

OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR THE FUTURE OF ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to provide detail of the options appraisal process and the options identified for the future of Ardchattan Primary School. This information will enable committee to determine the basis under which any statutory consultation will proceed.
- 1.2 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools establishment that is in effect a presumption against the closure of rural schools. 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.
- 1.3 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- a) Note the options identified through the preliminary consultation process into the future of Ardchattan Primary School
 - b) Agree that Education Officers begin the formal consultation process as detailed in the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.
 - c) Note that papers produced for the public should be readily available.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 24 April 2014 Council approved the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. Council agreed that if there were no registered pupils by the close of the registration period for session 2016/17 the Council would consult formally on the future of school provision at Ardchattan. <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s87661/ARDCHATTAN%20PRIMARY%20SCHOOL.pdf>. Ardchattan Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.
- 2.2 Following the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School, the pupils from the Ardchattan Primary School catchment area are currently attending either Lochnell or Dunbeg Primary Schools. Lochnell is 8.3 miles from Ardchattan, Dunbeg is 10.3 miles from Ardchattan Primary School. (AA Route Planner)
- 2.3 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools establishment that is in effect a presumption against the closure of rural schools. 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.
- 2.4 On 14th December 2017, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation for Ardchattan Primary school. Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 presenting and outlining details of the consultation <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s124759/Pre%20Consultation%20for%20Ardchattan%20Ashfield%20Primary%20Schools.pdf>
- 2.5 To meet the preliminary requirements the Education Service has, following consultation with the local community, prepared the options appraisal which includes the following:
- Context
 - The local area and communities around the schools
 - Detail on individual schools involved
 - Community engagement
 - Options for consideration regarding reasonable alternatives

- Analysis of options
- Detailed analysis of reasonable options including educational benefit statements, financial impact and environmental impact
- Conclusion

2.6 A preliminary consultation event was held in Ardchattan Primary on 28th March 2018 to seek the views of the community on the future of Ardchattan Primary School. This event was well attended.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee

- a) Note the options identified through the preliminary consultation process into the future of Ardchattan Primary School.
- b) Agree that Education Offices begin the formal consultation process as detailed in the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.
- c) Note that papers produced for the public should be readily available.

4.0 CONTEXT - EDUCATION IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

- 4.1 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. The size of schools varies significantly across the authority with primary school rolls ranging from less than 10 pupils to around 400, and secondary school rolls ranging from less than 30 to over 1300. There are 22 primary schools with a roll of under 20 pupils. The needs of most pupils, even those with significant and complex needs, are met within mainstream classes or in learning centers situated within mainstream schools. A very small, and reducing, number of children and young people are educated in day and residential schools out with Argyll and Bute.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.

- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Within the Corporate Plan, the agreed priorities include “*the education we provide meets the needs of all our young people and their families*”. This priority is underpinned and strengthened by Our Children, Their Future, Education Vision and Strategy. The priority actions within the strategy are to
- *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*
- 4.5 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. Councils also have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value. The Community Services Asset Management Plan provides a review of the property assets used to deliver Education services and the plan for capital investment. This 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 Services Asset Management Plan for schools and public buildings, both in the management of the existing assets and in the design and construction of new developments.
- 4.6 In addition, the Community Empowerment Act (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 within a reasonable timescale to them.

5.0 LOCAL AREA AND COMMUNITY

- 5.1 **The Ardchattan Primary School Setting**
Ardchattan Primary School was built in 1886 and is an attractive building of local granite in an exceptionally scenic setting. The school is co-educational and non-denominational and has a catchment area extending along the northern shore of Loch Etive including the village of Bonawe. The schools has

two classrooms, an art area and general purpose room as well as an office, a separate canteen building and a large playground.

Appendix 1 – Ardchattan Floor Plan.

- 5.2 The Scottish Government’s Rural School List 2016 classifies Ardchattan Primary School as ‘very remote rural’. This is defined 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. Ardchattan Primary is one of a group of over 20 primaries associated with Oban High School.
- 5.3 The school has been very active within the community. It has been a focus for social and educational events. The pupils invited the community in to events on many occasions every year. Whilst being mothballed the school continues to be used for Community Council Meetings, Friends of Ardchattan School Meetings and occasional other events. There is no other available community space or hall in the area.
- 5.4 Ardchattan is a scenically beautiful area, north of Oban bordering Loch Etive. This area includes Glen Ure, Glen Creran, Barcaldine, Benderloch, Connel, Bonawe and Glen Etive. Its name derives from the 6th-century Irish monk Saint Cathan, combined with the Gaelic element *ard-*, or "heights". Ardchattan Priory, founded as a Valliscaulian priory around the year 1230, is an historic attraction within the parish. The priory's ruins and surrounding gardens are open to the public. In the early 1900's there were about a thousand people living in Bonawe/ Ardchattan. The hub of this community was the Bonawe Quarry which still operates today.
- 5.5 Ardchattan Primary School is 8.3 miles from Lochnell Primary School. The area is sparsely populated with houses along the lochside, farms and the community of Bonawe. The school is situated on the side of a single track road that leads from North Connel to Ardchattan, there is then a further 0.8 of a mile of road leading to Bonawe Quarry where the road ends.
- 5.6 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 Ardchattan area showing the changing population from census 2001 to census 2011.

Table 1: Population information

Ardchattan Area Census Ref : 60QD000575			
2001		2011	
Total Resident Population	140	Total Resident Population	136
% under 16	25.71	% under 16	15.4
% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	55.71	% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	66.2
% pensionable age and over	18.57	% pensionable age and over	16.8

It is recognised that the census area and the catchment area of Ardchattan School differ slightly.

- 5.7 The current Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in March 2015. A new Local Development Plan (LDP2), which will set out planning and development proposals for the next 10 years from 2020 and a vision for 20 years, is currently being prepared. 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.
- 5.8 Appendix 2 shows the LDP for Bonawe. Within the Ardchattan/ Bonawe LDP there is a designated area suitable for quarrying development whilst there is no area designated specifically for housing development. Within the Lochnell area there are 2 designated areas for housing. Appendix 3 shows the LDP for Lochnell. Appendix 4 provides the key for LDPs.
- 5.9 Pupil projections, and data for 2017 - 2018 are based on data from the 2017 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 and pupil numbers for both Ardchattan and Lochnell primaries from August 2005-June 2014. It also highlights the current pupil numbers for Lochnell Primary from August 2014-June 2018.

Table 2	Ardchattan PS	Lochnell PS
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	57	148
2005-06	13	79
2006-07	10	80
2007-08	12	92
2008-09	10	92
2009-2010	9	87

2010-2011	5	92
2011-2012	3	96
2012-2013	3	101
2013-2014	4	112
2014-2015	0	109
2015-2016	0	114
2016-2017	0	124
2017-2018	0	130

Table 3 shows projected roles for Lochnell Primary School and approximate numbers of pupils in the Archattan Primary School catchment area according to figures held by Argyll and Bute.

Table 3	Ardchattan PS	Lochnell PS
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	57	154
2018 -2019	7	127
2019- 2020	6	128
2020 -2021	5	116*
2021 -2022	6	107*

* A prediction based on information available May 2018.

- 5.10 As a small settlement Bonawe is not identified for strategic growth in the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan (2015). There are no 'housing allocations' or 'potential development areas' identified in the plan in connection with this settlement, so any development opportunities would be confined to 'windfall' sites within the settlement boundary identified in the plan, and this does not appear to afford many, if any, credible opportunities for new residential development of any significant scale. There has been one planning permissions granted for the erection of four new dwellings within the settlement during the last three years (not currently built), which is indicative of the general lack of any significant growth potential. There may be some isolated opportunities for dwellings in the countryside within reasonable travelling distance of the school site, but to satisfy settlement strategy policy these would need to be on appropriate sites within defined 'rural opportunity areas'. These are very limited in both distribution and extent and would not be likely to afford many credible opportunities within the wider area.
- 5.11 The 'Key Rural Settlement' of Benderloch, where Lochnell Primary School is situated, has a moderate potential for growth with the Council's adopted settlement planning strategy allowing for 'medium scale' development (between 6 and 30 dwelling units) on appropriate sites within the defined settlement boundary. In addition, the settlement of Benderloch currently has two 'Housing Allocations' within its boundaries with an expectation that these could be developed with a combined total of 61 dwellings. There is a further

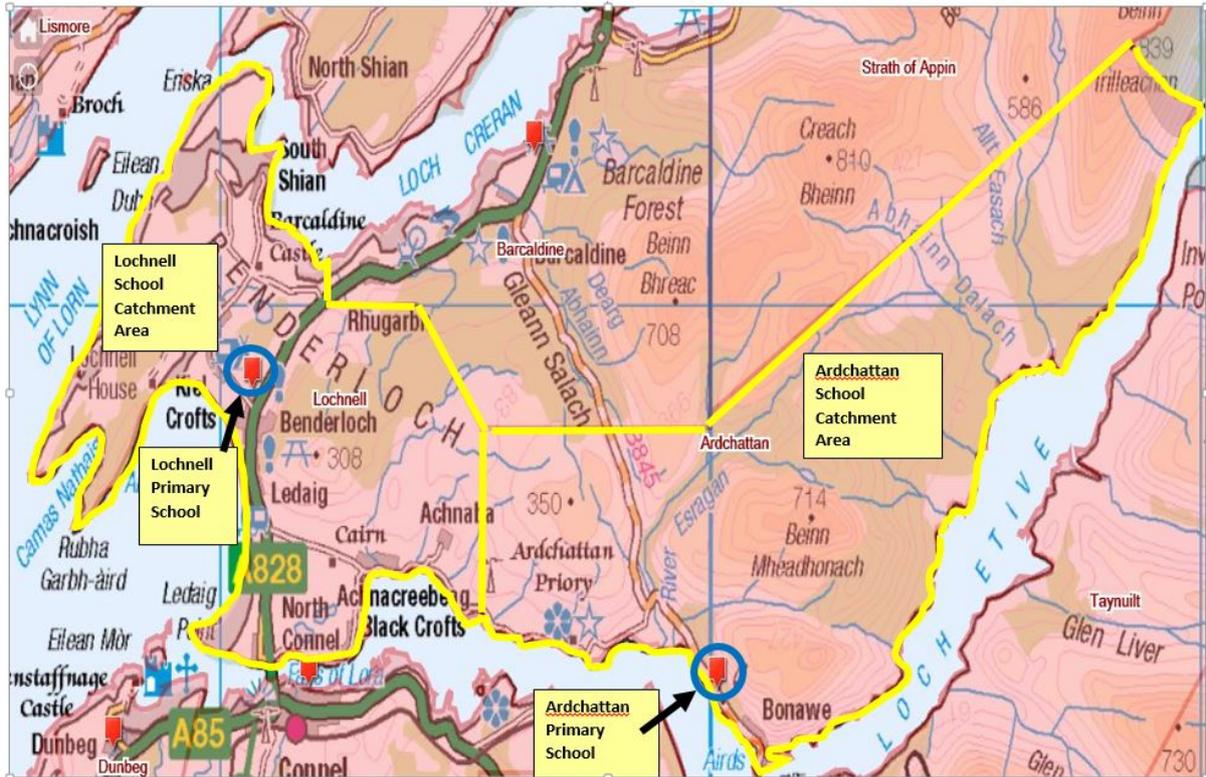
'Potential Development Area' identified within the settlement boundary which affords the potential for further residential development of the site to a medium to high density. Benderloch is a relatively large settlement consisting of two discrete built-up areas, both of which have the potential to accommodate further 'windfall' development on appropriate sites.

In addition, the catchment area for Lochnell Primary School also incorporates the settlement of North Connel. North Connel is another relatively large settlement which includes a further two Housing Allocations for a combined total of 38 dwelling units and two additional Potential Development Areas for residential development (at low density).

- 5.12 Following the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School children attend either Lochnell Primary School or Dunbeg Primary School. Lochnell Primary School is a nondenominational and co-educational school situated in the village of Benderloch on the main Oban – Fort William road. The building is single storey and was opened in 1992. The teaching bays in the original building are semi open plan. The entire building is well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for the primary school. Appendix 5: Lochnell Floor Plan.

The outdoor area provides many opportunities for learning. A joint school and community project was completed to provide and maintain the all- weather pitch adjacent to the school. There is a hard play area complemented by grass play areas. The school has safe and easy access both the beach and Beinn Lora. There are willow dens to play in and access to the nearby cycle track.

- 5.13 The building has facilities for pupils, visitors and special access needs. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2016 classifies Lochnell Primary School as 'very remote rural'. Oban High School is the associated Secondary School for Ardchattan, Lochnell and over 20 other Primary Schools. The Map below shows the adjoining catchment areas of Ardchattan and Lochnell Primary Schools Catchment Areas.



6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 A meeting was held in Ardchattan Primary School, on Wednesday 28th March 2018, 2-7pm. This was to seek the views of the community on the future of Ardchattan School. This meeting was attended by 15 People. There was also a meeting in Oban High School, Dunbeg Primary School and Lochnell Primary Schools to gather opinions from the young people from within the catchment area for Ardchattan School. Seven primary age children attended and five secondary aged young people attended.

6.2 Attendees at the sessions were given an overview of the information that the council would be using in this options appraisal, this included pupil projections, financial information, development information and local services and facilities.

The questions were as follows:

- Over the last three years, what has been the effect of mothballing Ardchattan 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
 - Re-open the school but widen the catchment

- Other points of information that should be considered in the options appraisal
- Attendees also noted questions regarding the future of the school.

6.3 The feedback is referred to and stated in relation to the individual outcomes.

6.4 There was a range of viewpoints on the future of Ardchattan School: The mothballing has had a negative social impact on various examples of village community life, including:

- *Community events have stopped as in the past they were led by the school.*
- *Children have become disconnected from each other and the community - they travel to different schools via different transport arrangements and they don't know each other.*

The Community is disappointed that buildings have been neglected:

- *The school house has been abandoned and is now decaying rapidly. The school building has been neglected, there is significant water ingress, the kitchen has been removed and general disrepair is apparent.*

Parents stated:

- *Pupils are now well settled in other schools – they would not move their children back to Ardchattan.*

The young people stated

- *Community events stopped.*
- *Make the building a community shop, café, museum*
- *Reopening is not an option because there are not enough pupils to make it viable*
- *Moving the catchment area is not a viable option because people travel out of the Bonawe area towards Oban / Benderloch to go to work – not many travel the other way.*
- *In a very small school you have arguments and fall out then have to fall in again – so that was OK.*
- *If the school reopened we could walk to school.*
- *A family decision was made to attend another school due to friendships made at Nursery.*

General Comments

- *It was acknowledged by several attendees that the pupil numbers were low and this made a school unsustainable*
- *Some pupils are travelling out of the Ardchattan Catchment Area with their families to a school nearer employment that is more convenient for them as a family.*
- *The community stressed that the school buildings should be looked after as the only public space asset in the Bonawe area. The school has beautiful grounds and is a rich habitat for wildlife.*
- *Ardchattan/ Bonawe community are actively pursuing options for use of the building as a community hub.*

7.0 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 The options considered were

- a) Re open Ardchattan School with the existing catchment area.
- b) Continue the mothballing of the school with pupils travelling to Lochnell Primary School.
- c) Re-open Ardchattan School and realign the catchment area.
- d) Close Ardchattan School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include Ardchattan catchment area.
- e) Community Option: The school is re-opened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs

7.2 Option A: Re-open Ardchattan Primary School with its existing catchment area

Community Feedback

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary School as a school.

'Pupils are now well settled in other schools – they would not move back or away from their friends'

'Lochnell is super school the children are happy where they are.'

'Without a nursery/ preschool – the school will never pick up again'.

'The pupil numbers were low and this made a school unsustainable'.

There was one family who expressed a preference to reopen:

'Reopen the school as a specialist resourced school or a centre for additional support needs including a sensory room.'

7.3 Pupil Numbers - If the school were to reopen in August 2019, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be six. Pupils currently within the catchment area attend Lochnell, Dunbeg and Strath of Appin (Gaelic Medium Education) Primary Schools. It has been stated by several families that their children would not return to attend Ardchattan Primary School if it were to reopen. In addition pupil numbers over the next four years are not predicted to rise significantly.

7.4 Travel Arrangements - The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B845, or 10.2 miles via the A828. Travel time is approximately twenty minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost four years. Travel was an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community.

7.5 Community Impact - *'The community events have stopped as in the past they were led by the school.'*

'There was involvement regularly from older members of the community – they now miss the social interaction for example Burns Nights – concerts etc. This lack of interaction has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the

community in terms of isolation and loneliness.'

Ardchattan School has been used by the community for several community events, These include Community Council Meetings, Friends of Ardchattan School Meetings, and recently A Defibrillator Awareness evening, This was attended by more than twenty people – most of whom came on foot highlighting the central situation of the school within the community. Almost all who attended indicated the need for the school to become a facility for the community to use.

7.6 Option A in summary

Pupil numbers for the school if it reopened would be six, as of the September 2017 census. Several families have indicated they would not move their children back to Ardchattan Primary if it were an option.

The travel arrangements have been in place for nearly four years.

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B845, or 10.2 miles via the A828. Travel time is approximately twenty minutes. Adverse weather can be a factor, however this is the same for other local schools and areas.

Based on all the above, the community are keen to find a meaningful and purposeful community use for the school that will also safe guard community use of the play area and pitch, this does not include reopening Ardchattan as a school.

7.7 Option B: Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School with the pupils zoned to Lochnell Primary School

The school has been mothballed for nearly 4 years. The Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, 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.”

7.8 Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next 4 years, as per para 8.3 above. The 2018/19 projected annual running cost for electricity, heating oil, ground maintenance and such like is £1,964. This does not include building maintenance and repair costs. 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.

'The school house has been abandoned and is now decaying rapidly.'

'The school building has been neglected, there is significant water ingress, the kitchen has been removed and general disrepair is apparent.'

'This is an asset – the authority needs to consider if we close the school what the council will do to support the community.'

There are many ideas for the future of the building being taken forward by Friends of Ardchattan School.

7.9 Option B in summary

The school has been mothballed for four years, it is acknowledged that this is longer than the Statutory Guidance timescale of three years. Pupil numbers are not predicted to rise in terms of pre-school children living within the catchment area.

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. The community, based on views collected and submitted, view the buildings and grounds as an opportunity for a community facility. There were multiple suggestions for usage of the buildings. On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase, mothballing is not a good use of resources, and that the buildings and grounds could be developed to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

7.10 Option C - Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell School.

The catchment area for Ardchattan School is very rural and sparsely populated. Ardchattan School is 0.8 mile from Bonawe Quarry. The road then becomes a landrover track and continues up Loch Etive – no children/ families live there with the housing being mainly deer stalker bothies or holiday cottages. The track terminates several miles past Cadderlie.

‘Moving the catchment area is not a viable option because people travel out of the Bonawe area towards Oban / Benderloch to go to work – very few people travel the other way.’

‘I believe the catchment area for this school and physical location restrict reopening options for this school.’

‘Pupils are now well settled in other schools – they would not move back or away from their friends’

7.12 Lochnell Primary School

As part of the forthcoming consultation there will be discussions with the parent body of Lochnell School regarding the future of Ardchattan School. There was no representation from the Lochnell Parent Council at the Options Appraisal Meeting. It was felt by attendees at the options appraisal meeting that moving the catchment area was not an option due to the remote nature of the location, the road and accepted direction of travel.

7.13 Option C in summary - Due to the geographic location of this remote rural primary school it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable. This is because most pupils in the neighbouring catchment area travel in the direction of Benderloch or Oban that is towards the larger centres of population, and not towards Bonawe. This is therefore not a reasonable option.

7.14 Option D - Close Ardchattan Primary School and zone pupils to Lochnell Primary School and realign the catchment area

Table 4: Schools Occupancy

<i>Lochnell</i>	<i>2018/2019</i>	<i>2019/20</i>
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<i>Primary</i>		
<i>Approved Capacity</i>	154	154
<i>Lochnell Projected Roll</i>	127	128
<i>Ardchattan Projected Roll</i>	6 (4 already attending Lochnell)	5
<i>Total Roll Projection</i>	129	128
<i>Lochnell Occupancy</i>	83.7%	83%

Pupils from Ardchattan Primary currently attend Dunbeg Primary School, Lochnell Primary School and the Gaelic Medium Department in Strath of Appin Primary School. The current occupancy rate for Lochnell School including six pupils from Ardchattan catchment area is 83.7%. The travel distance from school to school is 8.3 miles.

- 7.15 Comments in relationship to the mothballing regarding Lochnell School were very positive.
'Pupils are now well settled in other schools – they would not move their children back to Ardchattan.'
'Lochnell is super school the children are happy where they are.'
 One comment observed the interactions of the children in the village as children have opted to attend different schools.
'Children have become disconnected from each other and the community - they travel to different schools via different transport arrangements and they don't know each other.'
- 7.16 The community overwhelmingly supported closure of the school then the building and adjoining grounds being retained for community use as there is not a hall or other community building in Ardchattan/ Bonawe. All people who attended the consultation strongly stated the school should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair.
'The school buildings should be looked after as the only public space asset in the Bonawe area. The school has beautiful grounds and is a rich habitat for wildlife.'
 Ardchattan/ Bonawe community Friends of Ardchattan School are actively pursuing options for use of the building as a community hub.
- 7.17 Option D in summary - Lochnell School currently accommodates pupils from Ardchattan School and pupil numbers are not projected to increase significantly. Lochnell Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the

projected pupil numbers. This option is considered to be reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact in section 10 below.

7.18 Additional suggestion – Community Option - The school is re-opened and designated as a resource center for children with additional support needs. A detailed submission was offered suggesting that Ardchattan School, in a beautiful rural setting, with many special facilities, is ideally placed to be developed in to a resource center. The center could provide a variety of placements and support packages for children from the surrounding area. Modification of the school would include a sensory room and therapy rooms being created.

7.19 The school has good outdoor facilities including a poly tunnel, climbing area, football pitch, tennis court, pond and extensive garden area with access to the hill woodland and path. Wildlife is abundant and this should be considered when making a decision about the future of the school. *‘Through spending time at Ardchattan Primary School we have realised how special the area is. It is rich in wildlife, peaceful and a pleasant place to do activities.’ ‘In our rural area and restricted house and garden, there are limited opportunities for sports and leisure locally.’ Ardchattan is a place where a child can cope. Staying in is detrimental to the health of children and their carers.*

7.20 In summary - As it is considered best practice that the needs of most of our young people are met within the mainstream context, either in class or in a learning centre, this is not considered a reasonable option.

7.21 The outcome of the options appraisal is summarised below:

Option	Option Description	Outcome
A	Re-open Ardchattan Primary School with the existing catchment area	Not a reasonable option.
B	Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School with the pupils zoned to Lochnell Primary School	Not a reasonable option.
C	Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell School.	Not a reasonable option
D	Close Ardchattan Primary School and zone pupils to Lochnell Primary School and realign the catchment area	A reasonable option with strong representation that the school becomes a facility the community can develop.
Community suggestion	The school is re-opened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs.	Not a reasonable option

The outcome of the option appraisal recommends Option D (Close Ardchattan Primary School and zone pupils to Lochnell Primary School and realign the

catchment area) as the only reasonable option.

8.0 EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT STATEMENTS

- 8.1 This statement focusses on Lochnell Primary School, which is the school the majority of the Ardchattan Pupils have been attending since August 2014.
- 8.2 **Learning and Teaching**
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.
- 8.3 In Lochnell 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. 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.
- 8.4 In Lochnell Primary School children are 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. 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 to secondary school.
- 8.5 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.
- 8.6 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 Lochnell 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. Lochnell Primary School is part of the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Cluster, and a smaller local cluster which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups.
- 8.7 Lochnell Primary School encourages nurturing and positivity through a successful Buddy System. Children from different stages work and learn together. This vertical support is particularly evident on Sports Day and in the

dining room when groups of children are together in a social context.

- 8.8 It is important to note that both Lochnell and Ardchattan are remote rural schools each set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children are benefitting from the broader environment, as stated above, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment.
- 8.9 The co-location of the nursery and the primary classes at Lochnell enhances the transition process for the children moving from Nursery in to Primary one, through joint educational processes and liaison between the two settings.
- 8.10 Outcomes
Through the GIRFEC practice mode, 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 focusing 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.
- 8.11 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. Lochnell continues 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 eg PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.
- 8.12 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.
- 8.13 Environment for Learning
Lochnell Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the village of Benderloch. The entire building is well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for the primary school. The school has an all-weather pitch adjacent to the school. The pitch is used very well by the school every day. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

8.14 Rural Factors – Impact on Travel Arrangements

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B845, or 10.2 miles via the A828. Travel time is approximately twenty minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost four years. Travel was an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community.

8.15 Rural Factors – Community Impact

Almost all those who attended the pre consultation meeting expressed a real negative effect on the community after the moth-balling of Ardchattan School. The community revolved around events hosted or organised by the school. The lack of these events is perceived as a real loss. Since the moth-balling Ardchattan School has been used by the community for several community events. These include a variety of community activities, including a Friends of Ardchattan School Group. Most attendees come on foot highlighting the central situation of the school within the community. The community are very clear they would like the buildings and grounds to develop in to a community asset for the village.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPACT

9.1 The financial savings generated from mothballing would predominately be made through staffing costs. Details of estimated budget for a comparative school to Ardchattan can be found in Appendix 6. These financial savings support the delivery of services across the whole of Argyll and Bute. The estimated annual running costs of the mothballed buildings are £1,964.

9.2 The cost of transport to Dunbeg and Ardchattan Schools is £44,187

9.3 The approximate cost to bring the property in to an acceptable condition for reopening is £165,000, this is for fabric, mechanical and electrical works. This includes a cost of £10,000 to bring the water supply to standard. In addition to the above costs professional fees incurred would be approximately £25,000. Please see Appendix: 7 for financial detail.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

10.1 Currently four pupils travel to Dunbeg Primary School and six pupils travel to Lochnell Primary School from the Ardchattan Primary School Catchment area, for which there is an environmental impact. However this will have been offset by the requirement to run Ardchattan Primary School as a moth-balled rather than fully operational building.

11.0 CONCLUSION

11.1 Five options have been reviewed in considering the future of Ardchattan Primary School. Information was collated on pupil numbers, housebuilding, finances, the school, travel arrangements, environmental impact and the local area and community informed the options.

11.2 Members are asked to approve the start of the formal consultation which should now take place to consider each option that is thought reasonable as there are a number of differing views within the community.

12.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 12.1 | Policy | Consultation will be in line with existing consultation policy and statutory requirements. |
| 12.2 | Financial | There will be resource implications with officers time spent on preparing the reports and consultation documents and events. |
| 12.3 | Legal | Adherence with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. |
| 12.4 | HR | None at this time. |
| 12.5 | Equalities | Will continue to be considered as part of the consultation process and options appraisal preparation. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared. |
| 12.6 | Risk | There could be reputational risk to the council in consulting on the closure of rural schools. |
| 12.7 | Customer Service | Information for all stakeholders will continue to be provided as part of the wider consultation process. |

- Appendix 1: Ardchattan School Floor Plan**
2: Bonawe Local Development Plan
3: Lochnell Local Development Plan
4: Local Development Plan Key
5: Lochnell School Floorplan
6: Financial detail

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23 August 2018

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