



EDUCATION

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

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

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

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

3. BACKGROUND

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

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

3.1 Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan

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

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

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

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

3.2 Our Children Their Future

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

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

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

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

3.4 The School within the Community

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

3.5 Population

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

Table 1: Population Information

Minard Area Census Ref : Data from Scotland's Census website			
2001		2011	
Total Resident Population	70	Total Resident Population	71
% under 16	15.71	% under 16	14.1
% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	57.14	% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	59.2
% pensionable age	27.14	% pensionable age and	26.8

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

3.6 Development and House Building

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

- the key development areas i.e. the allocations for housing, industry and business, community facilities and infrastructure;
- the potential areas for future development (Potential Development Areas);
- areas requiring actions such as environmental improvement or regeneration (Areas for Action); and
- environmental designations such as national Scenic Areas, Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas and Local Nature Conservation Sites.

Appendix 1 shows the LDP 2 for Minard.

Appendix 2 shows the LDP 2 for Furnace.

Appendix 3 shows the LDP 2 for Lochgilphead areas

Appendix 4 provides the key for Local Development Plans.

3.7 Minard Primary School

The school is situated in the village of Minard, on the shores of Loch Fyne, in Mid-Argyll, on the A83 between Inveraray and Lochgilphead. The school, which was purpose built to deliver education, in 1871, is of traditional rural design.

The Council's title to the building was obtained from Thomas Owen Lloyd in favour of the School Board of the Parish of Glassary, dated 22 February and recorded GRS (Argyll) 19th March, both 1906. Legal Services and Estates indicate there is a burden in the title from 1906 to the effect that the subjects are to be used for educational purposes and for no other purpose. However Conveyancing Team within Legal

Services have investigated and in providing a copy of the title plan it clearly shows that the area of ground in question was in fact within the Council's school title and it was transferred to the Community Trust in 2006.

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

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

Appendix 5 shows the Minard Primary School Floor Plan.

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

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

3.8 Furnace Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus

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

Appendix 5 shows the Minard Primary Floor Plan

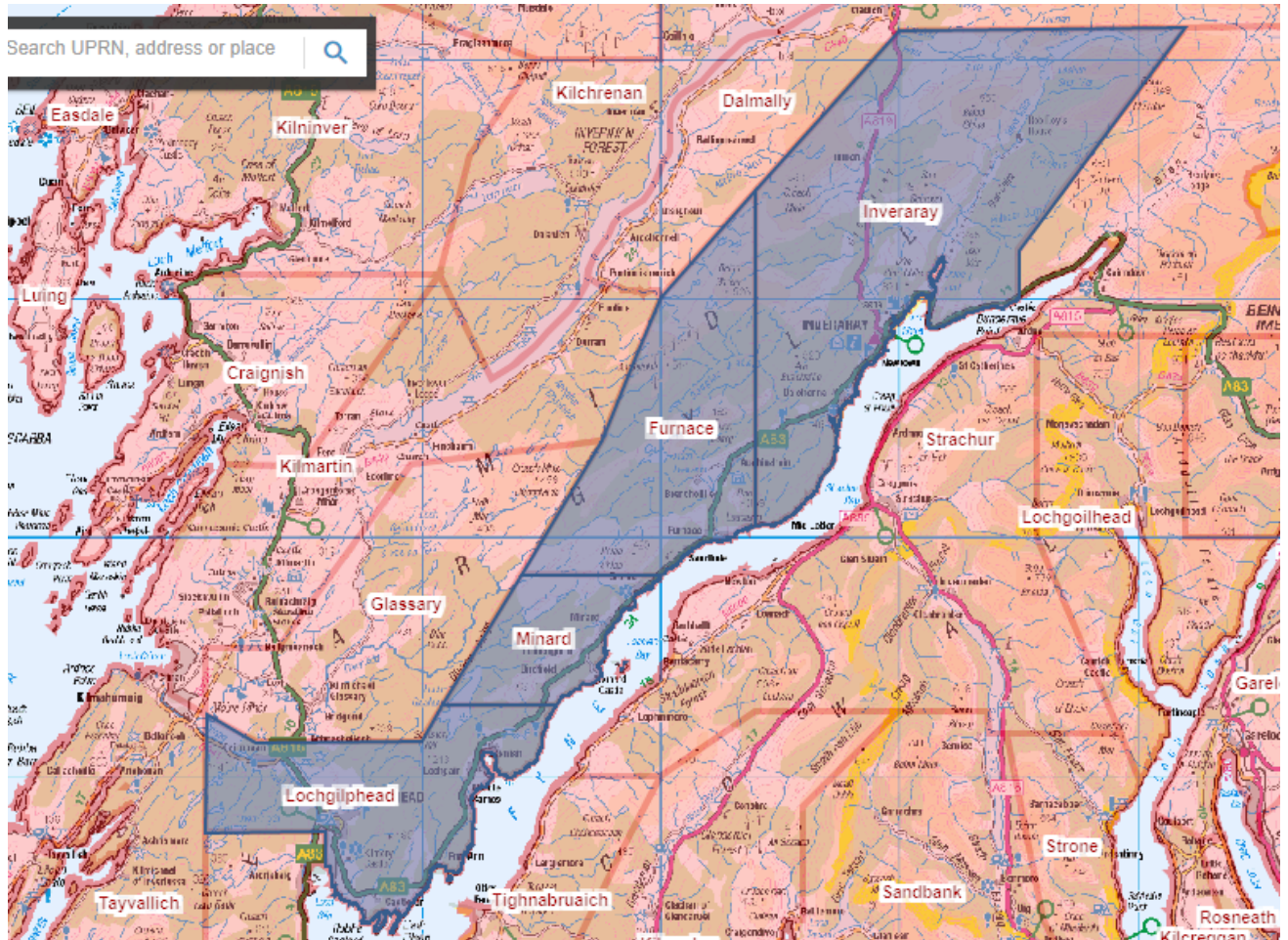
Appendix 6 shows the Lochgilphead Joint Campus Floor Plan

Appendix 7 shows the Furnace Primary Floor Plan

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

School for Furnace and Minard Primary Schools and classified as 'remote rural'.

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



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3.9 Pupil Numbers

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

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

Table 2:	Minard PS	Furnace PS	Lochgilphead PS
	Roll	Roll	Roll
Capacity	33	50	249
2011-2012	10	21	213
2012-2013	9	18	221
2013-2014	6	12	231
2014-2015	8	10	230
2015-2016	6	7	233
2016-2017	5	7	221
2017-2018	1	6	221
2018-19	3	13	227
2019-20	0	10	226
2020-21	0	12	207

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

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

* A prediction based on information available June 2022

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Meetings

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

could contribute to the process and their views are reflected in the paper.

4.2 Content of Meetings

Attendees at the meetings were given an overview of the information that the Council would be using in this Options Appraisal, this included previous pupil rolls, pupil projections, background information and details of the pre-consultation process.

The questions were as follows:

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

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

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

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

4.3 Feedback

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

- **Community and Parents**

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

- **Children/young people**

A few of the children expressed their desire to attend Minard Primary School however, the majority of children voiced they loved being at another primary school but that closing the

Minard Primary School made sense to them, due to small numbers of children involved.

- **Staff**

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

General Comments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Community Feedback

Ten community members who attended the Pre-consultation meeting were in favour of the school opening but felt it was linked to ensuring there is affordable housing in the area to attract more families. After school care was also a feature in meeting the needs of families and the feasibility of the school re-opening. The previous success of the school was recognised and there was some feeling that this should be available for the next generation. There was recognition that the school was at the heart of the community and the community have lost local amenities and concern that the village will lose its vibrancy and become less sustainable. There were also community members who felt that the numbers of children on the roll were so low now and in the future that a local village school was sadly no longer viable.

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

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

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

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

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

6.2 Pupil Numbers

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

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

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

	2021/2022	2022/202	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Minard Primary		3			
Approved Capacity	33	33	33	33	33
Roll Projection	6	6	4	2	1

6.3 Financial Information

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

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

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

6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

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

6.4.1 *Community Impact*

The reopening of the school would more easily allow the school's premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community to

specific events. The presence of a school and the facilities/activities that may be offered could make the area a more attractive place to live. Reopening the school may therefore encourage families with school age children to move to the community. This in turn may make the community more sustainable.

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

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

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

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

6.4.2 Travel Arrangements

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

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

If Minard Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to

transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The respective positive and negative impact may therefore balance.

6.5 Educational Benefits

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

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

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

6.6 Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.1 Community Feedback

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

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

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

“No focal point left for the village.”

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

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

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

7.2 Pupil Numbers

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

7.3 Financial Information

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

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

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

7.4.1 Community Impact

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

7.4.2 Travel Arrangements

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

Some parents in the current catchment area have chosen to have their children attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus as they work within that community. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Lochgilphead Joint Campus is 13.13 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. Continued mothballing of Minard Primary School would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal effect on staffing within the receiving primary schools.

7.5 Educational Benefits

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

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

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

7.6 Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

9.1 Community Feedback

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

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

You lose culture when you lose a small school.

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

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

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

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

9.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 5: Schools Occupancy:

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

9.3 Financial Information

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

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

9.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

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

9.4.1 Community Impact

The community had differing opinions on the closure of the school. Some would like the school to reopen, some reluctantly accepted that numbers were so low the school may not be viable

in the long term. All agreed that they would want a decision made and that it would be retained for community use, and not be allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. Within Minard there is a village hall. While it is accepted that school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, a vibrant community hub could be an asset to a community. This could potentially have a very positive impact on sustainability of the community if this option were to progress. If the Community wished to create a community hub, they would require to find a mechanism to acquire the property from the Council and deliver that aspiration. The buildings forming the school premises are situated within walking distance of the village. If the local plans for the building progress, this would have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

9.4.2 Travel Arrangements

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

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

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

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

9.5 Educational Benefits

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

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

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

Furnace Primary

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

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

Lochgilphead Joint Campus

Children from the Minard catchment area from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg who would attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus would benefit from learning within a bigger context and community. Children

are taught in single year groups and there is a wide range of expertise within a larger staff team.

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

9.6 Summary

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

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard Primary to Furnace Primary is 3.82 miles via the A83. Travel time is approximately seven minutes by car. The travel arrangements have been in place for over three years. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Minard community. However one family has expressed strongly that they are finding the travel arrangements in place for Furnace very difficult. Other families in the Minard area have chosen to place their children at Lochgilphead Joint Campus due to their own work and family commitments and have made their own travel arrangements. The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Minard to Lochgilphead Joint campus is 13.13 miles via A83. Travel time is approximately 19 minutes by car.

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

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

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

10. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

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

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

11.1 Pupil Projections

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

11.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Furnace and Lochgilphead Primary Schools, which are the schools the proposal is focused on in terms of realigning the catchment area for Minard. Some pupils in the Minard

area have been attending Furnace Primary since it was mothballed. Some pupils within the catchment area for Minard have always attended Lochgilphead Primary School as placing requests, these pupils have never attended Minard, even when it was open as the placement suited family work commitments.

11.2.1 Learning and Teaching at Furnace Primary

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

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

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

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

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Furnace Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of

continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. These schools are also part of the Mid Argyll Schools Cluster, supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within these schools are able to support and challenge each other on a daily basis. The whole staff teams are able to bring a range of talents and skills to benefit outcomes for learners.

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

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

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

11.2.2

Outcomes

Through the GIRFEC practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further

strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met.

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

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

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

11.3 Assessment of Rural Factors – Furnace Primary

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

Primary School catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at Section 2 of this report.

11.3.1 Community Impact

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

11.3.2 Travel Arrangements

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

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

11.4 Learning and Teaching at Lochgilphead Joint Campus

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to

develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

11.4.2

Outcomes

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

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

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

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

11.5 Assessment of Rural Factors – Lochgilphead

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

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

walking distance of the village. Formal closure of the school would mean that plans for the future of the building could potentially be progressed by the community.

11.5.2 Travel Arrangements

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

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

11.6 Financial Impact

The main elements included within a school budget are Teacher employment costs (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 Minard Primary School are a total of **£8,956**.

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

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

11.5 Environmental Impact

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

12. CONCLUSION

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

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

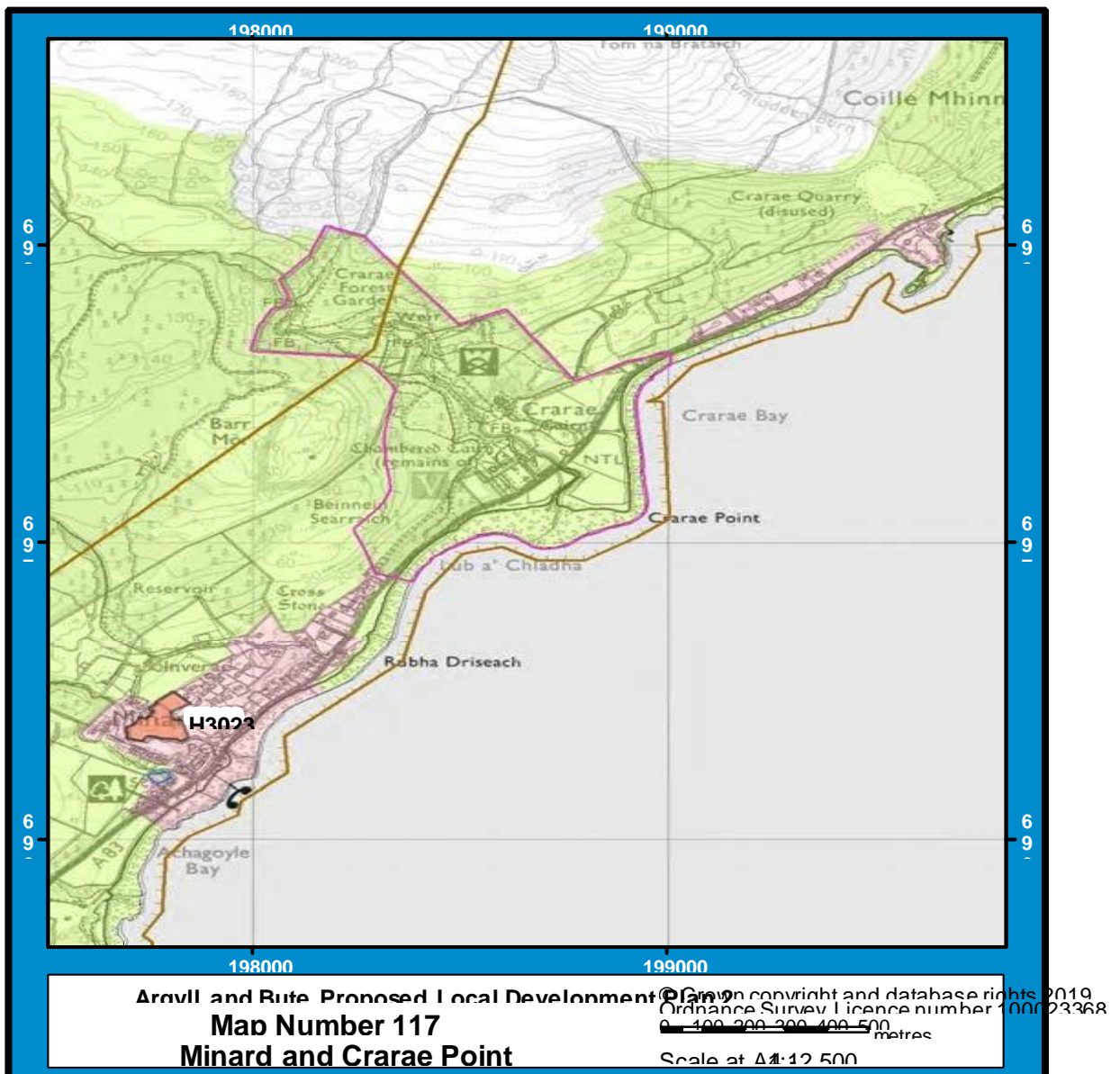
An authority that is contemplating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act before formulating a proposal.

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

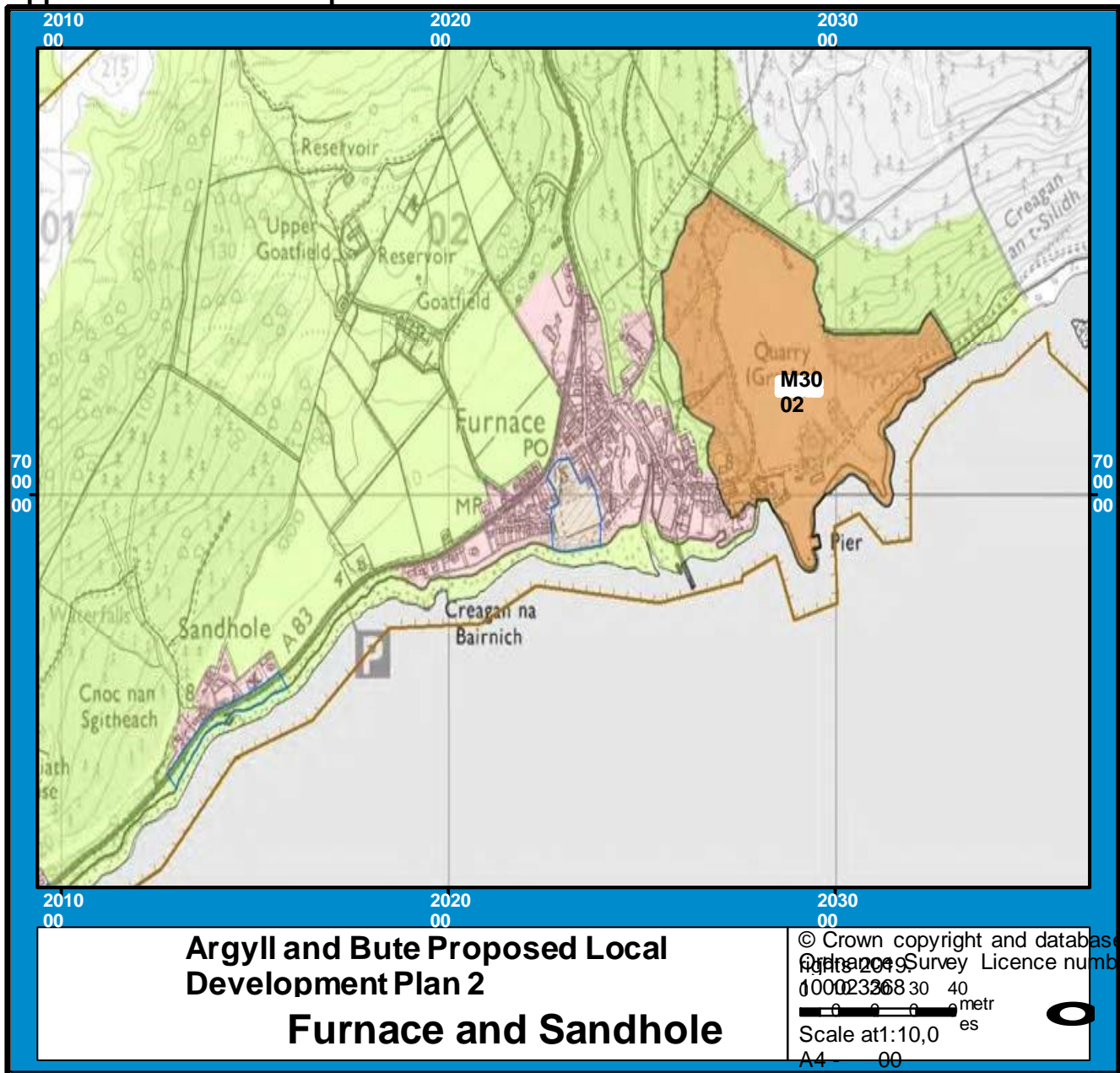
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

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

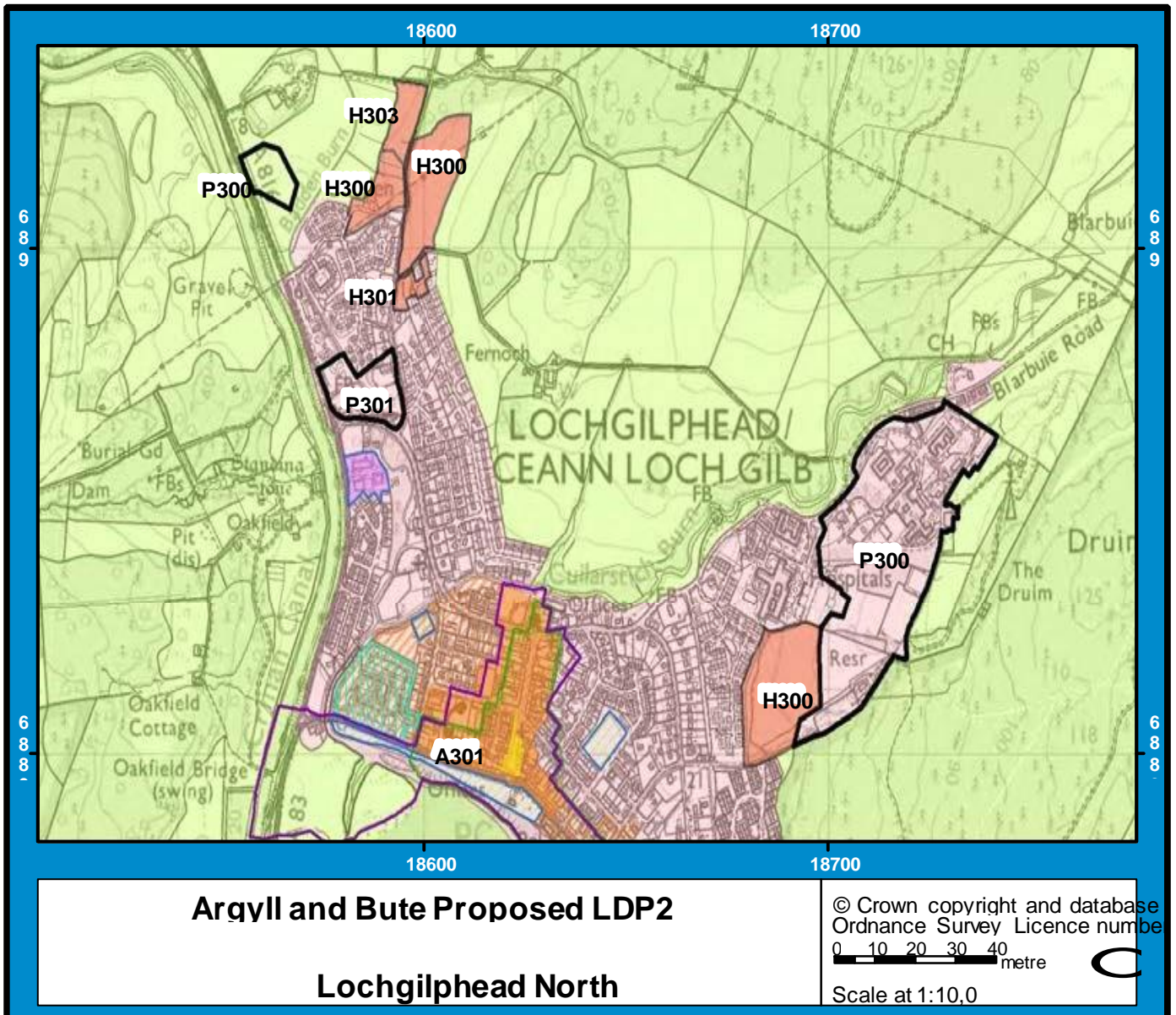
Appendix 1 Local Develop Plan for Minard



Appendix 2 Local Development Plan for Furnace



Appendix 3 Local Development Plans for Lochgilphead



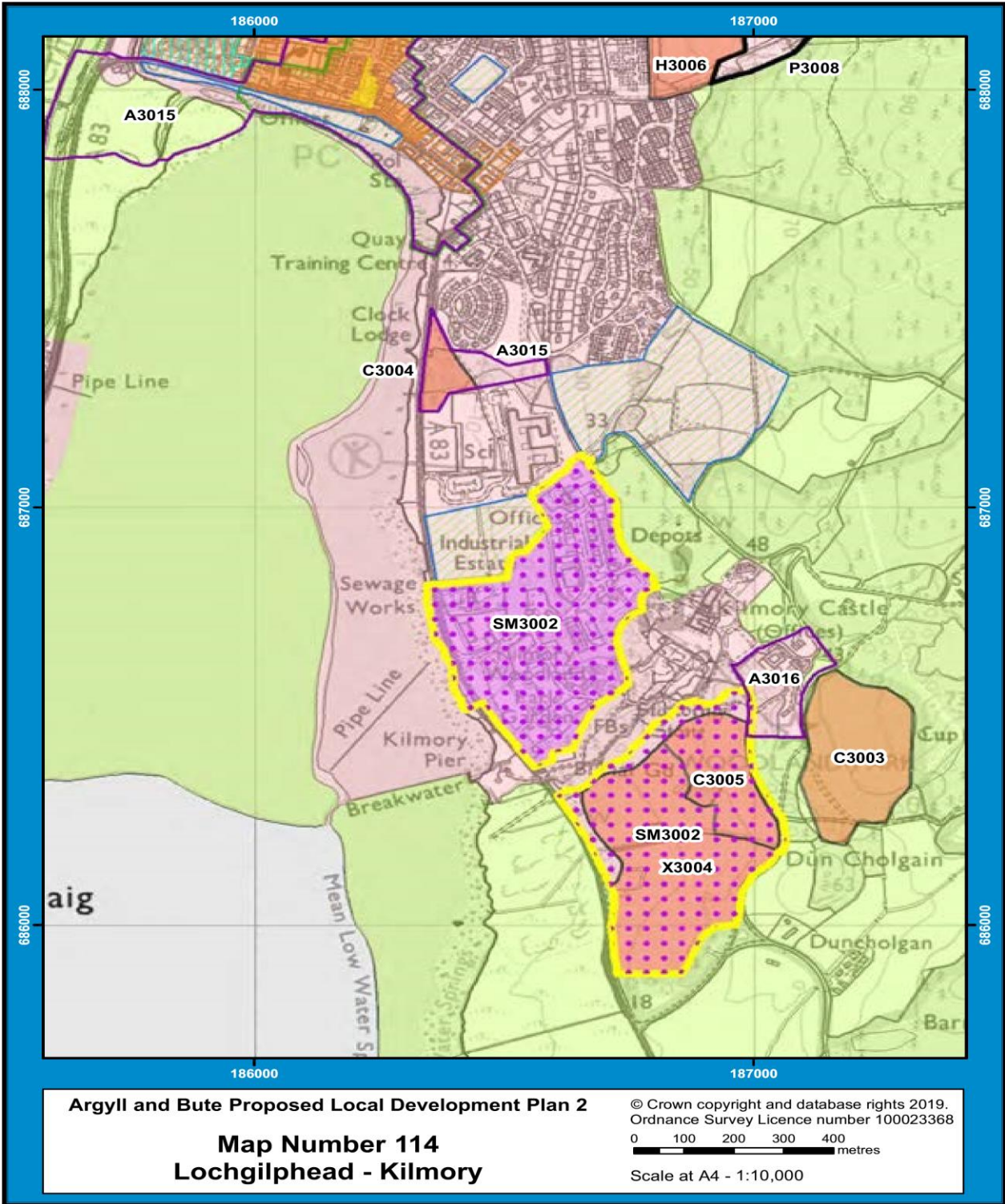
Argyll and Bute Proposed LDP2

Lochgilphead North

© Crown copyright and database
Ordnance Survey Licence number

0 10 20 30 40
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Scale at 1:10,0



Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2

**Map Number 114
Lochgilphead - Kilmory**

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Ordnance Survey Licence number 100023368
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Scale at A4 - 1:10,000

Appendix 4 Key for Local Development Plans

Proposed Local Development Plan 2 Key	
 Settlement Area	 Open Space Protection Area
 Greenbelt	 Wild Land
 Countryside Area	 Site of International Importance - Ramsar
 Remote Countryside Area	 Site of International Importance - Special Area of Conservation
 Strategic Masterplan	 Site of International Importance - Special Protection Area
 Allocation	 Site of Special Scientific Interest
 Potential Development Area	 National Nature Reserve
 Main Town Centre	 National Scenic Area
 Edge of Town Centre	 Garden & Designed Landscape
 Core Shopping Area	 Local Landscape Area
 Strategic Economic Investment Location	 Conservation Area
 Established Business & Industry Area	 Tourism Infrastructure
 Area for Action	 Marine Consultation Area
 Transport Infrastructure	 National Park
 Waste Management Site	 Other Council Area

Lochgilphead Joint Campus

Appendix 6 Lochgilphead Joint Campus Floor Plan

LEGEND

- Room Number
- Room Name
- Room Area (sq m)

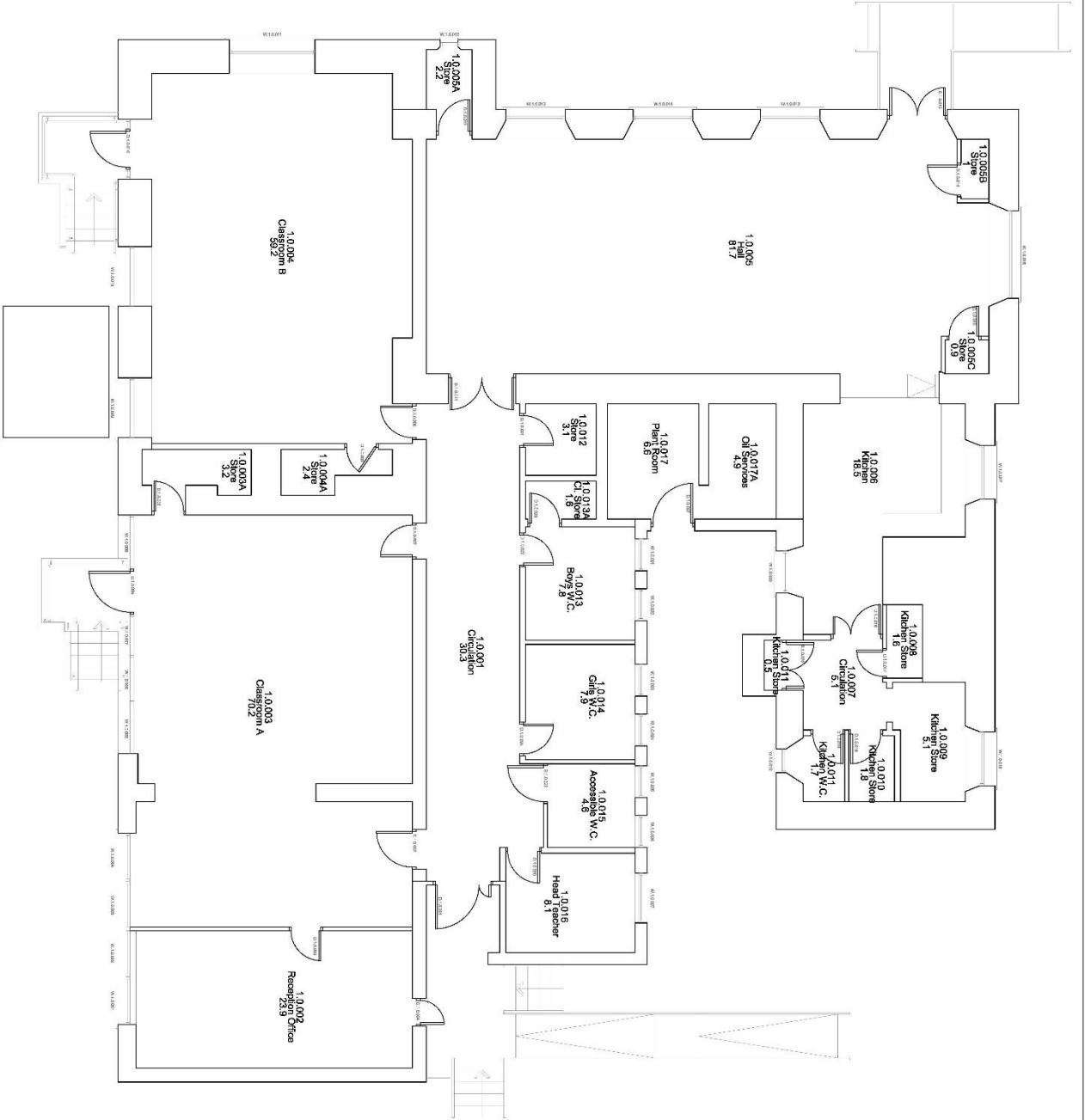
NOTES

1. ALL ROOMS TO BE FINISHED TO THE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR FINISHES.
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30. ALL ROOMS TO BE FINISHED TO THE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR FINISHES.

TITLE BLOCK

Lochgilphead Joint Campus
 Project No. 12345
 Date: 15/05/2024
 Scale: 1:500
 Drawing No. 1.00
 Architect: jmachitects

Appendix 7 Furnace Floor Plan



Furnace Primary School Main Building Ground Floor

NOTES

1. This drawing is for information only and does not constitute a contract. It is subject to the terms and conditions of the contract between the client and the contractor.

2. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and approvals for the works shown on this drawing.

3. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are carried out in accordance with the relevant building regulations and standards.

4. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed within the agreed programme of works.

5. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed to the satisfaction of the client.

6. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant health and safety regulations.

7. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant environmental regulations.

8. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant fire safety regulations.

9. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant accessibility regulations.

10. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant equality and diversity regulations.

11. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant data protection regulations.

12. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant information security regulations.

13. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant financial regulations.

14. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant procurement regulations.

15. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant contract law regulations.

16. The contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the works are completed in accordance with the relevant tort law regulations.

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Current School OIA on 01.08.2015 - 387 894

Client: Furnace Primary School

Project: Furnace

Contract No: PA32 8XU

Client Services Property Planning Team

Phone: 01484 80017

Website: <http://www.argyll-council.gov.uk>

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Appendix 8 Notes from Community Consultation Day

Minard Community Consultation

26TH May 2022

19 people attended through the day

Some have also responded by email.

General responses

Wrap around care featured...

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

When it closed, it also had an impact on Minard.

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

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

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

The school was at the heart of the community

It's more than just a school.

This was a vibrant school at the heart of the community. When my children came here – there were 30 children here. Those children have gone on to be very successful. They also have a community minded approach to life.

Children gain so much from the community that is valuable. How can that be provided by a bigger community? When the children were here, they would feel the support from the other members of the community.

This was the hub for the community.

There was a great feeling around the school.

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

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

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

General comments

I can't say either way without more information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This affects the local church too.

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

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

What we need are more children within the area.

Families who have already settled will stay in other schools as they will be established. We would need more children to have enough in a co-hort.

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

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

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

Amenities have reduced considerably in the village – what is there for young families? Recently young families have stepped up and kept it alive but sadly the writing is on the wall.

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

Housing is an issue in the area.

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

Such a shame about the building – not easy.
Understand what families are doing at the moment - it is convenient for them to have their children attend other schools.
It would be perfect to open the school again but realistically we know it is hard – but there is a danger this will become a retirement village.
The recent Transformation plans from the education department – gives me concerns for the future.
We need to make the area attractive for families in the future.
Affordable housing in the area is an issue. What is affordable for families?
Employment is also an issue.
We know staffing is an issue – but can we look at accommodation for members of staff to attract them to the area?
When travelling to another school, the LA should provide a school bus, rather than a public bus.
There are young families in the village – children are the lifeblood, we have children and grandchildren locally.
I understand parents wanting to go elsewhere to education their children – is it linked with after school care?
There are retired people here and the age demographic is older.

The local economy

Not having a school impacts on the local economy.
No school resulted in no shop.
When we lost the shop, it was hard.

Toddler group

There is a toddler group starting to encourage family participation in the area.
This is split between Furnace and Minard.
There is a Parent and Toddler group (13 max) attending, with 6-8 regular attenders – we work between Minard and Furnace and the parents like this.
There have been incidents with the alarm going off.

The building itself

The Community Trust was a tenant in the front room of the school house. It is still a tenant but 'stuff' moved out. CT on space at front.
Would like to see it used for a purpose for young people regardless. The building needs investment.

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

Mothballing the school has had a huge impact on community cohesion.
Families have been forced into going elsewhere and now they don't know what they are missing.
No focal point left for the village.
I feel really sad about it – my kids did really well out of the school.
Mothballing has forced community conversations around how the school could be better used.
I think it should continue to be mothballed as we don't know what people's lifestyles are going to be in the next 5 years, into the post-pandemic world.
The school connected (and was at the centre of) the community. It gave us a focus.

It's not being an asset to the community at the moment.
Need to accept that families are now looking to seek wider friendships for their family.

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

The school delivered a high quality education.

The children gained great democratic community skills.

Views on continuing with the mothballing

How will continuing to mothball the school increase numbers?

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

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

Views on re-opening the school with existing catchment

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

Children in small schools learn so well from each other.

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

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

The environmental impact and cost of living should be considered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Views on closing the school

You lose culture when you lose a small school.

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

It is difficult to motivate pupils in small groups.

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

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

We have no need for a school.

There are positives and negatives around a small school and a big school.

Quality of leadership is a factor and lack of staff is also an issue.

Re-open the school but widen the catchment area

It would be competing with Furnace PS.

X2 You would need wrap around care.

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

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

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

Parents need to want to support their own local schools.

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

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

We have a two year old and this is a strong community – there is no park/social space for children to meet/socialise (other than the school) – the school would be a great hub for them. I like the idea of small classes compared to larger classes – get more 1 to 1 focus on pupils. The 'friend base in one place ie the school helps in the transition to High School.

As a young parent, I am unsure about transporting young children to another school. Our travel and work commitments are an issue if the school does not re-open.

Social and belonging skills can be fostered.

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

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

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

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

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

Future use of the building/grounds

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

X 3 Could this be a Pre-5 centre? Nursery?

Could this be used for Forest schools?

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

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

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

A health retreat?

Fetes could be held.

Could be used as a bookable office or meeting space?

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

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

The building needs life but perhaps in a different purpose?

A hub to support those with addiction problems?

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

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

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

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

Could the grounds be used for a community garden?

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

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

Use as a hub/café/current community use?

X2 Needs to be used to its full potential/strengths

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

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

The school would make an amazing conversion into a home.

I believe there could possibly be 19 children attending the school in the future.

This would support a network for young families.

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

The longer the building is left, it is going to be open to vandalism and squatters. The building has a heritage that we cannot lose.
What is it going to turn into? The Lloyd family had gifted to Argyll and Bute.
Would like the community to pull together to consider buying the building.

Questions raised

What are the financial implications?

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

What is the overall plan for the future proofing of the area to join up housing etc?

Is it the responsibility for education to provide that sense of belonging?

Is there an argument for the school to be used while mothballed?

What are the plans for the building?

Information provided

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