

**LEARNING ESTATE INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (LEIP)**  
**MULL CAMPUS – PREFERRED SITE RECOMMENDATION**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide sufficient information to allow the Council to make an informed decision on the preferred site for Mull 2-18 Campus. Site selection is the first key decision milestone for the project and will allow the Outline Business Case to be progressed and design development to commence.
- 1.2 This report describes the site assessment and selection process, the contributing reports and analyses, outlines the relative benefits and challenges of each short-listed site option and makes a recommendation to the Council as to the preferred site, based on the evidence available.
- 1.3 The site selection phase for the project commenced in August 2024 with a “call for sites”. Eleven possible sites were identified, and four potentially viable options were shortlisted:-
- Site 1 – Tobermory Existing School Site
  - Site 2 – Craignure
  - Site 3 – Garmony
  - Site 4 – Tobermory South
- 1.4 A detailed transport review found that the two Tobermory sites present minimal change to existing arrangements with travel time, distance and carbon emissions for staff and pupils remaining broadly the same. This significantly increases for the two centrally located sites, and in the case of Site 2 – Craignure the aggregate travel time would double, and vehicle miles and carbon emissions would triple.

- 1.5 An Integrated Impact Assessment was undertaken to examine the potential impacts to the relevant groups on Mull and its surrounding islands that may result from a Tobermory or a more centrally located site. This highlighted that regardless of site location, the campus has the potential to deliver a range of benefits through the provision of contemporary and high-quality learning, sport and community facilities.
- 1.6 Many community members feel strongly that a central high school is required to unite young people from the north and south of Mull and to provide an on-island secondary education option for children from the Ross of Mull. However, there is also a strong feeling that early years and primary school education should not be relocated from Tobermory for the families residing there.
- 1.7 The impact assessment concluded that there are benefits and disbenefits associated with all site options. However, under the constraints of the available funding, it is unlikely that any of the options would be able to provide a fully equal solution for all children and young people living on Mull and the islands.
- 1.8 All contributing reports and analyses for the short-listed sites were considered as part of a site scoring exercise which assessed each site option against set criteria. The sites and their weighted scores are outlined below, in order of rank.
  1. Site 4 Tobermory South, 645
  2. Site 2 Craignure, 628
  3. Site 1 Tobermory Existing, 625
  4. Site 3 Garmony, 546
- 1.9 Sensitivity analyses were carried out and this demonstrated that site 4 – Tobermory South consistently performed better than the other site options, with the greatest number of cumulative good and very good scores. Site 3 – Garmony consistently performed the worst of the four options and that site is not recommended to be considered further.
- 1.10 Based on the substantial body of information contained within the Appendices of this report, the recommended preferred site for a new Mull Campus is Site 4 – Tobermory South.
- 1.11 This option would constitute a proposal to relocate the existing campus, with a statutory consultation legally required under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the outcome of which will be reported back to full Council upon completion of that process.
- 1.12 Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and supporting Appendices and endorse the site scoring mechanism, criteria and supporting

assessments. After consideration of all the available information and the content of the Integrated Impact Assessments, Members are asked to confirm their preferred site for a new Mull Campus, and agree to progress the Outline Business Case on that basis.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report outlines the key information that requires to be considered to identify a preferred site for the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) Mull Campus project, which has reached the decision milestone for site selection.
- 2.2 On 25th April 2024 the Council decided to *“commence the Business Case, undertake engagement exercises, commence the site selection process and establish governance arrangements, with updates to be brought back to Members at appropriate gateway points”*.
- 2.3 An update was provided to the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024, where it was advised that a recommendation of a preferred site for Mull Campus would be brought forward for consideration by the full Council at their next meeting. At that meeting it was unanimously decided that the Council:-
- “Having regard to the information provided in respect of educational benefits elements and funding metrics, and the advice of the Council’s Chief Financial Officer that a two-site Mull Campus would not be affordable, **agrees that the process will continue on a single-site basis for delivery of a new Mull Campus**”; and*
- “Notes the unanimous view of the community in Iona in relation to their removal from the scope of the project, and agrees that this is given effect to”*
- 2.4 This report sets out the relevant information and recommendations to enable the Council to decide on the preferred site for a new Mull Campus.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Considers the contents of the report and supporting Appendices.
- b) Endorses the site scoring mechanism, criteria and supporting assessments which is consistent with criteria categories commonly used for site selection on previous Council school projects.
- c) Confirms Site 4 – Tobermory South as the preferred site for a new Mull Campus and agrees to progress the Outline Business Case on that basis.
- d) Notes that as the preferred option would constitute a proposal to relocate the existing campus, a statutory consultation would be legally required under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the outcome of which will be reported back to full Council upon completion of that process.
- e) In making their decision in accordance with recommendation (b), above, Members are specifically requested to have regard to the detail of the Integrated Impact Assessment (**Appendix 1K**) on the potential impacts to the relevant groups on Mull and its surrounding islands, as detailed therein, recognising that each site presents different benefits and disbenefits to these distinct groups.

### 4.0 DETAIL

#### 4.1 Background

4.1.1 The Council submitted a bid for Scottish Government LEIP funding in October 2022 for a 2-18 campus on Mull and this was accepted in October 2023. The bid met the LEIP eligibility criteria on condition, with funding provided on a “like for like” basis to replace the existing Tobermory campus.

4.1.2 The potential cost implications of LEIP funding, which requires the Council to pay the full capital cost up front with up to 50% of eligible costs funded by Scottish Government over 25 years, were considered on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 where it was decided that the Council:-

*“noted the capital and revenue implications of the LEIP / Mull Campus project which were of a strategic financial nature” and*

*“considered the project to be affordable at this time, and agreed that up to £5m from the previously earmarked LEIP funding be used to commence the Business Case, undertake engagement exercises, commence the site selection process and establish governance arrangements, with updates to be brought back to Members at appropriate gateway points.”*

- 4.1.3 On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024 the Council agreed that a new Mull Campus would continue on a single-site basis. It was also agreed to remove Iona from the scope of the project in response to the community’s unanimous request to remain within the catchment area of Oban High School.
- 4.1.4 The Mull Campus project is being delivered as part of the North Schools Programme, which is a partnership between hub North Scotland Ltd and five local authorities to deliver eight schools. Three of these projects, including Mull Campus, are island schools.
- 4.1.5 The hub North Scotland team have supported the Council throughout the community engagement and site selection phase. The outputs are provided in **Appendix 1**, with individual reports in **Appendices 1A-L**.
- 4.1.6 This report describes the site assessment and selection process, the contributing reports and analyses, outlines the relative benefits and challenges of each short-listed site option and makes a recommendation to the Council as to the preferred site, based on the evidence available.
- 4.2 Call for Sites and Long List of Options**
- 4.2.1 A call for sites was launched from 27<sup>th</sup> August to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024 to seek suggestions of sites that may be suitable for the new Mull 2-18 Campus. Eleven possible sites were identified, including the existing school site.
- 4.2.2 The hub North Scotland team undertook a high-level review of each site to consider key constraints such as flood risk, ground conditions, accessibility and site abnormalities which could make the sites prohibitive to development. Each site was assessed on its suitability to deliver the brief in terms of size, fit and accessibility, and how it related to the wider context in terms of its ability to safely operate.
- 4.2.3 A Civil and Structural assessment of topographical and ground condition risks highlighted that some of the sites had substantial level changes and contained very poor marsh and peaty ground, making them unsuitable for development without significant remediation.
- 4.2.4 A review of Mechanical & Electrical requirements focused primarily on utilities and how easy it would be to service each site. As is typically the case in remote and rural regions, many sites were found to be located a distance away from existing infrastructure.
- 4.2.5 For each long-listed site an initial review was carried out in terms of any transport impact. Several sites were found to have constrained accesses which would not

be able to accommodate significant amounts of traffic during the delivery of the Mull Campus project or in final operation once the facility is live.

4.2.6 Taking these factors into consideration, four sites were shortlisted as being potentially capable of accommodating the campus requirements. Further detail on the long list of options and reasons for not shortlisting is provided in **Appendix 1 (section 2.3.1)** and **Appendix 1B** the Site Selection Options Appraisal report (October 2024). The report was agreed by the project's Strategic Board in early November 2024.

4.2.7 The four sites shortlisted for further consideration are:

1. Site 1 Tobermory Existing School
2. Site 2 Craignure
3. Site 3 Garmony
4. Site 4 Tobermory South

### **4.3 Assessment of Short-Listed Options**

4.3.1 A detailed set of criteria for assessment were developed jointly by the hub North Scotland technical team and Argyll and Bute Council Project Team<sup>1</sup>. The hub North team developed an initial draft for consideration, which focussed on technical aspects including site size and capacity to accommodate the brief, technical deliverability (utilities, ground conditions, topography, flood risk), statutory consents and legal aspects, accessibility, sustainability and cost. The assessment process also took into account the feedback from the public engagement exercise as detailed in **Table 1** below. The criteria and approach are consistent with other new build school projects delivered across Scotland.

4.3.2 The draft list was reviewed by the Project Team and Strategic Board in September 2024 where it was refined to align with criteria categories commonly used for site selection on previous Council school projects; impact, deliverability, affordability and risk. It was acknowledged that these would need to be expanded further to reflect the unique island context and comparatively wide geographical search area for a project located on Mull, which was recognised as being different from a mainland town location.

4.3.3 As noted in paragraph 4.3.1 above, the additional island factors included taking account of the feedback received from island communities during the community engagement exercise carried out in late September. This is described further in **section 4.4** of this report.

4.3.4 To better understand the island infrastructure and transport implications, hub North Scotland carried out a baseline assessment of the transport considerations for the existing 2-18 school in Tobermory. The report included suggested criteria

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<sup>1</sup> Project Team includes council officers from the following departments; finance, education, commercial services, legal and regulatory support, estates, property, ICT, procurement, communications and health and safety.

to be used in the site assessment exercise. This is described further in **section 4.5** of this report.

- 4.3.5 In October, once the Community Engagement Analysis Report and Transport Considerations baseline reports were available, the draft criteria were reviewed and adjusted to take account of the suggested criteria included in those reports. The revised criteria were reviewed again by the full Project Team, who also discussed suitable weightings for the criteria to reflect their relative importance. To reflect the nature of this project the Educational Benefits were weighted highest as outlined in **Table 5** (below). This was presented to the project's Strategic Board in early November where they confirmed acceptance of the proposals to date and broad agreement to the weightings subject to final adjustments to reflect the importance of educational impact and travel distances, particularly for young children. The criteria and weightings were adjusted and finalised accordingly to allow them to be used to assess each shortlisted site.
- 4.3.6 A site scoring exercise was subsequently carried out by a team of council officers from education, property, legal, finance, estates, planning, economic development and development & infrastructure services. They were supported by the Mull Campus and hub North Scotland teams. The site scoring was undertaken during two workshops held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025. During the workshop the technical team and subject matter experts presented the information gathered to inform the scoring of each criterion. The group then collectively agreed on a consensus score from 0-10 for each site for that criterion.
- 4.3.7 In line with its statutory duties the Council commissioned an Integrated Impact Assessment looking at the potential equality, island communities, economic, children's rights and wellbeing and Fairer Scotland Duty impacts.
- 4.3.8 The full suite of reports, impact assessments and the output of the site scoring exercise are included in **Appendices 1 and 2**. This is the culmination of six months of activity and the volume of information is substantial, therefore a hyperlink has been provided to some of the technical information. Conscientious consideration has been given to all the supporting information when forming the recommendations in this report.

#### **4.4 Community Engagement Analysis**

- 4.4.1 An extensive community engagement exercise was undertaken in September 2024 to ask the community what was important to them when considering a site for the new campus. The outcome was shared with the council in December 2024 and the full Community Engagement Analysis Report (November 2024) is available in **Appendix 1A**.
- 4.4.2 The report outlined the communities' key criteria for site selection, which were incorporated in the criteria and relative weightings used for the site scoring exercise where possible. A summary is included in **Table 1**.



**Table 1 – Communities’ Key Criteria for Site Selection**

<b>Communities Key Criteria</b>	<b>Site Selection Criteria Category</b>
1. Keeping travel time to a minimum	Education Impact
2. Keeping families together/ avoiding children going off island	Community and Place Impact
3. Providing an equitable solution that offers the best access for as many people as possible, and uniting the north and south populations	Community and Place Impact
4. Being able to sustain local populations and economies	Community and Place Impact
5. Plenty of outside space for good sports facilities and outdoor activities	Education Impact
6. Equitable access to after school clubs	Accessibility and Transport Impact
7. Close to existing services such as shops and sports facilities	Community and Place Impact
8. Good transport links and plenty of space for parking and safe, accessible drop off	Education Impact Accessibility and Transport Impact
9. Providing access to good community facilities such as a library, gym and adult learning on the campus	Education Impact
10. The ability to provide more subjects, including vocational subjects, and easier access for teachers to travel to the campus from Oban to provide specialist teaching	N/A – range of subject choice is determined by the number of teachers/ pupils and size of school. Digital learning has potential to enable this regardless of school location.
11. The opportunity to develop, or make use of existing, active travel routes so children can walk and cycle to school	Accessibility and Transport Impact
12. The ability to retain existing staff and attract new staff, including proximity to affordable housing	N/A – report noted that these points are conflicting, would be subjective and difficult to score.
13. Limiting the impact on the existing school and/ or surrounding residents	Community and Place Impact
14. Provision of good technology that can support online/ distance learning	N/A – assessed at shortlisting stage, a requirement for all sites.
15. Space for future expansion	Education Impact

## 4.5 Transport Considerations

4.5.1 Transport was highlighted by the community as a key consideration due to the unique geography and infrastructure challenges on Mull and the islands. A detailed transport review has been undertaken to assess the baseline for the existing school provision and examine the transport impact of each shortlisted site option. The Mull Education Campus Transport Considerations report (January 2025) is available in **Appendix 1H** and contains a high-level summary in section 15 of the report. All data presented relates to a single one-way trip.

4.5.2 The following metrics were considered when evaluating the four site options for Mull Campus and these were assessed as part of the site scoring exercise:

- Number of user journeys and mode split
- Good public transport links to the site and location
- Existing safe active travel links to site
- Travel times for pupils and staff
- Potential impact on public transport network
- Ability of existing roads infrastructure to service site
- Trips with complex dependencies/ multiple stages and modes of travel
- Carbon impact of travel

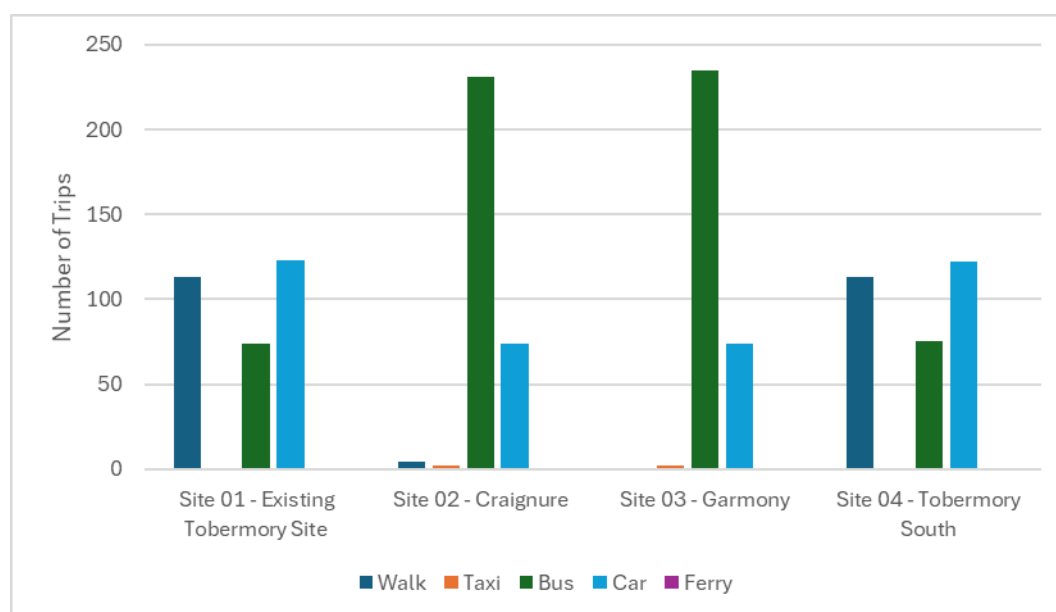
4.5.3 The report outlines that the two Tobermory sites present minimal change to existing arrangements with travel time, distance and carbon emissions remaining broadly the same. For the centrally located sites the travel time, distance and carbon emissions would increase significantly. The combined totals for all 59 staff and 252 pupils are illustrated in **table 2**.

**Table 2 – Combined travel time, miles and carbon emissions (one-way trip)**

	<b>Site 1 Tobermory Existing</b>	<b>Site 2 Craignure</b>	<b>Site 3 Garmony</b>	<b>Site 4 Tobermory South</b>
Time minutes (hours/ minutes)	4,488 (74h 48m)	10,799 (179h 59m)	9,229 (153h 49m)	4,810 (80h 10m)
Vehicle miles	467	1,553	1,358	453
Carbon emissions (kg CO2E)	156	460	409	152

4.5.4 The total number of trips and modal split for all staff and pupils is shown in **figure 1**. The Garmony and Craignure site options demonstrate a significant shift away from active travel with **approximately 4 additional buses** required compared to the baseline.

**Figure 1 – Number of one-way trips by mode and site**



## 4.6 Integrated Impact Assessments

- 4.6.1 The Council have a statutory duty to consider the potential impacts of any change to services or policy before key decisions are made. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Report (January 2025) examines the economic, island communities, equality, children's rights and wellbeing and Fairer Scotland Duty impacts on a high-level basis comparing a Tobermory option to a more central location. The report also provides detail at a site-specific level where this was required to inform the site scoring exercise. The IIA is attached in **Appendix 1K**.
- 4.6.2 Members are specifically requested to have regard to the IIA findings of the potential impacts on the distinct and unique communities on Mull and the islands, recognising that each site option affects these communities in different ways. A high-level overview is provided in this recommendation report; however Members are strongly encouraged to consider the full detail contained within the IIA before coming to any decision.

### **Community Input**

- 4.6.3 It is ultimately the Council's duty to undertake the impact assessments, however the communities affected have an important part to play in informing these. A rich body of evidence was already available through the engagement exercises undertaken at the time of submitting the bid for LEIP funding in 2022, and the more extensive engagement undertaken in September 2024 as described in **Appendix 1A**. Bunessan Primary Parent Council had carried out an independent survey to gather the views and opinions of parents and carers at the school, and gave their permission for the findings to be included in the IIA process.
- 4.6.4 Over and above this, the chairs of community and parent organisations represented on the Community Sounding Board were invited to co-ordinate a

response to the IIA process. Groups were emailed on 20<sup>th</sup> December, with engagement proformas issued on 6<sup>th</sup> January and a virtual briefing session held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Responses were requested by 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025. In view of the engagement that had already taken place and the limited timescales available, community groups were asked to respond on behalf of their organisation. Taking cognisance of the potential commercial sensitivities, the exact details of short-listed sites were not shared at that point and groups were asked to provide views on the impact of a Tobermory site option and a central site option.

- 4.6.5 Following the briefing session some community organisations collectively issued a formal response detailing that they would not participate in the impact assessment engagement process at this stage. Concerns were raised around the timing of the impact assessments, the length of the engagement window and the level of detail available of the proposed sites for selection. As a result, the feedback received was minimal, although responses received from three of the organisations were taken into account. These responses along with the information collated from the extensive engagement activities in September 2024, the Bunessan Parent Council independent survey, and a further Pupil Forum Engagement exercise carried out in January 2025 informed the content in the IIA.
- 4.6.6 Mull Community Council and their Mull Campus Working Group subsequently advised the Mull Campus Team that they are conducting their own detailed survey, which they believe will assist councillors to make an informed decision.
- 4.6.7 The Mull Campus Team continue to engage with community representatives on the Community Sounding Board. The next meeting is scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 where the recommendation that is being put to Elected Members will be shared, and input will be sought on how best to provide an update to the communities affected once a decision is made by the Council. The Mull Campus Team wish to express their gratitude to community volunteers for the time and input they have invested in the project to date.

### ***Economic Impacts***

- 4.6.8 The economic impact assessment identifies areas of economic benefit where the value is expected to differ depending upon the choice of site location. These include effects on local investment; effects on existing housing stock; impacts on educational attainment; parent/guardian loss of earnings; staff commuting costs and the cost of transport carbon emissions.
- 4.6.9 The differences in economic impact across the Tobermory and central site options are summarised in **table 3** below. This concludes that the economic impact of the Mull Campus project will be £3,147,000 higher if the school were built in Tobermory than would be the case if it were built in a central location.

**Table 3 – Difference in economic impact between Tobermory and Central Site Options**

<b>Summary</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Investment Lost/Gained Due to Relocation	£89,000
Existing Property Values	£1,474,000
Students Lifetime Earnings	£627,000
Changes to Parents Current Earnings	£96,000
Cost of Commuting	£640,000
Carbon Cost of Travel	£221,000
<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>£3,147,000</b>

### ***Island Communities Impacts***

4.6.10 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 provides a legal basis for greater decision making at a local level within Scottish Islands and seeks to increase economic prosperity for island communities.

#### *Central site location*

4.6.11 The potential impacts of a central site location for young people and families living in the South and South West of Mull is summarised below:

- Positive impact, bringing unity to the North and South communities.
- Community members feel strongly that a central high school option is crucial to reversing current trends of depopulation in the South West.
- Stimulate local economic, business and population growth.
- Potential to positively impact social outcomes for children and young people by reducing the length of the journey to attend school.
- Greater opportunity to interact with a larger cohort of children and young people on the island.

4.6.12 The potential impacts of a central site location for young people and families living in Tobermory and the North of Mull is summarised below:

- Increased travel times to school for primary and secondary age children, potentially impacting physical health, sleep and exercise, mental health and academic performance.
- 95 children in early years and primary school education would travel daily from Tobermory to a central location. The community were particularly concerned about the negative impact on younger children.
- An additional 4 buses would be required to transport pupils daily. Children would no longer be able to walk to school from home.

- Negative impact on the demographic structure of the area with a risk of depopulation if families chose to relocate or leave the island.
- Potential loss of revenue for Tobermory-based businesses
- Negative impact on parent's and carer's working patterns whilst also incurring additional fuel and maintenance costs for private vehicles, which may be unaffordable for some.
- Increased vehicle trip generation with an increase in vehicle carbon emissions and potential adverse effects on local road infrastructure.

#### *Tobermory site location*

4.6.13 The potential impacts of a Tobermory site location for young people and families living in the South and South West of Mull is summarised as follows:

- No additional benefit, continue with status quo of local primary schooling and off-island secondary-school attendance.
- Children feel tired from long journeys or spending extended periods of time away from home, potentially impacting physical health, sleep and exercise, mental health and academic performance.
- Continued risk of depopulation, where families may decide to relocate to avoid the possibility of weekly boarding on the mainland.
- 50% of parents in the South West of Mull have stated that they would consider leaving the area if the school is not built centrally.
- Concern that previous decision to site the school in Tobermory resulted in generational impacts which shaped social outcomes.

4.6.14 The potential impacts of a Tobermory site location for young people and families living in Tobermory and the North of Mull is summarised as follows:

- Positive impact to those who use the existing 2-18 School in Tobermory through the re-provision of enhanced and contemporary facilities.
- Modern school could encourage population retention and growth.
- No detrimental impact on working parents and carers and established Tobermory-based businesses.
- Tobermory site option may be more attractive to recruit and retain teachers, which is currently an issue on Mull.
- Supports active travel, children continue to walk to school from home.
- Lower vehicle trips. No additional transport-related costs for families.

#### *All Site Locations - Health*

4.6.15 An extended daily commute of 30 minute to an hour each way for children can have several impacts on physical health, sleep and exercise, mental health and academic performance. This is relevant to pupils in all site option scenarios who

need to contend with longer journey times than their peers in other Argyll & Bute and Scotland locations.

#### *All Site Locations – Gaelic Language*

4.6.16 The Mull Campus project could result in positive impacts for the use of Gaelic and promotion of Gaelic learning for pupils of all ages and the wider community.

#### ***Equality Impacts***

4.6.17 The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those without. The duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. A summary of the key impacts is provided in the paragraphs below.

4.6.18 It is considered that a central site option would positively impact children and young people and their families living in the South and South West of Mull and bring unity to the North and South communities of the island. During consultation, children and young people from these areas raised that a central site option would be fairer for them as they would not have to travel as far every day and could potentially participate in after school clubs.

4.6.19 However, children and young people from Tobermory and the North of Mull presented concern with a central site option as it would significantly increase their journey time to and from school, reduce their current freedoms and potentially remove their ability to attend after school clubs. They showed preference towards a Tobermory site option as they could continue to walk to school and because the majority currently live in and around Tobermory.

4.6.20 It is considered that all site options would positively impact disabled children as the school would have improved campus facilities, such as enhanced accessibility measures. However, there are potential negative impacts as a result of a central site as some disabled children may not be able to travel by public transport and this would put pressure on family members or caregivers who may not have access to a private car.

#### ***Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impacts***

4.6.21 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires public bodies to consider whether existing and emerging legislation, policy and guidance have an impact on children and young people and to assess what further action is required to ensure compliance with the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

4.6.22 The following impacts on children's wellbeing have been considered:

- The new campus has the potential to address long-standing accessibility challenges currently identified at the existing Tobermory 2-18 High School site and provide improved learning environments benefitting all

pupils including those with additional needs and enhancing overall pupil wellbeing.

- Increased travel times for children from Tobermory to a central site location could negatively affect children's wellbeing and their ability to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Safety, travel arrangements, and minimising disruptions during construction are key priorities raised by parents and pupils.
- Some community members have expressed concern around the impact of boarding weekly on the health and wellbeing of secondary aged pupils from the Ross of Mull. There are concerns around the implications of this on children's mental health and physical wellbeing, including their ability to participate fully in island life.

4.6.23 The following differential impacts were identified for different groups of children and young people:

- A Tobermory site option maintains proximity for local children but continues challenges for children from the Ross of Mull, who may need to board off-island for secondary school.
- A central site option provides more equitable secondary school access across Mull but disadvantages Tobermory's younger children, who would face longer daily commutes to early years and primary school attendance.
- Parents generally believe that older children can better adapt to longer travel times compared with younger children.
- Community members emphasise the need to manage any knock-on effect on nearby primary schools if primary provision at Tobermory is relocated.

4.6.24 While the Mull Campus Proposals have the potential to significantly enhance education and children's rights on Mull, they also present challenges around travel, wellbeing, and equitable access, particularly for specific groups of children. Ongoing consultation and mitigation strategies will be critical.

### ***Fairer Scotland Duty***

4.6.25 The Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) places a legal responsibility on certain public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions or developing policy. The FSD seeks to tackle socio-economic disadvantage and reduce the inequalities associated with being disadvantaged. It is closely related to issues of poverty which may affect outcomes across health, housing, education and training and employment prospects.

### ***Socio-Economic Disadvantage***

4.6.26 The North, South West and South of Mull all fall into the least deprived 40% of areas in Scotland, whilst Tobermory performs even better in the bottom 30%. In



terms of overall impact depending on the campus site selection, it is not clear how area deprivation could be affected by either site option.

4.6.27 There is a greater loss to earning and future earning for a central site location compared to Tobermory, which is reflective of the larger population in the Tobermory settlement.

4.6.28 Community feedback has expressed concern around the impact of children attending six years of their schooling off-island, limiting their opportunities to participate fully in family life and community life on the island.

4.6.29 There is a precedent for extended travel times on Mull for secondary school children accessing Tobermory High School from other localities on the island.

#### *Inequality of Outcome*

4.6.30 Regardless of site location, the Mull Campus project presents a positive opportunity to address challenges in the quality and provision of education on the island through the provision of contemporary and sustainably designed educational facilities that would benefit pupils aged 2-18 in addition to the wider community.

4.6.31 The extent of this benefit is varied depending on whether this is delivered in a central or Tobermory Site location. The reality of the proposals means that there is the potential to affect different groups of children and young people and their communities by virtue of where they live on the island.

4.6.32 There could be negative impact on potential future earnings for children required to undertake longer daily journeys to school. Pupils who must travel further to school are less likely to attend university and may experience a loss of earnings as a result.

4.6.33 There could be higher sensitivity in local communities living near site options in Tobermory and a central site in relation to the provision of or re-provision of sports facilities that might be associated with the Mull Campus proposals.

4.6.34 The project has the potential to affect income both in terms of future earnings for pupils and the earning of parents and carers.

#### ***IIA Conclusions***

4.6.35 The current Tobermory 2-18 school building is in poor condition and is not fully accessible for children and staff with disabilities or additional support needs. A replacement of this facility with a new modern facility will provide a positive impact on education provision.

4.6.36 Many community members across the island feel strongly that a central high school is required to unite young people from the north and south of Mull and to provide an on-island secondary education option for children from the Ross of Mull. However, there is also a strong feeling across the island's communities that early years and primary school education should not be relocated from Tobermory for the families residing there.

4.6.37 The conclusions of the IIA show that there are benefits and disbenefits associated with all site options. However, under the constraints of the available funding, it is unlikely that either of the campus locations would be able to provide a fully equal solution for all children and young people living on Mull and the islands.

4.6.38 Regardless of site location, the campus has the potential to deliver a range of benefits to the island through the provision of contemporary and high-quality learning, sport and community facilities. It is recommended that the pupils and members of the community are closely involved in shaping the design of the new campus so that it can best meet the needs of people living on Mull and the islands.

## 4.7 Site Option Appraisal

This section provides an indicative site plan for each shortlisted site illustrating how the buildings and external elements could be accommodated on the site. A summary of each site's strengths and weaknesses is also provided, with more detailed information available in **Appendix 1** Site Analysis Report (February 2025).

### 4.7.1 Site 1 – Tobermory Existing School Site



#### Strengths

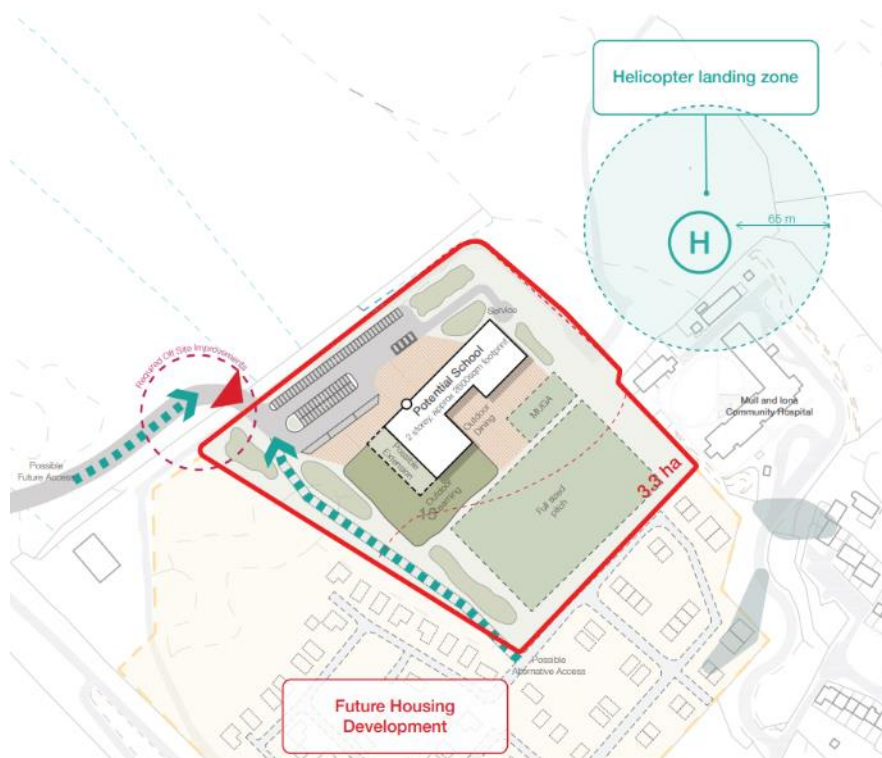
- Status quo: no change to school location, no statutory consultation required
- Keeps nursery and primary provision in Tobermory
- Lower transport impact than central options (no change)
- Maintains and encourages active travel (currently 30% of primary pupils and 40% of secondary pupils walk to school)
- Economic benefit is £3.15m higher than a central island location

- Very good access to community services, local shops and businesses
- Close to existing housing and future allocated housing development sites (up to 150 units in the Tobermory area)
- No site purchase costs, land already owned by council
- Lower revenue cost than central site options

#### Weaknesses

- Challenging topography, significant level changes within the site and on approach
- Poor roads and footpath infrastructure in surrounding area.
- Would be difficult to deliver improvements to current bus drop off arrangements
- Tight site with insufficient space for a full size 100m x 60m pitch, although a 7-aside pitch can be accommodated
- Potential for significant disruption to existing school during construction activities
- Requires use of common good land (which would be reinstated), statutory consultation required, unlikely to be acceptable to the local community
- Impact on family life: too far to travel for young people from Ross of Mull, who would likely remain with the current arrangement of boarding away from home when attending High School during the week
- Phased construction, demolition and pitches; prolonged construction programme

#### 4.7.2 Site 2 – Craignure



#### Strengths

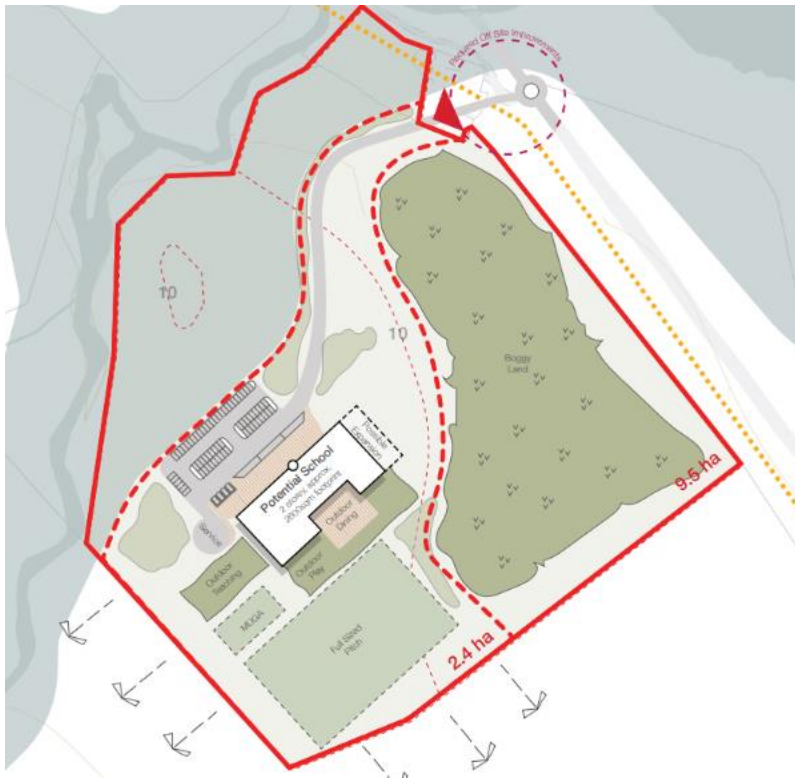
- Can accommodate the full education brief including good quality external space, parking and drop off areas and full-size pitch

- Equity of access, bringing the island together and providing an opportunity for young people across the island to attend the same high school
- Potential to positively impact on social outcomes for children and young people living in the South and South West of Mull, providing an option to attend high school and return home to their families daily.
- Potential to reverse the depopulation in South West Mull and enable economic development and potential housing in Craignure and the south
- Proximity to other community facilities; community hospital and swimming pool
- Adjacent land is allocated for future housing development (80 units) with outline planning permission for 97 houses
- Potential for shared enabling works and costs with adjacent development site
- Low construction programme risk

#### Weaknesses

- More children would undertake longer daily journeys to school by bus, doubling the aggregate travel time for pupils overall
- Very limited potential for active travel, majority of pupils and staff travel by bus or car
- Negative impact for younger and primary school aged children (combined total of 95). No community support for the relocation of the nursery and primary school away from Tobermory.
- Potential impact on parents/ carer's working patterns, increased cost and carbon impact.
- Possible adverse effect on local road infrastructure due to increased trip generation involving mainly single-track roads
- Economic benefit is £3.15m lower than a Tobermory location
- Increase in revenue costs; 4 additional school buses required

### 4.7.3 Site 3 – Garmony



#### Strengths

- Can accommodate the full education brief including good quality external space, parking and drop off areas and full-size pitch
- Equity of access, bringing the island together and providing an opportunity for young people across the island to attend the same high school
- Potential to positively impact on social outcomes for children and young people living in the South and South West of Mull, providing an option to attend high school and return home to their families daily.
- Potential to reverse the depopulation in South West Mull and enable economic development

#### Weaknesses

- More children would undertake longer daily journeys to school by bus, doubling the aggregate travel time for pupils overall
- Very limited potential for active travel, all pupils and staff travel by bus or car
- Negative impact for younger and primary school aged children (combined total of 95). No community support for the relocation of the nursery and primary school away from Tobermory.
- Potential impact on parents/ carer's working patterns, increased cost and carbon impact.
- Economic benefit is £3.15m lower than a Tobermory location

- Remote from residential areas and other amenities, closest facility is the rugby club to the north.
- No planned development nearby and site has no designation under the Local Development Plan.
- No footways or crossing opportunities on nearest road network
- Possible adverse effect on local road infrastructure due to increased trip generation involving mainly single-track roads
- High enabling costs as no adjacent utilities or roads infrastructure
- Increase in revenue costs; 4 additional school buses required

#### 4.7.4 Site 4 – Tobermory South



#### Strengths

- Very little change from existing as Tobermory location
- Keeps nursery and primary in Tobermory
- New site, no impact on existing school operations
- Better quality roads and footpath infrastructure in surrounding area with potential to deliver improvements to bus drop off arrangements
- Supports active travel; expected to remain broadly similar to the current school site
- Lower transport impact than central site options (marginal change)
- Economic benefit is £3.15m higher than a central island location
- Good access to community services, local shops and businesses
- Close to existing housing and to future allocated housing development sites (up to 150 units in the Tobermory area, 112 units in immediate area)

- Lower revenue cost than central site options
- Low construction programme risk

#### Weaknesses

- Tight site with insufficient space for a full size 100m x 60m pitch, although a 7-aside pitch can be accommodated (there are potential solutions available to provide a full-size pitch elsewhere)
- Site purchase costs, land under multiple ownership and likely to be the most expensive of the 3 site options that would require land purchase
- Impact on family life - significant travel distances for young people from Ross of Mull, who would likely choose to remain with current arrangement of board away from home when attending High School

### 4.8 Site Scoring Exercise

4.8.1 Sites were scored by a multidisciplinary team of technical experts, as described in **paragraph 4.3.6**. The team had access to the information contained within **Appendix 1** to enable them to collectively agree a score. Each site was scored 0-10 across set criteria. A description is provided in **table 4**.

**Table 4 – Site scoring categories and description**

Score	Category	Description
0	Very poor	Fails to meet any requirements, performs poorly in all aspects (a score of very poor for deliverability or capable of accommodating the brief is likely to result in the site failing the initial shortlisting)
1		
2	Poor	Factors or risks that would significantly impact on ability to meet the basic requirements of the brief and/or impact negatively on quality of education provision. Complex or costly solution required. Significant adverse impact.
3		
4		
5	Satisfactory	Meets basic requirements, satisfactory
6	Good	Performs well in most aspects, minor issues which can be relatively easily overcome, able to meet essential brief requirements
7		
8	Very Good	Meets requirements in full, negligible risk / impact, any perceived issues are very minor in nature, potential to provide a very good education solution
9		
10	Excellent	Ideal site, performs very well in all aspects, fully meets requirements, most cost-effective solution

4.8.2 Once scores were agreed, the weightings were applied to reflect the relative priority of each of the criteria, which resulted in a total weighted score for each site option. The categories and relative weightings were agreed by the project Strategic Board in advance of the scoring exercise and are outlined in **table 5**.

**Table 5 – Criteria Categories and Relative Weightings Used in Site Scoring**

<b>Criteria Category</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Deliverability	15
Impact	
• Education	32
• Community and Place	8
• Accessibility and Transport	8
• Sustainability	5
Affordability	25
Risk	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

4.8.3 The output from the site scoring exercise is attached as **Appendix 2** and summarised in **table 6**.

**Table 6 – Weighted score and ranking for the shortlisted sites**

	<b>Weighted score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Site 1 – Tobermory Existing Site	625	3
Site 2 – Craignure	628	2
Site 3 – Garmony	546	4
<b>Site 4 – Tobermory South</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>1</b>

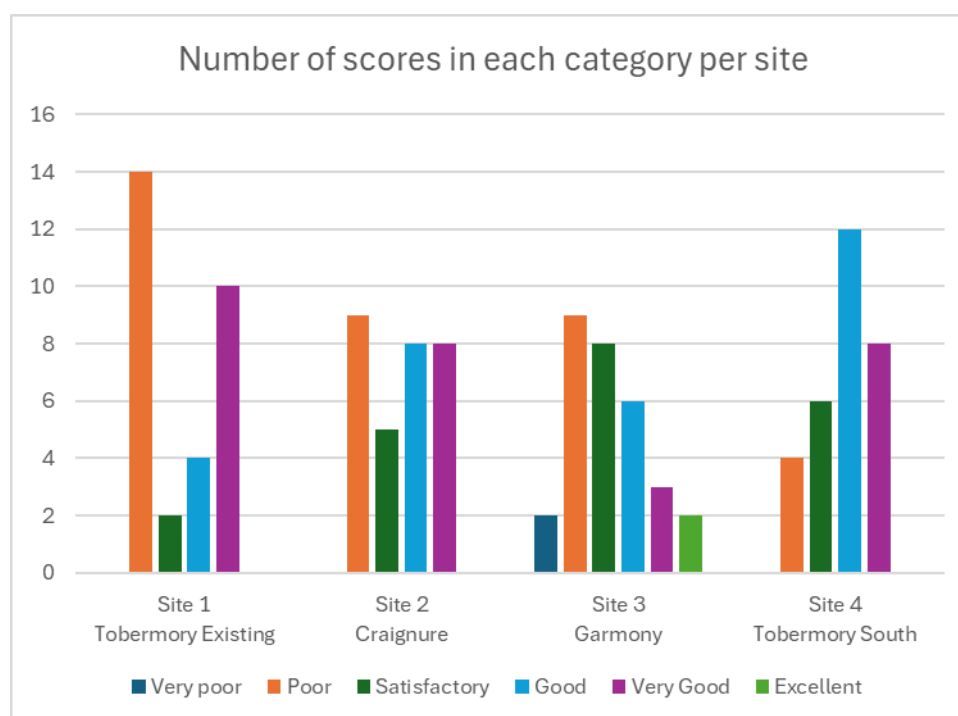
4.8.4 Site 4 – Tobermory South scores most highly and is ranked 1<sup>st</sup>. Sites 2 - Craignure and 1 – Tobermory Existing are close behind, with Site 3 – Garmony performing least well.

4.8.5 With the scores for the top three sites relatively close, further sensitivity analysis was carried out. This included removing the scores for each criteria category in turn to check if that had any impact. In all cases, Site 4 – Tobermory South remained the highest scoring option, with Site 3 – Garmony the lowest, suggesting a robust conclusion.

4.8.6 The four site options were also assessed on the number and distribution of very poor to excellent scores to check consistency of performance. This is illustrated in **figure 2**.



**Figure 2 – Number of scores by category for each site option**



4.8.7 Figure 2 highlights that Site 4 – Tobermory South has significantly more cumulative good/ very good scores than poor scores, indicating a robust outcome. Site 2 – Craignure is the only other site where the number of cumulative good/ very good scores are greater than the number of poor scores. The number of poor scores for Site 1 – Tobermory Existing is equal to the number of cumulative good/ very good scores.

4.8.8 The site scoring exercise therefore indicates that Site 4 – Tobermory South performs the best of the four site options in respect of the agreed site selection criteria.

4.8.9 Site 3 – Garmony consistently performs the worst of the four options, and it is therefore not recommended that this option be considered further.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Of the four sites shortlisted, three are deemed to be potentially viable and the benefits and challenges of each must be carefully considered. There is no definitive site option that will fully satisfy all project requirements and address all the potential impacts on the distinct groups on Mull and its surrounding islands. Regardless of the option chosen, there will be an element of compromise, and it should be acknowledged that a proportion of those groups will be dissatisfied with the outcome.

5.2 Based on the substantial body of information provided in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report, the preferred site for a new Mull Campus is Site 4 – Tobermory South

and that is the option recommended to Members to progress the Outline Business Case on that basis.

- 5.3 This option would constitute a proposal to relocate the existing campus, and therefore a statutory consultation would be legally required under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 5.4 It must also be noted that as the project progresses through the RIBA<sup>2</sup> design stages and more detailed information becomes available, there may be a requirement for the Council to review their position on the preferred site.
- 5.5 In making their decision in accordance with recommendation (5.2), above, Members are specifically requested to have regard to the detail of the Integrated Impact Assessment (**Appendix 1K**) on the potential impacts to the relevant groups on Mull and its surrounding islands, as detailed therein, recognising that each site presents different benefits and disbenefits to these distinct groups.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – The Council’s Learning Estate Strategy 2021 sets out an ambition to have Schools in category A or B in terms of suitability and condition. Delivering a new Campus on Mull is the no.1 priority in that strategy to address the suitability and condition of the current campus in Tobermory and is also a Corporate Policy.
- 6.2 Financial – On 25th April 2024 the Council deemed the project to be affordable at that time. The site scoring exercise examined the potential revenue and capital affordability of each site option, giving cognisance to potential site acquisition and land disposal values, site abnormal costs and transport implications.
- 6.3 Legal – An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken (**Appendix 1K**) to demonstrate how the proposals for a new Mull Campus show due regard to the socio-economic, equalities, child rights and island communities duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Fairer Scotland Duty, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, and the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.
- 6.4 HR – None at this stage. One of the potentially viable site options would result in a change of base for staff. To be considered once the preferred site has been identified.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
  - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – An equality impact assessment has been carried out to inform this decision.
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – An economic impact assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty assessment have been carried out to inform this decision.

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<sup>2</sup> Royal Institute of British Architects

- 6.5.3 Islands Duty - An island communities impact assessment has been carried out to inform this decision.
- 6.6 Climate Change – The carbon impact of travel, embodied carbon and opportunities for sustainable heating solutions were considered as part of site scoring exercise. To be eligible for full LEIP funding the campus will require to meet certain criteria in respect of embodied carbon and operational energy use.
- 6.7 Risk – Sites were assessed against risk criteria, taking consideration of legal restrictions and site acquisition, construction programme and planning risks.
- 6.8 Customer Service – A community engagement exercise was undertaken to understand what was important to the communities when considering possible sites. Community groups and parent councils were invited to input their views as part of the integrated impact assessment process.
- 6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – A children’s rights and wellbeing impact assessment has been carried out to inform this decision.

**Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services and Education**

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Financial Services**

**Audrey Forrest, Policy Lead for Education**

6 February 2025

**For further information contact:**

Head of Commercial Services – Ross McLaughlin

Head of Education and Lifelong Learning and Chief Education Officer – Jen Crocket

Head of Education – Learning and Teaching – Wendy Brownlie

## APPENDICES

Appendix	Title	Location
Appendix 1	Hub North Scotland Site Selection and Engagement Report (February 2025)	* Attached * Mod.Gov * Publicly Accessible
1A	Community Engagement Analysis (November 2024)	<a href="#">Mull Engagement Analysis</a>
1B	Long List of Sites (October 2024)	<a href="#">Long-list</a>
1C	Short List Site Plans	<a href="#">Short List Plans</a>
1D	Utilities Infrastructure Reports	<a href="#">Appendices - Utilities</a>
1E	Preliminary Ground Conditions Review	<a href="#">Geotech</a>
1F	Flooding and Drainage Report	<a href="#">Flooding Drainage</a>
1G	Place Diagrams	<a href="#">Place Diagrams</a>
1H	Transport Considerations Report (January 2025)	* Summary Paper Attached * Mod.Gov <a href="#">Transport Considerations</a> * Publicly Accessible
1I	Site Abnormal Costs	* Mod.Gov * <b>Exempt</b>
1J	Wayleaves, Legal and Site Acquisition Risk	* Mod.Gov * <b>Exempt</b>
1K	Integrated Impact Assessment Report (February 2025)	* Attached * Mod.Gov * Publicly Accessible
1L	Valuation Report (January 2025)	* Mod.Gov * <b>Exempt</b>
Appendix 2	Site Scoring Outcome	* Attached * Mod.Gov * Publicly Accessible