Argyll and Bute Council

Education

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: MARCH 2020

Review of Education Provision

Skipness Primary School

Proposal for the closure of Skipness Primary School

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that education provision at Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020.

The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for 3 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 £1,641.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 12 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget 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/school-consultations-and-proposals

A summary of this document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document
- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors

- Tarbert and Skipness Community Council
- 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

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Tarbert Public Library, Barmore Road, Tarbert, PA29 6TW
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Tarbert Primary School, School Road,Tarbert.PA29 6TE
- Skipness Village Hall, B8001, Tarbert, PA29 6XT

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

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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 8th September 2016, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Skipness Primary School. The Council agreed that in the event there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2018/19 the school be considered for formal closure through the statutory process.

Skipness Primary School – Mothballing Decision:-
https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7207&Ver=4

1.2 On 5th September 2019, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal for Skipness Primary School.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8381&Ver=4

The Community Services Committee received a report on 10th December 2019 providing details of the Options Appraisal for Skipness Primary School; carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, as amended. The Committee agreed to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and requested that officers formulate a draft proposal for consideration at the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 12th March 2020 which, if approved, would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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

1.3 The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of certain preliminary requirements which must be satisfied prior to the formulation of a proposal.

1.4 In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a new right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. This may be something that the Community wish to consider as part of or as a consequence of this process. Public bodies including Councils must consider such requests and make a decision within six months of receiving a valid request.

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

1.6 There is a requirement to have special regard to the rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in the preliminary requirements which were undertaken prior to this proposal being written. A full assessment of the preliminary requirements is set out in the Options Appraisal, which is attached as **Appendix 5**.

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

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

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that education provision at Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020. The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for 3 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 £1,641.

- Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 12 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.

- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget 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. This proposal document contains an Educational Benefits Statement;

- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;

- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accomodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils; and

- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

3 Preliminary requirements

3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Skipness Primary School, as it has been mothballed for over 3 years. The Council have considered the reasons for making this proposal, and have also considered other viable alternatives, the likely effect on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a consequence of this proposal. Financial implications were also considered. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was produced.

3.2 The Council considered how the implementation of this proposal would impact on the education of the children affected. The Council also considered the impact on the children who currently live in the catchment area but attend other schools, as well as children who may potentially live in the catchment area in the future.

3.3 The place of the school in the community was also considered, in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. Since the mothballing of the School, the community has continued to have use

of the School grounds, 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 travel by bus to attend Tarbert Primary School.

3.5 Four options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase, as required by section 12A of the 2010 Act.

3.6 Of the four options which were considered by the community and the Council; (d) is the favoured option by the Council, as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.

a) Re-open Skipness Primary School,
b) Continued Mothballing of Skipness Primary with pupils zoned to Tarbert Primary School,
c) Re-open Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area,
d) Close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert Primary School (The Proposal).

When considering the above options; the positive educational benefits of Tarbert Primary School alongside the factors of projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard at Skipness Primary School, in addition the lack of local support for reopening Skipness Primary School, option (d) was considered the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons behind consideration of this proposal.

3.7 Following from an initial options appraisal which was presented to the Council's Community Services Committee on 10th December 2019, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements were satisfied enabling the draft proposal to be formulated, with the option to close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert Primary School being identified as the most adequate means of addressing the reasons for possible proposal.

3.8 During the preliminary consultation regarding the future options for Skipness Primary School there were a range of viewpoints gathered from parents, young people and members of the community.

3.9 The community reflected that Skipness Primary School had been an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Skipness Primary School. However there is a will that the school be retained for community use and not be allowed to fall into disrepair. Skipness community are pursuing options for use of the building as a community hub.

3.10 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 Skipness 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?MId=8513

3.12 In conclusion, after the pre-consultation with the community, the Council feels that the proposal to close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert Primary School is the most reasonable means to address the underlying reasons for considering the future of Skipness Primary School. Further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

4 Assessment of the Proposal

4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020. The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.

4.2 Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for over 3 years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £1,641.

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 12 fte vacancies for 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 accomodation 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 four options. The favoured option by the Council is (d), as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.

a) Re-open Skipness Primary School;
b) Continued Mothballing of Skipness Primary with the pupils zoned to Tarbert Primary School;
c) Re-open Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area;
d) Close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert 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 Skipness Primary School and extend the catchment area of Tarbert Primary School to include the current catchment area for Skipness 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.

This assessment includes a description of what (if any) steps the Council took to address the underlying reasons for the proposal prior to formulating it.

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

4.15 The Council has also taken special regard to the following factors if this proposal was to be implemented, as Skipness Primary School is classified as a remote rural school.

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

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

5 School roll

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

The school roll of Skipness Primary School has seen a steady decline since 2007.

Table 2:	**Skipness PS**	**Tarbert PS**
Capacity	26	130
	Roll	Roll
2005-06	7	100
2006-07	7	91
2007-08	7	89
2008-09	7	92
2009-2010	6	95
2010-2011	1	92
2011-2012	3	88
2012-2013	3	83
2013-2014	4	79
2014-2015	3	81

2015-2016	3	83
2016-2017	0	94
2017-2018	0	93
2018-19	0	96
2019-20	0	102

Predicted Roll

Table 3:	**Skipness PS**	**Tarbert PS**
Capacity	26	154
	Roll	Roll
2020 -2021	1	109*
2021 -2022	1	106*
2022-2023	1	103*

* A prediction based on information available July 2019.

5.2 In 2019-2020 there are zero school aged children who live in the Skipness Primary School catchment area and who attend other schools.

5.3 There are currently zero school aged pupils who live in the Skipness catchment area who attend Tarbert Primary School.

5.4 The school roll is not predicted to rise significantly in the future. The area around Skipness is a small settlement and is not identified for growth in the Local Development Plan: https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp.

5.5 There are no housing allocations and only two live planning permissions for residential development within the Skipness catchment area.

6 Teacher numbers

6.1 Teacher numbers are improving nationally, with a 1.23% decrease in the number of teachers nationally from 2014 - 2019. In Argyll and Bute there has been a 3.7% reduction in the fte number of teachers from 2014 - 2019.

6.2 As the school has been mothballed for over 3 years, the issue of recruitment of staff has not improved. At the time of writing this report there are 12 fte vacancies for class teachers in Argyll and Bute. Despite a sustained effort to secure permanent staff, there is no reason to think that staffing would not continue to be a considerable challenge for Skipness Primary School

6.3 At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Tarbert Primary School.

7 Condition of the building

7.1 Argyll and Bute Council's School Estate Management Planning process identified in 2016 that the condition of Skipness Primary School was satisfactory and graded a B. Outlined in the Options Appraisal (**Appendix 5** – section 6.3) are the full financial details in reference to costs for the re-opening the building or continuing to retain the building as mothballed.

7.2 As part of the consultation process the Council would be open to 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 (Scotland) 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.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

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 Tarbert Primary School, which is the school pupils from the Skipness Primary School catchment area have previously attended from October 2016, although there are currently no school aged pupils in the Skipness Primary School catchment area.

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 Skipness Primary School as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the School and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.

8.4 Skipness and Tarbert Primary Schools are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Although there are currently no school aged children in the Skipness Primary School

catchment area, children from Skipness Primary School area who previously attended Tarbert Primary School continued to benefit from education in a locality familiar to them, and still relatively close to home.

8.5 The co-location of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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. Tarbert Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll and Kintyre 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 Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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. Health and Wellbeing 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 groups also bring opportunities for increased collaborative working. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

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 Tarbert Primary School and Tarbert Academy, 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 Tarbert Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the village of Tarbert. The entire building is well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for the Tarbert 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 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 pupils if this proposal was to be implemented, as summarised in the paragraphs above. There are benefits for the development of social and emotional skills, as well as the educational benefits resultant from access to a more diverse curriculum. The learning environment in Tarbert 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 Tarbert Primary School.

13.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal in respect of staffing. Should issues arise however, these will be mitigated through the Council Educational Management Team support structure.

Early Learning Centre Users – Pre Five Children

13.3 The co-location for the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Tarbert Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and the school and includes joint early level learning every week.

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

Existing and future pupils

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

14.2 There would be positive educational benefits associated with this proposal. 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 could increase the roll of Tarbert 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 Skipness Primary School, which consists of one classroom, a dining area and school office, 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. Tarbert Primary School meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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 Skipness Primary School catchment area. However, children who previously lived in this catchment area and attended Tarbert Primary School made this journey, 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 Summary of educational benefits statement

17.1 Educational benefits of this proposal, such as the ability for children to participate in a broad range of experiences, the development of the strategic leadership of the head teacher in taking forward improvements in learning and teaching, and the ability to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the children are significant benefits to this proposal. During the pre-consultation phase, these benefits were explored in detail and details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, to include the alternative proposals and the authority's assessment of other likely effects of the proposal and the reasons for that assessment are attached as **Appendix 5**.

17.2 Whilst the positive educational benefits are numerous, there is one negative aspect identified which arises from the children attending Tarbert Primary School. This negative aspect is principally around the fact that children have to travel by either bus or car to school. However it is considered that the positive aspects of this proposal outweigh the negative aspect of some travelling for children.

18 Factors for rural school closures

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

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

18.2 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.

18.3 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

18.4 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.

18.5 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 Skipness Primary School may be an important step in building community confidence, promoting growth and enabling communities to realise their aspirations.

18.6 Research[1] 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.

18.7 Within Skipness there is Skipness Village Hall which is used for community events. Almost all people who attended the preliminary consultation strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair.

18.8 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.

18.9 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 enterprise focus.

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

18.10 During the pre-consultation phase, almost all members of the community supported closure of the school with the suggestion that the building and

[1] https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/

adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. Within Skipness there is Skipness Village Hall which is used for community events. All people who attended the pre-consultation meeting felt that the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the aesthetic of the community.

18.11 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 and in particular the availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the community. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

The likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements

18.12 The travel distance from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles on the B8001/A83. Travel time is approximately twenty five minutes. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community.

18.13 Implementation of the proposal would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Skipness Primary School, in terms of current travel arrangements would have a neutral effect on the environment. There is no current annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Tarbert Primary School.

18.14 It is anticipated that the effect on the travel arrangements of staff and other users of the facility would not differ materially from that of the pupils accessing the school.

Environmental impact

18.15 Currently no pupils travel to Tarbert Primary School from the Skipness Primary School Catchment area. Therefore, this option would have a neutral environmental impact on the current position and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils.

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

19 Financial Impact

19.1 The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in **Appendix 4**. Some of this information has been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was prepared. In particular the annual cost of mothballing the school has been recalculated from £1,644 to £1,641.This information gives details on the estimated cost if Skipness Primary School was still to be an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Skipness Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is estimated at £1,641 per year.

Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £143,666.

19.2 Column 2 of Table 1 at **Appendix 4** shows the projected annual running costs of Skipness whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on Tarbert Primary as the receiving school. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.

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

19.4 In line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers, the Education Service operates on the basis that supernumerary teachers are redeployed and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. Some of the costs noted in column 3 of Table 1 will not directly impact on Tarbert 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 Skipness Primary School.

19.5 There are currently no annual transport costs for pupils to attend Tarbert Primary School. Transport costs per year to attend Skipness Primary School, if it were to be reopened, are estimated at £14,282 per year. Transport costs per year to attend Tarbert Primary School would be £14,282 although use of the service bus would incur no additional transport costs.

19.6 Table 2 contains the notional 30 year lifecycle costs that would arise based on the GIA of the various schools irrespective of the number of pupils accommodated. Lifecycle costs are representative of the cost needed to keep the building in a good state of repair. The cost over the next thirty years therefore to maintain Skipness Primary School is £133,686 and for Tarbert Primary School this is £1,023,865

19.7 Table 3 contains the annual running costs during mothballing of Skipness Primary School and these are estimated at £1,641 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.

19.8 The transfer of pupils from Skipness to Tarbert Primary School would impact on the council's Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocation for Tarbert Primary

School Teaching Staff as there would be a reduction in the Percentage of Primary Pupils in Small Schools. This reduction is estimated at £4,000. However Argyll and Bute Council is supported through the floor mechanism so would not see a reduction in their overall funding.

20 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 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 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.

21 Consultation arrangements

21.1 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 10th December 2019 that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Skipness Primary School and redraw its catchment area to Tarbert Primary School is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

21.2 This document was considered by the Council as Education Authority on 12th March 2020 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.

21.3 A summary of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed on page 2 of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website:

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

21.4 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 19th March 2020 until the close of business on 15th May 2020 which lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and includes at least 30 school days.

21.5 A public meeting will be held at Skipness Village Hall on 6th May 2020 at 7.00pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education Authority and the Education Authority will present reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered. However, the Education Authority will also consider written comments which should be sent to Education Services, School Consultations, Argyll & Bute Council, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ and should be received no later than 5.00pm on 15th May 2020.

21.6 Written representations may be made on the proposal and the alternatives to the proposal. Written representations may also suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

21.7 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.

21.8 After receiving Education Scotland's report, the Education Authority will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9, 10 and 13 of the 2010 Act. The Education Authority will thereafter make its final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be published a minimum of 3 weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

21.9 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.

21.10 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.

21.11 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.

22 Conclusion

22.1 It is proposed that education provision at Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020. The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.

22.2 It has been assessed that the proposal is the most appropriate means of addressing the underlying reasons for formulating it, which are:

- Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for three years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £1,641;

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 12 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.

Other Considerations

- This proposal will bring educational benefits to all present and future users of the affected schools and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future;

- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;

- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate;

- Retaining unessecary 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 its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsistainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Louise Connor
Head of Education: Learning & Teaching

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Policy Lead for Education

For further information contact:
Simone McAdam
Education Manager
simone.mcadam@argyll-bute.gov.uk

January 2020

APPENDICES

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

APPENDIX 1

Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry

Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RT
Telephone: 01546 605522 **Fax:**
Our Ref: **Ref:**
If phoning or calling please ask for:
e-mail: simone.mcadam@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Council Website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Skipness Primary School

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision
Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Skipness 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 Skipness 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 19th March 2020 and will conclude on 15th May 2020. 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 Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020. The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for over three years. The school condition will deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is zero and is not predicted to rise in the near future.

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 12 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.

- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

The Council's education strategy
Our Children Their Future

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

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

Alternatives to the Proposal

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

a) Re-open Skipness Primary School,
b) Continued Mothballing of Skipness Primary with the pupils zoned to Tarbert Primary School,
c) Re-open Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area,
d) Close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert 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/school-consultations-and-proposals
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal
- Ask parents, carers, children, young people, teachers, support staff and others to tell us what they think of the proposals.

What to do now?

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 6th May 2020 at 7.00pm in Skipness Village Hall.
- 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: argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk

What next?

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

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

If the suggestion goes ahead, any children from Skipness Primary School catchment area would be educated at Tarbert Primary School.

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

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Tarbert Public Library, Barmore Road, Tarbert, PA29 6TW
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Tarbert Primary School, School Road,Tarbert.PA29 6TE
- Skipness Village Hall, B8001, Tarbert, PA29 6XT

It is also available electronically via our website:

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

Yours faithfully,

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director with responsibility for Education

APPENDIX 2

Argyll and Bute Council
Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

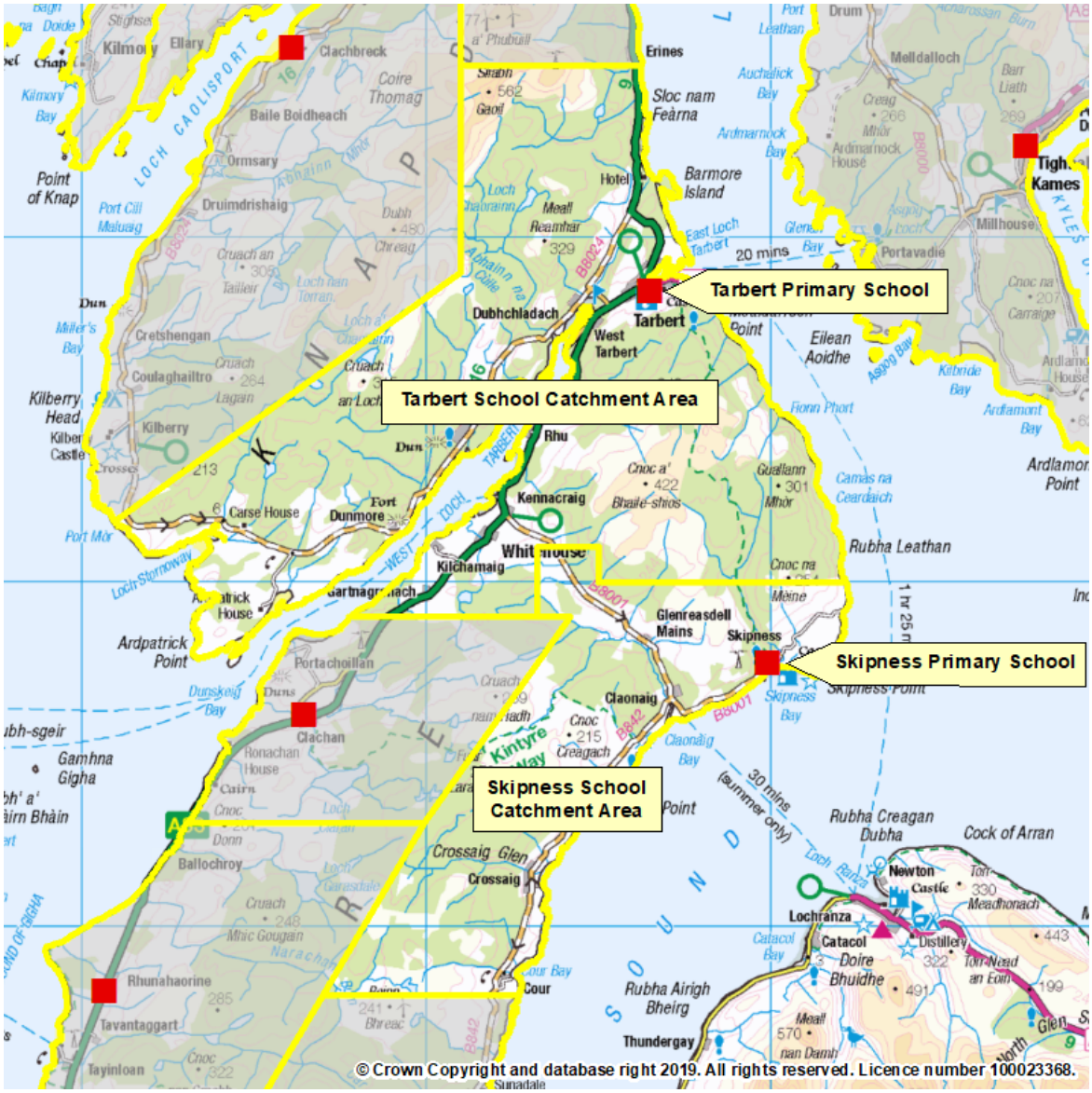
Proposal	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Skipness Primary School be discontinued with effect from 28th October 2020. The catchment area of Tarbert Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Skipness Primary School.	
This part of the form must be completed for 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)

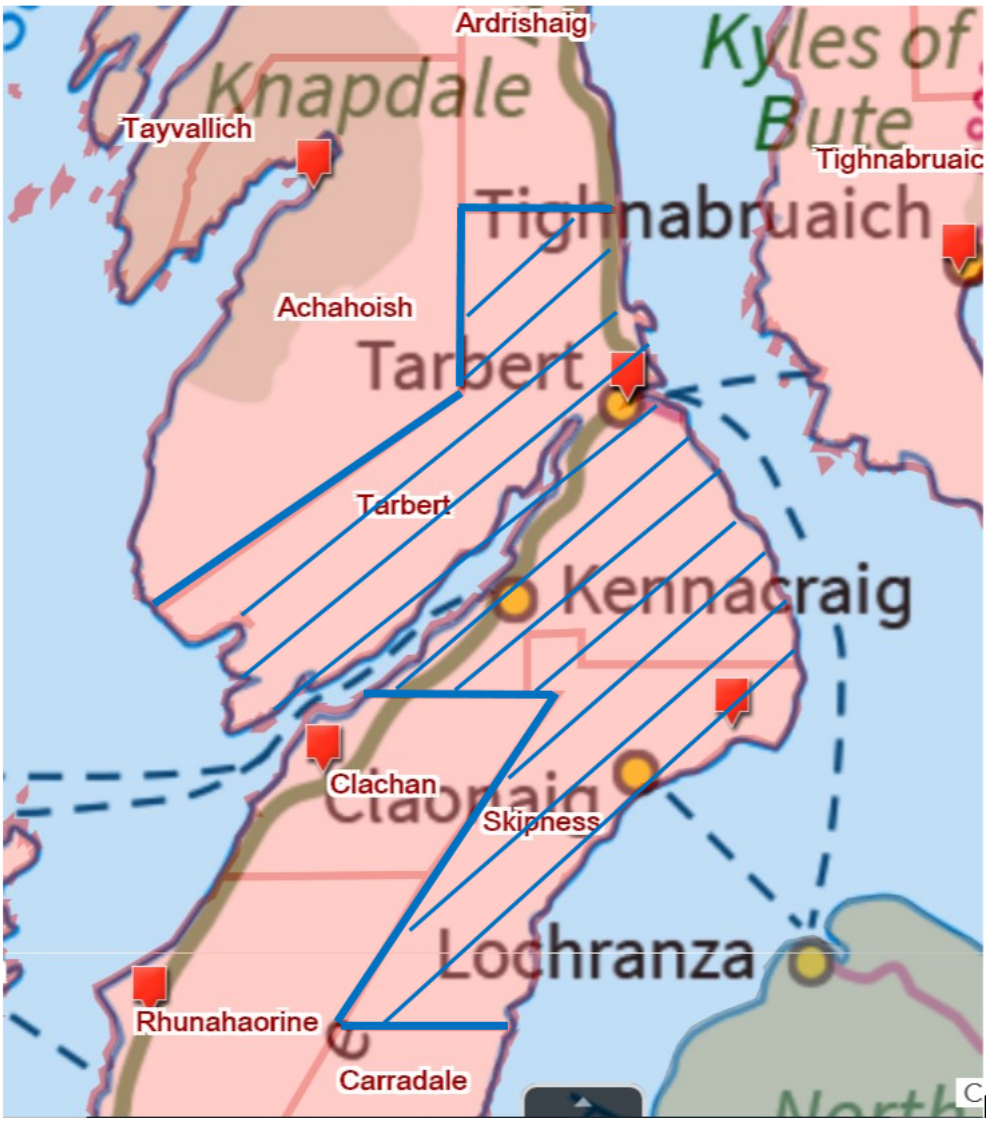
Parent ☐	Child / Young Person ☐	Staff ☐	Other * ☐
Elected Member / MSP / MP ☐		Member of Community Council ☐	
*Other: (please specify)			
Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)			

APPENDIX 3 - MAPS

MAP OF CURRENT PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA



MAP OF PROPOSED CATCHMENT AREA



APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1[2]

Name of School Skipness Primary	**Projected annual costs for full financial year 2019/20**	**Additional financial impact on receiving school** Tarbert Primary	**Annual recurring savings** (column 2 minus column 3)
School costs			
Employee costs -			
teaching staff	98,567	98,569	0
support staff	15,522		15,522
teaching staff training (CPD etc)			
support staff training			
Supply costs	2,681		2,681
Building costs:			
property insurance	226		226
non domestic rates	325		325
water & sewerage charges			0
energy costs	1,966		1,966
cleaning (contract or in-house)	261		261
building repair & maintenance	4,190		4,190
grounds maintenance	142		142
facilities management costs	163		163
revenue costs arising from capital			0
other - refuse collection; telephones	556		556
School operational costs:			
learning materials	2,823	67	2,756
catering (contract or inhouse)	12,911	475	12,437
SQA costs			0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			0
Transport costs:			
home to school			
other pupil transport costs		14,282[3]	-14,282

[2] These figures have been calculated based on Skipness Primary school roll the last full year prior to mothballing.

[3] This figure is based on current financial costs if transport was necessary to be provided.

staff travel			0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	**140,335**	**113,392**	**26,942**

Income:			
Sale of meals	-17	-17	0
Lets			0
External care provider			0
Other			0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	**-17**	**-17**	**0**
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	**140,318**	**113,376**	**26,942**

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	**46,773[4]**	**37,792**	**3,368**

Table 2

Capital costs	**School proposed for closure** Skipness Primary	**Receiving school** Primary
Capital Life Cycle cost	133,686	1,023,865
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	226
non domestic rates	325
water & sewerage charges	
energy costs	350
cleaning (contract or in-house)	
security costs	
building repair & maintenance	450
grounds maintenance	7
facilities management costs	283
other	
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	**1,641**

[4] This figure has been calculated based on Skipness Primary school roll of the last full year prior to mothballing.

Table 4

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

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
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 Skipness are designated to attend which has a roll of > 70 pupils. The additional pupils from Skipness will maintain the roll of above the small school threshold. There will be a loss of small school GAE for those pupils attending Skipness equating to approximately £4,000. **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.**	4,000
GAE IMPACT	4,000

APPENDIX 5 – OPTIONS APPRAISAL

EDUCATION

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 8th September 2016, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Skipness Primary School. The Council agreed that in the event there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2018/19 the school be considered for formal closure through the statutory process.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7207&Ver=4

On 5th September 2019, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal, for Skipness Primary School. The Community Services Committee received a report presenting and outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010 (as amended) and a broad timeline of this process.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8381&Ver=4

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

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

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

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

On 5th September 2019, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the preliminary requirements in relation to considering a rural school closure and look at an options

appraisal for Skipness Primary School. This review will enable the Education Service to identify and consider the options put forward.

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

2. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

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

1. Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for three 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 September 2019 there were 18.5 fte vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers.
3. Whilst the School is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

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

3. BACKGROUND

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

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 Skipness and the Local Area - the Skipness Primary School Setting

Skipness is a scenically beautiful area situated on the most North Westerly point of the Kintyre peninsula. Skipness is a small and picturesque village overlooking the Kilbrannan sound towards the Isle

of Arran, whose name means 'point of the ships' in ancient Nordic tongue. The Kintyre Way passes through the village of Skipness on its way from Tarbert to Southend, encouraging outdoor enthusiasts to take in the natural beauty of the area. Skipness village is home to the historic attractions of the 13th Century Skipness Castle and Kilbrannan Chapel from the same time period which are open to the public and attracts visitors throughout the year.

3.4 The School within the Community

Skipness Primary School was very active within the community. It was 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 no longer continues to be used for meetings. With Skipness Village Hall, a community managed charity that host various community events and can be hired privately, being the hub of the village.

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 Skipness area showing the changing population from census 2001 to census 2011:

Table 1: Population Information

Skipness 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 Skipness Primary School differ slightly. Currently there are 34 permanent community members in the village of Skipness.

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 Skipness.
Appendix 2 shows the LDP for Tarbert.
Appendix 3 provides the key for Local Development Plans.

3.7 Skipness Primary School

Skipness 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 from Cour to Cnoc na Meine and across to Whitehouse. 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 shows the Skipness Primary School Floor Plan.

Skipness Primary School is 12.6 miles from Tarbert Primary School. The area is sparsely populated. The School is situated on the side of a single track road that leads from Claonaig to Skipness.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Skipness 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. Skipness Primary is one of 5 primary schools associated with Tarbert Academy.

3.8 Tarbert Primary School

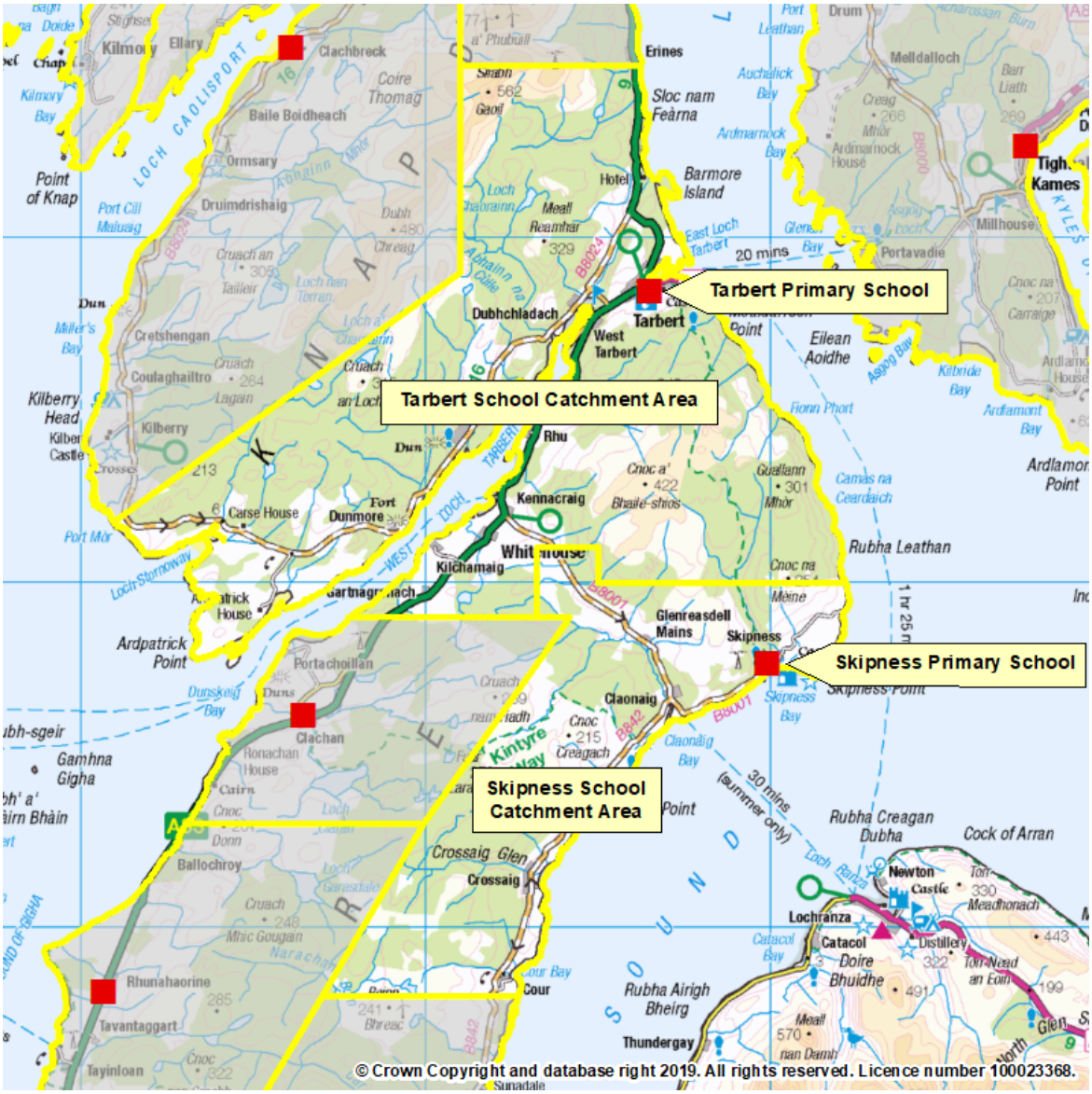
Following the mothballing of Skipness Primary School, children currently attend Tarbert Primary School. Tarbert Primary School is a non-denominational and co-educational school situated in the village of Tarbert at 4 Eastfield, off the main A83 road. Tarbert Academy is a 3-18 school comprising three stages of schooling. The Pre-5 unit serves the village and near environs of Tarbert. The Primary serves the village and the surrounding community; and the Secondary also serves the communities of South Knapdale and North Kintyre. The original school building was constructed in 1896 and is still used today. New accommodation was phased in during the mid-1990s and is used to house the Primary, Assembly Hall, Office and School Kitchen. In the year 2000, the School also became home to a Pre-5 unit and in 2014 an Early Level classroom with its own toilet block, kitchen and outdoor play area was built in the Primary Department. The building is well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for the Primary School.

Appendix 5 shows the Tarbert 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. There are willow dens to play in and access to the nearby cycle track.

The Primary School building has facilities for pupils, visitors and special access needs. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Tarbert Primary School as 'very remote rural'. Tarbert Academy is the associated Secondary School for Skipness and Clachan. Pupils at Achahoish Primary can choose between Tarbert Academy and Lochgilphead High and pupils from Rhunahaorine and Gigha are given the choice between Tarbert Academy and Campbeltown Grammar.

The Map below shows the adjoining catchment areas of Skipness and Tarbert Primary Schools Catchment Areas:



3.9 Pupil Numbers

Pupil projections, and data for 2019 - 2020 are based on the 2018 pupil census, a return prepared annually for the Scottish Government. Past pupil numbers are historic data from past pupil censuses. Pupil projections for future P1 intakes are from NHS data taken from children registered with GP practices in the area. This data is anonymised.

Table 2 shows the historic and current pupil numbers for both Skipness and Tarbert Primary schools:

Table 2:	**Skipness PS**	**Tarbert PS**
Capacity	26	130
	Roll	Roll
2005-06	7	100

2006-07	7	91
2007-08	7	89
2008-09	7	92
2009-2010	6	95
2010-2011	1	92
2011-2012	3	88
2012-2013	3	83
2013-2014	4	79
2014-2015	3	81
2015-2016	3	83
2016-2017	0	94
2017-2018	0	93
2018-19	0	96
2019-20	0	102

Table 3 shows projected rolls for Tarbert Primary School and estimated number of pupils in the Skipness Primary School catchment area according to figures held by Argyll and Bute Council:

Table 3:	**Skipness PS**	**Tarbert PS**
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	26	154
2020 -2021	1	109*
2021 -2022	1	106*
2022-2023	1	103*

* A prediction based on information available July 2019.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Meetings

A Community Engagement Meeting was held in Skipness Village Hall, on October 24th, 2019 from 14:30-18:00 hours. This was to seek the views of the community on the future of Skipness School. This meeting was attended by 22 people. There was also a meeting in Tarbert Academy to gather opinions from the young people from within the catchment area for Skipness School. Three secondary aged young people attended as there are currently no primary aged pupils from the Skipness catchment area attending Tarbert Primary.

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 Skipness 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 area*

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 Skipness School:

- **Community and Parents**
  The majority of the community felt that the most viable option is to formally close the school and were in agreement that the low numbers of children did not make the re-opening of the school realistic. There was a small percentage of people in support of continued mothballing in order to retain the building in case of future need.

- **Children/young people**
  The young people voiced they loved being at school at Skipness Primary but that there are currently no pupils at Skipness Primary and closing the school made sense to them.

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

General Comments:

'Closing is the most sensible option.'

'Tarbert isn't too far and there is an existing bus service.'

'Continued mothballing would mean further deterioration to the building and would be a waste of the premises.'

'Changing catchment area could impact other small local schools and wouldn't necessarily mean more pupils for the school as parents have a choice of where to send their children.'

'If there were kids there I feel they would miss out on the great learning experience. But I understand there's no point keeping a school open if there isn't anyone in the classrooms.'

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

Skipness Primary School has been mothballed for 3 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 September 2019 there were 18.5 fte vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers.

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

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

6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Community Feedback

Of the 22 community members that attended the Options Appraisal engagement event, no one was in support of re-opening the School because the lack of feasibility due to low pupil numbers.

6.2 Pupil Numbers

If the school were to reopen in August 2020, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be one. There are no pupils currently within the catchment area but children would attend Tarbert Primary School. It has been stated that without a viable number of pupils for the School parents would not be considering placing their children at attend Skipness Primary School if it were to re-open.

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

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

Skipness Primary	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Approved Capacity	26	26	26
Roll Projection	1	1	1

6.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£143,666**[5]

The annual cost of mothballing Skipness Primary School is **£1,644**.

The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£75,000.**

6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Skipness Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Skipness Primary School to increase. Skipness Primary School is currently mothballed and there

[5] Annual costs for running a comparative school for Skipness Primary School.

are no current pupils in the Skipness catchment area. 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 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 Skipness School. All of which have been reported to be well attended. Respondents noted the negative impact of the school mothballing on the community as:

- The visual impact on the community of the mothballed school.
- The continued deterioration of the building.

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 (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the

A83. Travel time is approximately 25 minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community. If Skipness 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 respective positive and negative impact may therefore balance.

6.5 Educational Benefits

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

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

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

6.6 Summary

The 22 people who attended the consultation the majority were not in favour of reopening Skipness Primary as a school. If the school reopened, pupil numbers would be zero, as of the September 2018 census, and this is predicted to increase by 1 over the next three years.

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 **£143,666**[6], with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£75,000.**

[6] Annual costs for running a comparative school for Skipness.

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 (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83. Travel time is approximately 25 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 almost 3 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.

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 and the lack of local support for reopening Skipness Primary School this is not considered to be a reasonable option.

7. OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS ZONED TO TARBERT PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

7.1 Community Feedback

There are many ideas for the future of the building being taken forward by the community 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 building is deteriorating and is becoming an eye-sore.'*

'Continued mothballing would mean further deterioration to the building and would be a waste of the premises.'

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

'The building should be used for a purpose to benefit 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 (2019/20) to the Council of the mothballed Skipness Primary School is **£1,644.** 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 **£75,000**. There is no current annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools.

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

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

7.4.1 <u>*Community Impact*</u>

If pupils are to continue their education in Tarbert Primary School there would be no change to the current impact on the community. If the mothballing of Skipness was to continue the building would deteriorate further and eventually become unavailable. This could have a detrimental effect on the

sustainability of the Skipness community. At present the school grounds are available for community use. For example, the tarmac area is used as parking for Village Hall events and visiting children use the play areas. 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.

7.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

There is no change to the travel arrangements that are currently in place nor to the environmental impact from these. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83. Travel time is approximately 25 minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community. Continued mothballing of Skipness Primary School would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal effect on staffing within the receiving primary schools.

7.5 Educational Benefits

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

Both Tarbert and Skipness are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Skipness area, attending Tarbert 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 Tarbert Primary.

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

7.6 Summary

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of continuing the three year mothballing of Skipness 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 (2019/20) to the Council of the mothballed Skipness Primary School is **£1,644.** 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 **£75,000**. There is no current annual transport cost for taking pupils to an alternative school.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83. Travel time is approximately twenty-five 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 Skipness Primary school.

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

8. OPTION C: RE-OPEN SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EXTEND ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO THE JUNCTION OF THE B8001 AND A83, INCULDING THE VILLAGE OF WHITEHOUSE

8.1 Community Feedback

The existing catchment area for Skipness School is very rural and very sparsely populated.

When considering the option to realign the catchment area of Skipness, the boundary for Skipness School has been hypothetically moved to the junction of the B8001 and the A83 and including the village of Whitehouse.

Community views are:

'Changing catchment area could impact other small local schools and wouldn't necessarily mean more pupils for the school as parents have a choice of where to send their children.'

8.2 Pupil Numbers

The pupil numbers within this new catchment area would not increase the roll significantly. As part of any possible forthcoming consultation, there would be discussions with the parent body of Tarbert Primary School regarding the future of Skipness School. There was no representation from the Parent Council at the Options Appraisal Meeting. It was felt by attendees at the meeting that moving the catchment area of Skipness Primary School 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 **£143,666**[7] per annum**.**

To bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school would cost **£75,000.**

The cost to use minibuses to transport the children to Skipness Primary School would be **£14,738**[8] (These transport costs are calculated assuming the boundary has moved to include all children who live within the junction of the B8001 and the A83).

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 why the future of Skipness Primary School is being reviewed are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no

[7] Annual costs for running a comparative school for Skipness.
[8] This would be the cost of one mini bus.

expectation for the pupil numbers at Skipness Primary School to increase. Skipness Primary School is currently mothballed and the pupils are rezoned to Tarbert Primary School.

To reopen Skipness Primary School **and** realign its catchment area could increase the pupil numbers if families were to send their children to Skipness Primary School.

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 Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the A83. Travel for children within this new boundary would be less than thirty minutes and would be a new 'bus route'. Therefore, appropriate risk assessments would be necessary. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community.

If Skipness 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 Tarbert and Skipness are very remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Skipness area that currently attend Tarbert Primary School benefit from the broader environment, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment. Outdoor learning is currently provided at Tarbert Primary School.

The outdoor facilities either in the school grounds or in the immediate neighbourhood of Skipness Primary School 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 Skipness Primary as a school, and realigning its catchment area 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 **£143,666**[9], with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£75,000.**

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

[9] Annual costs for running a comparative school for Skipness.

The travel distance from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the A83. Travel for children within this new boundary would be less than 30 minutes and would be an existing '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 very 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 community that may not be the case as most pupils in the neighbouring catchment area travel in the direction Tarbert, towards the larger centre of population, and not towards Skipness. It would require pupils who may have already settled in Tarbert Primary School to move to Skipness Primary School. Skipness families have stated they would not move their children back to Skipness without viable pupil numbers if it reopened. All families would be entitled to submit a placing request to attend Tarbert 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 Skipness Primary School, this is not considered to be a reasonable option.

9. OPTION D: CLOSE SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR TARBERT PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT SKIPNESS CATCHMENT AREA

9.1 Community Feedback

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

'It's not realistic to re-open the school as there are not enough young people.'

'Tarbert isn't too far and there is an existing bus service.'

Young people said:

'If there were enough kids I think the community would want it to stay open.'

'I found it easy to come to Tarbert, I enjoyed company of new friends transition was ok.'

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

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

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

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

9.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 5: Schools Occupancy:

Primary	*2019/2020*	*2020/21*
Approved Capacity	*130*	*130*
Projected Roll	*102*	*109*
Skipness Projected Roll	*0*	*0*
Total Roll Projection	*102*	*109*
Occupancy	*78.5%*	*83.9%*

Pupils from Skipness Primary catchment area would attend Tarbert Primary School, as there are currently no pupils attending Skipness there is no projected addition to school roll at Tarbert Primary School. The current occupancy rate for Tarbert Primary School is 78.5%.

9.3 Financial Information

As there are currently no pupils at Skipness Primary there is no annual cost to transport pupils to alternative schools. An existing West Coast bus means that there would be no additional annual transport costs. If Skipness Primary School were to be closed it would generate savings of **£1,644** - the current annual cost of mothballing (2019/20) to the Council**.** This includes electricity, heating oil, and ground maintenance but does not include building maintenance and repair costs.

9.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Skipness Primary School is being reviewed are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Skipness Primary School to increase. Skipness Primary School is currently mothballed and were there pupils they would be rezoned to other schools. To reopen the school would not increase the pupil numbers.

9.4.1 *Community Impact*

The community overwhelmingly supported closure of the school with the building and adjoining grounds being retained for community use. Within Skipness there is a village hall. All people who attended the consultation strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall into further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises and the visual impact of the village. While it is accepted that school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, a vibrant community hub could be an asset to a community. This could potentially have a very positive impact on sustainability of the community if this option were to progress. If the Community wished to create a community hub, they would require to find a mechanism to acquire the property from the Council and deliver that aspiration. The buildings forming the school premises are situated within walking distance of the village. If the local plans for the building progress, this would have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

9.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83. Travel time is approximately 25 minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community. This

option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Skipness Primary School, in terms of travel would have a neutral effect on the environment. There is currently no annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Tarbert Primary School and the use of the existing West Coast Motors service bus would not incur additional costs in the immediate future.

9.5 Educational Benefits

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

Both Tarbert and Skipness are very remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Skipness area who would attend Tarbert 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 Tarbert Primary. The pupils would then be transitioning to Tarbert Academy with an established friendship group.

In Tarbert 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.

9.6 Summary

The majority of people who attended the consultation were in favour of closing Skipness Primary as a school, and realigning the catchment area of Tarbert 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 Tarbert Primary School is 78.5%. As there are currently no pupils in the Skipness catchment area, there is no annual cost to transport pupils to Tarbert Primary school and use of the existing West Coast Motors service bus would not incur additional costs.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83 and this option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Skipness Primary School would therefore have a neutral effect on the environment. Tarbert Academy currently accommodates pupils from Skipness School and pupil numbers are not projected to increase significantly. Tarbert Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers.

In Tarbert 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 Skipness Primary School with the existing catchment area	Not a reasonable option.
B	Continued Mothballing of Skipness Primary School with the pupils zoned to Primary School	Not a reasonable option.
C	Re-open Skipness Primary School and extend its catchment area to the junction of the B8001 and A83 including the village of Whitehouse.	Not a reasonable option
D	Close Skipness Primary School and realign the catchment area of Tarbert Primary School to include the current catchment area for Skipness Primary School.	A reasonable option with strong representation that the school becomes a facility the community can develop.

12. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION: CLOSE SKIPNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR TARBERT PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT SKIPNESS CATCHMENT AREA

12.1 Pupil Projections

Primary	*2019/2020*	*2020/21*
Approved Capacity	*130*	*130*
Projected Roll	*102*	*109*
Skipness Projected Roll	*0*	*0*
Total Roll Projection	*102*	*109*
Occupancy	*78.5%*	*83.9%*

12.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Tarbert Primary School, which is the school Skipness Pupils have been attending since September 2016.

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 Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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 Tarbert 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. Tarbert Primary School is part of the Kintyre Schools 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 Tarbert 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.

Tarbert 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 Tarbert and Skipness are very remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Skipness area,

who would attend Tarbert Primary School would benefit 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 Tarbert Primary School 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 model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met.

In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. Tarbert 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*

Tarbert Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the village of Tarbert. 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 why the future of Skipness Primary School is being reviewed are stated at Section 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase at the School. Skipness Primary School is mothballed with no current pupils. Having considered all the alternatives above, the option to close Skipness Primary School and realign the catchment area for Tarbert Primary School to include the former Skipness Primary School catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at Section 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 Skipness there is a Village Hall which houses community events. All people who attended the Options Appraisal Meeting strongly stated the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises and the visual impact of the village. It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a vibrant community hub could be an asset to the community. The school premises are situated within walking distance of the village. 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 (sourced from Google maps) from Skipness Primary to Tarbert Primary is 12.6 miles via the B8001 and the A83. Travel time is approximately 25 minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for almost 3 years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Skipness community. Pupils will travel on the existing West Coast Motors service bus and eventually all the pupils will travel to Tarbert Primary School. The environmental impact of travel will be minimal, as these arrangements are currently in place due to the mothballing of Skipness Primary School. The closure of Skipness Primary School, in terms of travel, would have a neutral effect on the environment. Due to there being no pupils presently within the Skipness catchment area, there is currently no annual transport cost of taking pupils to Tarbert Primary School and use of the existing West Coast Motors service bus would mean there are no future cost implications.

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 Skipness Primary School are a total of **£1,644**.

Annual savings generated through closing Skipness Primary School would be **£1,644**.

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 no pupils travel to Tarbert Primary. 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 Tarbert Primary School, a relatively short journey. Travel is an accepted aspect of rural life.

13. CONCLUSION

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

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

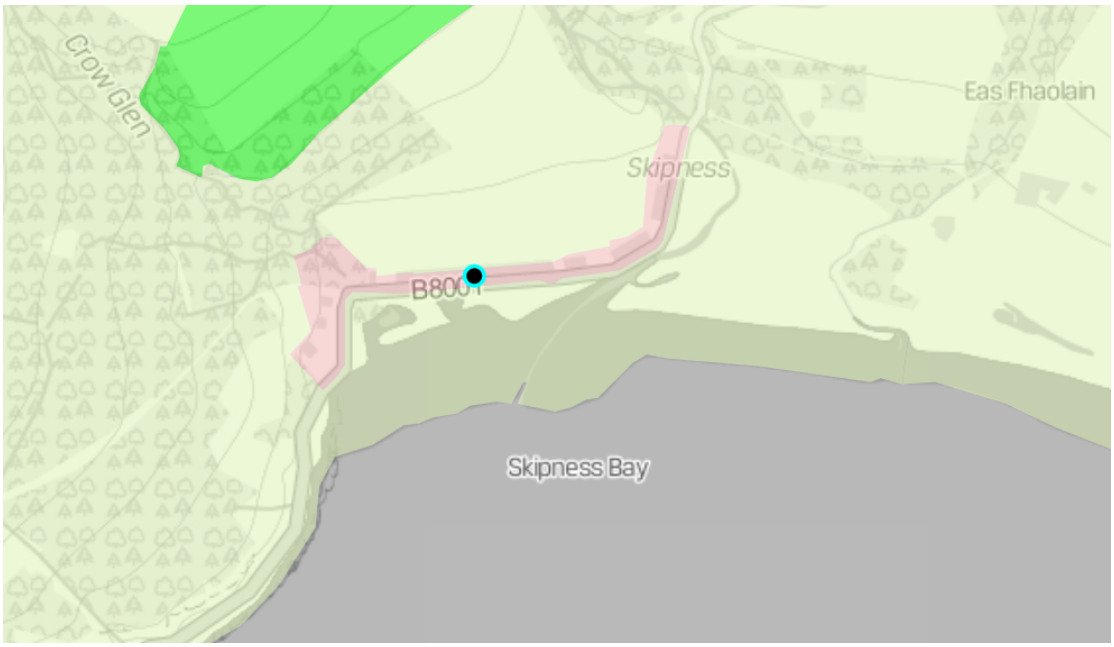
An authority that is contemplating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act before formulating a proposal.

After consideration of the preliminary requirements, as set out in the Act, and the options, and having regard to the specific reasons identified at Section 2 of this report, closing Skipness Primary School and realigning the catchment area of Tarbert Primary School to include the current catchment area for Skipness Primary School is the most reasonable option in order to address the reasons for the possible proposal.

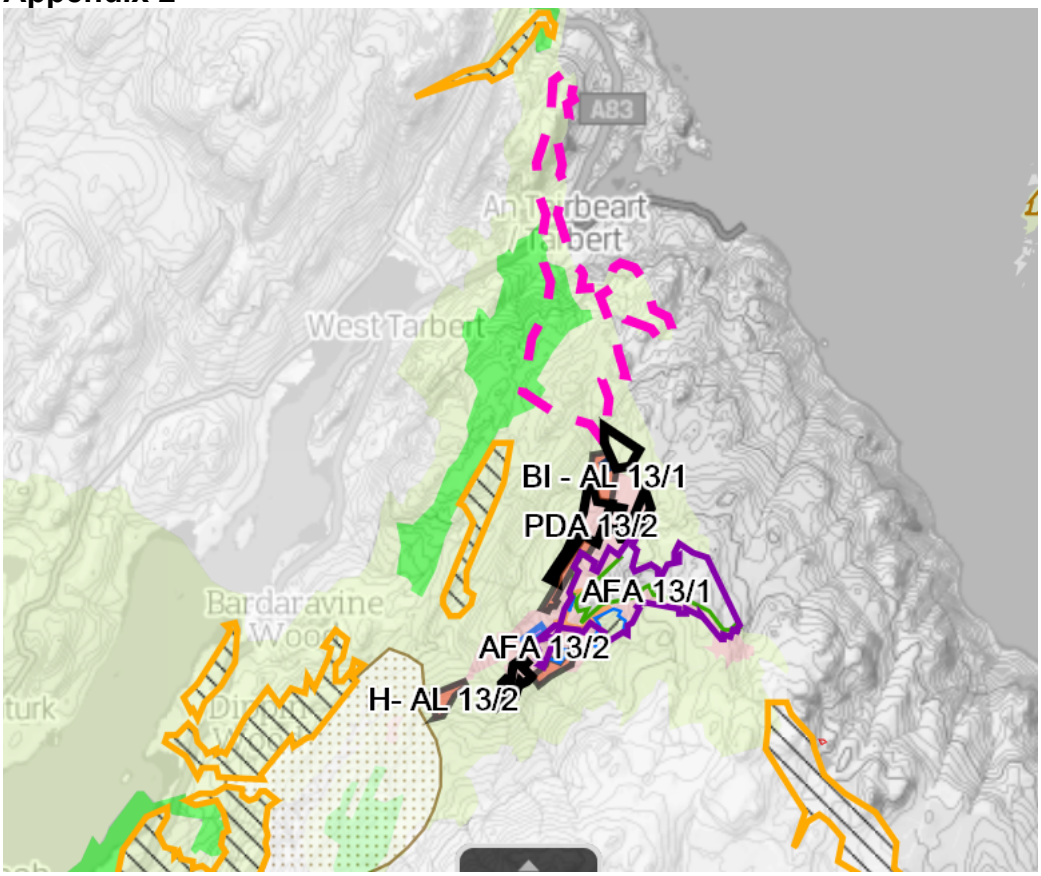
Members are asked to:

- 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 1



Appendix 2

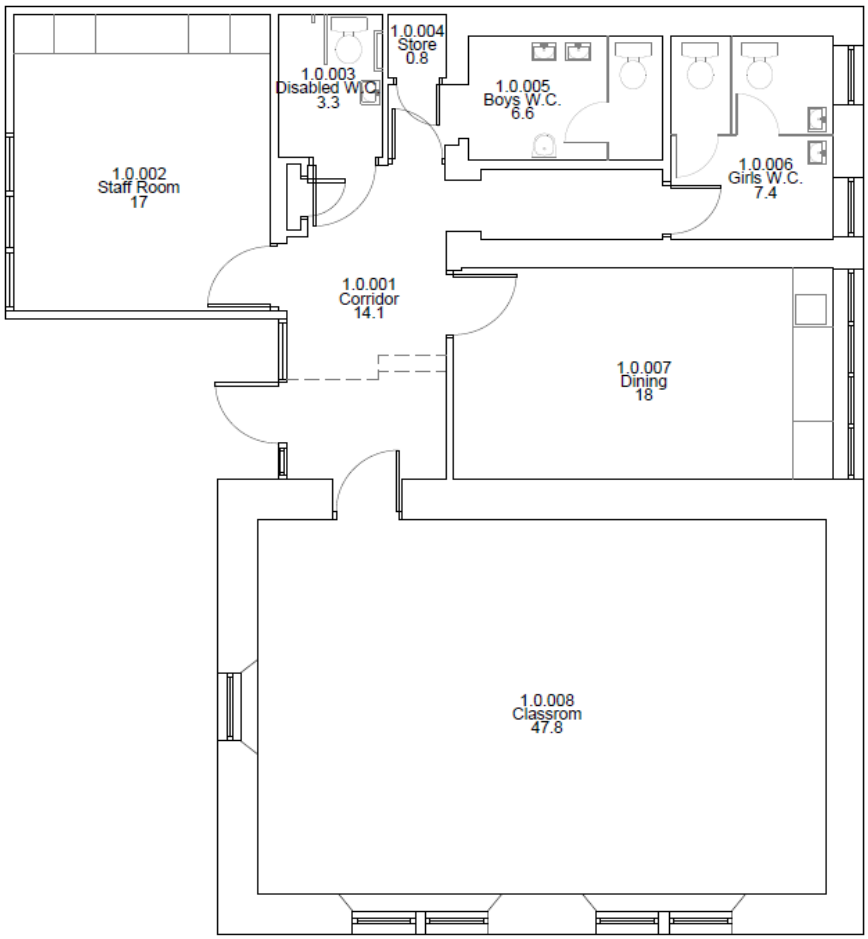


Appendix 3

Development Management Zones

- Countryside Zone
- Greenbelt
- Rural Opportunity Area
- Settlement Zone - Main Town
- Settlement Zone - Key Settlement
- Settlement Zone - Key Rural Settlement
- Settlement Zone - Village / Minor Settlement
- Very Sensitive Countryside

Appendix 4



Skipness Primary School Main Building
Ground Floor

Notes

Contractor to check all dimensions on site.
Do not scale from drawing.
Report any discrepancies and omissions to Customer Services, Argyll and Bute Council without delay and before proceeding with any effected works.
All Building work is to comply with current Technical Standards and all other relevant statutory regulations.

DESIGN
Unless stated otherwise, the designs shown are subject to detailed survey, investigations, and legal definition, the CDM Regulations, and the comments and / or approval of the various relevant Local Authority Officers, Statutory Undertakers, Fire Officers, Engineers and the like. They are copyright, project specific and confidential and not part is to be used or copied in any way without the express prior consent of Customer Services, Argyll and Bute Council.

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Current School GIA on 31.10.13 = 126m²

Rev	Date	Description	Drawn By
-	00.00.00	-	-

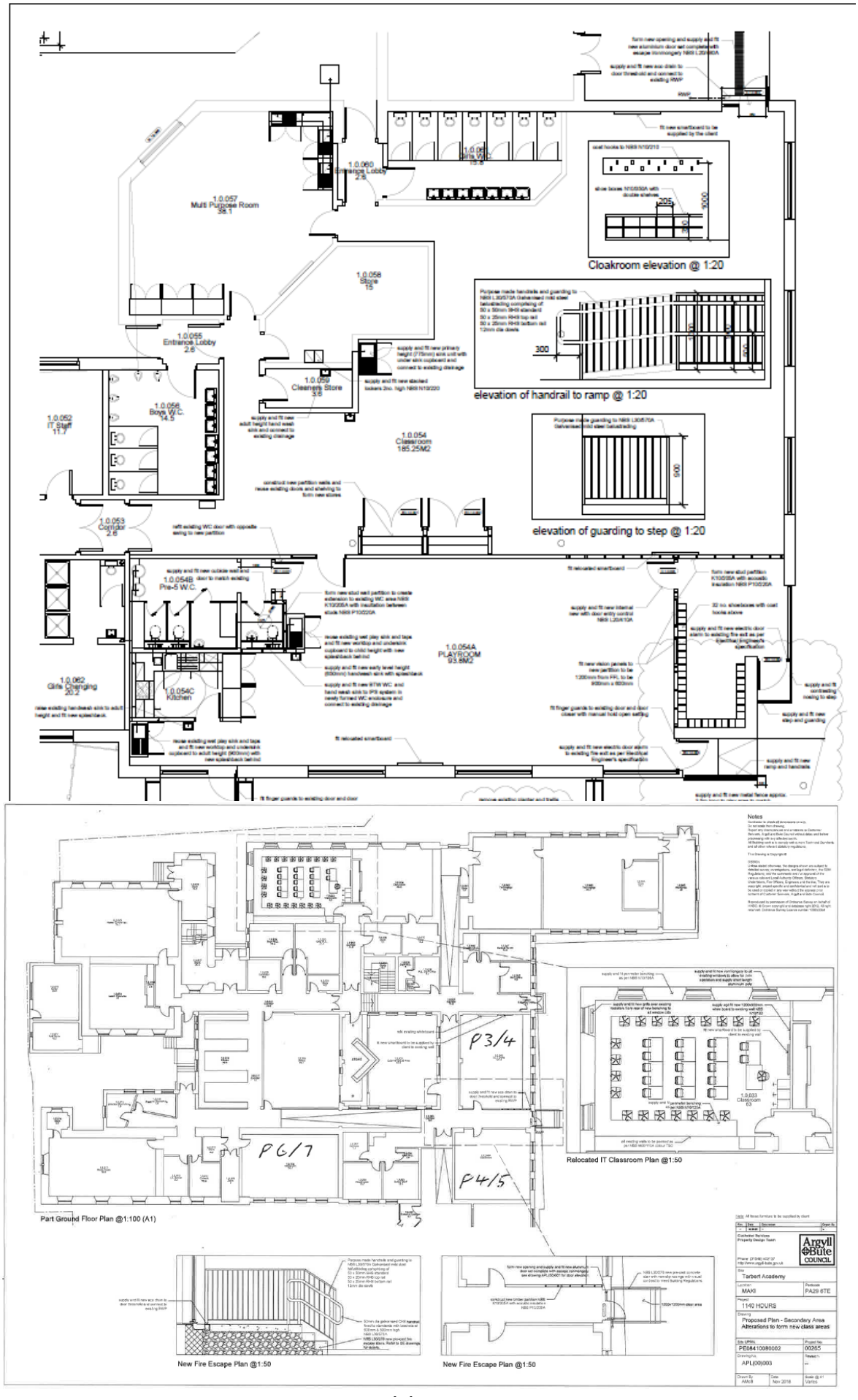
Customer Services
Property Design Team

Phone: (01546) 602127
http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Argyll & Bute COUNCIL

Site: Skipness Primary School	
Location: Tarbert	Postcode: PA29 6XT
Project: --	
Drawing: Current Floor Plan	
Site UPRN: PE07109760001	Project No.: --
Drawing No.: AEL(00)001	Revision: --
Drawn By: mm	Date: October 2013
	Scale @ A2: 1:50

Appendix 5


Cloakroom elevation @ 1:20
elevation of handrail to ramp @ 1:20
elevation of guarding to step @ 1:20
Part Ground Floor Plan @1:100 (A1)
Relocated IT Classroom Plan @1:50
New Fire Escape Plan @1:50
New Fire Escape Plan @1:50
Notes
Argyll & Bute Council
Tarbert Academy
PA29 6TE
1140 HOURS
Proposed Plan - Secondary Area Alterations to form new class areas
PE084100980002
00265
APL(00)003