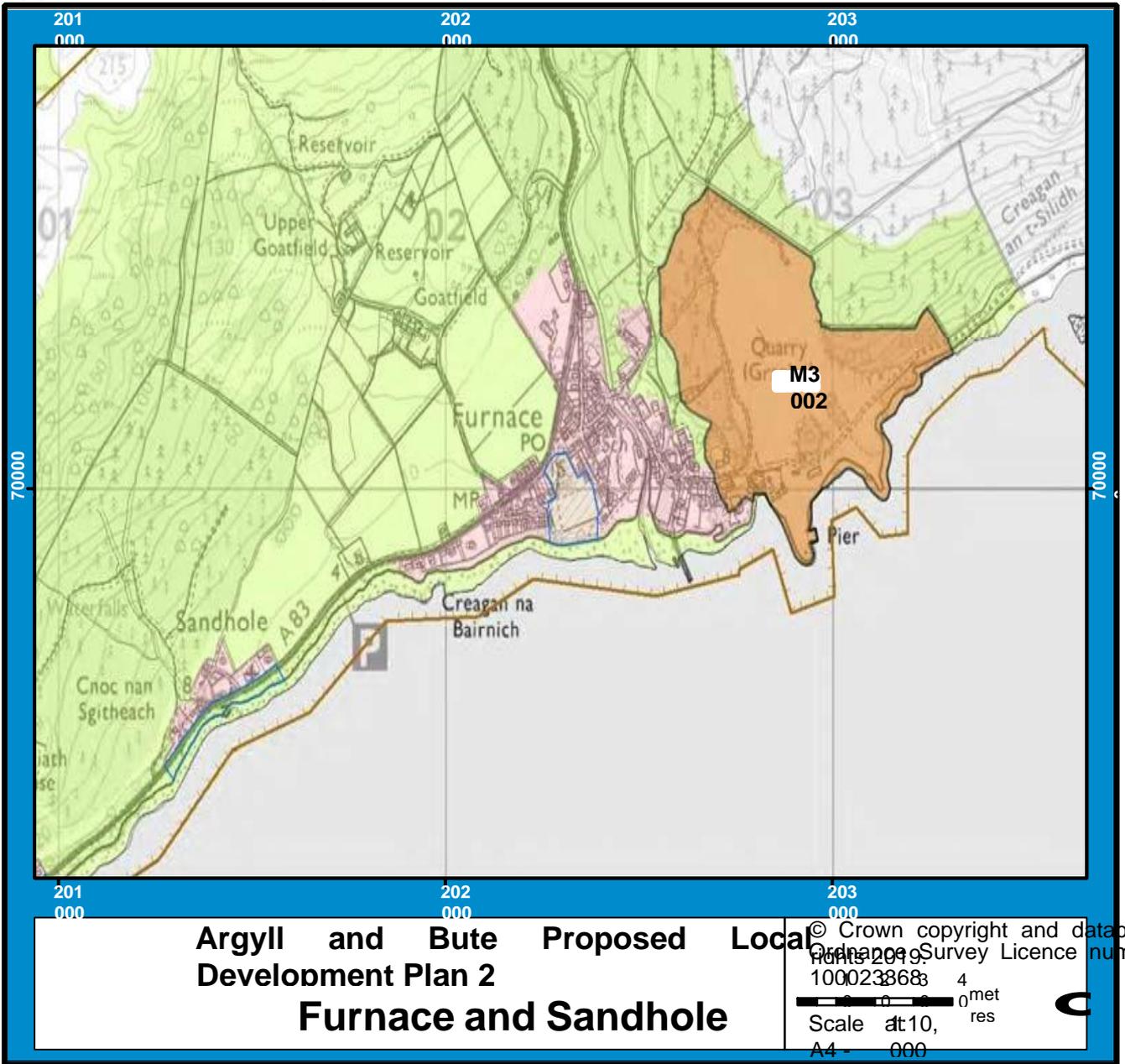
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a. Note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements; and,
- b. Agree that officers now formulate a draft proposal that will come back to the June 2023 meeting of the Committee for approval by members which would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

### Appendix 1 Local Development Plan for Minard



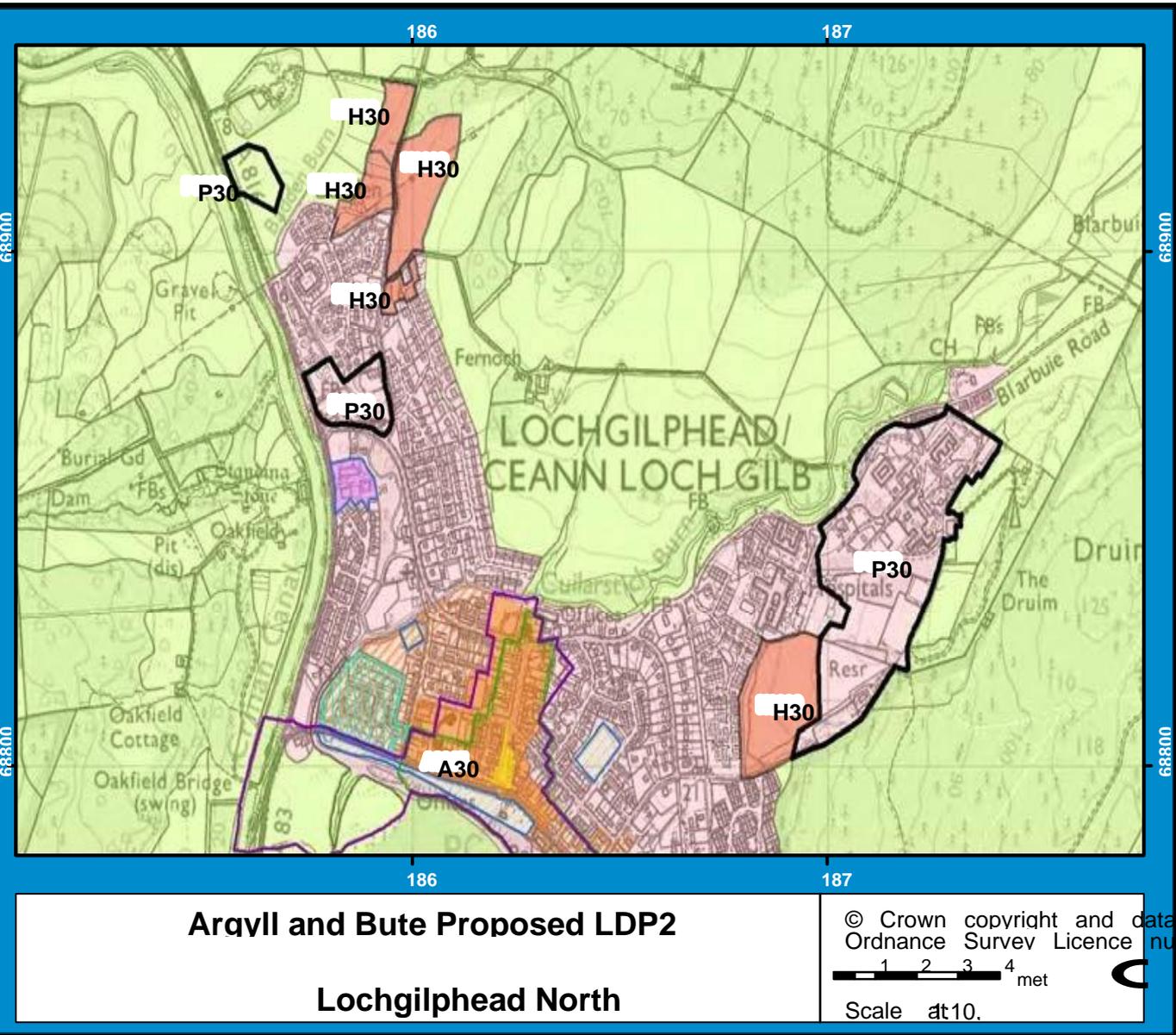
**Appendix 2 Local Development Plan for Furnace**

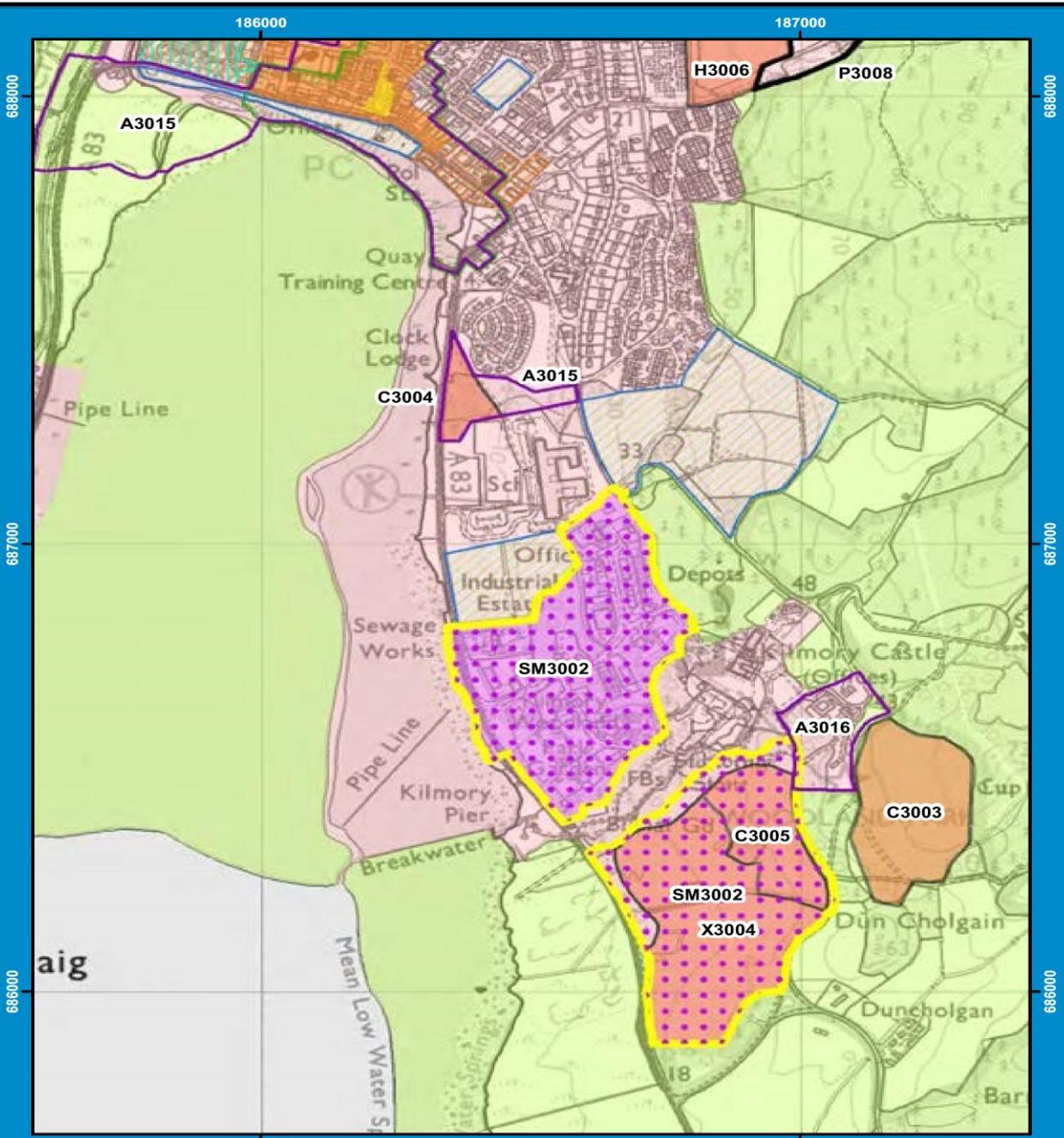


**Argyll and Bute Proposed Local  
Development Plan 2  
Furnace and Sandhole**

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### Appendix 3 Local Development Plans for Lochgilphead





## Appendix 4 Key for Local Development Plans

### Proposed Local Development Plan 2 Key

 Settlement Area	 Open Space Protection Area
 Greenbelt	 Wild Land
 Countryside Area	 Site of International Importance - Ramsar
 Remote Countryside Area	 Site of International Importance - Special Area of Conservation
 Strategic Masterplan	 Site of International Importance - Special Protection Area
 Allocation	 Site of Special Scientific Interest
 Potential Development Area	 National Nature Reserve
 Main Town Centre	 National Scenic Area
 Edge of Town Centre	 Garden & Designed Landscape
 Core Shopping Area	 Local Landscape Area
 Strategic Economic Investment Location	 Conservation Area
 Established Business & Industry Area	 Tourism Infrastructure
 Area for Action	 Marine Consultation Area
 Transport Infrastructure	 National Park
 Waste Management Site	 Other Council Area









## Appendix 8 Notes from Community Consultation Day

Minard Community Consultation

26<sup>TH</sup> May 2022

19 people attended through the day

Some have also responded by email.

### General responses

#### ***Wrap around care featured....***

I feel there are limited efforts to keep Minard PS open. Argyll and Bute have not committed to the wrap around care that would make it viable. There used to be after school care in Furnace that was also used by Minard families. When it closed, it also had an impact on Minard.

The council have made a conscious choice not to support wrap around care to help to close schools.

When the school was open, we had an after school club. Would parents take ownership of this? Help with before and after school care? It might suit parents better who are now working from home.

Wrap around care is important for a school in this location and context.

### **The school was at the heart of the community**

It's more than just a school.

This was a vibrant school at the heart of the community. When my children came here – there were 30 children here. Those children have gone on to be very successful. They also have a community minded approach to life. Children gain so much from the community that is valuable. How can that be provided by a bigger community? When the children were here, they would feel the support from the other members of the community. This was the hub for the community.

There was a great feeling around the school.

As a former parent, we would never have moved here without the school being open. The shop, the post office, church – the school is so important – without a school the village is dead. This was a marvellous school, the village was buzzing. The school was the life of the village/community – it was vibrant – with Easter celebrations, Christmas and the local community would offer support.

I have been part of the community for 40 years and my children attended the school and hold very responsible positions with the Scottish Government and Strathclyde University. I was involved in the school, I find it so sad as it was the centre of the community.

There was such a pride in the school – with different activities, including coffee mornings – the whole community supported the children in many ways.

When you have an education in a school like this, it stays with you.

### **General comments**

I can't say either way without more information.

This affects the long term future of communities that are between Inveraray and Lochgilphead.

If you are transported to another town to go to school, you lose your connection with your home community.

ABC needs to take care because of how previous proposed closures were managed. This needs compassion.

Children end up not having freedom to play with friends without being transported. For children from low income families, this impacts more. The cost of living is real.

Having the school closed has impacted on the connections or **lack of** that young families have. Covid activities in the community illustrated this as activities for kids was organised by older families.

The community used to be based around so much many of the school activities.

The use of the building and grounds would need to be for the community, should the school close.

Concern that if the school were to close, it would end up as an Airbnb or anti-social neighbours.

The actions of the council are out of line with what they are saying about retaining schools therefore there is a lack of trust.

We need to look at all the facts and we don't have these. Maybe we need an independent mediator to help facilitate discussion.

x2 Would encourage a decision to be made about the future of the building and grounds sooner rather than later.

Social belonging is important but is it to be expected from education?

This is a reflection of how life is now in a rural area – you need to commute out of the village for work and services.

I don't feel I have enough information around the health and wellbeing impact on pupils.

Empty houses for holiday lets – the community could be gone and this is a ghost town.

This affects the local church too.

Within the locality, it is holiday homes around here. Are there 10 affordable houses meant to be built?

I am torn between the personal and the professional outlook – if my wee one was to come here – socially - what would I want?

What we need are more children within the area.

Families who have already settled will stay in other schools as they will be established.

We would need more children to have enough in a co-hort.

We need the community to thrive and numbers to go up for the school to be viable. The social side – could the school provide this?

All it takes is for some local families to move into the area.

The Community Council held a meeting regarding the school previously – 4 adults turned up.

Amenities have reduced considerably in the village – what is there for young families?

Recently young families have stepped up and kept it alive but sadly the writing is on the wall.

House prices in the area are so high – ACA? Indeed, across Argyll.

Housing is an issue in the area.

This could become a 'ghost village', with second houses.

Such a shame about the building – not easy.

Understand what families are doing at the moment - it is convenient for them to have their children attend other schools.

It would be perfect to open the school again but realistically we know it is hard – but there is a danger this will become a retirement village.

The recent Transformation plans from the education department – gives me concerns for the future.

We need to make the area attractive for families in the future.

Affordable housing in the area is an issue. What is affordable for families? Employment is also an issue.

We know staffing is an issue – but can we look at accommodation for members of staff to attract them to the area?

When travelling to another school, the LA should provide a school bus, rather than a public bus.

There are young families in the village – children are the lifeblood, we have children and grandchildren locally.

I understand parents wanting to go elsewhere to education their children – is it linked with after school care?

There are retired people here and the age demographic is older.

### **The local economy**

Not having a school impacts on the local economy.

No school resulted in no shop.

When we lost the shop, it was hard.

### **Toddler group**

There is a toddler group starting to encourage family participation in the area. This is split between Furnace and Minard.

There is a Parent and Toddler group (13 max) attending, with 6-8 regular attenders – we work between Minard and Furnace and the parents like this.

There have been incidents with the alarm going off.

### **The building itself**

The Community Trust was a tenant in the front room of the school house. It is still a tenant but 'stuff' moved out. CT on space at front.

Would like to see it used for a purpose for young people regardless. The building needs investment.

### **What affect has the mothballing had on you, your family, the community?**

Mothballing the school has had a huge impact on community cohesion.

Families have been forced into going elsewhere and now they don't know what they are missing.

No focal point left for the village.

I feel really sad about it – my kids did really well out of the school.

Mothballing has forced community conversations around how the school could be better used.

I think it should continue to be mothballed as we don't know what people's lifestyles are going to be in the next 5 years, into the post-pandemic world.

The school connected (and was at the centre of) the community. It gave us a focus.

It's not being an asset to the community at the moment.

Need to accept that families are now looking to seek wider friendships for their family.

This was a vibrant school that was part of our community.

The school delivered a high quality education.  
The children gained great democratic community skills.

### **Views on continuing with the mothballing**

How will continuing to mothball the school increase numbers?

Should we continue to mothball to see how post-pandemic living impacts on choices open to parents? The increase in home working could make the local school more viable?

Could the school be used by the community in a more productive way whilst mothballed?

### **Views on re-opening the school with existing catchment**

There needs to be sufficient numbers of children in the school so that a child is not there on their own.

Children in small schools learn so well from each other.

It would be interesting to know post pandemic the projected numbers for pupils.

It would be great to involve the community through events that used to be led from the school.

The environmental impact and cost of living should be considered.

There are very young children in the area, coming up.

Unless you know there is potential to send a child to a local school, you are not going to use it.

There are not any children to make it viable at the moment.

I know that in order for it to be viable we need more children. I would like the school to open with larger catchment area but there needs to be a demand. It is hard for families to juggle – wrap around care could be an issue.

Why has this happened? I find this very upsetting to look at the school like this – I know there are not a lot of children in the village but could the school be used for adult purposes too?

Children would benefit from walking locally to school rather than going in the car.

We have more young children already in our area that have recently arrived who could benefit from local education in the village.

If folk know if there is a school in the village area – it may attract more people here – there were only ever good reports about the school and former pupils should be able to access the school. The village needs new life rather than the older demographic – we need to attract new younger members of the community.

The school offers a fantastic context for learning about nature – children need to be learning outdoors – it's not just about learning in the classroom.

The facilities and resources are already here to open – this could save money.

### **Views on closing the school**

You lose culture when you lose a small school.

Concern that this will have further impact on the local community and the economy.

It is difficult to motivate pupils in small groups.

Not enough children in the locality for the school to be opened as an educational establishment.

The school logbook show how much quality work was done in the school – but numbers need to be healthy – numbers below 9 means it is hard to motivate children.

We have no need for a school.

There are positives and negatives around a small school and a big school. Quality of leadership is a factor and lack of staff is also an issue.

### **Re-open the school but widen the catchment area**

It would be competing with Furnace PS.

X2 You would need wrap around care.

The toddler group has shown that there may be a demand for the school through this group.

When the school was here, there was placing requests from outwith the area.

There doesn't appear to be the same commitment/flexibility within communities to support one another with wrap around care.

Parents need to want to support their own local schools.

It's harder to get a community feel in a large school.

We are a young family and we work from home – it would be so convenient for us to have the school open.

We have a two year old and this is a strong community – there is no park/social space for children to meet/socialise (other than the school) – the school would be a great hub for them. I like the idea of small classes compared to larger classes – get more 1 to 1 focus on pupils. The 'friend base in one place ie the school helps in the transition to High School. As a young parent, I am unsure about transporting young children to another school. Our travel and work commitments are an issue if the school does not re-open.

Social and belonging skills can be fostered.

With my experience in Pupil Support, I would reflect that a small school can offer a great deal for pupils with ASN. The distance between Lochgilphead and Inveraray is considerable for young children. Pupils thrive in small schools – there are some children who can't cope in bigger schools. With the nurture agenda – it's what small schools provide. Some pupils have transferred to here – they could not cope elsewhere and they flourished. My heart says open the school and widen the catchment area, but my head knows it is unsustainable. The school grounds are fantastic for learning.

This is a fantastic resource.

Children need to come first – this should be used as education as its sole purpose. Need to bring in as a village young children and families, without them we will lose buses, shops, businesses.

Mum's need to be at the gate – it is about supporting them as much as supporting the children.

I feel this is such a waste of a beautiful building. Why keep Furnace open and close here? Why not open here and close Furnace if their numbers are going down?

To open the school would bring more life to the village and encourage young families into the area.

### **Future use of the building/grounds**

X5 Could it be used as an outdoor centre, Leisure/hostel/cycling/sailing/kayaks/archery etc locals and visitors could access?

X3 Could this be a Pre-5 centre? Nursery?

Could this be used for Forest schools?

Could this be a 1 to 1 support place for children with learning disabilities?

Could the school be used as a creative space/possible art hub?

Or a drop in medical centre – appointments for those who have mobility or transport issues?

A health retreat?

Fetes could be held.

Could be used as a bookable office or meeting space?

Could the school house be let out to help finance the use of the school for the above mentioned?

Post COVID – would this be used differently as a building?

The building needs life but perhaps in a different purpose?

A hub to support those with addiction problems?

Would parents re-consider school placements if this was on their doorstep/in their immediate community?

Uncertainty around the building and the grounds. Would the building and ground revert back to the community?

Issues with access. Concern over scale or any development. Does infrastructure support this? Parking, etc?

Could development create a population with more children without a school to deliver the education service?

Could the grounds be used for a community garden?

Could the school be a community hub for adult education or educational purposes? The last two years have been tough – it has had a lot of impact on the mental health of everyone.

The community would benefit from it being used on a commercial basis.

Use as a hub/café/current community use?

X2 Needs to be used to its full potential/strengths

Community would benefit from use as a business or linked to education.

So sad to see this – the building needs investing in.

The school would make an amazing conversion into a home.

I believe there could possibly be 19 children attending the school in the future. This would support a network for young families.

What happens for families living locally who do not have a car?

The longer the building is left, it is going to be open to vandalism and squatters. The building has a heritage that we cannot lose.

What is it going to turn into? The Lloyd family had gifted to Argyll and Bute.

Would like the community to pull together to consider buying the building.

### **Questions raised**

What are the financial implications?

What infrastructure is being put in place to support/encourage young families into the area?

What is the overall plan for the future proofing of the area to join up housing etc?  
Is it the responsibility for education to provide that sense of belonging?  
Is there an argument for the school to be used while mothballed?  
What are the plans for the building?

**Information provided**

Local residents also provided Education representatives with information about the ownership of the building and also thoughts on the accuracy of numbers of children in the area.

## Appendix 2 - EQSEIA



### Argyll and Bute Council

#### Argyll and Bute Council: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

#### Section 1: About the proposal

##### Title of Proposal

To close Minard Primary School.

##### Intended outcome of proposal

The proposal is to close Minard Primary School.

Currently, we are in the consultation phase, at this stage it is vitally important that we seek the views of all stakeholders affected by this proposal. Once this has been done, there will be a consultation report prepared on the issue by Local Authority Officers, with input from Education Scotland. This report will be presented to the Community Services Committee (CSC) for their decision.

Ultimately, the intended outcome the closure of the school, which has been mothballed for over four years. If after consultation the stakeholders involved in the process, Education Scotland, and the CSC feel that the closure is not a reasonable option, then the closure would not take place.

##### Description of proposal

Consideration of this proposal means that a decision is being taken about permanently closing Minard Primary School.

As per the legislative guidance set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Argyll and Bute Council is seeking views on the following proposal, namely:

It is proposed that education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

The catchment area of Furnace Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard School.

##### Reasons for this Proposal

This is the best option to address the reasons for the proposals which are;

- Minard Primary School has been mothballed for over four years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £10,382.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. In June 2023 there were 8.59fte primary vacancies in Argyll & Bute.
- Whilst Minard Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Argyll and Bute Council's Community Services Committee agreed that a consultation with all stakeholders be undertaken on the proposal.

**Corporate Priorities to which the proposal contributes:**

Learning estate now and in the future; we will ensure our schools are effective, sustainable learning environments.  
Attaining and achieving at all stages; we will improve outcomes for children and young people.

**Lead officer details:**

Name of lead officer – Annette Trevelyan  
Job title – Education Officer  
Department - Customer Services: Education

**Appropriate officer details:**

Name of appropriate officer - Wendy Brownlie  
Job title - Head of Education  
Department - Customer Services: Education  
Sign off of EQSEIA



Date of sign off  
13<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Who will deliver the proposal?**

Should the closure go ahead, there will be in fact no change to the current arrangements which have been in place since the school has been mothballed.

The Head Teacher of Inveraray Primary School, in her capacity as shared Headship with Furnace Primary School, will be the senior officer of the Council who provides the leadership of the educational experience for the children attending the school, who would have otherwise attended Minard Primary School. The Education Central team of the Council will be responsible for the support and challenge of the school as per standard protocols.

Transport colleagues will be responsible for any travel arrangements for children who are entitled to this, and this has already been in place since the school was mothballed.

## Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA

### Consultation / engagement

Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, if a local authority proposes to close a school it must undertake a statutory consultation with the 'relevant consultees' affected by this proposal. In this instance;

#### **Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools**

are the 'affected schools'.

The formal consultation on the proposal within this document will be undertaken under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the Act"). The consultation period will start on **15<sup>th</sup> June 2023** (with due written notice of the proposal issued to the relevant consultees listed in Appendix 1) and end on **13<sup>th</sup> September 2023**. Written representations must be received by this date in order to be taken into account.

**A copy of the proposal document will be provided to the following 'relevant consultees' in terms of the Act:**

A summary of that document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document
- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors (Ward 3 Mid Argyll)
- Furnace Community Council
- West Loch Fyne Community Council
- Lochgilphead Community Council
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP

- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

A copy of that document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Lochgilphead Library, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8AA
- Furnace Primary Furnace, By Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XU

The steps listed below have also been taken to ensure that the proposal is widely available:

- The proposal document will also be published on the Argyll and Bute Council website;
- Publicised in Argyll & Bute's weekly Newsround throughout the consultation period;
- Social media postings by the council on both the Proposal and public meeting;
- Physical posters re the public meeting displayed at the affected schools (Lochgilphead, Furnace & Inveraray) and local shops in Inveraray
- This document can be made available in alternative forms or translated by contacting Argyll House, Dunoon, tel: 01369 708576 or [argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk);

A copy of this document will also be available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Lochgilphead Library, Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8AA
- Furnace Primary Furnace, By Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XU

There will be a public meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00pm in Minard Primary School.

## DATA

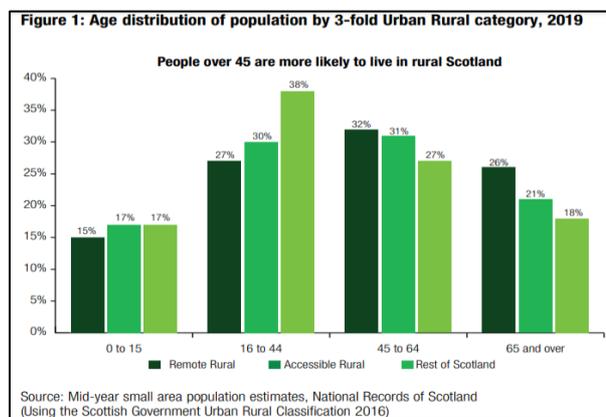
The catchment area for Minard Primary School is classed as remote rural. The definition for remote rural are settlements with a population of less than 3,000 with a greater than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.

**Table 1: Population and land share by 3-fold Urban Rural category, 2011 & 2019**

	2011	2019	% change 2011-2019	% of 2019 population	% of land area
<b>Remote Rural</b>	315,945	316,166	0.1%	6%	70%
<b>Accessible Rural</b>	573,407	616,536	8%	11%	28%
<b>Rest of Scotland</b>	4,410,548	4,530,598	3%	83%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,299,900</b>	<b>5,463,300</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Mid-year small area population estimates, National Records of Scotland (Using Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016)

Source: Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021 The Scottish Government , February 2021



<https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-scotland-key-facts-2021>

Remote rural areas have a lower percentage of the population in the 0-15 and the 16-44 age groups but a higher proportion of people aged 45-64. For example, in 2019 27% of the population in remote rural areas and 30% of the population in accessible rural areas were 16-44 year olds, compared to 38% in the rest of Scotland.

Conversely, 58% of the population in remote rural areas and 52% of the population in accessible rural areas were aged 45 and over, compared to 45% in the rest of Scotland.

In 2019 the proportion of people aged 65 or over was 21% in accessible rural areas and 26% in remote rural areas compared to 18% in the rest of Scotland.

56% of journeys to school were made by walking or cycling in 2021. 68% of those aged 4-11 and 43% of those aged 12-18 usually walked or cycled to school. For those aged 4-11 the next most popular mode was as a passenger in a car or van (25%). For those aged 12-18, the next most popular was school bus (28%). 5% of children aged 4-11 usually used school transport. 11% of children living in the most deprived SIMD areas (centile 1 and 2) used school transport. 50% of children living in remote rural areas used school transport.

[Transport and Travel in Scotland 2021: Results from the Scottish Household Survey | Transport Scotland](#) (updated September 2022)

## OTHER INFORMATION

Evidence for this proposal was found in the Equality Evidence Finder, and in the Guidance for the Fairer Scotland Act.

Additional evidence was found in the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, in terms of legislative compliance. Education management circulars, 1.33 on capacity, 3.01 on admission and 3.09 on transfers were also consulted. The circular 3.23 on child protection and safeguarding was also considered.

The national policy of GIRFEC – Getting it Right for Every Child, was also considered in the formation of this proposal as was the Argyll and Bute Education vision and strategy, Our Children, Their Future

### Gaps in evidence

There are no gaps in evidence

## Section 3: Impact of proposal

### Impact on service users:

Description	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age		X		
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Sex		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population				x
Island populations		x		
Low income				X
Low wealth				X
Material deprivation				X
Area deprivation				X
Socio-economic background				X
Communities of place				X
Communities of interest				X

If you have identified any impacts on service users, explain what these will be.

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

If the proposal is accepted, there will be no immediate impact on pupils and families, as the children are already currently attending Lochgilphead and Furnace/ Inveraray Primary Schools, who would otherwise have attended Minard Primary School.

There may be families who move into the revised catchment area who would then require transport, and in addition, if significant, this may lead to changes in staffing levels in Furnace Primary School.

The Education Management team will use their existing quality assurance procedures to monitor the education provided in the school.

**Impact on service deliverers (including employees, volunteers etc.):**

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age				x
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Sex		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population				x
Island populations		X		
Low income				X
Low wealth				X
Material deprivation				X
Area deprivation				X
Socio-economic background				X
Communities of place				X
Communities of interest				X

**If you have identified any impacts on service deliverers, explain what these will be.**

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

The Proposal has a consultation period that runs from June 15<sup>th</sup> 2023 to September 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 where all interested parties can submit a written representation. A public meeting will be held on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 where interested parties can ask questions of the Proposal.

**How has ‘due regard’ been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?**

In looking at the educational benefits statement of this proposal these have been considered. All information is contained in the proposal paper in Appendix 1 or to read online:

[Minard Primary School Proposal Paper](#)

**Section 4: Interdependencies**

**Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?**

Potentially on transport, as more children may require transport who may move into the catchment area.

**Details of knock-on effects identified**

Increased number of children requesting free school transport may add pressure to the transport system.

**Section 5: Monitoring and review**

**How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?**

The Education Central Team including locality Education Managers will monitor the impact this catchment area change would have, if implemented.

## APPENDIX 3 - WRITTEN CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Argyll and Bute Council Education

### RESPONSE FORM

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Argyll and Bute Council.

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School – to the extent that the north section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay) will be subsumed by Furnace Primary School; and the south section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg) is subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print)  Anne Paterson	Address: Auchbeag, Minard, By Inveraray, Argyll  Post Code: PA32 8YB
I <b>agree</b> (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signatur <i>Anne S Paterson</i> e:	Date: 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2023

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Elected Member / MSP / MP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
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\*Other: (please specify)  
Resident of Minard – Ex HT of Minard Primary, Ex Parent,

**Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)**

I agree with the proposal to now discontinue education provision at Minard Primary due to the low number of eligible pupils within the village.

However I am concerned with the school catchment area being split and the potential to further fracture the cohesion of the community. We are a small rural community who are working hard to engage with the whole community and to build community cohesion. My views are that the segregation of the catchment area would not support the ambition to build community cohesion.

My own views are that the catchment area should be subsumed into the Furnace Primary School Catchment area. Both schools have been in a shared headship now for many years and have built a wider community around the schools. Furnace is still a small school and provides the village school model rather than the bigger rural town model at Lochgilphead Primary.

We need to ensure that rural schools and their communities continue to be an important part of Education delivery in Argyll and Bute.

**Argyll and Bute Council: Education**

**RESPONSE FORM**

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Argyll and Bute Council.

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School – to the extent that the north section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay) will be subsumed by Furnace Primary School; and the south section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg) is subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print) Laura and Michael Skelton	Address: Tullochgorm, Minard, Argyll
	Post Code: PA32 8YQ
I agree that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: Laura A Skelton M J Skelton	Date: 11/09/2023 11/09/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council	<input type="checkbox"/>				
*Other: (please specify)							

40 years residency at Tullochgorm, Minard, parents of two children who previously attended Minard Primary School, previously actively involved in the school board, playgroup, and founder member of the After School Club. Retired teacher. Retired Care Commission Officer.

**Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)**

The proposal to partition the Minard School catchment area is potentially detrimental and serves no purpose.

Travel time/distance to Lochgilphead is approximately three times longer than travel time/distance to Furnace. Additionally the route to Furnace can be considered safer due to much of the road being within a 40 mph speed limit whereas the route to Lochgilphead has almost entirely a 60 mph speed limit. In terms of pupil welfare and safety Furnace should be the preferred option.

The Minard community situated to the south of the proposed catchment boundary comprises approximately thirty dwellings and has always been an integral part of the village. To separate future pupils from the same village community by sending them to schools in opposite directions runs counter to supporting communities and maintaining rural village identity and social integration.



**RESPONSE FORM**

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Argyll and Bute Council.

**Proposal**

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School – to the extent that the north section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay) will be subsumed by Furnace Primary School; and the south section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg) is subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print) MARGARET MONCUR	Address: 10 ACHAGOIL MINARD
	Post Code: PA32 8YE

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: <i>Margaret Moncur</i>	Date: 11/9/23
-----------------------------------	---------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP		<input type="checkbox"/>		Member of Community Council		<input type="checkbox"/>	

\*Other: (please specify)

Minard Resident, Parent of former Pupils

**Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)**

While I agree that this is the best option i.e. move to formal closure, splitting the village by realigning the catchment areas to Lochgilphead and Furnace will reinforce a fragmented community. It would be better if they could all go to the same school but in stating that I am conscious that several parents are already “ voting with their feet” with placement requests to Inveraray PS.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those involved with Minard School over past years. Both my children enjoyed and benefited from their time at Minard School.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 13 September 2023 at 21:08:11 BST  
**To:** [argyllhoustoreception@argyll.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhoustoreception@argyll.gov.uk)  
**Subject:** Minard Primary School

Dear Sir/Madam

Can I first ask if the attached notice was displayed on the Minard community notice board? If it was - I didn't see it, and I view the notice board regularly. I saw this notice in Inveraray Co-op AFTER the event in Minard primary school had taken place. I would certainly have attended had I known about it. I am also a teacher and didn't hear anything about the event in connection with my job either. If I didn't know about it, I wonder how many others also didn't know about it? I am VERY disappointed in this apparent lack of proper consultation.

I do think there is a strong case for Minard Primary School to be reopened, a 'halfway house' in between the larger Inveraray and Lochgilphead schools, and would like my views in this respect to be formally put forward. Too many smaller schools are being closed to the detriment of communities and children who would thrive in a smaller, more nurturing environment.

KarenElkin  
(Local resident and Teacher)

## **APPENDIX 4 PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

### **Minard Primary School Public Consultation Meeting**

**Held in Minard Primary School on 29 August 2023 at 7pm**

#### **Panel**

Yvonne McNeilly, Policy Lead for Education

Daniel Hampsey, Depute Policy Lead for Education

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director

Jen Crocket, Chief Education Officer/Head of Education-Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement

Wendy Brownlie, Head of Education – Performance and Improvement

#### **In attendance**

Graeme McMillan - Transformation Programme Manager

Annette Trevelyan – Education Officer

Simon Ross – Education Scotland

#### **Admin:**

Fiona Ferguson – Directorate Support Officer

Laura Blackwood – Directorate Support Officer

Councillor J Brown

Councillor D Philand

9 Members of the public

Welcome and introductions were made by Councillor McNeilly.

Mr Hendry outlined the objective of tonight's meeting, the proposal itself and the statutory process which the Education Service must follow.

Ms Crocket and Mrs Brownlie then spoke to a prepared presentation on the proposal this included, the background to the proposal, the reasons for the proposal, the educational benefits which the Council believe would be achieved upon implementation of the proposal and information on how stakeholders can submit formal responses to the consultation.

Questions were also taken from the audience.

#### **Audience**

In relation to the timeframe what takes place from June 2023 to May 2024?

#### **Panel Response**

Once the consultation period closes, the children who are in the current catchment area for Minard and could attend primary school will have the opportunity to speak to Education Scotland. Education Scotland will then formulate their report and submit this to the Education Service. All the feedback from focus groups, stakeholders, the consultation and this meeting, together with the Education Scotland report, will be taken into account. The Service will then produce a further report which will go to the next available Community Services Committee for a decision on closure, which is likely to be in March 2024.

### **Audience**

Does this report then go to the full Council for a decision?

### **Panel Response**

No, there is no need for this to go a Council meeting. The Community Services Committee has full delegated powers to take a decision.

### **Audience**

How is the Council facilitating the responses to the consultation?

### **Panel Response**

Comments made here tonight will be noted and fed into the process.

The proposal paper, summary report and a response form is on the Council's website and this form can be completed and sent in.

Closing date for the consultation is Wednesday 13 September 2023.

### **Audience**

What are the Council doing to promote this consultation? The community only knew it was happening from a poster which was in the co-op, why was one not put up in the village?

Offer for the consultation to be publicised on the Minard community facebook page.

### **Panel Response**

In terms of the statutory consultation process the Service have carried out what is required. Notice about the consultation was given to all of the relevant consultees, and the Notice was also posted on the Council website. This was also advertised through social media and posters. It is a matter of regret that this was not taken further with one being placed in the village.

Suggested that additional social media posts can be put out to further highlight the consultation period.

## **Audience**

Two significant points here the process as a whole and the process for engagement/communications need to improve.

## **Audience**

In regard the proposed catchment areas having the line as is currently stands could cause different social interaction which would be a shame.

## **Panel Response**

At the point when the school was mothballed, the discussions at that time with the parents informed this catchment boundary. The catchment area does not stop a placing request to another school outwith the catchment area being made.

## **Audience**

If parents choose to send their children to a school outwith the catchment area they would be responsible for getting them there and incurring that cost. This could lead to parents having an inequality of choice as some parents who can't afford to take their children to their choice of school would have to stay within the catchment area.

Why is there a split to Furnace and Lochgilphead as its 4 miles to Furnace and 14 miles to Lochgilphead?

## **Panel**

Based on the discussions previously held with families when the school was initially mothballed, this approach was deemed to have regard to those views, allowing a degree of choice of school.

## **Audience**

This is a pointless change – they are all members of the same village why do this?

We need to future proof – these are fragile communities and this split gives the wrong message.

## **Panel**

This is a just one proposal, if there was a clear view from this evening and from other responses this would be taken into account when the final proposal is being produced.

Our first priority would be the views from the families with children who are affected by this proposal.

**Audience**

How does this proposal fit as the Education Act states that a school can only be closed for educational benefit reasons? Is this just to provide further information?

**Panel**

Yes, all these factors have an impact.

**Audience**

If children were not transported by parents to school would pupils travel on the service bus with secondary children?

**Panel**

The Transport Team would advise us what transport arrangements would be available for the children. Assessments if required can be carried out for a child who has additional support needs. The Education Service work closely with colleagues the Transport Team.

Whatever is put in place will be safe and legally compliant.

**Audience**

Keen to see educational improvements in the area. What will the savings that would be made from this proposal be used for? Have you looked at the possibility of improving pre-school provision in the community?

**Panel**

Where there are satellite schools we have found that parents choose to take their children to the town where they work.

When 1140 hours policy was implemented a significant exercise was undertaken at that time to find out where children were located across Argyll and Bute.

This building would not meet Care Inspectorate requirements and this is not something we have considered in regard to Minard, however the Service are willing to offer advice and support to any toddler groups.

**Audience**

What forecasting mechanism is being used to forecast future numbers of children?

## **Panel**

Our roll projections are based on a range of factors, including age, social and economic data, planning applications to name a few. We have re-gained access to NHS records, which are also key in determining roll projections.

Older population is not peculiar to Minard, in an educational context this is a factor but at a national level there is no joined up or co-ordinated approach to demographics.

## **Audience**

There are no children in the school and even if the school was re-opened parents would chose not to attend Minard.

Two points to do the right thing for families and children – need to mark the memories.

No real choice for parents as there is no wrap around care in Minard or Furnace therefore Inveraray or Lochgilphead are the only choices.

## **Panel**

As wrap around care is not a statutory duty the Council do not receive funding to provide this.

The Education Service is willing to engage with communities to help them provide out of school hour care for school aged children.

## **Audience**

In terms of transport, does the arrangements for this only begin when a decision is made and does this apply to what will happen to the school building?

## **Panel**

The community can develop thinking now but no decision on the future of the school will be taken until the March 2024 Committee.

Reference was made to previous processes e.g. Achnamara and Ardchattan where the school was transferred to the community. There are a number of ways of pursuing this.

## **Audience**

Did the council facilitate this?

## **Panel**

The Council does have some resource looking at 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and Community Empowerment Act. You would need to have some idea of what you wanted to pursue before you come in to engage.

Other community groups who have completed similar transfers may be able to assist.

### **Audience**

What is the legal situation in regard to the title of the school?

### **Panel**

The Council's title to the building was obtained from Thomas Owen Lloyd in favour of the School Board of the Parish of Glassary in 1906. Legal Services and Estates indicate there is a burden in the title from 1906 to the effect that the subjects are to be used for educational purposes and for no other purpose. However Conveyancing Team within Legal Services have investigated and in providing a copy of the title plan it clearly shows that the area of ground in question was in fact within the Council's school title and it was transferred to the Community Trust in 2006

This process would need to conclude before any further work would be undertaken in regard to the titles.

### **Audience**

Would it be possible to be passed on details of the Lloyd Trust to the community if available? So we can make our own enquiries.

### **Panel**

Yes if we have these they can be passed over.

Councillor McNeilly thanked everyone for their attendance and expressing their views and closed the meeting.

## APPENDIX 5 - EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT



# Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Argyll and Bute Council to discontinue education provision at Minard Primary School and to realign the catchment area to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools.**

September 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 Argyll and Bute Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Minard Primary School and to realign the catchment area to Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools. 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; and other children in the council area;
- 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:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 29 August 2023 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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 site of Inveraray Primary School, Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus, 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 Minard Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

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## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Argyll and Bute Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council undertook the consultation between 15 June and 13 September 2023. The proposal was communicated via the council website and a copy provided to key stakeholders. The consultation paper was made available in several local venues and council offices. Argyll and Bute Council held a public meeting at Minard Primary School on 29 August 2023. This was attended by nine members of the local community, local elected members and council officers. No parents attended. The council received five responses to the online consultation and almost all agreed with the proposal to close the school.

2.3 Overall, all attendees at the public meeting and those who responded to the consultation agree that Minard Primary School is no longer viable. While they are disappointed to lose the school within the village, they agree that it should close. However, several local residents are concerned about the council's proposal to split the Minard Primary School catchment between two different primary schools. In their responses, they have suggested an alternative proposal to realign the whole of the Minard catchment to Furnace Primary School. This would, in their view, help to maintain a unified village and local community identity. The council should consider this alternative proposal and assess if this would be a suitable alternative to their original proposed alignment. Discussions at the public meeting also focused on the potential future use of the site. If the council decides to close the school, they should continue to work with the local community to explore alternative uses for the school and grounds.

## 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council has set out clearly the educational benefits arising from the proposal for children from the Minard Primary School catchment to attend either Lochgilphead Primary School or a split placement between Furnace and Inveraray Primary Schools. The council has considered and highlighted the positive educational benefits in relation to: learning and teaching; meeting learners needs; broadening the range of educational experiences; and the environment for learning. HM Inspectors agree that there can be educational benefits for children, including opportunities to learn, develop and socialise with a wider group of peers. The council has highlighted one negative aspect around additional travel. However, HM Inspectors agree that the positive aspects of the proposal outweigh this negative aspect.

3.2 Almost all staff, parents and children, that HM Inspectors met with, agree with the council's proposal to permanently close Minard Primary School. A few people were unhappy that there would no longer be an option for children to attend a school in the village in the future. They did, however, understand the reasons why the council was proposing closure. The children that HM Inspectors spoke with, who attend either Furnace/Inveraray Primary Schools or Lochgilphead Primary School, are happy with the current arrangements. Almost all of them said that they would not wish to attend Minard Primary School if it were to re-open. All of the children who live in Minard hope that the school and the grounds can be repurposed in the future for the benefit of the local community.

3.3 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard.

3.4 The council took appropriate steps to consider reasonable alternatives to closing Minard Primary School through an options appraisal and engagement with stakeholders prior to moving

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ahead with the consultation. The alternatives included: re-opening Minard Primary School; continuing to mothball Minard Primary School with the pupils zoned to Furnace Primary School; and closing Minard Primary School and realigning its catchment area to Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools. The council has considered the impact on the community if the school is closed. The school, which was in the past a hub within the village, has the potential to be repurposed. This could have a positive impact on the local community in the future. The council has also considered the likely effect of different travelling arrangements, which would essentially be the same as those in place while the school has been mothballed. The travelling time between Minard and Lochgilphead is around twice the time between Minard and Furnace. In finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries, the council may wish to consider the alternative suggestion to realign the whole of the Minard catchment area to Furnace Primary School.

#### **4. Summary**

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits for children arising from the council's proposal to close Minard Primary School. For example, that there can be more opportunities for them to learn, develop and socialise with a wider group of their peers. A few stakeholders have questioned the proposal to split the Minard catchment. The council should take these views into consideration when finalising the alignment of catchment boundaries, if they decide to close Minard Primary School. The council should also work with the local community, including children and young people, to consider any alternative use for the school and grounds taking account of local needs, views and aspirations.

**HM Inspectors**  
**September 2023**

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## APPENDIX 6 - PUPIL FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

### Lochgilphead Primary

Date of Pupil Consultation	4/9/23
School for proposed closure	Minard Primary School
Staff member(s) Leading. Number of children / age range.	Cathleen MacDonald  4 children – aged from P4 to P7

Background information for pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am meeting with you today because the Council want to find out your views, about Minard Primary School being closed. This process of asking for your views is called a consultation.</li> <li>• This consultation is anonymous – which means your words and ideas may be used in public reports that are written, but your name won't be written with your words and ideas.</li> <li>• We want to consult with you to find out what you think about the Council's proposal to close Minard Primary School. The Council is proposing this because             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There many pupils from the area that would go to Minard and this number isn't going up.</li> <li>- It's getting expensive to keep looking after a building that isn't being used.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It is important that we find out your thoughts and opinions because you are the most current pupils that went to that school so your views are important and this will help us make a decision for pupils that would be future pupils at Minard Primary School.</li> <li>• Closing the school isn't the only option for Minard Primary School –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It could re-open.</li> <li>- It could continue to be 'mothballed' – which means it's temporarily closed like it is now.</li> <li>- Close Minard PS and change the catchment area for pupils to go to other schools nearby.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
If you went to Minard tell us a little bit about going to school at Minard PS.	N/A
What do you think the positive things would be if Minard PS closed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New houses could be built</li> <li>• The building could be given to Minard Community Council to be used as a community building.</li> <li>• It could be used as a football pitch or play park.</li> <li>• Children can go to a bigger school in Lochgilphead where there are more opportunities.</li> </ul>
Do you have any concerns about Minard PS closing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would mean that there would be no local school as an option for any new children in the village.</li> </ul>

What might other people be concerned about if Minard PS closed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other people in the village have said they would rather it closed.</li> </ul>
If Minard PS closed is there anything that would help make this easier for pupils from Minard PS going to another school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is already a bus to take children to school in Lochgilphead however, there needs to be a safer crossing to the bus stop.</li> </ul>
Do you have any other comments about this that you want to add?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school needs cleaned up and made safe.</li> <li>• There should be security cameras and 'no littering' signs put up.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have more ideas please let your teacher know.</li> <li>• If anything we have chatted about today has made you worried remember you can talk to your class teacher or your parents.</li> </ul>

### **Furnace / Inveraray Primary**

Date of Pupil Consultation	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
School for proposed closure	Minard Primary School
Staff member(s) Leading.	Sandra Clarke
Number of children / age range.	4 pupils; aged P2 to P6

Background information for pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am meeting with you today because the Council want to find out your views, about Minard Primary School being closed. This process of asking for your views is called a consultation.</li> <li>• This consultation is anonymous – which means your words and ideas may be used in public reports that are written, but your name won't be written with your words and ideas.</li> <li>• We want to consult with you to find out what you think about the Council's proposal to close Minard Primary School. The Council is proposing this because <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– There many pupils from the area that would go to Minard and this number isn't going up.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's getting expensive to keep looking after a building that isn't being used.</li> <li>• It is important that we find out your thoughts and opinions because you are the most current pupils that went to that school so your views are important and this will help us make a decision for pupils that would be future pupils at Minard Primary School.</li> <li>• Closing the school isn't the only option for Minard Primary School – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It could re-open.</li> <li>- It could continue to be 'mothballed' – which means it's temporarily closed like it is now.</li> <li>- Close Minard PS and change the catchment area for pupils to go to other schools nearby.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
If you went to Minard tell us a little bit about going to school at Minard PS.	No children previously attended Minard Primary School.
What do you think the positive things would be if Minard PS closed?	<p>Children have better opportunities for learning in a bigger primary school. The building could be used for something else, a hotel, meeting place or supporting the community.</p> <p>Children will make more friends in bigger schools.</p> <p>It would save money and the money could be used for other schools.</p>
Do you have any concerns about Minard PS closing?	<p>I wonder what would happen to the building.</p> <p>Could we use some of the resources that are there as it would be a shame to waste them.</p> <p>I worry that there are not many families or children in Minard.</p>
What might other people be concerned about if Minard PS closed?	Having to drive to other schools. If Minard was open, they could walk to school.
If Minard PS closed is there anything that would help make this easier for pupils from Minard PS going to another school?	Provide a school bus for children but this would add to climate change and pollution.
Do you have any other comments about this that you want to add?	<p>If it was closed we could play football there.</p> <p>If Minard children come to Inveraray, we would make them feel welcome.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have more ideas please let your teacher know.</li> <li>• If anything we have chatted about today has made you worried remember you can talk to your class teacher or your parents.</li> </ul>