



**EDUCATION**

**OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

**LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Isle of Luing**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 No pupils have attended Luing Primary School since August 2020. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Community Services Committee agreed Luing Primary should be mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022 and the school premises should be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis. The Community Services Committee also agreed that in the intervening period, the Education Service would gather the necessary information, identify all reasonable options and assess those options in order to consider the future of Luing Primary School in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*, and present these findings to the Committee in the form of an Options Appraisal at a future meeting of the Committee.

<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.

Before the Community Services Committee mothballed Luing Primary School, there were no pupils enrolled.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the 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 Luing Primary School. This review will enable the Elected Members to consider the various options put forward in relation to the future of Luing Primary School.

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**

**21** 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. Luing Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll had been declining in the few years previously and not predicted to rise in the near future. This continues to be the situation. In the last year when the school was open, families with children of primary school age expressed their desire for their children to attend a bigger school.
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. Should Luing Primary School re-open, staffing the school will be a significant challenge in the current educational climate.
3. Whilst the School is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

The Council is therefore considering the future of Luing 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 Luing and the Local Area - the Luing Primary School Setting**

Luing Primary School is situated on the Island of Luing which lies nineteen miles south of Oban. The island is 6 miles long and 1.5 miles wide and has a population of around two hundred. It is mainly a farming and fishing community and a number of residents commute daily to Oban via the ferry at Cuan. The largest centre of population is at Cullipool in the north west of the island. Slate quarrying was carried out on Luing for many years, at one point employing 170 men, with slate still being extracted from quarries at the north end of Cullipool until 1965. Luing is also well known for its breed of Luing Cattle which were developed as a commercial beef breed hardy enough to prosper under adverse weather. There is a variety of wildlife on the island, such as otters and hares with sightings of seals, porpoises and dolphins. There are regular chances to see buzzards, peregrines and hen harriers, as well as visiting eagles.

### 3.4 The School within the Community

When the school was open, Luing Primary School was very active within the community. It was a focus for social and educational events. The school had positive links with a number of agencies that enriched the education of the children. Whilst being mothballed, the school has not been used for any activities. The island has an active community and the Community Council indicate that they are trying to attract families to the area. Recently the Community Council and local parent and toddler groups have submitted requests to use the building.

### 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 Luing area showing the changing population from census 2001 to census 2011:

Table 1: Population Information

Luing Area Census Ref : Data from Scotland's Census website			
2001		2011	
Total Resident Population	142	Total Resident Population	128
% under 16	22.54	% under 16	14.8
% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	54.23	% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	49.2
% pensionable age and over	23.24	% pensionable age and over	35.9

Data identifies that the population until 2011 was decreasing with a reducing demographic of children of statutory school age and an increase in those residents who are of a pensionable age.

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

### **3.6 Development and House Building**

The Local Development Plan (LDP2), sets out planning and development proposals for the next 10 years from 2020, and a vision for 20 years, is available. 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. **There are no allocations or development proposals for Luìng within the current plan.**

*Appendix 1* shows the Local Development Plans (2) for Luìng. (Toberonochy, Blackmill Bay and Cullipool)

*Appendix 2* shows the Local Development Plans (2) for the Easdale area (Easdale and Seil)

*Appendix 3* provides the key for Local Development Plans.

### **3.7 Luìng Primary School**

Luìng Primary School is an attractive Victorian building, built in 1877, of local granite in an exceptionally scenic setting. The school is co-educational and non-denominational and has a catchment area extending across the whole island. The school has two classrooms, an office, a store, kitchen and a playground.

*Appendix 4* shows the Luìng Primary School Floor Plan.

Luìng Primary School is 5.95 miles from Easdale Primary School, with a stretch of water in between. A local ferry provides a link with the mainland and the crossing takes 4 minutes. The area is sparsely populated. Luìng Primary School is situated on the side of a road that leads towards Toberonochy.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Luìng 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. Luìng is one of primary schools associated with Oban High School.

### **3.8 Easdale Primary School**

Children who are in the catchment area for Luing Primary School while it has been mothballed have been directed to Easdale Primary on the Isle of Seil. There is one Primary 1 pupil who is in mainstream education in the catchment area for Luing attending Easdale Primary School. The pupil arrived on the island after the school was mothballed. Easdale Primary is a mainstream, non-denominational school catering for boys and girls of all stages P1-P7. It has a pre-five unit catering for children who have reached their third birthday. The catchment area of the school includes the Isle of Seil and Easdale Island.

The school is close to the village of Ellenabiach on the Isle of Seil, which is linked to the mainland by a bridge.

The school building dates from 1877 and has been extensively modernised. The accommodation comprises 3 class-teaching areas, an activity area and pre five/general purpose area, a hall/dining room, an office and staff room. The school grounds comprise of a tarred area to the rear of the building with wet weather shelter and garden areas to the side and front.

*Appendix 5* shows the Easdale Primary School Floor Plan.

The Primary School building has facilities for pupils, visitors and special access needs. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Easdale Primary School as 'very remote rural'. Oban High School is the associated Secondary School for Luing and Easdale.

The Map below shows the adjoining catchment areas of Luing and Easdale Primary Schools:



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### 3.9 Pupil Numbers

Pupil projections, and data for 2021 - 2022 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 registration numbers for both Luing and Easdale Primary schools:

Table 2

School name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Luing Primary	17	12	15	14	8	8	14	10	7	0	0
Easdale Primary	29	28	33	26	28	21	14	14	16	17	20



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

<b>Table 3:</b>	<b>Luing PS</b>	<b>Easdale PS</b>
	Roll	Roll
<b>Capacity</b>	49	92
<b>2023</b>	3	24
<b>2024</b>	4	25
<b>2025</b>	5	27
<b>2026</b>	6	25
<b>2027</b>	6	28
<b>2028</b>	6	27

\* Prediction based on information available to Argyll and Bute (2022).

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **4.1 Meetings**

A Community Pre-Consultation 'drop in' engagement session was held in Atlantic Island Centre, on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 from 9.30am-7.30pm. This was to seek the views of the community on the future of Luing School. This meeting was attended by 33 people. There were also written communication and emails from the local community received that have also been accepted as part of the pre-consultation. An officer also met with the Primary 1 pupil at Easdale Primary who is from the Luing Primary School catchment area on 11<sup>th</sup> May to gain their view at the time of the Pre-consultation. There is a record of this meeting available and the pupil's views are represented in Sections 4, 6, 7 and 8.

### **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:

*What has been the effect of mothballing Luing 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. A summary of comments from the Community meeting can be found in *Appendix 6*.

### **4.3 Feedback**

There was a range of viewpoints on the future of Luing Primary School:

- **Community and Parents**

The majority of the community felt on the day of the consultation that they wanted the mothballing to continue for a number of reasons. Two families wanted the school to be re-opened; one family were happy with the provision for their Early Years child at Easdale Primary. Subsequently, after the consultation day, Luing Community Council indicated that it would be their wish to open the school as soon as possible as a school and used as such by both Luing and Seil Pre- school and primary aged children. One family confirmed during the consultation that they would be sending their child to Luing Primary School, should it re-open.

- **Children/young people**

The responsible Education Officer was granted permission to speak to the Primary 1 child that would attend Luing PS in 2021-22 and it was his wish that the school should re-open. The pupil said he was tired of travelling and wanted to be able to walk or ride his bike to the school and he looked forward to meeting teachers at the school.

- **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 may not be viable. Members of staff highlighted difficulties in providing staffing, securing affordable family housing on the island and ensuring social aspects of education are met due to low numbers. Some members of staff stated that when the school was under a shared headship with Easdale, this worked well. Some indicated that they would like to see the school open again to

have education more locally for families and thought this would help to attract families to the area.

Feedback notes from the consultation day can be found in Appendix 6.

### **General Comments:**

*“Continue to mothball for a while longer, with possible uses for other purposes eg playgroup. Gives the community time and can attract families to the area.”*

*“A key point is that the Community Trust have been working hard to bring more families to the area but this can take few years. We need the authority to support us. This is a big thing for us.”*

*“In a wee community like this – the school was at the centre – the community were able to support the children – this is harder when the local school is not on the island.”*

*“If there is no school on the island, it is off putting to families considering moving to the area.”*

*“The council need to understand that this is a historical cycle on the Isle of Luing, when I attended the school, there were 6 children, 7 children, when my children went but then when my youngest son left there was around 30 children – the roll goes up and down and the school has remained open. This is nothing new in the last 55 years. We would ask that it continues to remain open as we believe the numbers will go up.”*

*“It’s more than just a school.”*

*“Easdale ELC has 10 children – which is better socially and for educational purposes.”*

*“There is a really good community at Easdale PS for the children. My child likes going on the ferry.”*

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

Luing Primary School has been mothballed for 2 years, the decision to mothball the school was during a pandemic and had arisen through parental choice of families choosing at the time to educate their children in a bigger school. There were 5 primary aged children at Luing Primary at the time. The school roll was very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the future. This continues to be the situation. At the Pre-Consultation meeting in May the majority of the community felt that mothballing should continue. The Community

Council have since expressed their wish that the school should open with immediate effect.

Whilst the building is mothballed it continues to deteriorate. The Community is very proactive and would like to use the building constructively in the future. 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 Luìng Primary School. The following options are explored within this paper:

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

## **6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **6.1 Community Feedback**

Of the 33 community members that attended the Options Appraisal engagement event, the majority of which were in favour of mothballing the school with a view to re-opening the school in order to attract families to the area. There was a small minority who felt the small number of children in the school would prove challenging to deliver a meaningful education. Luìng Community Council have subsequently requested that the school is opened with immediate effect and continue to work with under a shared Headship with Easdale Primary School, as previously.

*“In a wee community like this – the school was at the centre – the community were able to support the children – this is harder when the school is not on the island.”*

*“If there is no school on the island, it is off putting to families considering moving to the area.”*

*“When the ferry is involved, it does change everything – adds time to the commute.”*

*“Smaller schools really support children of different ages, P1-P7 looking out for each other – all generations benefit from the school opening.”*

*“Housing is an issue on the island. Easdale PS love having Luing children with them – it is brilliant as they get to be with their peers. While it would be nice to have a school on your doorstep, being with children of different ages is important.”*

*“It would be lovely to see the school open however, children’s welfare is not good if there are not many children there and they cannot reach their milestones. It is important that they mix with children of their own age and other ages.”*

*“Financially, it is hard. The staffing, support for pupils and teaching commitments need to be considered as all of this would be hard to find.”*

## **6.2 Pupil Numbers**

If the school were to reopen in August 2022, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be two. The families of these children have expressed a desire for the school to 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 significantly (see Table 4 below), and are well below the capacity of the school building.

If the school were to reopen teaching staff would require to be recruited.

If the school were to re-open, numbers would remain low and are well below the capacity of the school building. The community feel however, with their efforts to ensure affordable housing is available, the numbers of pupils could increase.

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

Luing Primary	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Approved Capacity	49	49	49	49	49	49
Roll Projection	2	3	4	5	6	6

### 6.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration to re-open the school is **£165,360<sup>1</sup>**

The annual cost of mothballing Luing Primary School is **£10,323**. Property Services have advised that if the decision is that the school is to remain operational, the total estimated cost of remedial works identified as being required in Years 1 to 3 and Years 1 to 10 and excluding professional fees is as follows:

	Estimated Cost (Y1-Y3)	Estimated Cost (Y1-Y10)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£119,432.10 (£120k)</b>	<b>£151,053.10 (£155k)</b>

### 6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Luing Primary School to increase significantly under present circumstances within the forthcoming years without a change in the housing situation on the island. The Luing Community Trust have informed through the pre-consultation process that they are working to address the concerns about affordable family housing on the island. This could take some time and affordable housing does not always guarantee numbers of children of statutory school age seeking local authority education. Luing Primary School is currently mothballed and from August 2022 there are 2 current pupils in the Luing catchment area looking to access mainstream schooling, and currently attending Easdale Primary School. To reopen the school would not necessarily increase the pupil numbers but the local community feel that it would help to attract families to the area.

The school has not been able to secure stable staffing in recent years. There was no resident staff on Luing and winter closures were high risk due to ferry cancellations. In the last ten years there were occasions each year when the school closed due to inclement weather and no teaching staff being available on the island. However, this issues was not, and is not, unique to Luing.

Luing ELC has been registered as 'Inactive' with the Care Inspectorate since August 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Annual costs for running a comparative school for Luing Primary School.

The Isle of Luing has a Village Hall that is accessed and used on a regular basis.

#### 6.4.1 Community Impact

The reopening of the school would enable the premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community to specific events. The presence of a school and the facilities/activities that may be offered could make the area a more attractive place to live. Reopening the school may therefore encourage families with school age children to move to the island. This in turn may make the community more sustainable.

The local authority are currently making arrangements for the local community to be able to use the building while it is mothballed. This does not impact on the future of the school.

The Community Council have expressed their wish that the school open with immediate effect and the majority of local community members who attended the Pre-consultation meeting were in favour of the school re-opening.

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

- The continued deterioration of the building.
- They were unaware as a community that the building could be used by Community groups while it was mothballed and as a result, it has not been used. Some community groups have now requested use of the building and this is being investigated.
- A lack of focus for significant aspects of community life that the school previously provided for all generations on the island.
- Disappointment in not being consulted regarding the initial mothballing *de facto*. However, the school was mothballed due to families seeking to educate their children elsewhere and there is no requirement for the local authority to lead a consultation as mothballing is an informal, non-statutory process.
- Concerns about travel arrangements for pupils who attend Easdale Primary School from Isle of Luing during the mothballing period.

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 to the island 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 Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles, including a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to a public timetable. The total travelling time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times and where children live on the Isle of Luing. The travel arrangements, as arranged by Transport department would be: pupils are picked up on a mini bus on the island, taken to the ferry, the driver accompanies the children on the ferry, as an escort and wait with them until the service bus arrives. The driver ensures that the children safely board the bus at this location. The service bus is met by a member of the school staff at Easdale Primary School, who ensures pupils disembark safely and are led into the school, the reverse of which happens in the afternoon. At no time are the primary pupils left unattended.

Families and the community on Luing have been dissatisfied with these arrangements, viewing them as being unsafe and putting children at risk. One family who currently have the only child of primary school age on the island have chosen to take and pick up their child themselves, incurring costs and also dedicating time during the working day. The travel arrangements have been available since the school was mothballed. If Luing 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. The Education Officer spoke to the Primary 1 child travelling from Luing to Easdale Primary in May 2022 and he indicated as part of the pre-consultation process that he was tired of travelling and would prefer to attend the local school. Staff would either travel to the school by car and ferry 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, subject to recruitment of staff and where they lived.

## **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.

There are recognised benefits of children working with and socialising with a peer group. Collaborative learning is an important aspect of the curriculum and with very low projected pupil rolls is not a benefit that would be achieved by reopening the school.

With respect to outdoor learning community spaces could be used either in the school grounds or in the immediate area of the island 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 would need to be brought up to standard in order to facilitate an appropriate learning and teaching environment.

## **6.6 Summary**

Of the 33 people who attended the pre-consultation the majority were in favour of mothballing in the sense that this would then facilitate the reopening of Luing Primary as a school on a permanent basis. If the school reopened in August 2022, the pupil roll would be two and based on current projections, increasing to 3 in 2023 as numbers of children registered with Argyll and Bute demonstrate.

Argyll and Bute Council have found recruitment of teachers and promoted posts challenging in remote rural areas, particularly since the pandemic and staffing remains an issue for many schools nationally. Should Luing Primary School re-open, staffing the school will be a significant challenge in the current educational climate.

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 **£165,360<sup>2</sup>**, with the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£119,432** over a three year period, **£151,053** over a ten year period.

The Isle of Luing has a Village Hall that is accessed and used on a regular basis. The community will continue have access to the school building while it is mothballed, as the authority are arranging currently.

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 Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles including a short ferry journey of 4 minutes. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times and where children live on the Isle of Luing. Adverse weather can be a factor, however this is the same for other local schools and areas. The travel arrangements have been available to access since the school was mothballed. Parents of the Primary 1 child attending Easdale Primary during the mothballing period have chosen not to access the travel arrangements due to their belief that the arrangements put their child at risk and have made their own arrangements, at a personal cost. Should the school reopen, there may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The positive and negative impact may balance depending on the recruitment of staff and their location.

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

When considering the above alongside projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard balanced against strong feeling within the community and their specific request to keep the school open, this is not considered the most reasonable

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<sup>2</sup> Annual costs for running a comparative school for Luing.

option to address the underlying reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being explored.

## **7. OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF LUIING PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS ZONED TO EASDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Statutory Guidance for the 2010 Act, in relation to mothballing, states *“the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote.”* Luing Primary School has been mothballed for 2 years.

### **7.1 Community Feedback**

There was significant concern raised at the Pre-consultation meeting regarding what was viewed as the lack of consultation in the mothballing of Luing Primary School. The mothballing of a school is a temporary closure. It does not require a statutory consultation to be carried out as it is an informal non-statutory measure.

At the Pre-consultation meeting there was a majority that wanted the continued mothballing of Luing Primary, in the sense that this would allow for preparation for the community and local authority to assess what the long term future would be for the school. The majority of residents viewed the mothballing to this being short term and would enable planning for the school to re-open. Luing Community Trust stated that they were working hard to secure affordable housing on the island and they felt that this would help to increase numbers of children accessing local mainstream education. There was also a view that post-pandemic, there would be opportunities for the island to attract more families to the area.

*“Continue to mothball for a while longer, with possible uses for other purposes eg playgroup. Gives the community time and can attract families to the area.”*

*“The building needs to be used sooner rather than later as it will deteriorate and I am sure others would like to use it.”*

*“Folk have changed the way they work from home. People are still reeling from COVID, these two years should not count. Beginning to*

*think about the future. Folk are adjusting and need to look at and assess. I think we will get another influx on Luig.*”

*“Keep it mothballed for the time being until we are ready for it as a school, but ensure that the community can use it safely ie toddlers group and others as appropriate in the meantime.”*

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:

## **7.2 Pupil Numbers**

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

## **7.3 Financial Information**

The current annual cost (2021/22) to the Council of the mothballed Luig Primary School is **£10,323**. 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 **£119,432** over a three year period, **£151,053** over a ten year period. The current annual transport cost of taking pupils to Easdale Primary school is approximately **£18,427**.

## **7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors**

The reasons why the future of Luig Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Luig Primary School to increase significantly without a change in the housing situation on the island. The Community Trust have informed through the Pre-consultation process that they are working to address the concerns about affordable family housing on the island. Luig Primary School is currently mothballed and from August 2022 there are 2 current pupils in the Luig catchment area looking to access mainstream schooling. To mothball the school it would not necessarily increase the pupil numbers but the local community feel that it would give them more time to attract families to the area in the short term.

### **7.4.1 Community Impact**

If pupils are to continue their education in Easdale Primary School the members of the community who attended the consultation day majority indicated that they would remain

concerned. If the mothballing of Luing was to continue the building would deteriorate further. There are already concerns about the condition of the building and there would be expenses to be met by the authority to bring it up to standard for use by the community. There is a risk that the building would eventually become unavailable, if not brought up to standard and used in the meantime by the community. This could have a detrimental effect on the sustainability of the Luing community.

#### **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 Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles via a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to public timetable. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour depending on ferry times and where children live on the Isle of Luing. The protocol for travel arrangements is detailed in Section 6.4.2 but have not been used by the existing family as they are viewed by them and some members of the community as being unsafe and putting children at risk. They also feel there is a lot of expectation for young children. The travel arrangements have been available since the school was mothballed. The existing family have chosen to take and pick up their children themselves, incurring personal costs and also dedicating time during the working day. The child travelling from Luing to Easdale Primary was in Primary One in May 2022 and indicated when speaking to the Education Officer as part of the Pre-consultation process that he was tired of travelling and would prefer to attend the local school.

Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Luing community. Children throughout Argyll and Bute make very similar journeys on school transportation, ferries and service buses every day. Continued mothballing of Luing Primary School would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal effect on staffing within Easdale Primary, the receiving primary school.

### **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.

There are recognised benefits of children working with and socialising with a peer group. Collaborative learning is an important aspect of the curriculum and with very low projected pupil rolls is not a benefit that would be achieved by reopening the school.

Both Luing and Easdale are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Outdoor learning is currently provided at Easdale Primary.

The co-location of the nursery and the primary classes at Easdale 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 in favour of continuing the mothballing of Luing Primary School; only for the short term to provide time for the community and Council to see what the future holds for the population of the Isle of Luing. The majority of attendees felt that after the next period of mothballing there would be a possibility of the school being able to re-open. 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.

The current annual cost (2021/22) to the Council of the mothballed Luing Primary School is **£10,323**. 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 **£119,432** over three years and **£151,053** over ten years. The current annual transport cost for taking pupils to Easdale Primary School is approximately **£18,427**.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles including a brief ferry crossing of a four minutes. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times and where children live on the Isle of Luing. Adverse weather can be a factor, however this is the same for other local schools and areas. The travel arrangements have been available to access since the school was mothballed, but families and many members of the community are dissatisfied with the travel arrangements offered by the Council and have chosen to make their own arrangements at a cost financially and commitment of time. Should the school reopen, there may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The positive and negative impact may balance.

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

On the basis that pupil numbers are not expected to increase significantly in the forthcoming years, and the building's mothballing was a temporary measure; the long term possibilities remain unknown. Although a significant portion of stakeholders in the pre-consultation exercise requested a continuation of the mothballing of Luing Primary School, this is not considered the most reasonable option to address the underlying reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being explored for the reasons as set out above.

## **8. OPTION C: CLOSE LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR EASDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT LUING CATCHMENT AREA**

### **8.1 Community Feedback**

The majority of people who attended the Options Appraisal meeting were in favour of reopening Luing Primary as a school. The Community Council have indicated that it would be their wish that the school opens with immediate effect. Some recognised the challenges there were in small numbers of children at the school. The Education Officer leading the Pre-consultation sought permission and spoke to the Primary 1 pupil who currently attends Easdale PS. The pupil has no experience of Luing Primary and while he likes his teacher and friends, he expressed his wish to attend Luing Primary. The following comments were made by stakeholders in relation to the option to close Luing Primary School:

*“The school is vital to the future of the island. My substantial experience in education makes me very concerned. Previously the school was under threat, we fought this and the roll has declined. However, there needs to be enough children to attend. There are potential pupils currently. We will campaign against closure as strongly as we did 10 years ago.”*

*“Absolutely not – once it’s gone it’s gone and cancels any future of Luing children being educated on their island.”*

*“My child has friends whose family would love to move over here but housing is hard. It would be wonderful to have them here.”*

*“The school was an important part of previous children’s lives here and it was an important part of our small community which supported it and enjoyed seeing the children there.”*

There were a few comments regarding parents being satisfied with the education offered at Easdale Primary and ELC:

*“Easdale ELC has 10 children – which is better socially and for educational purposes.”*

*“There is a really good community at Easdale PS for the children. My child likes going on the ferry.”*

There were also concerns raised regarding the cost of opening a school for small numbers of pupils and also the quality of what may be available to the children subsequently:

*“.....were the school used for education in future, there is the social question that, in the fullness of time, the very few children who might be schooled on the island will be deprived of contact with what would be their peers, were they in a larger school community, perhaps to the detriment of their development as members of society.”*

Many community members commented on the school premises and potential for this to be used by the community:

*“There must be other ways of using the school building – previously used as a café and for choirs to use.”*

*“Could the school be used as a Pre-school facility for early learning?”*

*“Could the building be used to link with UHI and Argyll College for learning? Adult learning? A study space in classes? This happens in*



*Mull, Campbeltown and on Islay. Folk studying on the island could use this facility – you have less distractions than at home.”*

## 8.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 4: Pupil Numbers and Occupancy

Luing Primary	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Approved Capacity	49	49	49	49	49	49
Roll Projection	2	3	4	5	6	6
Occupancy	4%	6%	8%	10%	12%	12%

If Luing Primary School were to be permanently closed, it is further intended that the catchment area for Easdale Primary School would be extended to subsume Luing’s current catchment area. The current occupancy rate for Easdale Primary School is 78.5%.

## 8.3 Financial Information

Currently there are no primary school age children using the Education Transport offered but one primary child is entitled to this; the family have chosen to not access this for reasons outlined in Section 7.4.2. An existing West Coast Motors bus means that there would be no additional annual transport costs should Luing Primary School be permanently discontinued. Families accessing Early Years provision at Easdale Primary School from the Isle of Luing are reimbursed **£1,482** annually. If Luing Primary School were to be closed it would generate savings of **£10,323** - the current annual cost of mothballing (2021/22) to the Council. This includes electricity, heating oil, ground maintenance, building maintenance and repair costs. The cost to bring the school building to an acceptable standard to re-open the school which is **£119,432** over three years and **£151,053** over ten years.

## 8.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report. There is no expectation for the pupil numbers at Luing Primary School to increase significantly without a change in the housing situation on the island over forthcoming years. The Community Trust have informed through the Pre-consultation process that they are working to address the concerns about affordable family housing on the island. Luing Primary

School is currently mothballed and from August 2022 there will be 2 pupils in the Luing catchment area looking to access mainstream schooling. If the school were to close many of the local community members who engaged with the pre-consultation process felt that it will discourage families from moving to the island and this then could have a significant impact on the future of the island overall.

#### 8.4.1 Community Impact

There was a significant view from community members at the preliminary consultation in May 2022 that did not support the closure of the school. Within Luing there is a village hall that the community use. All people who attended the consultation strongly stated the school building should be retained in a good state of repair. It was widely accepted by the community that school closure will have an adverse effect on a community and its longer term sustainability.

#### 8.4.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles, including a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to public timetable. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times, and where children live on the Isle of Luing. The protocol for travel arrangements has already been described in Section 6.4.2 but has not been used by the existing family as the arrangements are viewed by them and some members of the community as being unsafe and putting children at risk. They also feel there is a lot of expectation for young children. The travel arrangements have been available since the school was mothballed. The existing family has chosen to take and pick up their child themselves, incurring personal financial costs and also dedicating time during the working day. The child travelling from Luing to Easdale Primary was in Primary One in May 2022 and indicated as he spoke to the Education Officer as part of the pre-consultation process that he was tired of travelling and would prefer to attend the local school.

Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Luing community. Children throughout Argyll and Bute make very similar journeys on school transportation, ferries and service buses every day. Closure of Luing Primary School would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal

effect on staffing within Easdale Primary, the receiving primary school.

This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements in place for staff and pupils. However, the family with the current pupil attending Easdale Primary has expressed concern about the sustainability of the current situation and is dissatisfied. The community have also made their views known in terms of their concerns about what is available. The closure of Luing Primary School, in relation to travel would have a neutral effect on the environment. There is currently no additional annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Easdale Primary School and the use of the existing mini-bus, ferry and West Coast Motors service bus would not incur additional costs in the immediate future.

## **8.5 Educational Benefits**

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

Both Luing and Easdale are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a very remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Outdoor learning is currently provided at Easdale Primary. The pupils would then be transitioning to Oban High School with an established friendship group.

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

## **8.6 Summary**

The majority of people who attended the consultation were not in favour of closing Luing Primary as a school, and realigning the

catchment area of Easdale Primary School due to the remote nature of the school's location. They also commented on the potential for the school premises to be used as a community asset.

Current capacity for Easdale Primary School is 78.5%. There are currently two pupils in the Luing catchment area, there is no additional annual cost to transport pupils to Easdale Primary school and use of the existing mini bus, ferry and West Coast Motors service bus would not incur additional costs.

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles, including a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to public timetable. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times, and where children live on the Isle of Luing. The protocol for travel arrangements has already been described in Section 6.4.2 but has not been used by the existing family as the arrangements are viewed by them and some members of the community as being unsafe and putting children at risk. They also feel there is a lot of expectation for young children. The travel arrangements have been available since the school was mothballed. The existing family has chosen to take and pick up their child themselves, incurring personal financial costs and also dedicating time during the working day. The family with the current pupil attending Easdale Primary has expressed concern about the sustainability of the current situation and is dissatisfied. The child travelling from Luing to Easdale Primary was in Primary One in May 2022 and indicated as he spoke to the Education Officer as part of the pre-consultation process that he was tired of travelling and would prefer to attend the local school.

The closure of Luing Primary School would have a neutral effect on the environment in terms of travelling arrangements. Easdale Primary currently accommodates pupils from Luing School and pupil numbers are not projected to increase significantly. Easdale Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers.

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

In summary of all the aspects outlined above, this has been identified as the most reasonable option for further consideration of the future of Luing Primary School.

## 11. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Option	Option Description	Outcome
A	Re-open Luing Primary School with the existing catchment area	A requested option, as identified by the community.
B	Continued Mothballing of Luing Primary School with the pupils zoned to Easdale Primary School	A requested option, as identified by the community.
C	Close Luing Primary School and realign the catchment area of Easdale Primary School to include the current catchment area for Luing Primary School.	The most reasonable option to address the underlying reasons for considering the future of Luing Primary

### DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION C: CLOSE LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR EASDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT LUING CATCHMENT AREA

#### 12.1 Pupil Projections

Luing Primary	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Approved Capacity	49	49	49	49	49	49
Roll Projection	2	3	4	5	6	6

#### 12.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Easdale Primary School, which is the school Luing pupils have been attending since December 2020.

##### 12.2.1 Learning and Teaching

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through

their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

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

In Easdale Primary School children may be taught in classes composed of children from more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children of varying sizes and composition, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school.

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

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Easdale 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. Easdale Primary School is part of the Oban, Lorne and the Isles (OLI) Schools Cluster, which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work

across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within Easdale Primary School are able to support and challenge each other on a daily basis. The whole staff are able to bring a range of talents and skills to benefit outcomes for learners.

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

Both Easdale and Luing are very remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification).

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

#### 12.2.2

##### Outcomes

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

In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children

are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. Easdale continues to develop within the PATHS program supporting positive behaviours and relationship within the school. A larger staff, parent body and partner group by nature increases the breadth of talent and interest that may be available to share within a school setting. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

12.2.3 *Experiences - Broadening the Range of Opportunities*

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

12.2.4 *Environment for Learning*

Easdale Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated on the Isle of Seil. The entire building is well maintained and along with the surrounding scenery provides attractive accommodation for the primary school. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

### **12.3 Assessment of Rural Factors**

The reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being reviewed are stated at Section 2 of this report. There is currently no expectation for the pupil numbers to increase significantly at the School. Luing Primary School is mothballed with two pupils accessing education at Easdale Primary from August 2022. Having considered all the alternatives above, the option to close Luing Primary School and realign the catchment area for Easdale Primary School to subsume the former Luing Primary School catchment area is considered the most reasonable means to address the reasons identified at Section 2 of this report.

12.3.1 *Community Impact*

The majority of the community who attended the consultation day in May 2022 did not support the closure of the school. There was a strong feeling that the sustainability of the Isle of Luing would be threatened



without a school of its own. There was also the benefits of island life that are enhanced by having a school on the island that community members valued and children have previously enjoyed. All people who attended the pre-consultation meeting strongly stated the school building should be also used by the community and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises. The difficulties in affordable housing on the island are a factor and the Community Trust are working to address these for the long term future. There is a history of school rolls fluctuating over a long period of time on the island.

### 12.3.2 Travel Arrangements

The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luig Primary to Easdale Primary is 6 miles, including a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to public timetable. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, this could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times, and where children live on the Isle of Luig. The protocol for travel arrangements has already been described in Section 6.4.2 but has not been used by the existing family as the arrangements are viewed by them and some members of the community as being unsafe and putting children at risk. They also feel there is a lot of expectation for young children. The travel arrangements have been available since the school was mothballed. The existing family has chosen to take and pick up their child themselves, incurring personal financial costs and also dedicating time during the working day. The child travelling from Luig to Easdale Primary was in Primary One in May 2022 and indicated as he spoke to the Education Officer as part of the pre-consultation process that he was tired of travelling and would prefer to attend the local school.

Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Luig community. Children throughout Argyll and Bute make very similar journeys on school transportation, ferries and service buses every day. Closure of Luig Primary School would have no effect on current staff travel. The small number of children has minimal effect on staffing within Easdale Primary, the receiving primary school.

This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements in place for staff and pupils. However, the family with the current pupil attending Easdale Primary has expressed concern about the sustainability of the current situation and is dissatisfied. The community have also made their views known in terms of their concerns about what is available. The closure of Luing Primary School, in relation to travel would have a neutral effect on the environment. There is currently no additional annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Easdale Primary School and the use of the existing mini-bus, ferry and West Coast Motors service bus would not incur additional costs in the immediate future.

#### **12.4 Financial Impact**

The main elements included within a school budget are Teacher employment costs (ie basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the Primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the Teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value. As a result of the authority's policy for no Teacher redundancies it is presumed that the staff are deployed elsewhere within the authority and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget, unless the member of staff is filling a vacancy. 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 Luing Primary School are a total of **£10,323**.

Annual savings generated through closing Luing Primary School would be **£10,323**.

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

### **12.5 Environmental Impact**

From August 2022, two pupils will travel to Easdale Primary. However this option would have a neutral environmental impact on the current position and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils. Eventually all pupils will attend Easdale Primary School. Travel is an accepted aspect of rural life.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

Three alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of Luing 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.

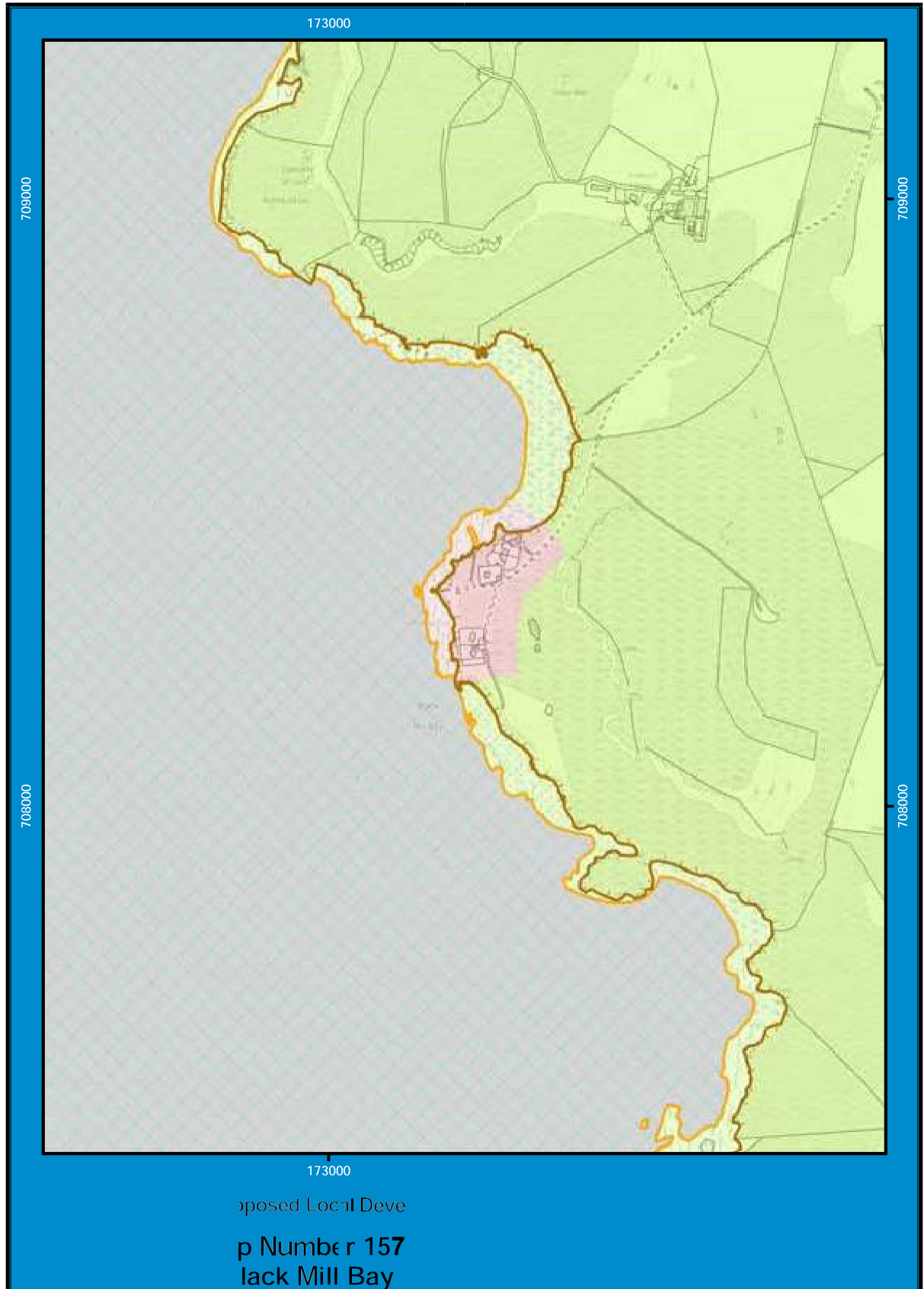
After consideration of the preliminary requirements, as set out in the Act, and the options, and having regard to the specific reasons identified at Section 2 of this report, closing Luing Primary School and realigning the catchment area of Easdale Primary School to include the current catchment area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

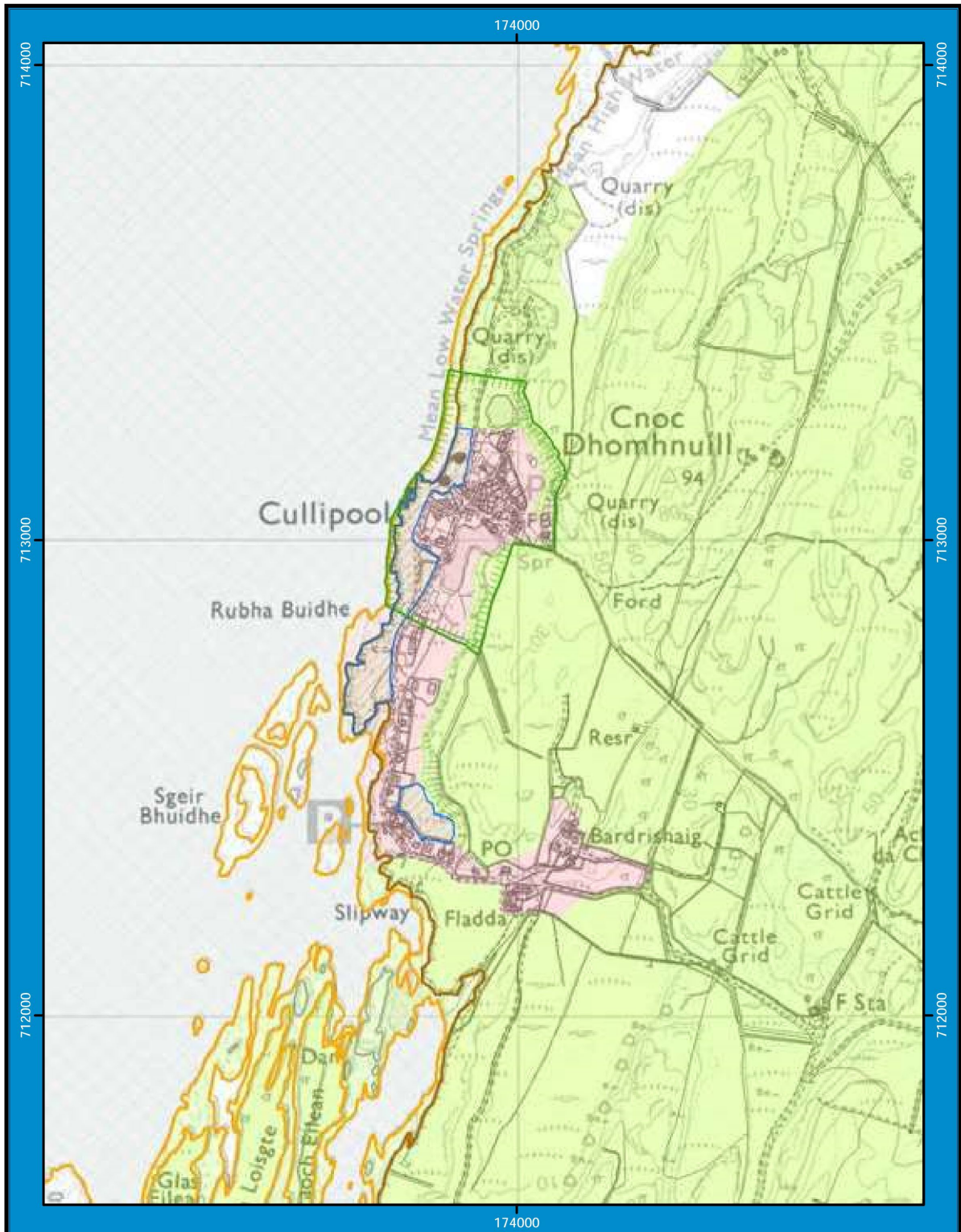
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- 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 Plans for Luing Area





Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2

**Map Number 172**  
**Cullipool**





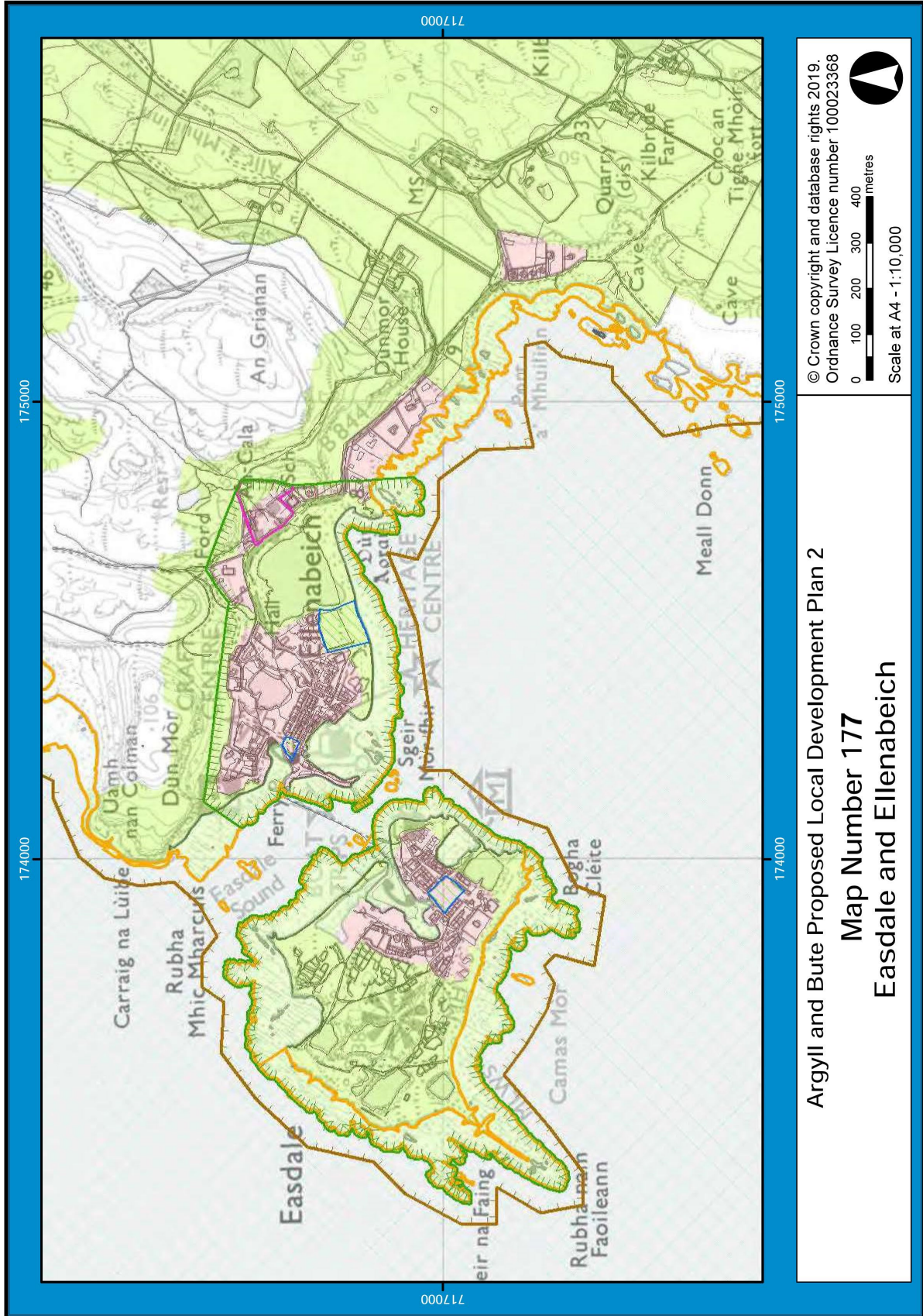
Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2

### Map Number 216 Toberonochy

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Ordnance Survey Licence number 100023368  
0 100 200 300 metres  
Scale at A4 - 1:7,500



## Appendix 2 Local Development Plans for Easdale Area



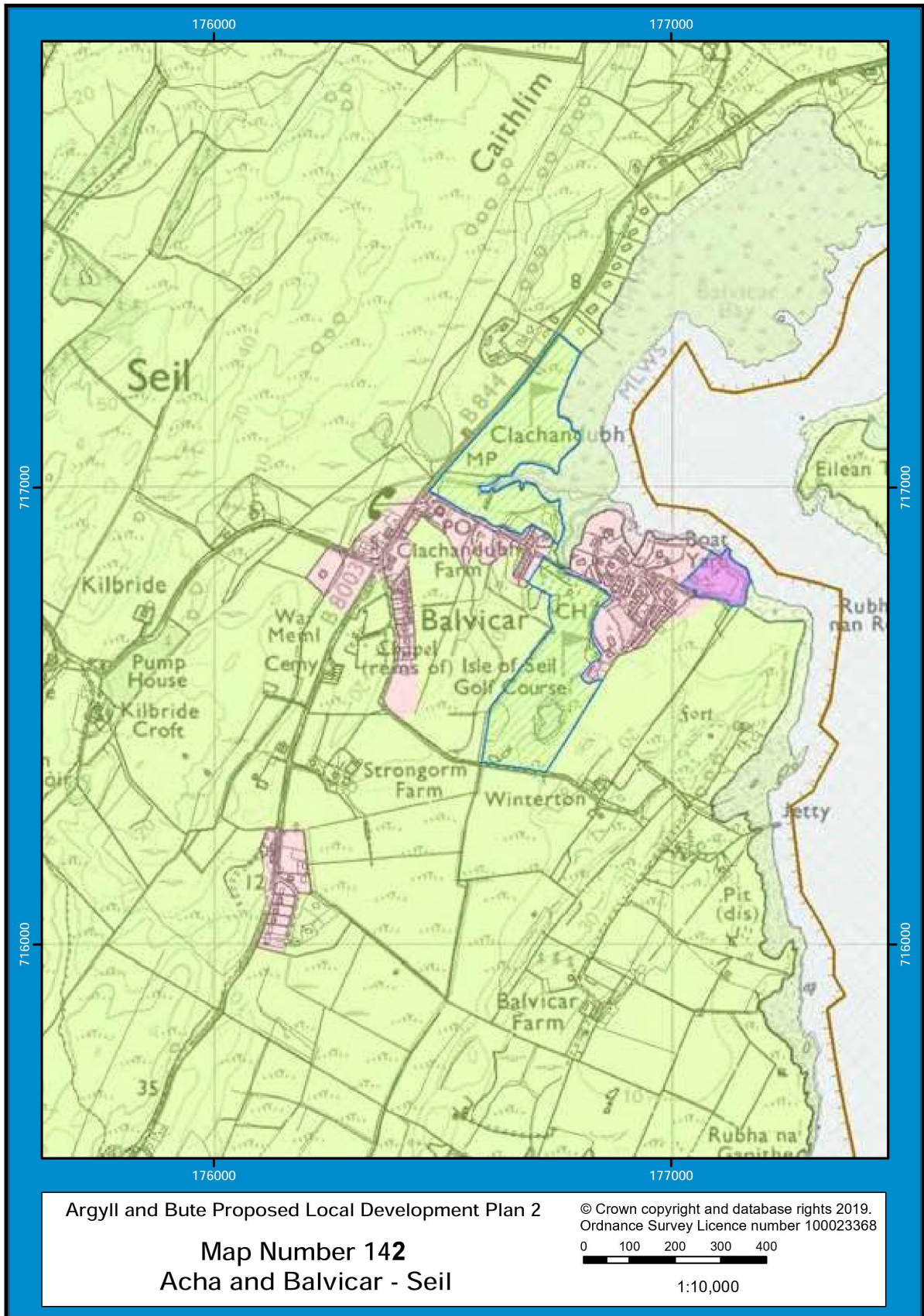
Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2  
**Map Number 177**  
**Easdale and Ellenabeich**

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0 100 200 300 400 metres

Scale at A4 - 1:10,000





**Appendix 3**



# 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





## Appendix 6

### Luing – Community Consultation Day

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022

#### **How has the mothballing of the school affected you, your family and the community?**

x18 Keep mothballed for the time being until we are ready for it as a school, but ensure that the community can use it safely ie toddlers group and others as appropriate in the meantime.

x12 The building needs to be used sooner rather than later as it will deteriorate and I am sure others would like to use it.

x11 Continue to mothball for a while longer, with possible uses for other purposes eg playgroup. Gives the community time and can attract families to the area.

x11 Talk of the school being used by the community – we need to know how to go about that – obviously there has not been a lot of opportunity for this during the pandemic, but in the last six months, it could perhaps have been used.

x9 Feel need to continue with mothballing at current time – it is what is right for now, re-assess in 2-3 years time if things are looking more prosperous.

x9 negatively – can't attract families here to work (and no accommodation) – need the school.

x7 If the school is not viable, people will not come to the island.

x7 Do want it to be mothballed if it inhibits closing – need a bit more time to see what is happening.

x6 Extend mothballing – give us a chance to recover from COVID – everyone really pulled together and stuck together and we are adjusting to everything.

x13 We were not told as a Community Council about the school being able to be used by the community or details about the mothballing

x10 Why did the community not know they could use the school while it was being mothballed?

x8 Didn't know the school could be used whilst mothballed.

x6 Sad to see the school closed – this has a negative impact on the community – moral, future thinking etc.

x5 Holly Tea was a massive community event as was the school sports day and Burns celebrations.

x3 Lack of community involved in children of Luing's education – no involvement in Easdale School, sadly.

x3 Folk have changed the way they work from home. People are still reeling from COVID, these two years should not count. Beginning to think about the future. Folk are adjusting and need to look at and assess. I think we will get another influx on Luig.

x2 There was no consultation for mothballing.

x2 Achaleven PS – an example of a school that mothballed and communities change and needs of the population being met.

I was part of the group that helped to protect the school previously – I feel it is my duty as a resident to continue to do this. We need to continue to mothball the school.

There is a lack of awareness of what has happened.

Church are also concerned about this and the groups that support activities for all ages.

### ***Mothballing and transport arrangements***

x16 Current transportation for the children at the moment is not safe – no seatbelts on the buses, it is a public service. Unattended? Council not taking into account or taking concerns seriously.

x15 Transport arrangements for young children needs looking at. I would not want a member of my family to be travelling such a long way, unaccompanied.

x14 Transport arrangements not acceptable – why is the mini bus not being used?

x12 Feel transport – safety and use of mini bus – reinstated would be sought after.

x11 Current transport situation – need door to door service – the previous school minibus should take them.

x3 There are 3 stages for transporting young children to the school currently. There is the mini-bus – to ferry – to service bus.

x3 Thinking about transport – policy? This needs looking at – for young children – it is a lot to expect.

The bus times for transporting children are ‘peak’ times. Also, the time it takes out of the day for children and families to transport children.

These are obstacles for children – what if they are not in school?

What happens if bad weather happens and children are stranded?

One parent contacted the Officer leading the Pre-consultation and raised the following issues in relation to travel for his child. He wanted to ensure that the consultation recognised his dissatisfaction:

- The travel costs he has incurred in fuel, wear and tear on his car, costs in ferry travel as he is extremely unhappy that the arrangements in place for his child to travel puts his child at risk on a number of levels;
- The time taken as a family to transport his child;
- Travel times – the waiting time involved for the ferry;
- The arrangements suggested are unsafe, there are also no seatbelts on the buses the children are travelling in;
- Members of the public are allowed to sit with unaccompanied children that could be as young as 4 years, 6 months;
- The cancellation of ferries;
- The sustainability of the arrangements for them as a family and being able to ensure their child attends school.

### **Views on re-opening the school (with current catchment)**

x17 A key point is that the Community Trust have been working hard to bring more families to the area but this can take few years. We need the authority to support us. This is a big thing for us.

x16 It's more than just a school.

x16 Smaller schools really support children of different ages P1-P7 looking out for each other – all generations benefit from the school opening.

x14 If no there is no school on the island, it is off putting to families considering moving to the area.

x12 As a former pupil, I understand the population fluctuates – housing is an issue – the Community Trust are pursuing this and it could create affordable housing which could support the school.

x12 In a wee community like this – the school was at the centre – the community were able to support the children – this is harder when the school is not on the island.

x10 When the ferry is involved, it does change everything – adds time to the commute.

x10 As a community we want to support the local parents.

x10 The prospect of a school gives hope to families moving to the island – there will be education locally for their children.

x7 A lot of families on Seil and Kilmelford would move back to Luing but housing that is affordable is a massive issue.

x6 Escort offered for two days? Unsafe.

x6 If you want to get more children on the island, it is not made very easy.

x5 A community needs to thrive – we need facilities to attract families.

x4 school is an integral part of the community.

x3 If no school is available, transport is not suitable – children on their own?  
Bus?

x3 If they have a joint HT, there would be collaboration between both schools – there could be advantages.

x2 There are 2 issues – main one is that it is important to have a school on the island. Second, is that it may be that a village primary in which the numbers are low does not suit every child.

x2 Things can fluctuate and numbers can go up and down. A permanent closure would not be good – can we illustrate that there is potential for numbers to go up? Even with small numbers, it will attract more families to the area.

x2 Upset at lack of consultation over mothballing 2020 and sudden short notice about this latest Pre-consultation.

As parents, we move here 1 year ago and I felt I had no option but to send my child to Easdale PS. I am not willing to put my child on a public service bus.

The council need to understand that this is a historical cycle on the Isle of Luing, when I attended the school, there were 6 children, 7 children when my children went but then when my youngest son left there was around 30 children – the roll goes up and down and the school has remained open. This is nothing new in the last 55 years. We would ask that it continues to remain open as we believe the numbers will go up.

We are going through a difficult patch – we need to be very careful about preserving the community – if we do not have a school we will not attract families to the area.

Can understand why parents are not keen to send children to a school with low numbers in terms of education, but it only takes 1-2 families to move into the area for numbers to go up.

I believe there are 25 new residents on Luing.

A lot of young families on the island. This is really hard.

The school was an important part of previous children's lives here and it was an important part of our small community which supported it and seeing the children there.

### **Views on closing the school**

x15 The school is vital to the future of the island. My substantial experience in education makes me very concerned. Previously the school was under threat,

we fought this and the roll has declined. However, there needs to be enough children to attend. There are potential pupils currently. We will campaign against closure as strongly as we did 10 years ago.

x9 Absolutely not – once it's gone it's gone and cancels any future of Luing children being educated on their island.

x8 Would be a shame for children not to have school on the island. Special community and school should be safe guarded.

x8 Having a school on Luing attracts more families and enterprises to the area, which is what we need. The proposals would be to campaign as before when the school was under threat, which I am sure people will do.

x7 I would like my child to be educated with more numbers.

x3 A great pity if the school were to close.

x2 My child has friends whose family would love to move over here but housing is hard. It would be wonderful to have them here.

Easdale ELC has 10 children – which is better socially and for educational purposes.

There is a really good community at Easdale PS for the children. My child likes going on the ferry.

I was part of the group that helped to protect the school previously – I feel it is my duty as a resident to continue to do this. We need to continue to mothball the school.

If the school closed, it would be the death nell for the community.

Need to bring some life to the area. Vibrancy. It would be tragic if it were to close.

The islands part of A & B make up and identity.

### **The future of the building**

x5 Empty buildings are bad – use it for outwards bound activities with the High School.

x5 Could the school not now be our nursery?

x3 Could the building be used to link with UHI and Argyll College for learning? Adult learning? A study space in classes? This happens in Mull, Campbeltown and on Islay. Folk studying on the island could use this facility – you have less distractions than at home.

x4 Used as a Pre-school facility for early learning?

There must be other ways of using the school building – previously used as a café and for choirs to use.



Opportunity for others to use for other things – client groups would be interested.

Need to use the school for evening classes or ‘back up’ school if something happens to Easdale PS in the winter.

### **General comments**

x8 Communication? Why has it taken so long from the decision in terms of the process, Dec 2020 until now?

x8 Planning system does not always support affordable housing.

x2 Cost of living here is high. Transporting children from Luing to Easdale, if you chose to do that yourself is an added cost. There are 6 houses being built currently.

Fibre broadband to all houses planned end of 2023

Feeling that we are at a ‘Pre-consultation’ which will inform decisions about the future of the school very quickly – and it is about closure or opening the school formally.

Communication prior to this meeting today did not provide us with an understanding of what was happening.

The community knows what the potential is.

Living on an island, it is already remote.

It is a lifestyle choice.

Peoples working habits will change post COVID. People do move.

Our community Trust are looking into affordable housing and jobs and business. Lots happening within the island, to generate jobs. Opportunities for ACA and A&B owned housing.

“Housing is an issue on the island. Easdale PS love having Luing children with them – it is brilliant as they get to be with their peers. While it would be nice to have a school on your doorstep, being with children of different ages is important.”

“It would be lovely to see the school open however, children’s welfare is not good if there are not many children there and they cannot reach their milestones. It is important that they mix with children of their own age and other ages.”

“Financially, it is hard. The staffing, support for pupils and teaching commitments need to be considered as all of this would be hard to find.”

### **The school at the heart of the community**

x12 Luing PS was at the heart of the community and the whole community supported the children – local community raised amazing amounts of cash

and it gave the community a chance to get together – Christmas and Halloween parties – everyone was together.

