



Argyll and Bute Council

Education

CONSULTATION REPORT

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

AUGUST 2019

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 Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st October 2019.
- 1.2 The pupils of Ardchattan Primary School's catchment area will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School.
- 1.3 The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan 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:
 - Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147
 - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.1 fte (full time equivalent) vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
 - Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

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 2nd May 2019 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 24th April 2014, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. The Council agreed that in the event there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2016/17, the school be considered for formal closure through the statutory process.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=257&MId=6147&Ver=4>

- 4.2 On 14th December 2017, the Council agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an Options Appraisal for Ardchattan Primary School.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7671&Ver=4>

- 4.3 The Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the 2010 Act and a broad timeline of this process.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7776>

- 4.4 On 11th December 2018, the Council considered the Options Appraisal carried out in line with the preliminary requirements of the 2010 Act and agreed that the Education Service would now formulate a draft proposal for approval.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8098&Ver=4>

- 4.5 On 14th March 2019, the Council approved the draft Proposal Paper, adopted the proposal as a “relevant proposal” in terms of the 2010 Act, and agreed to proceed with the statutory consultation process.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8207>

- 4.6 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 Ardchattan 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 14th March 2019 – 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/education-and-learning>

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

- The Parent Councils of the “affected schools” (Ardchattan Primary School and Lochnell Primary School)
- The parents of the pupils attending 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 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
- Community Councils
- Community Planning Partnership
- 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 copy of the Proposal Paper was also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ

- Public libraries in the vicinities of the schools affected
 - Local area offices in the vicinities of the schools affected
 - The schools affected by the proposal
- 6.4 The document was available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English.
- 6.5 If members of the public wanted the document in another language or format, or if they required the services of an interpreter, this was made available.
- 6.6 There were 133 letters sent with the summary proposal, 15 letters sent which contained the full proposal, and 40 emails sent which contained the full proposal. These were sent 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 18th March 2019 until the close of business on 17th May 2019 – a minimum of six weeks which included at least 30 school days, as required by Section 6(4) of the 2010 Act.
- 6.8 A public meeting was held at Ardchattan Primary School on 2nd May 2019 at 7.00 pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate was welcome to do so. 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 period. It will be published on the Council’s website for a period of no less than 3 weeks prior to final consideration of the proposal by the Council’s Community Services Committee on 5th September 2019.

7. Pupil Engagement

- 7.1 The proposal to close Ardchattan Primary School could have an impact on pupils, parents and the community. Pupils’ views are a significant part of the consultation process. To that regard, pupils that would attend Ardchattan Primary School took part in a focus group with officers from the Education Service to share their views on the proposal.
- 7.2 The focus group consisted of 4 pupils with only 1 pupil having attended Ardchattan Primary. The pupils were given information regarding the Council’s proposal and asked for their thoughts and ideas through a series of questions.
- 7.3 Pupils in the focus group felt that it was positive if the school closed as they loved their school, Lochnell Primary, but they felt very strongly that the Ardchattan Primary School building should be used for the community. Pupils said:

“It’s really good (at Lochnell Primary) because we have lots of friends here that we know and we have known them for a while.”

“All of the teachers and staff are really friendly (at Lochnell Primary) and help you if you are stuck. There’s more staff here.”

“There is a community pop up tea room every 3rd Sunday (at Ardchattan Primary) and it’s really good. All of the profits go to making Ardchattan nicer.”

“If it (Ardchattan Primary) closed the building could be used for lots more community things.”

“I would be concerned if the school closed and the building couldn’t be used for the community.”

“It’s really important that the building is used for the community.”

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

8. Responses to the Consultation Exercise

8.1 There were 3 written responses received during the consultation period which were sent to the Head of Education, Learning and Teaching, Argyll House, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ. Two were supportive of the proposal and one was inconclusive. The summary of responses can be found at **Appendix 3**. Oral responses to the proposal were gathered at the public meeting held at Ardchattan Primary School on 2nd May 2019. Three representatives from the local community attended along with officers from the Education Authority and Education Scotland. Minutes of the public meeting are attached as **Appendix 4**. The three members of the public present intimated that they were in favour of the proposal and identified the potential of the vacant Ardchattan Primary School to act as a community hub.

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

- Views expressed generally that education provision should be discontinued at Ardchattan Primary School, but the school building should still be available to the community – with a view to community ownership.
- Clarification sought regarding travel to Lochnell Primary School being free of charge and whether parents who wish to send their children to Dunbeg Primary School would need to pay for transport.
- Clarification sought as to whether pre-five children would get free transport to Lochnell Primary School.
- View expressed by those present at the public meeting that the school roll fell as parents work in Oban and choose to send their children to schools in Oban so that they are able to drop them off and collect them after school. There is also afterschool care provision available in Oban.

There is no nursery provision in Ardchattan, and once children have been in nursery elsewhere they have already built up relationships and choose to stay there rather than return to Ardchattan Primary.

- View expressed by those present at the public meeting that children do not thrive in schools with low numbers.
- View expressed by those present at the public meeting that they appreciated the difficulties the Council faces when it comes to recruiting and retaining teaching staff.

8.3 The Education Authority identified and assessed a number of reasonable alternatives to the proposal in its Proposal Paper and as part of the preliminary requirements. No further reasonable alternatives to the proposal were submitted as part of the public consultation process.

9. Education Authority Response to Written/Oral Representations

9.1 Question: Transport is free of charge to Lochnell School – should parents wish to send their children to Dunbeg would they need to pay for transport?

Response: Yes.

9.2 Question: Would pre 5 children get free transport to Lochnell School?

Response: No – pre 5 is not statutory education. With the move to 1140 hours we would look at the closest provision – a courtesy ride may be provided.

9.3 Question: Have you assessed the impact of the proposal on the Community?

Response: The likely effect that implementation of the proposal would have on the local community is assessed in Paragraphs 17.2-17.13 of the Proposal Paper. In addition to this, the Council has considered all responses received in this regard as part of the consultation process.

9.4 Statement: There was an impact on the local community after mothballing the school – as this was well used by the community and we would like to try to keep it open for the community.

Response: There is a difference here between keeping the Education provision and keeping the building.

10. Education Scotland Report

10.1 In accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.

10.2 In preparing their report, Education Scotland attended the public meeting on 2nd May 2019 in connection with the Council's proposal. They also visited Lochnell, Dunbeg and Ardchattan Primary Schools to seek the views of relevant consultees.

10.3 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full at **Appendix 5**.

10.4 This report supports the proposal and is summarised below:

1. Education Scotland notes that the proposal has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Ardchattan Primary School and the local community.
2. Education Scotland notes that the proposal will assist the Council to deliver “Best Value” through making more efficient and effective use of its resources; ensuring that that the education budget is more sustainable in the future.
3. Education Scotland notes that the proposal has very strong support from stakeholders.
4. Education Scotland notes that in taking up the proposal the Council should follow up on its expressed interest in working with the Ardchattan community to develop a sustainable community facility via a possible community asset transfer.

11. Education Authority Response to Education Scotland Report

11.1 The Council welcomes the report from Education Scotland and accepts its findings.

11.2 The Council’s response to the findings contained within the Education Scotland Report is as follows:

Finding of report:

- a) Education Scotland notes that the proposal has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Ardchattan Primary School and the local community.
 - We agree that the educational benefits for current and future pupils are clear. These include improved social interaction with more children of the same age supporting the development of mental, social, physical and emotional skills. Children will also experience increased opportunities to engage in a wider range of activities enriching their curriculum experience.
- b) Education Scotland notes that the proposal will assist the Council to deliver “Best Value” through making more efficient and effective use of its resources; ensuring that that the education budget is more sustainable in the future.
 - In delivery of this proposal the council will not incur the costs of maintaining a mothballed building nor costs of repair if the building were

to reopen after 5 years. Staff costs and recruitment costs will also be saved.

- c) Education Scotland notes that the proposal has very strong support from stakeholders.
- Throughout the consultation almost all parents and children were in favour of the Council's proposal. The Community Council were also in favour of the proposal and expressed an interest in retaining the building for community use.
- d) In taking forward the proposal the Council should follow up on its expressed interest in working with the Ardchattan community to develop a sustainable community facility via a possible community asset transfer.
- Argyll and Bute Council is open to engaging with the local community and community council on its plans to develop a sustainable community facility via a possible community asset transfer.

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 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;
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting, and
- Education Scotland's report.

12.2 In addition, officers carried out a further assessment of the proposal and each of the alternatives to it 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.

12.3 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.

12.4 Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meetings and have considered equally carefully the Education Scotland report and the online and written representations. The proposal was reviewed to consider whether any of the representations led the Council to reconsider other options as being reasonable alternatives to the proposal to close Ardchattan Primary School. None of the

representations led officers to conclude that any of these options should be reconsidered as reasonable alternatives. The Educational Benefits were reviewed in respect of the Education Scotland report and representations made. There were no factors included in the Education Scotland report or representations made requiring any aspect of the Educational Benefits to be reconsidered. Further consideration was also given 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 concluded that the proposal continues to be the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons for its formulation.

- 12.5 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 remains the best solution to address the reasons for the proposal as set out at Section 2 of this Report. Implementation of 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 Ardchattan Primary School catchment area is insufficient to make the school viable. If the school were to remain mothballed this would be a continuing drain on the Council's resources. The proposal will assist the Council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. Furthermore, the Council will work with the Ardchattan community to develop a sustainable community facility that all will be able to benefit from.

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. One area of inaccuracy identified by the Council is in regard to the implementation date of 21st October 2019, as stated in the Proposal Paper. Following the publication of the Proposal Paper, the date for the Community Services Committee meeting (where the Council will make its final decision on the proposal) was rescheduled to 5th September 2019. Accordingly a revised implementation date of 31st October 2019 should be noted in order to allow for the full 8 week statutory period prior to implementation of the proposal, within which it can be called-in by the Scottish Ministers.

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 It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31st October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School. The implementation date for this would be October 31st 2019.
- 15.2 This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:
- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147;

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.81 fte vacancies for 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.

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 Ardchattan Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31st October 2019. The pupils of Ardchattan Primary School's catchment area will continue to receive their education at Lochnell Primary School. The delineated catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be permanently extended to subsume the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

APPENDIX 1 - PROPOSAL PAPER



Argyll and Bute Council
Customer Services: Education

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: MARCH 2019

Review of Education Provision

Ardchattan Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

Proposal for the closure of Ardchattan Primary School

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019.

Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School.

The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

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/education-and-learning>

A summary of this document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils and children 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 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
- The Community Councils
- Community Planning Partnership
- 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)
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- Education Scotland

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- Public libraries in the vicinities of the schools affected
- Local area offices in the vicinities of the schools affected
- The schools affected by the proposal

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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 برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 24th April 2014, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. The Council agreed that in the event there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2016/17 the school be considered for formal closure through the statutory process.

Ardchattan Primary School – Mothballing Decision:-

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=257&MId=6147&Ver=4>

- 1.2 On 14th December 2017, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal for Ardchattan Primary School. The Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 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&MId=7671&Ver=4>

- 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 a preliminary consultation process.

- 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 Ardchattan 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.

- 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.

1.8 Over the next five years, our agreed 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 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" which is the Education Vision and Strategy for Argyll and Bute Council.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147
- Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

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;
- 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 and
- This proposal contains the Educational Benefits Statement.

3 Preliminary requirements

- 3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Ardchattan Primary School, as it has been mothballed for four years. Pupils from Ardchattan Primary catchment area currently attend Dunbeg Primary School and Lochnell Primary School. 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 initial pre-appraisal took place.
- 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. When the school was mothballed, the community continued to have use of the facilities and this was also taken into consideration as part of the pre-consultation process.
- 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 continue to travel by bus to Lochnell Primary School.
- 3.5 Four options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase of this proposal, as required

by section 12A of the 2010 Act. The local community also suggested a further option which was discussed and considered as part of this process.

- 3.6 Of the five options which were considered by the community and the Council; E is the favoured proposal by the Council, as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.
- a) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School,
 - b) Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochnell Primary School,
 - c) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School,
 - d) Ardchattan Primary School is reopened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs (Suggested by the community),
 - e) Close Ardchattan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School (The Proposal).
- 3.7 Following from an initial options appraisal which was presented to Council on 11th December 2018, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements were satisfied enabling the draft proposal to proceed.
- 3.8 There were a range of viewpoints on the future of Ardchattan Primary School, from parents, young people and members of the community.
- 3.9 The community reflected that Ardchattan Primary School had been an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Ardchattan Primary School. However there is a will that the school be retained for community use and not be allowed to fall into disrepair. 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.
- 3.10 The current travel arrangements for children and staff have been in place for four years. 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

- 3.11 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 Ardchattan Primary School. Full details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, to include the alternative proposals are attached as appendix 5 and are also available here to read:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MIId=8098&Ver=4>

3.12 In conclusion, after the pre-consultation with the community, the Council feels that the proposal to close Ardchattan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School is reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

4 Educational Benefits Statement

- 4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.
- 4.2 Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147.
- 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 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head 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 five options. E is the favoured proposal by the Council, as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.
- a) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School;
 - b) Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochnell Primary School;

- c) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School;
 - d) Ardchattan Primary School is reopened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs (Suggested by the community); and
 - e) Close Ardchattan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School (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 Ardchattan Primary School and that the catchment area of Lochnell Primary school shall be extended to include the current catchment area for Ardchattan 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 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.
- 4.14 The Council has also taken special regard to the following factors if this proposal was to be implemented, as Ardchattan Primary School is classified as a 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.
 - Financial Impact.

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

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 Ardchattan Primary School has seen a steady decline since 2007.

School Roll	Ardchattan PS	Lochnell PS
Capacity	57	148
	Roll	Roll
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
2018 -2019	0	127

Predicted Roll

Predicted School Roll	Pupils who live in the Ardchattan Catchment	Lochnell PS Roll
2019- 2020	6	124
2020 -2021	5	116
2021 -2022	6	107

- 5.2 In 2018-2019 there are eight children who live in the Ardchattan Primary School catchment area and who attend other schools.

- 5.3 There are five pupils who live in the Ardchattan catchment area who currently attend Lochnell Primary School. These children are all in receipt of Council transport to go to school. There are also another three pupils who attend Dunbeg Primary School who live in the catchment area for Lochnell Primary School, however they attend Dunbeg Primary School as a placing request.
- 5.4 The school roll is low and would not be predicted to rise in the future. The area around Ardchattan is a small settlement and is not identified for growth in the local development plan.
- 5.5 There are no housing allocations or potential developments identified.

6 Teacher numbers

- 6.1 Teacher numbers are improving nationally, with a 6.86% increase in the number of teachers nationally from 2013 - 2017. However in Argyll and Bute there has been a 1.28% reduction in the number of teachers from 2013 -- 2017.
- 6.2 As the school has been mothballed for the last 4 years, the issue of recruitment of staff has not improved. At the time of writing this report there are 14 vacancies for class teachers in Argyll and Bute and 2 vacancies for head teachers. 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 Ardchattan Primary School.
- 6.3 At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Lochnell Primary School.

7 Condition of the building

- 7.1 Argyll and Bute Council's School Estate Management Planning process identified in 2013 that the condition of Ardchattan Primary School was satisfactory. There was also an acknowledgement that there was work required to be undertaken on both the roof and windows.
- 7.2 As part of the consultation process the Council would be open to discussion with the community in regard to the future of the building. This might involve the transfer of the building to a recognised community group through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Sc) Act 2015 or some other agreed mechanism. This 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.

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 statement focusses on Lochnell Primary School, which is the school the majority of the Ardchattan pupils have been attending since August 2014.
- 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 the 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 Both Ardchattan Primary School and Lochnell Primary School are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ardchattan Primary School area attending Lochnell Primary School continue 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 Lochnell Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and school and includes joint early level learning every week.

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 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.
- 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 Lochnell 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. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school.
- 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 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, which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within Lochnell 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 Lochnell 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 on sports day and in the dining room when groups of children are together in a social context. This system develops and benefits both the 'buddy' and the 'buddied'. This system works well and benefits the wide range of children in the school.

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, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Almost all children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. Lochnell continues to develop within the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme, which supports positive behaviours and relationship within the school.
- 10.3 The staff, parent body and partner group 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.

- 10.4 A 'Respect Me' policy is built into class lessons and permeates the whole school ethos through assemblies and class work on rights and responsibilities.

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 planning process between Lochnell Primary School and Oban High School, which involves increased opportunities for children to participate and to make new 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. Staff promote positive relationships at all levels and also through the Young Sports Leaders programme, the impact of this being that children enjoy good relationships with their peers, young leaders feel confident and entrusted to take these developments forward.

12 Environment for Learning

- 12.1 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, 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 two other rural communities.
- 12.3 Any mitigating effects around the adverse weather and transport issues are outweighed by the benefits of this proposal.
- 12.4 In summary, there are a range of educational benefits for children 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 resultant from access to a more diverse curriculum. The learning environment in Lochnell 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 Lochnell Primary School.
- 13.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal. 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 Lochnell Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and the school and includes joint early level learning every week.

Gaelic learners

- 13.4 Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS) is not currently offered in any of the schools in this proposal so there would be no effect if the proposals were implemented.

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, detailed above.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 The proposal would increase the roll of Lochnell 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 Ardchattan Primary School would benefit from 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 easier. Larger

year groups make the provision of specialist services more viable and provide enhanced opportunities for school trips. Lochnell Primary School meets all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1996.

15 Assessment of likely educational benefits on the pupils of any other schools in the Council area

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 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

- 15.3 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.

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

- 16.1 The main adverse effect from this proposal would be the length of the journey to school for children who live in the Ardchattan Primary School catchment area. However, children who live in this catchment area have been making this journey for the last four years, and families in the area do not feel this is a major consideration. Funded school transport would also continue to be provided for pupils should this proposal be implemented.

17 Factors for rural school closures

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

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

- 17.2 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.
- 17.3 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
- 17.4 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.
- 17.5 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. The opportunity for the local community to acquire this building could be key to helping to make this community an independent, resilient place to live. Management of assets such as Ardchattan Primary School may be an important step in building community confidence, promoting growth and enabling communities to realise their aspirations.
- 17.6 Research 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.
- 17.7 It is important to recognise that a school's primary function is to provide pupils with the best possible educational experience. During initial consultation, there was some support from the community for closure of the school with the building and adjoining grounds being retained for community use.
- 17.8 Within the Ardchattan/Bonawe there is no hall or other community building. All people who attended the consultation strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair.
- 17.9 It is considered that formal closure of this school could have a positive impact on the wider community, and may lead to an increase in other users of the facility which may lead to an improvement in economic growth.
- 17.10 Indeed, the school closure may help to empower the local community should the community wish to undertake an asset transfer process for the building. This could have a positive impact on community sustainability. Formal closure would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the

community who are already considering future uses for the building. This may enhance community life by giving a community focus for activities and events.

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

- 17.11 During the pre-consultation phase, some members of the community supported closure of the school with the suggestion that the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. Within Ardchattan/Bonawe there is no hall or other community building. 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 community's access to the premises.
- 17.12 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. If the local plans for the building progress, this could have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.
- 17.13 There have been some community lets in Ardchattan Primary School in the last five years, particularly for community events and the community does use the school grounds for sporting events such as community football

The likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements

- 17.14 The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 9.8 miles on the B845/A828, or 8.3 miles via North Connel. Travel time is approximately twenty minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost four years, and travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community.
- 17.15 This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Ardchattan Primary School, in terms of current travel arrangements would have a neutral effect on the environment. The current annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Lochnell Primary School is £19,545.
- 17.16 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.
- 17.17 At present, some travel to Dunbeg Primary School. The environmental impact of travel will be minimal, as these arrangements are currently in place due to the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. The closure of Ardchattan Primary School, in terms of travel, would have a neutral effect on the environment.

Environmental impact

- 17.18 Currently three pupils travel to Dunbeg Primary School and five pupils travel to Lochnell Primary School from the Ardchattan Primary School Catchment area. 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.
- 17.19 If this proposal was to be implemented there would be little or no impact on the natural environment.

Financial Impact

- 17.20 The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in Appendix 4. Some of this information has been recalculated since the initial pre-appraisal took place. This information gives details on the estimated cost if Ardchattan Primary School was still to be an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Ardchattan Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is estimated at £2,147 per year. Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £134,049.
- 17.21 Column 2 of Table 1 shows the projected annual running costs of Ardchattan whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on Lochnell Primary as the receiving school. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.
- 17.22 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.
- 17.23 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. On top of this there is estimated to be an increase to Lochnell Primary School's teacher entitlement of 0.1 FTE at a cost of £5,073. The additional pupils transferring to Lochnell would result in an increase to their formula-based discretionary budget of £177. Some of the costs noted in column 3 of Table 1 will not directly impact on Lochnell Primary school but they will be a cost to the Authority as a whole, for example school transport,

and the costs of maintaining the teachers employed in Ardchattan Primary School.

- 17.24 Transport costs for pupils to attend Lochnell Primary School are £19,545. Costs per year to attend Ardchattan Primary School if it were to be reopened are estimated at £16,756 per pupil per year. Costs per pupil per year to attend Lochnell Primary School are £4,596 per pupil per year.
- 17.25 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 Ardchattan Primary School is £372,498, and for Lochnell Primary School this is £943,593.
- 17.26 Table 3 contains the annual running costs during mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School and these are estimated at £2,147 per year. 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.
- 17.27 The transfer of pupils from Ardchattan to Lochnell would impact on the council's Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocation for Primary School Teaching Staff as there would be a reduction in the Percentage of Primary Pupils in Small Schools. This reduction is estimated at £25k. However Argyll and Bute Council is supported through the floor mechanism so would not see a reduction in their overall funding.

Summary of educational benefit assessment and statement

- 17.28 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 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 authorities assessment of other likely effects of the proposal and the reasons for that assessment are attached as appendix 5.
- 17.29 Whilst the positive educational benefits are numerous, there are also some negative aspects which arise from the children attending Lochnell Primary School. These negative aspects are 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.

18 Equality and Socio Economic Impact

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 Island (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 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.

19 Consultation arrangements

19.1 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 11th December 2018 that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Ardchattan Primary School and redraw its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

19.2 This document was considered by the Education Authority on 14 March 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.

19.3 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/education-and-learning>

19.4 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 18th March 2019 until the close of business on 17th May 2019 which lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and includes at least 30 school days.

- 19.5 A public meeting will be held at Ardchattan Primary School on 2nd May 2019 at 2.30pm. 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 Head of Education, Learning and Teaching, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ and should be received no later than 17th May 2019.
- 19.6 Written representations may be made on the proposal and the alternatives to the proposal. Written representations may also suggest other alternatives to the proposal.
- 19.7 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.
- 19.8 After receiving Education Scotland's report, the Education Authority will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9 and 10 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.
- 19.9 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.
- 19.10 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.

19.11 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.

20 Conclusion

20.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School. The implementation date for this would be October 21st 2019.

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

- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147;
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head 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 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 unnessecary accomodation 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 it's 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;
- This proposal sets out the Educational Benefits Statement.

20.3 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 Island (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 Council will undertake the process of assessment during the consultation process in respect of this proposal to ensure that due regard is given to these matters in the decision making process.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services

Louise Connor
Head of Education: Learning & Teaching

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning

For further information contact:

Alison MacDonald
Education Manager
alison.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk

February 2019

APPENDICES

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

APPENDIX 1

Argyll and Bute Council

Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Customer Services

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry



Customer Services

Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RT

Telephone:

Fax:

Our Ref:

Ref:

If phoning or calling please ask for:

e-mail: @argyll-bute.gov.uk

Council Website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Ardchattan Primary School

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision

Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Ardchattan 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 Ardchattan 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 18th March 2019 and will conclude on 17th May 2019. 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 Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head 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 pre-consultation stage of this process;

- a) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School,
- b) Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochnell School,

- c) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell School,
- d) Ardchattan School is reopened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs,
- e) Close Ardchattan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School (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/education-and-learning>
- Holding public meetings 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 2nd May 2019 at 2.30pm in Ardchattan 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:

Via the website: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning>

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 view 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 the children would continue to be educated in the schools they currently attend.

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
- Public libraries in the vicinities of the schools affected
- Local area offices in the vicinities of the schools affected
- The schools affected by the proposal

Yours sincerely

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services



**Argyll and Bute Council
Customer Services: 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.

<u>Proposal</u>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21 October 2019. Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School from 21 October 2019. The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.	
This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:	
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)

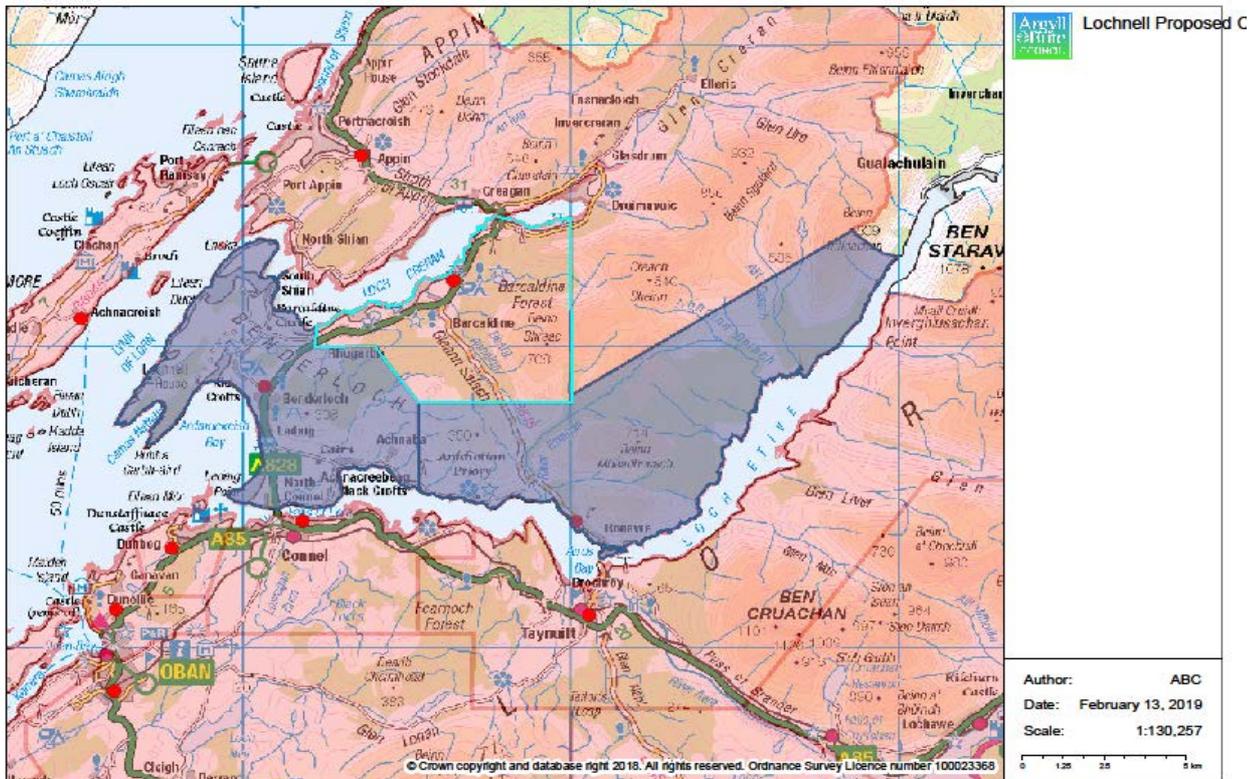
Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>		

*Other: (please specify)

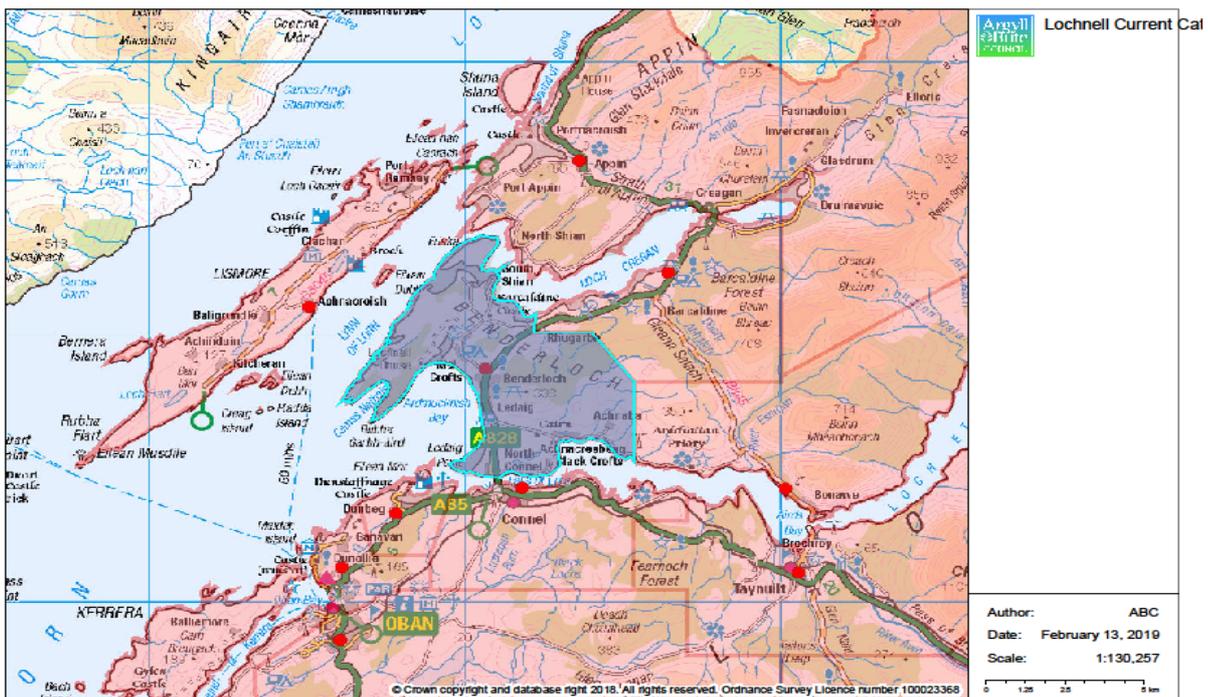
Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)

APPENDIX 3 –

MAP OF PROPOSED CATCHMENT AREA



MAP OF CURRENT LOCHNEIL PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA



APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1

	Projected annual costs for full financial year 2019/20	Additional financial impact on receiving school Lochnell Primary	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Name of School Ardchattan Primary			
School costs			
<i>Employee costs -</i>			
teaching staff	81,698	86,771	-5,073
support staff	12,277	0	12,277
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	0	0	0
support staff training	0	0	0
Supply costs -	2,345	95	2,250
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	476	476	0
non domestic rates	702	0	702
water & sewerage charges	211	0	211
energy costs	10,456	0	10,456
cleaning (contract or in-house)	4,557	0	4,557
building repair & maintenance	6,446	0	6,446
grounds maintenance	133	0	133
facilities management costs -	0	0	0
revenue costs arising from capital	0	0	0
other - refuse collection; telephones	562	0	562
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	2,934	177	2,757
catering (contract or inhouse)	12,435	3,694	8,741
SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0	0	0
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	0	19,545	-19,545
other pupil transport costs	0	0	0
staff travel	0	0	0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	135,232	110,758	24,474

Income:			
Sale of meals	-1,183	-1,183	0
Lets	0	0	0
External care provider	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-1,183	-1,183	0
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	134,049	109,575	24,474

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	16,756	13,697	3,059
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Table 2

Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
	Ardchattan Primary	Lochnell Primary
Capital Life Cycle cost	372,498	943,593
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	476
non domestic rates	632
water & sewerage charges	160
energy costs	817
cleaning (contract or in-house)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	0
grounds maintenance	62
facilities management costs	0
other	0
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	2,147

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
	0
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
<p>The Primary Indicator determining the GAE allocation for Primary School Teaching Staff is based on the number of primary school pupils with the Secondary Indicator being the percentage of pupils in small schools (roll < 70 pupils averaged over 2 years). The pupils from Ardchattan are designated to attend Lochnell which has a roll of > 70 pupils. The additional pupils from Ardchattan will maintain the roll of Lochnell above the small school threshold. There will be a loss of small school GAE for those pupils attending Ardchattan equating to approximately £25k.</p> <p>Argyll and Bute Council, however, is supported by the floor mechanism therefore any calculated reduction in GAE would not have an actual impact on the overall GAE allocation.</p>	25,000
GAE IMPACT	25,000



**CUSTOMER SERVICES:
EDUCATION**

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

**ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

1. INTRODUCTION

On 24 April 2014 Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. The 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/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=257&MId=6147&Ver=4>

On 14th December 2017, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal, for Ardchattan Primary School. The Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 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&MId=7671&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, 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 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 within a reasonable timescale to them.

Ardchattan Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.

On 14th December 2017, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the preliminary requirements in

relation to considering a rural school closure required and look at an options appraisal for Ardchattan Primary School. This review will enable Community Services: Education to identify and consider the options put forward.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 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

An authority that is 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.

1. The Authority's reasons for formulating a proposal are: Ardchattan 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 October 2018 there were significant 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 required to consider the future of Ardchattan Primary School. The 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.

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 Ardchattan and the Local Area - the Ardchattan Primary School Setting

Ardchattan is a scenically beautiful area, north of Oban, bordering on Loch Etive. Its name derives from the 6th-century Irish monk Saint Cathan, combined with the Gaelic element *Ard-* or heights. Ardchattan

Priory which was founded 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 1900s there were about a thousand people living in Bonawe/ Ardchattan. The hub of this community was the Bonawe Quarry which still operates today.

3.4 The School within the Community

Ardchattan Primary School has been very active within the community. It has been a focus for social and educational events. The pupils invited the community to attend 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 other occasional events. There is no other available community space or hall in the area.

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 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 Primary School differ slightly.

3.6 Development and House Building

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.

Appendix 1 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.

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).

Appendix 2 shows the LDP for Lochnell.

Appendix 3 provides the key for LDPs.

3.7 Ardchattan Primary School

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

Appendix 4 – Ardchattan Primary School Floor Plan.

Ardchattan Primary School is 8.3 miles from Lochnell Primary School. The area is sparsely populated with houses along the loch side, 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.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2016 classifies Ardchattan 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. Ardchattan Primary is one of a group of over 20 primaries associated with Oban High School.

3.8 Lochnell Primary School

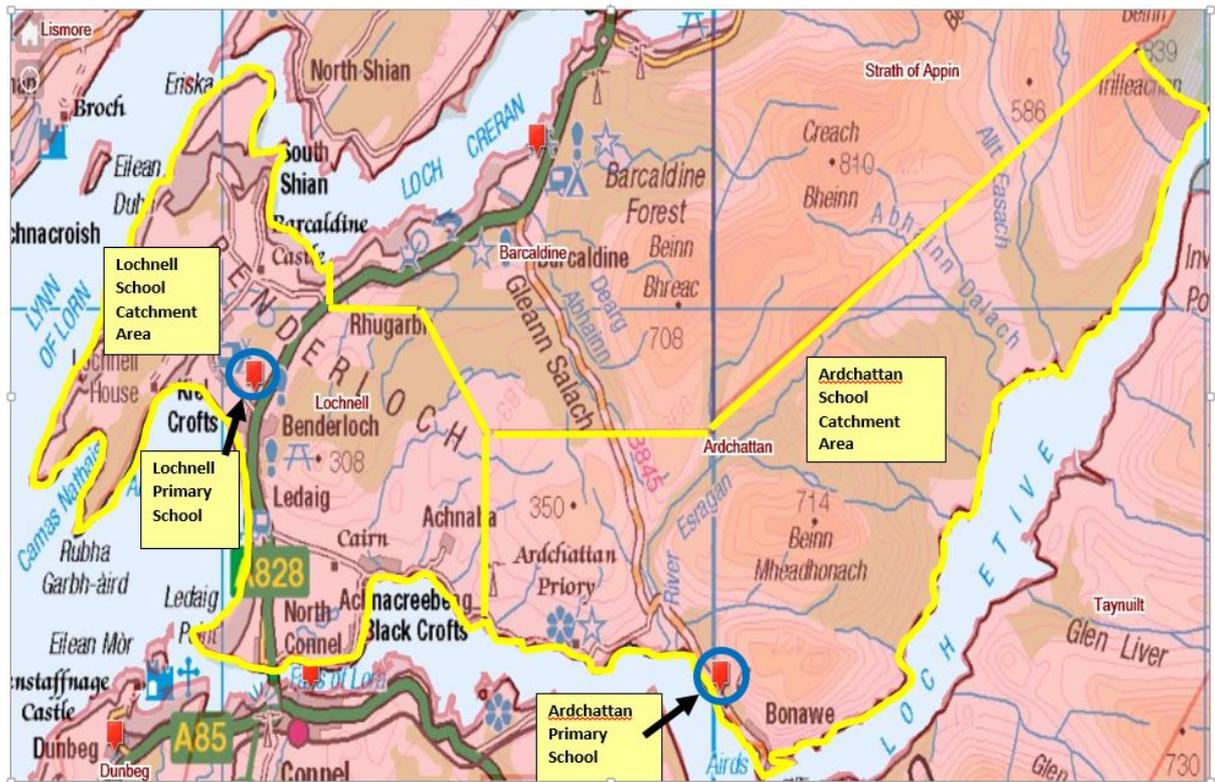
Following the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School children attend either Lochnell Primary School or Dunbeg Primary School. Lochnell Primary School is a non-denominational and co-educational school situated in the village of Benderloch on the main Oban to Fort William road. The building is single 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 Primary School 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.

The Lochnell Primary School building has facilities for pupils, visitors and special access needs. The Scottish Government’s Rural School List 2016 classifies Lochnell Primary School as ‘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:



3.9 Pupil Numbers

Pupil projections, and data for 2017 - 2018 are based on 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 pupil numbers for both Ardchattan and Lochnell primary schools:

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 rolls for Lochnell Primary School and estimated numbers of pupils in the Ardchattan Primary School catchment area according to figures held by Argyll and Bute Council:

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.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Meetings

A Community Engagement 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, Dunbeg Primary 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.

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

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*

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 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 an 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's 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 their 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.

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

Ardchattan 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. There is very little support for the reopening of the school.

Whilst the building is mothballed it continues to deteriorate. The Community is very proactive and is planning a future for the building. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers.

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

- a) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School.
- b) Continued Mothballing of Ardchattan Primary with the pupils zoned to Lochnell School.
- c) Re-open Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell School.
- d) Ardchattan School is reopened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs.

- e) Close Ardchattan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School (The Proposal).

6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Community Feedback

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary as a school. They commented on how well pupils had settled in to other schools with developed friendships and on the sustainability of the school with respect to low numbers:

‘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.’

6.2 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 re-open. Their children have settled into their new schools with developed friendships. There may be a negative impact on children if they were to be moved from their current school.

If the school were to reopen sustainability may not be viable due to the fact that pupil numbers over the next four years are not predicted to rise and are well below the capacity of the school building.

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

Ardchattan Primary	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
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Approved Capacity	57	57	57	57
Roll Projection	6	6	5	6

6.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£114,760¹**

The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£190,000²**

6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Ardchattan Primary School to increase. Ardchattan Primary School is currently mothballed and the pupils are rezoned to other schools. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers.

6.4.1 Community Impact

The reopening of the school would enable the premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community in 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.

However the community have demonstrated no wish for the school to reopen. Almost all who attended the community engagement indicated the need for the school to become a facility for the community to use rather than an educational establishment.

There have been several community events held at the school including Community Council Meetings and social events run by Friends of Ardchattan School. All of which have been reported to be well attended. There was minimal environmental impact in relation to transport as many participants came on foot, as the building is situated centrally within the community. Respondents

¹ Annual costs for running a comparative school for Ardchattan.

² No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

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

'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.'

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. Maintenance and building costs would also have to be met by the community if the school were to reopen as a community hub. 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 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 is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community. If Ardchattan Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing and education 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 positive and negative impact may 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

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary as a school. If the school reopened, pupil numbers would be six, as of the September 2017 census, and this is not predicted to increase over the next three years. *Several families have indicated they would not move their children back to Ardchattan Primary if the school reopened.*

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 **£114,760³**, with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£190,000⁴**.

If the school was to be reopened, the premises would be able to be used by the community as a hub, 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 from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, 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. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than four years. Should the school reopen, 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 positive and negative impact may balance.

³ Annual costs for running a comparative school for Ardchattan.

⁴ No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

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 the above alongside projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard, the lack of local support for reopening Ardchattan Primary School this is not a reasonable option.

7. OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS ZONED TO LOCHNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

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.” Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for 4 years.

7.1 Community Feedback

There are many ideas for the future of the building being taken forward by Friends of Ardchattan School as a real hub for community life. 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:

‘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.’

7.2 Pupil Numbers

Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next 4 years, as per Table 4 above.

7.3 Financial Information

The current annual cost (2018/19) to the Council of the mothballed Ardchattan Primary School is **£1,035**. 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 **£190,000⁵**. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**.

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Ardchattan Primary School to increase. Ardchattan Primary School is currently mothballed and the pupils are rezoned to other schools. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers.

7.4.1 *Community Impact*

If pupils are to continue their education in Lochnell Primary School there would be no change to the current impact on the community. If the mothballing of Ardchattan was to continue the building would deteriorate further and eventually become unavailable to the community to hold and develop events. This could have a detrimental effect on the sustainability of the community. At present the buildings and grounds are available for community use. For example, Ardchattan School has been used for several community events, these include Community Council meetings, Friends of Ardchattan School meetings and information gathering meeting for the future plans of the building. The community view the buildings and grounds as an opportunity to develop a community hub and there were multiple suggestions for possible usage. This may make the area a more attractive place to live.

There would be no change to the current economic impact of maintaining the mothballed Ardchattan Primary School. The current annual cost (2018/19) to the Council is **£1,035**. This includes electricity, heating oil, and ground maintenance but does not include building maintenance and repair costs. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**.

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 from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3

⁵ No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

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 is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community. The continued mothballing would have little 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.

Both Lochnell and Ardchattan are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ardchattan area, attending Lochnell 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. Outdoor learning is currently provided at Lochnell.

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. 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 continuing the four year mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. 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 in terms of pre-school children living within the catchment area. Mothballing had no positive impact on the reasons for the proposal.

The current annual cost (2018/19) to the Council of the mothballed Ardchattan Primary School is **£1,035**. 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 **£190,000⁶**. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**.

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, 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. The travel arrangements have been in place for more than four years. Should the school continue to be mothballed these travel arrangements would continue.

There are no specific educational benefits from continuing the mothballing of the

On the basis that pupil numbers are not expected to increase and the buildings, mothballing is not of benefit to the community or the Council, therefore continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

8. OPTION C: RE-OPEN ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA OF LOCHNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

8.1 Community Feedback

The existing catchment area for Ardchattan School is very rural and very sparsely populated. Ardchattan School is 0.8 mile from Bonawe Quarry. The road then becomes a 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.

When considering the option to realign the catchment area of Ardchattan, the boundary for Ardchattan School has been hypothetically moved west to include the area of North Connel east of the A828.

Community views are:

‘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.’

⁶ No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

'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'

8.2 Pupil Numbers

The pupil numbers within this new catchment area would increase the roll significantly. As part of any 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.

8.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£114,760⁷** per annum.

To bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school would cost **£190,000⁸**.

The cost to use minibuses to transport the children to Ardchattan Primary School would be **£66,000⁹** (These transport costs are calculated assuming the boundary has moved to include all children who live to the east of the A828).

There would also be a financial cost associated with the recruitment of additional staff and ongoing associated costs.

8.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Ardchattan Primary School to increase. Ardchattan Primary School is currently mothballed and the pupils are rezoned to other schools.

To reopen Ardchattan Primary School **and** realign the catchment area of Lochnell School would increase the pupil numbers, if families were to send their children to Ardchattan Primary School.

⁷ Annual costs for running a comparative school for Ardchattan.

⁸ No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

⁹ This would be the cost of three mini buses.

8.4.1 Community Impact

The reopening of the school would enable the premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community in 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. However, the community has given very little support for this option.

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.

8.4.2 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 for children within this new boundary would be less than twenty minutes and would be a new 'bus route'. Therefore, appropriate risk assessments would be necessary. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community.

If Ardchattan Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing and education of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Local members of staff could also walk or cycle to school. There would be an increase in the number of pupils at the school and therefore an increase in staff numbers. There could be increased car usage by staff resulting in a negative environmental impact.

8.5 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.

Both Lochnell and Ardchattan are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ardchattan area, attending Lochnell 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. Outdoor learning is currently provided at Lochnell.

The outdoor facilities either in the school grounds or in the immediate neighbourhood would offer the opportunity to develop a curriculum that maximises the use of the local environment supporting the individual needs of the learners.

8.6 Summary

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary as a school, and realigning the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School due to the remote nature of the school's location.

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 **£114,760¹⁰**, with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£190,000¹¹**.

If the school was to be reopened, the premises would be able to be used by the community as a hub, 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 from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, or 10.2 miles via the A828. Travel for children within this new boundary would be less than twenty minutes and would be a new 'bus route'.

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.

Due to the geographic location of this remote rural primary school it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable. While this option could in theory contribute to sustainability of the

¹⁰ Annual costs for running a comparative school for Ardchattan.

¹¹ No inflation adjustment applies to estimates.

community that may not be the case as 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. It would require pupils who are presently settled in Lochnell Primary School to move to Ardchattan Primary School. Ardchattan families have stated they would not move their children back to Ardchattan if it reopened. All families would be entitled to submit a placing request to attend Lochnell Primary School. It is unlikely that pupil numbers would increase significantly.

When considering the above alongside the challenges in recruiting teaching staff, the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard and the lack of local support for reopening Ardchattan Primary School, this is not a reasonable option.

9. OPTION D: ARDCHATTAN SCHOOL IS RE-OPENED AS A RESOURCE CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

9.1 Community Feedback

'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'

9.2 Pupil Numbers

It is not possible at this stage to give an indication of projected pupil numbers for this option as the majority of pupils with additional support needs are educated within other existing schools.

9.3 Financial Information

The cost to equip a small sensory room for a child with significant needs is in excess of **£5000**. To equip a whole school would cost significantly more.

The total annual running cost - including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration is **£114,760**.

The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard is **£190,000**. daily - **£22,000**. Bringing children from a wider catchment would cost significantly more. Escorts would also be required.

9.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are stated at Section 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase. Ardchattan Primary School is mothballed and the pupils all attend other schools. 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 option would not increase the pupil numbers.

9.4.1 Community Impact

The community's wish for the building to be used for a positive purpose would be met by this option. However, areas of the school may not be available for let due to the requirement for specialist equipment/areas. This option would also ensure the building and facilities are returned to a reasonable standard. This option may offer some local employment contributing to the sustainability of the community. However the school would not be a mainstream school, thus not meeting best practice for educating pupils with additional support needs, most local children would continue to travel out of the area to school and therefore may not add to the attractiveness for families moving to the village or ultimately to the local community's sustainability.

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. There may be additional travel costs associated with specialist vehicles that may be required.

9.4.2 Travel Arrangements

Travel for children within this type of school catchment would be variable. Appropriate risk assessments for children with additional support needs would be necessary. Staff would travel by car, there would be multiple car journeys considering staffing levels for a specialist school. Local children would continue to travel out to school

whilst pupils attending the school would travel inwards. This would have a negative environmental impact.

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 from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

The outdoor facilities either in the school grounds or in the immediate neighbourhood would offer the opportunity to develop a curriculum that maximises the use of the local environment supporting the individual needs of the learners.

9.6 Summary

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 both authority and national practice. When considering the above alongside the likely neutral impact of sustainability, negative environmental impact, challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to equip and bring the building up to standard, and the lack of local support for reopening Ardchattan Primary School, this is not a reasonable option.

10. OPTION E: CLOSE ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO LOCHNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

10.1 Community Feedback

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary as a school. They commented on how well pupils had settled in to other schools with developed friendships and on the sustainability of the school with respect to low numbers. Comments in relation to the closure of Ardchattan Primary School and attendance at Lochnell Primary 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.’

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

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

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.’

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

‘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.’

The Ardchattan/Bonawe community and Friends of Ardchattan School are actively pursuing options for use of the building as a community hub.

10.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 5: Schools Occupancy:

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

Pupils from Ardchattan Primary catchment area 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%.

10.3 Financial Information

The annual cost to transport pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**.

The annual transport cost for six pupils to travel to Lochnell Primary School is **£18,152**.

10.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Ardchattan Primary School to increase. Ardchattan Primary School is currently mothballed and the pupils are rezoned to other schools. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers.

10.4.1 Community Impact

The community overwhelmingly supported closure of the school with the building and adjoining grounds being retained for community use. Within the Ardchattan/Bonawe there is no hall or other community building. All people who attended the consultation 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. 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.

10.4.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, 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 is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community. This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The

closure of Ardchattan Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment. The current annual transport cost for six pupils to travel to Lochnell Primary School is **£18,152**. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**.

10.5 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.

Both Lochnell and Ardchattan are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ardchattan area, attending Lochnell 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. Outdoor learning is currently provided at Lochnell. The pupils are then transitioning to Oban High School with an established friendship group.

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.

10.6 Summary

The majority of people who attended the consultation commented on how well pupils had settled into other schools they attend and were not in favour of reopening Ardchattan Primary as a school, and realigning the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School due to the remote nature of the school's location. They also commented on the potential for the school premises to be used as a community asset.

Current capacity for Lochnell Primary School including the six pupils from Ardchattan Primary School is 83.7%. The annual cost to transport pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**. The annual transport cost for six pupils to travel to Lochnell Primary School is **£18,152**.

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, or 10.2 miles via the A828, and this option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Ardchattan Primary School would have a neutral effect on the environment. 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.

In Lochnell Primary School, children benefit from a positive learning environment with learning and teaching which is better matched to the needs of the young people who attend the school. In addition there are more opportunities for personal and social development in this setting.

This has been identified as a reasonable option for further consideration.

11. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

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 to include pupils in the North Connel area to the east of the A828.	Not a reasonable option
D (Community Suggestion)	The school is re-opened and designated as a resource centre for children with additional support needs.	Not a reasonable option
E	Close Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include the catchment area for Ardchattan	A reasonable option with strong representation that the school becomes a facility the community can develop.

12. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION: CLOSE ARDCHATTAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR LOCHNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE FORMER ARDCHATTAN CATCHMENT AREA

12.1 Pupil Projections

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

12.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Lochnell Primary School, which is the school the majority of the Ardchattan Pupils have been attending since August 2014.

12.2.1 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.

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.

In Lochnell 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. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children of varying sizes and composition, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school.

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 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. Colleagues within Lochnell 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.

Lochnell 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 on Sports Day and in the dining room 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.

Both Lochnell and Ardchattan are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ardchattan area, attending Lochnell 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 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.

12.2.2 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 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. Almost all 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 e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

12.2.3 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.

12.2.4 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. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

12.3 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are stated on page 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase at the school. Ardchattan Primary School is mothballed and the pupils all attend other schools. Having considered all the alternatives above, the option to close Ardchattan Primary School and realign the catchment area for Lochnell Primary School to include the former Ardchattan catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at page 2 of this report.

12.3.1 Community Impact

The community overwhelmingly supported closure of the school with the suggestion that the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. Within Ardchattan/Bonawe there is no hall or other community building. All people who attended the consultation 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. 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. 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.

12.3.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance from Ardchattan Primary to Lochnell Primary is 8.3 miles via the B84, 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 is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community. Pupils will travel in one minibus and eventually all the pupils will travel to Lochnell Primary School. At present, some travel to Dunbeg Primary School. The environmental impact of travel will be minimal, as these arrangements are currently in place due to the mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School. The closure of Ardchattan Primary School, in terms of travel, would have a neutral effect on the environment. The current annual transport cost for six pupils to travel to Lochnell Primary School is **£18,152**. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools is **£44,187**. These costs remain unchanged from the current costs.

12.4 **Financial Impact**

The main elements included within a school budget are Teacher employment costs (ie 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 Ardchattan Primary School are a total of **£1,035**.

Annual savings generated through closing Ardchattan Primary School would be **£1,035**.

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.

12.5 Environmental Impact

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 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. Eventually all pupils will attend Lochnell Primary School, a relatively short journey. Travel is an accepted aspect of rural life.

13. CONCLUSION

Five alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of Ardchattan 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 formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 before starting to prepare its proposal paper.

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 Ardchattan Primary School and redrawing its catchment area to Lochnell Primary School is the most reasonable option in order to address the reasons for the possible proposal.

Members are asked to:

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

APPENDIX 2 – EQSEIA

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

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal
To close Ardchattan Primary School.

Intended outcome of proposal
<p>The proposal is to close Ardchattan Primary School.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Ultimately, the intended outcome the closure of the school, which has been mothballed for 4 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.</p>

Description of proposal

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

As per the legislative guidance set out in the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2015, Argyll and Bute Council is seeking views on the following proposal, namely:

It is proposed that education provision at Ardchattan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019.

Pupils of Ardchattan Primary School will continue to be educated at Lochnell Primary School.

The catchment area of Lochnell Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Ardchattan Primary School has been mothballed for four years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £2,147
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

On 14th March 2019, Argyll and Bute Council's Community Services Committee agreed that a consultation with all stakeholders be undertaken on the proposal.

Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes

BO108: All our children and young people are supported to realise their potential.

Corporate outcome: Education, skills and training maximise opportunities for all.

Lead officer details:

Name of lead officer	Alison MacDonald
Job title	Education Manager
Department	Customer Services: Education

Appropriate officer details:

Name of appropriate officer	Louise Connor
Job title	Head of Education

Department	Customer Services: Education
Sign off of EqSEIA	<i>M A Canal</i>
Date of sign off	16.0419

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 Lochnell Primary 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 Ardchattan 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;

Lochnell Primary School

Is the 'affected school'.

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 **18th March 2019** (with due written notice of the proposal issued to the relevant consultees listed in Appendix 1) and end on **17th May 2019**. 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:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools;
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools;

- A copy of the proposal will be provided to all Early Years Establishments in the local area, giving access to parents who have children expected to attend the affected schools within two years of the publication of this proposal paper;
- The pupils at the affected schools (in so far as the Education Authority considers them to be of suitable age and maturity);
- All Argyll and Bute Council employees at the affected schools;
- Trade union representatives of employees at the affected schools;
- Community Councils within the affected locality;
- Local churches;
- All relevant users of the affected schools, and
- Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partners.

A copy of the proposal document will also be made available to:

- All Elected Members of Argyll and Bute Council;
- Argyll and Bute Youth Forum;
- Education Scotland (formerly Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, HMIE);
- The Constituency MSP of the affected schools;
- List MSP for the area of the affected schools;
- The MP of the affected schools;
- Police Scotland;
- NHS Highland;
- Argyll and Bute School Transport;
- Senior Local Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, and
- Care Inspectorate

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

- Notice of the proposal and of publication of this proposal document will be placed within local newspapers;
- The proposal document will also be published on the Argyll and Bute Council website;
- This document can be made available in alternative forms or translated by contacting Argyll House, Dunoon, tel: 01369 708576 or argyllhouse@argyll-bute.gov.uk;

The proposal paper will also be available at the following locations;

- A. Council offices
- B. All libraries in Oban and Lorn
- C. All Oban and Lorn area/locality offices
- D. The schools affected by the proposal

There will be a public meeting held on the 2nd May 2019 at 7.00pm in Ardchattan Primary School.

Data

The catchment area for Ardchattan Primary School is a remote rural school. Remote rural areas have seen a -0.1% decrease in population in the most recent data available, which is in the period between 2001 and 2013. This contrasts with a 1.0% increase in the same period in Accessible Rural and 0.2% increase in the rest of Scotland.

Rural areas have a lower percentage of the population in the 16-34 age group but a higher proportion of people aged 45 and over. For example, in 2017 18% of the population in remote rural areas and 19% of the population in accessible rural areas were 16-34 year olds, compared to 25% in the rest of Scotland.

Conversely, 57% of the population in remote rural areas and 52% of the population in accessible rural areas were aged 45 and over, compared to 35% in the rest of Scotland.

In 2017 the proportion of people aged 65 or over was 21% in accessible rural areas and 25% in remote rural areas compared to 18% in the rest of Scotland.

Source: [Population Estimates by Urban Rural Classification 2011-17](#) (Last updated: August 2018)

52% of journeys to school were made by walking or cycling in 2017. 59% 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 (30%). For those aged 12-18, the next most popular was school bus (23%). 8% of children aged 4-11 usually used school transport. 21% of children living in the most deprived SIMD areas (centile 1 and 2) used school transport. 33% of children living in remote rural areas used school transport. [Transport and Travel in Scotland 2017](#) (Last updated: September 2018).

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:

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
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		
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
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

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

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
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		
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
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

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Communities of interest?				X

If any 'don't know's 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 Lochnell Primary School, who would otherwise have attended Ardchattan Primary School.

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

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

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.

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 management team, supported by education officers will monitor the impact this catchment area change would have, if implemented.

APPENDIX 3 - WRITTEN CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ardchattan Primary School commenced on the 18th March 2019 and closed on 17th May 2019.

Response Forms

Three response forms were received. Two responses agreed with the Council's proposal and one response was unclear.

RESPONDENT GROUP	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	AGREE	DISAGREE	UNCLEAR
Parents/Community Members	2	1	0	1
Community Council	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	3	2	0	1

Appendix 4 – Public Meeting Minutes

Ardchattan Public Consultation Meeting Thursday 2 May 2019 at Ardchattan Primary School

Panel

Douglas Hendry – Executive Director Customer Services
Councillor McNeilly – Policy Lead for Education
Louise Connor – Head of Education
Anne Paterson – Head of Education
David Logan – QIM Special Projects
Kieron Green – Elected Member

Admin

Fiona Ferguson
Susie Sinclair

Attendees

Elaine Robertson (Elected Member)
Tony Dalgety
Doreen Henderson
One other
Stewart Maxwell – Education Scotland

ORAL REPRESENTATIONS	
QUESTION	ANSWER
Transport is free of charge to Lochnell School – should parents wish to send their children to Dunbeg would they need to pay for transport?	Yes
Would pre 5 children get free transport to Lochnell School?	No – pre 5 is not statutory education. With the move to 1140 hours we would look at the closest provision – a courtesy ride may be provided.
Assessing the impact on Community - how far have you got with that?	The consultation document covers what has been done in the regard. So far two responses have been received one which is supportive of the proposal and one from the community which is unclear as it supports the proposal but then contradicts that in a further comment by wanting the school to remain open.

STATEMENT	RESPONSE
There was an impact on the local community after mothballing the school – as this was well used by the community and we would like to try to keep it open for the community	Difference here between the keeping the Education provision and keeping the building.
OBSERVATION(S)	
<p>In terms of the community use of building even if proposal does proceed you can approach the council with a view to taking over the building. This is a possibility.</p> <p>Look at asset transfer on the website which will provide you with the names of those officers to contact - it may be beneficial to do this. Community may have approached the Council already but told to wait until after this process is complete.</p> <p>Expression of interest was made in February. David Rennie setting up as a Community Transfer body getting together a transfer request.</p>	
VIEWS EXPRESSED	
Various time of year community would come to the school once mothballed this did not happen. Trying to revive this with the community.	
School roll fell - as folk work in Oban and choose to send their children to schools in Oban so that are able to drop off and collect after school. There is also afterschool care available in Oban. There is no nursery provision here, and once they have been in nursery elsewhere they have already built up relationships and choose to stay there rather than return to Ardchattan.	
When we moved to area 60 pupils in the school numbers dropped used VC in school but this was not successful.	
Children do not thrive in schools in low numbers.	
Not supporting the opening of the school.	
School for use of community hub - not grounds to reopen the school.	
Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.	
Impact assessment to be completed EQESIA.	



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 Ardchattan Primary School and to extend the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School.

June 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her 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 Ardchattan Primary School and to extend the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School. Changes to be effective from 21 October 2019. 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 2 May 2019 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 Dunbeg Primary School, Lochnell Primary School and Ardchattan Primary School, 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 Ardchattan Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 18 March 2019 until 17 May 2019. The council posted the consultation document on its website. A summary of the proposal document was provided to key stakeholders. Copies of the proposal document were also made available at local council offices, public libraries and the schools affected by the proposal. The council also made arrangements to gather children's views at Lochnell Primary School about the proposal. All the children were supportive of the proposal. They identified key benefits as having access to more children for friendships and more teachers. A public meeting on 2 May 2019 was attended by three representatives of the local community. All present were supportive of the proposal on the basis that the vacant building be considered for community use. The council received three written responses. Of these two were in favour of the proposal and one was inconclusive. However, all three responses indicated support for the possibility of a future transfer of the vacant building to community use should the proposal proceed.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Ardchattan Primary School was built in 1886 and is located approximately 12 miles north of Oban. The catchment area extends along the northern shore of Loch Etive including the village of Bonawe. The school is co-educational and non-denominational. It has been mothballed for five years. The school roll is very low and is not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of mothballing the school is £2,147. Since being mothballed, the building condition has deteriorated. There have been no pupil enrolments since elected members approved the mothballing. In 2018-19, there were eight children living in the Ardchattan Primary School catchment area attending Dunbeg Primary School and Lochnell Primary School. Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the education budget is more sustainable in the future. Lochnell Primary School is a suitably equipped and well supported school situated in the village of Benderloch. The school is well maintained and has an all-weather pitch adjacent to the school which is well used. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs. Both Lochnell Primary School and Dunbeg Primary School have nursery provision.

3.2 The council has set out a reasonable case in support of its proposal. The council states there will be a number of educational benefits for children if the proposal goes ahead. These include improved social interaction opportunities among children of their own age. This will also help children develop important mental, social, physical and emotional skills. Larger year groups will increase the opportunity for collaborative working with children of a similar age and stage of development. Opportunities to engage in a wider range of activities which enrich the curriculum will be increased. The proposal will assist the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources as it will not incur the costs of maintaining a mothballed building.

3.3 Children, parents and staff from Lochnell Primary School and Dunbeg Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. Children from Lochnell Primary School enjoy having access to a wider range of learning opportunities and friendship groups from attending a bigger school. Opportunities to take on positions of responsibility within the school were increased. Whilst the children were supportive of the proposed closure they were equally clear they want the vacant school to be made available as a community resource. Ardchattan parents spoke positively of the benefits of their children attending a larger school. They recognise future numbers required to reopen Ardchattan Primary School are not viable. Staff recognise the benefits attending a larger school brings to the children, in supporting the demands of Curriculum

for Excellence in areas such as health and wellbeing. Delivering employability and personal and social skills was seen as being difficult in a very small school setting.

3.4 Members of the community who met with HM Inspectors were very positive about the proposal. They recognised the benefits to children from attending a larger school. They also identified the potential of the vacant Ardchattan Primary School to act as a community hub which would be of clear social benefit to people of all ages locally. Local constituted groups such as Ardchattan Community Centre were already making good use of the vacant property by running events such as a monthly 'pop up' tea room and art classes. Local survey information identifies strong support. Plans for further development are in place, subject to the outcome of the consultation.

3.5 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. In arriving at its proposal the council has clearly assessed the likely benefits to children and in doing so has given consideration to any reasonable alternatives. A number of options were considered. These included the continued mothballing of Ardchattan Primary School, the re-opening of Ardchattan Primary School either as a school (with the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School realigned) or as a resource centre for children with additional support needs. Due to insufficient demand these were not seen as viable. The current proposal to discontinue education provision at Ardchattan Primary School and to extend the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School was the option most favoured by the local community and the council. The very small numbers of children anticipated in Ardchattan in the future are likely to limit opportunities for children to develop a broad range of skills. The proposal does not impact negatively on children and young people at Lochnell Primary School or on the Ardchattan community. Since the school was 'mothballed' in 2014 local community groups such as 'Ardchattan Community Centre' have made regular use of the vacant building running well-supported community events. The council has indicated a willingness to consider a request to transfer the ownership of the vacant building as part of a local asset transfer. Equality and socio economic impact assessments conducted by the council identify no negative impact. There is scope to develop Ardchattan Primary School as a community venue. Lochnell Primary School is 9.8 miles from Ardchattan Primary School. Travel time is approximately 20 minutes. The current travel arrangements for children have been in place for almost four years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Bonawe community.

4. Summary

Argyll and Bute Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Ardchattan Primary School and to extend the catchment area of Lochnell Primary School to include the current catchment area of Ardchattan Primary School has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Ardchattan Primary School and the local community. It has very strong support from stakeholders. Children will have access to increased learning opportunities, wider experiences and better socialisation through being part of a larger school. Ardchattan Primary School has not been in use since being mothballed in 2015. The current number of children within the catchment area is insufficient to make the school viable. The proposal will assist the council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. In taking forward the proposal the council should follow up on its expressed interest in working with the Ardchattan community to develop a sustainable community facility via a possible community asset transfer.

HM Inspectors
June 2019

APPENDIX 6 - PUPIL FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

Date of Visit	25/04/19
School for proposed closure	Ardchattan (Pupils at Lochnell PS)
Staff member(s) Leading	S. McAdam

Background information for pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am meeting with you today because the Council want to find out your views, about Ardchattan Primary School being closed. This process of asking for your views is called a consultation. • 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. • We want to consult with you to find out what you think about the Council's proposal to close Ardchattan Primary School. The Council is proposing this because <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There aren't many pupils from the area that would go to Ardchattan and this number isn't going up. - Finding staff is quite difficult and the school would need a teacher and a HT to reopen. - It's getting expensive to keep looking after a building that isn't being used. • It is important that we find out your thoughts and opinions because you would be the current pupils at that school so your views are important and this will help us make a decision for pupils that would be future pupils at Ardchattan Primary School. • Closing the school isn't the only option for Ardchattan Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It could re-open. - It could continue to be 'mothballed' – which means it's temporarily closed like it is now. - The school is re-opened as a resource centre for pupils with additional needs (community proposal) - Re-open Ardchattan PS and change the area for pupils to go to Lochnell PS - Close Ardchattan PS and change the area for pupils to go to Lochnell PS.
Tell us a little bit about going to school at Lochnell PS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * It's really good because we have lots of friends here that we know and we have known them for a while. * It's really good. * It's fun because sometimes we get treats like the egg competition. * We have friends that we have known since we were really little. * I think it's better than going to Ardchattan because it was very small and there wasn't a lot of people to make friends. Going to school is

	<p>where you meet friends and I have loads of people to be friends with here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * All of the teachers and staff are really friendly and help you if you are stuck. There's more staff here.
<p>What do you think the positive things would be if Ardchattan PS closed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * There would be more people for Lochnell Primary. * You can make new friends. * I think it (the building) should be used for the community. * There is a community pop up tea room every 3rd Sunday and it's really good. * All of the profits go to making Ardchattan nicer. * I think it's where people go to vote. * We have a community council and they meet in the building. * The community council try to make things a bit better for the people in Ardchattan. * If it (the school) closed the building could be used for lots more community things.
<p>Do you have any concerns about Ardchattan PS closing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I would be worried that people would move. * I would be concerned if the school closed and the building couldn't be used for the community. * It's really important that the building is used for the community. * It's a bit early to get the bus.
<p>What might other people be concerned about if Ardchattan PS closed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *
<p>If Ardchattan PS closed is there anything that would help make this easier for pupils from APS going to another school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Not knowing anyone can be a bit scary. * We could get to know other people on the bus. * The bus driver is really nice. * We would help them to fit in. * People here at Lochnell Primary are really nice and help you to feel welcome.
<p>Do you have any other comments about this that you want to add?</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have more ideas please let your teacher know and she call tell me. • If anything we have chatted about today has made you worried remember you can talk to your class teacher or your parents.