



**Argyll and Bute Council: Education**

## **CONSULTATION REPORT**

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

**February 2024**

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in regard to a proposal in terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended.

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## **1. Summary of the Proposal**

- 1.1 It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.
- 1.2 Primary aged pupils residing in Luing Primary School's catchment area will generally continue to receive their education at Easdale Primary School.
- 1.3 The delineated catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Luing Primary School.

## **2. Reasons for the Proposal**

- 2.1 The above is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:
  - Luing Primary School has been mothballed for 3 years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
  - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time the proposal was issued as a basis for statutory consultation (June 2023) there were 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
  - The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064. Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

## **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 This is a Consultation Report prepared in compliance with the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended (the 2010 Act) on the above proposal.
- 3.2 The purpose of this Report is to:
  - Provide a record of the total number of written responses made during the statutory consultation period;
  - Provide a summary of the written responses;
  - Provide a summary of oral representations made at the public meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1:30 pm;
  - Provide a statement of the Council's response to those written and oral representations;
  - Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of the Council's response to this report;

- State how the Council reviewed the proposal following the representations received during the statutory consultation period and receipt of the report from Education Scotland;
- Provide details of any omission from, or inaccuracy in, the Proposal Paper and state how the Council acted upon those;
- State how the Council has complied with Sections 11A to 13 of the 2010 Act when reviewing the proposal; and
- Explain the opportunity that may arise to make representations to the Scottish Ministers in connection with Section 15(4) of the 2010 Act.

## 4. Background

4.1 On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Argyll and Bute Council's Community Services Committee approved the mothballing of Luing Primary School. As no pupils have been attending Luing Primary School since August 2020, it was recommended that the School was mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022. The Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School.

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

4.2 The Community Services Committee received a report on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 providing details of the Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School; carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act, as amended. The Committee agreed to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and requested that officers formulate a draft closure proposal for consideration at the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 which, if approved, would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the 2010 Act.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=14784&Ver=4>

4.3 At the Community Services Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Members considered and agreed to adopt the draft proposal as a "relevant proposal" that would proceed to a statutory consultation under the 2010 Act. This statutory consultation opened on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and ended on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. A public meeting was also held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1:30pm in Luing Primary School.

[Community Services Committee on Thursday, 12 March 2020, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=14784&Ver=4)

4.4 Full details of the proposal, reasons for the proposal, the reasonable alternatives to the proposal that were identified, an assessment of the proposal



and each of the reasonable alternatives, and an assessment of the educational benefits to the proposal and each of the alternatives are set out in the Proposal Paper, which is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **5. Equality and Socio-Economic Impact**

- 5.1 The Council as a public authority has a duty under the *Equality Act 2010*, the *Public Sector Equality Duty 2011*, the *Fairer Scotland Duty* and the *Islands (Scotland) Act 2018* to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs). The full EQSEIA in respect to the proposal to close Luing Primary School is attached as **Appendix 2**. As Luing is an island community, an Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) has also been carried out, this is attached in **Appendix 7**.
- 5.2 The EQSEIA and ICIA identify several negative impacts. These are outlined below.
- 5.3 The EQSEIA recognises that closure could impact negatively on the island population by dissuading families with school age children from moving to the island, this in turn could impact on the economy of the island and overall sustainability.
- 5.4 The ICIA takes cognisance of the fact that community groups are opposed to the closure of Luing Primary School. This highlights a number of issues including transport infrastructure inadequacies and the impact on the sustainability and economic development of the island. Those groups have proposed an additional period of mothballing in order to allow them to progress work underway to attract new families and businesses to the island. The groups believe that these investments and developments would be at risk without a primary school on the island, as they rely on attracting enough young people to the island and who are key to the island's sustainability and economic prosperity. Some of the plans that the Community Trust is formulating, including the development of affordable homes on the island to cater for young people and families, have yet to come to fruition and there is insufficient evidence at present time to indicate that significant investment in the island will be secured in the foreseeable future in order to attract new families who will require a functioning local school. The groups believe that closure of Luing Primary School is likely to discourage young families from moving to/living on Luing. The groups highlighted that parents are extremely dissatisfied with the current travelling arrangements for primary school pupils to Easdale Primary School for reasons of inflexibility of timetables, cost, and lack of a "door-to-door service".

## 6. The Consultation Process

6.1 Following the Council's decision of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023, where it agreed to adopt the proposal as a "relevant proposal" in terms of the 2010 Act and issue it as a basis for consultation, the Proposal Paper was made available on the Argyll and Bute Council [website](#).

6.2 A summary of that document was also provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of the Proposal Paper
- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute local Ward Councillors
- Luing Community Council
- Community Planning Partnership
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

6.3 Hard copies of the Proposal Paper were also made available from the following locations:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Easdale Primary School, Easdale by Oban, PA34 4RF
- Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4TB
- Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX

6.4 It was possible for the Proposal Paper to be made available to stakeholders in alternative languages, formats, or alongside the services of an interpreter. No requests to this effect were received by the Council during the consultation period.

- 6.5 Copies of the Proposal summary were emailed to notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees (as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act) of the proposal and invited them to make representations as part of the consultation process.
- 6.6 The consultation ran from 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 until the close of business on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – a continuous period in accordance with the requirements of Section 6(4) of the 2010 Act.
- 6.7 A public meeting was held at Luing Primary School on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1:30pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate was welcome to do so. Advance written notice of this meeting was given to all the “relevant consultees” in terms of the 2010 Act. The meeting was convened by the Education Authority who presented reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There was an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made.
- 6.8 This Consultation Report is the Council’s response to the issues raised regarding the proposal during the consultation period. It will be published on the Council’s website for a period of no less than 3 weeks prior to final consideration of the proposal by the Council’s Community Services Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

## **7. Pupil Engagement**

- 7.1 The proposal to close Luing Primary School could have an impact on pupils, parents and the community. Pupils’ views are a significant part of the consultation process.
- 7.2 A focus group, which included two children who currently reside on Luing, was held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 within Easdale Primary School. No pupils who currently attend Easdale Primary School previously attended Luing Primary School.
- 7.3 Primary pupils at Easdale Primary School, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, were provided with a PowerPoint that was presented by the Headteacher and were offered an opportunity to give their views and have these recorded as part of the consultation process.
- 7.4 The pupils were given information regarding the Council’s proposal and asked for their thoughts and ideas through a series of questions.
- 7.5 Pupils in the focus group said:

**What do you think the positive things would be if Luing PS closed?**

*‘I don’t know’*

*'I would still see my friends from Easdale if Luing was closed'*

**Do you have any concerns about Luing Primary closing?**

*'It is not a good idea'*

*'It is a nice school'*

*'I would be worried when it closes'*

**What might other people be concerned about if Luing Primary School closed?**

*'I don't know'*

**If Luing PS closed is there anything that would help make this easier for pupils from Luing going to another school?**

*'I don't know'*

**Do you have any other comments about this that you want to add?**

*'No'*

*'I would miss my friends from Easdale Island'*

7.6 The pupil focus group response is attached as **Appendix 6**.

## **8. Responses to the Consultation Exercise**

- 8.1 There were 41 written responses received during the consultation period which were emailed to [argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk). The responses can be viewed in full at **Appendix 3**. Oral responses to the proposal were gathered at the public meeting held at Luing Primary School on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Twenty five representatives from the local community attended along with officers from the Education Authority and two councillors. Also in attendance and Chairing the meeting was Education Policy Lead, Councillor Yvonne McNeilly. Minutes of the public meeting are attached as **Appendix 4**. The 25 members of the public present intimated that they were strongly opposed to the proposal and were in favour of a sustained period of mothballing instead.
- 8.2 41 written responses were received from community members, the community Council and Community Trust, two MSPs and 1 elected member. Six of those respondents requested that their response to be considered

confidential, and did not give permission for their responses to be published. Therefore, these responses are not included in **Appendix 3**, but can be summarised as follows: Four of these responses were in agreement with the proposal for the following reasons:

- Pupils who currently travel to Easdale are safe and well looked after during journeys
- Children have opportunities for a wider range of experiences which can be more easily facilitated at Easdale due to greater staff and pupil numbers
- Children have a peer group within Easdale Primary School and more opportunities for social interaction
- Recruitment in rural schools continues to be a significant challenge.
- Easdale Primary School building is in a better state of repair.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are easier to facilitate at Easdale.
- Funding would be better directed towards Easdale/other schools.
- Suggestion that Kilninver, Luing and Easdale could be amalgamated to form one larger school.

8.3 Two of those responses disagreed with the proposal, citing the following reasons:

- Transport arrangements (from Luing to Easdale Primary School) are insufficient, inconvenient and costly.
- Transport arrangements impact on children’s ability to engage in after school clubs.
- Impact on the sustainability of the island community.
- Impact on families with school age children residing on Luing.
- The school should be mothballed for an extended period of time.

<b>RESPONDENT GROUP</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>
Community Members	35	5	30
Community Council / Community Trust	3	0	3
MSP	2	0	2
Elected Member	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>

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

- Views were expressed that Luing Primary School should continue to be mothballed for a sustained period of time.
- Views that the community were not sufficiently consulted in the preliminary stages of the process.
- Impact that school closure would have on attracting new families to the island - therefore significantly impacting community sustainability
- Impact on the economic prosperity of the island should the school close
- Concerns around infrastructure and transport links
- Safety concerns around children travelling to/from Easdale Primary from Luing.
- Views that Luing Primary School should be closed and resources diverted.

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

## **9. Education Authority Response to Written/Oral Representations**

9.1 Questions raised through the consultation process fell into 3 main themes: Transport/Infrastructure; consideration of the wider economic and community impact of school closure; and wider educational benefits.

### **9.2 Transport/Infrastructure**

**Issues raised:** The current Cuan ferry timetable is insufficient with an infrequent service and leading to considerable time that it takes for parents/children to get between Luing and Easdale. A number of respondents raised concerns over the cost of the existing service and concerns around pupil safety due to the lack of a door-to-door bus pick up service. Respondents also raised concerns around increased safety risk or service disruption due to adverse weather. A number of respondents were concerned about the use of a public bus by young children for the journey between North Cuan and Easdale, as the bus is used by the public as well as school pupils. Parents/carers are requesting that extra measures are taken in order to safeguard their children.

**Response:** The Education Service are continuing to work closely with colleagues in the Transport team (Roads and Infrastructure Services) in order to explore options for possible enhancements to the current service. The Council are assured that the current travelling arrangements where pupils are picked up from home by the Council's minibus and driver, taken over on the ferry and transferred from the minibus to the public/service bus at North Cuan, for onward travel to Easdale Primary School for school pupils are safe and in

compliance with the law. However, the Education Service, in partnership with colleagues from Transport, are in the process of exploring further options in order to reassure parents/carers about the safety of their children – in particular, the possibility of a “door-to-door” service is being examined.

### 9.3 Impact on economy of the island/community sustainability

**Issues raised:** A large number of responses raised the issue that the closure of Luing Primary School will have a significant impact on the economic viability and community sustainability of Luing. They felt that closure of the school will be detrimental in that it will discourage new families with school age children from moving to the island. If there is not a demand for homes on the island then this will result in fewer or no new housing being developed. They also believed that this could lead to fewer young people wishing to remain on the island - again impacting on the local economy and community sustainability. Several responses highlighted that work was underway and at an early stage in terms of boosting the economy of the island, such as the re-opening of the slate quarry.

**Response:** The Council is committed to exploring opportunities to sustain and further enhance the local economies of all of its rural and island communities. Cognisance has to be given to the fact that there are a large number of rural and island communities across Argyll and Bute. The fact that Luing Primary school is currently mothballed is not desirable or attractive to families considering moving into an area – meaning that the low school roll is a product of circumstance rather than as a result of actions taken by the Education Service. As identified in the proposal paper, the School roll is zero, and not currently projected to rise to a level which will make the School viable for re-opening in the near future. The future of the School therefore necessarily needs to be considered following this consultation exercise.

### 9.4 Wider educational benefits

**Issues raised:** Due to the current ferry arrangements and timetables, it is not possible for children to attend after school extra-curricular activities in Easdale Primary School. It is also not possible for parents/carers to attend evening events or some weekend events depending on timing. Due to this, some respondents felt that parents/carers and children residing on Luing did not feel fully included in the wider community of Easdale Primary School. However, some respondents felt that the educational benefits outweighed the negative aspects, as it was beneficial for children to mix with a larger group of peers within Easdale Primary School and that Easdale Primary is able to offer a broad and varied curriculum.

**Response:** The Education Service acknowledges the points raised at the public meeting and through written responses regarding timings of extra-

curricular and wider school events. Following the public meeting, representatives from the Education Service met with Easdale Primary School staff to discuss these concerns. Easdale Primary School are committed to revising the provision of extra-curricular activities and school events in order to ensure that these are more accessible to children/parents and carers residing on Luing. It was recognised that children residing on Luing and attending Easdale are fully included in the Easdale school community and therefore it is important that every effort is made to ensure that the children and their families are able to attend school events. The Education Service will continue to monitor this situation and will offer support where required. The Education Service agrees that the educational benefits of pupils from Luing attending Easdale Primary School outweigh the negative impacts, as it is beneficial for children to mix with a larger group of peers within Easdale Primary School, and that Easdale Primary is able to offer a broad and varied curriculum.

## 10. Education Scotland Report

- 10.1 In accordance with Section 8(2) of the *Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010*, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.
- 10.2 In preparing their report, Education Scotland considered all relevant documentation in relation to the proposal. They also visited Easdale Primary School to seek the views of relevant consultees.
- 10.3 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full at **Appendix 5**.
- 10.4 This report broadly supports the proposal and is summarised below:
  - a) Overall, HM Inspectors consider that the council has made a reasonable educational case for the closure of Luing Primary School. Children are settled at Easdale Primary School and enjoy learning alongside their peers. This includes social benefits and access to wider opportunities at Easdale Primary School.
  - b) Education Scotland found that stakeholders were not in agreement with the proposal.
  - c) Education Scotland notes that should the Council decide to implement the closure proposal, it should continue to engage with the Luing community to explore options for the future use of the school building. However, as this is a rural, island school there are wider considerations that need to be taken into account, including the impact a closure may have on island sustainability.



- d) As the planned Island Community Impact Assessment is developed it will be important for the council to engage further with the community organisations on Luing. This will provide an opportunity to explore ways to mitigate any potential negative impacts that could result if this proposal to permanently close the school is agreed.
- e) Improving travel arrangements to better support children to attend school and take part in out of school activities may help to address some stakeholder concerns. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies or omissions notified to it.

## **11. Education Authority Response to Education Scotland Report**

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

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

- a) **Overall, HM Inspectors consider that the council has made a reasonable educational case for the closure of Luing Primary School. Children are settled at Easdale Primary School and enjoy learning alongside their peers. This includes social benefits and access to wider opportunities at Easdale Primary School.**

11.3 The Council agrees that the educational benefits for current and future pupils attending Easdale Primary School are clear. Children benefit from enhanced transitions between nursery and Primary 1 and also Primary 7 to S1. Children also benefit from opportunities to work with a wider number of peers and children at other stages, helping to develop social skills. The access to a range of extra-curricular activities is also a benefit that children experience at Easdale Primary School. There are also educational benefits that result from school staff being a part of a larger staff group which enhances opportunities for professional learning and moderation of children's work. Stakeholders have identified the strength of the educational benefits and opportunities for pupils at Easdale Primary School. The Education Service are also currently exploring options to improve poor internet connectivity within Easdale Primary.

- b) **Education Scotland found that stakeholders were not in agreement with the proposal.**

11.4 All attendees at the public meeting, and 36 out of the 41 written responses to the consultation, were opposed to the proposal.

***c) Education Scotland suggests that should the Council decide to implement the closure proposal, it should continue to engage with the Luìng community to explore options for the future use of the school building.***

11.5 Argyll and Bute Council is open to engaging with the local community, on any plans to develop a sustainable community facility via a possible community asset transfer. However, it is recognised, aided by consultation feedback, that there are already several well-established community hubs on the island.

***d) As the planned Island Community Impact Assessment is developed it will be important for the council to engage further with the community organisations on Luìng***

11.6 The Island Community Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal can be found at **Appendix 7**.

***e) Improving travel arrangements to better support children to attend school and take part in out of school activities may help to address some stakeholder concerns.***

11.7 The Education Service are in communication with colleagues in the Transport team in order to explore options for future school transport provision. This work is ongoing and one of the options being assessed is the provision of a door-to-door transport service for pupils living on Luìng attending Easdale Primary School. Members of the Education Service also met with the Headteacher at Easdale Primary School in order to discuss extra-curricular opportunities/equity of access/school events being accessible to parents/carers on Luìng. Those discussions are also being advanced.

## **12. Rural Schools – Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

12.1 After the Education Authority received Education Scotland's report, officers carried out a further review of the proposal following the close of the consultation, having regard (in particular) to:

- Written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the Consultation period;
- Views of Easdale Primary pupils as gathered during the consultation exercise,
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting, and
- Education Scotland's report.

12.2 The feedback from the Consultation was considered by officers. Data and factual information was checked where required and advice sought from other

Council services where necessary. This ensured that the Council met the requirements to review the proposal under Sections 9(1) and 13(5) of the 2010 Act.

- 12.3 One of the underlying reasons for the Proposal thus far has been, in common with many other Scottish local authorities, the challenge of teacher recruitment in Argyll and Bute. At the time the Proposal was issued as a basis for statutory consultation (June 2023) there were 8.59fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute. Given that this is a fluid figure, it has been reviewed and as of the end of January 2024 it is now 10.84fte. This update shows that teacher recruitment continues to be a challenge for the Council and an important factor to consider in relation to the ability to staff all of our schools.
- 12.4 In addition, officers carried out a further assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives to it as set out in the Proposal Paper, having particular regard to the preliminary requirements for rural school closures as set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act. As mentioned previously, no further reasonable alternatives to the proposal were identified or advanced by officers or stakeholders during or following the consultation exercise.
- 12.5 Option A: Re-Opening Luing Primary School

12.5.1 If the school reopened in August 2024, the pupil roll is projected to be a maximum of four. However, this would be dependent on pupils who are already attending Easdale Primary School transferring to Luing.

12.5.2 It would be anticipated by the community that the school and children would be supported by the previous Joint Shared Head Teacher, with Easdale Primary School. A Principal Teacher would need to be recruited if the school were to re-open and a class teacher would be required to cover the Principal Teacher's non-contact time. Previous staff employed at the school were re-deployed when the school was mothballed. This would mean that if the school were to re-open, staff would need to be recruited for the school, which has obvious lead-in times.

12.5.3 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 would be a significant challenge in the current educational climate.

- 12.5.4 There are also 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**, 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.
- 12.5.5 If the School was to be re-opened, the premises would be able to be used by the community, in addition to its use as an educational facility. However, it has been highlighted by stakeholders that there are already several other well-established community facilities on the island. The re-opening of the School may encourage families with school age children to move to the community, which may make the community more sustainable.
- 12.5.6 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 children from Luing attending Easdale Primary during the mothballing period have chosen not to access the travel arrangements due to their belief that the arrangements put their children at risk, and have made their own arrangements, at a personal cost. Should Luing Primary School re-open, 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 travelling onto the island, which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact; or the positive and negative impacts may balance depending on the recruitment of staff and their location.
- 12.5.7 There are no specific educational benefits from re-opening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.
- 12.5.8 When considering all of the above, in light of the consultation findings, and alongside projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable

expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard, following a review of the proposal and all of the reasonable alternatives, re-opening Luving Primary School is not considered to be the most reasonable option to address the underlying reasons why the future of Luving Primary School is being explored.

## 12.6 Option B: Continued Mothballing of Luving Primary School

- 12.6.1 The school roll projections have been re-examined for Luving Primary School, and numbers of primary school pupils in the forthcoming years are not expected to rise significantly in the forthcoming years (based on pre-school aged children living within the catchment area).
- 12.6.2 The current annual cost to the Council of mothballing Luving Primary School is £12,064. 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 under existing arrangements is £21,676.
- 12.6.3 The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luving 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 Luving. 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 continue to be mothballed, and subject to any alternative future transport arrangements that may be agreed by the Council's School Transport team, the impact on travelling arrangements of continued mothballing would be neutral as pupils would still have to travel to attend Easdale Primary School.
- 12.6.4 The prevailing stakeholder preference intimated in the consultation responses is to extend the period of the mothballing of Luving Primary school in order for the community to undertake further activities in an attempt to attract new families with school-aged children to Luving. Luving 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. As yet, there is no evidence to suggest that plans will come to fruition in the foreseeable future to an extent that will impact the projected school rolls and make Luing Primary School viable for re-opening.

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

12.6.5 Based on current projections, pupil numbers for Luing Primary School not expected to increase significantly in the near future. Moreover, the Statutory Guidance accompanying the 2010 Act is clear that mothballing can only ever be used as a temporary measure. In the case of Luing Primary School, the long term possibilities remain unknown. Although a significant portion of stakeholders in the consultation exercise requested a continuation of the mothballing of Luing Primary School, following a review of the proposal, and this option, for the reasons as set out above – continued mothballing of the school is not considered to be the most reasonable option to address the underlying reasons why the future of Luing Primary School is being explored.

12.7 Option C: Close Luing Primary School and Re-align the Catchment Area of Easdale Primary School to Include the Current Catchment Area for Luing Primary School (the Proposal)

12.7.1 The current capacity for Easdale Primary School is around 78.5%. There are currently two primary aged pupils residing in the Luing catchment area. There is no additional annual cost to the current arrangements of transporting pupils to Easdale Primary School using the existing mini bus, ferry and West Coast Motors service bus if these were to continue should the proposal be implemented.

12.7.2 The travel distance (sourced from Google maps) from Luing to Easdale Primary School is 6 miles, including a ferry crossing of 4 minutes which runs to a public timetable. Travel time to Easdale Primary is approximately between 45 minutes and 1 hour. This could be slightly longer or shorter, depending on ferry times, and where children live on the Isle of Luing. The current travelling arrangements, in place since the School's mothballing have not been used by families of existing pupils to date. Feedback to the consultation has expressed views by members of the community

that those travelling arrangements are unsafe and putting children at risk. This position has been reviewed by the Council's School Transport Team who have confirmed that the current travelling arrangements are safe and in accordance with the applicable legislation. However, given the views that have been raised as a result of this consultation on the subject of school transport specifically, the School Transport team are currently in the process of reviewing options for future school transport provision for primary school children residing on the Isle of Luing. The options being reviewed include consideration of a "door-to-door" service between Luing and Easdale Primary School.

12.7.3 It was highlighted by consultees that the closure of Luing Primary School could have a negative impact on the community sustainability of the island. However, continued mothballing of the school for a period is unlikely to reverse any of those negative impacts in the near future, as pupils would continue to have to travel off the island to attend other primary schools, and the Luing Primary School premises would deteriorate further in the intervening period – meaning that it may not be accessible to the community. Whilst it is noted that there are already a number of well-established community hubs on the island, formal closure of the school could allow for plans to be progressed by community groups, or any other third parties for an alternative use of the property – which could generate new ideas to benefit the local community and promote the island's sustainability. The overriding view of the community is noted that the island needs a primary school to attract and retain residents. However, it has been noted from this review that the school roll is unlikely to rise to a level which will make the school viable again in the near future, the school building will continue to deteriorate during any extended period of mothballing at further cost to the Council, whilst the school remains mothballed it will not serve any benefit to the local community, and implementation of the proposal would allow the educational benefits being enjoyed by children currently attending Easdale Primary School to continue.

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

- 12.7.5 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 and a larger peer group. In addition, there are more opportunities for personal and social development and collaborative working within a setting such as Easdale Primary School.
- 12.8 Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the Education Scotland report and the written representations submitted. As set out above, the proposal has been reviewed to consider whether any of the representations have led the Education Service to reconsider any other options as being reasonable alternatives to the proposal to close Luing Primary School. None of the representations have led officers to conclude that any of these options should be reconsidered as reasonable alternatives to the proposal. The Educational Benefits were reviewed in respect of the Education Scotland report and representations made. There were no factors included in the Education Scotland report or representations made requiring any aspect of the Educational Benefits Statement (as set out in the Proposal Paper at **Appendix 1**) to be reconsidered. Further consideration was also given to the likely effect on the local community, and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements, as outlined in the paragraphs above. Having reviewed the Education Scotland report and feedback from consultees in respect of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives, officers have concluded that the proposal continues to be the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons for its formulation.
- 12.9 Officers have reviewed the proposal following the close of the consultation and careful consideration of all consultation feedback, and have concluded that the educational benefits of the proposal far outweigh any potential disadvantages. The proposal will have a neutral impact on travelling arrangements, as these have been in place since the mothballing of Luing Primary School (and are currently subject to review by the School Transport team). The overwhelming majority of consultation responses from individuals and community groups whose views were gathered are opposed to the proposal that the school be closed from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. However, Education Scotland's report concludes that the Council have made a reasonable case for closure of the school and it also notes that the current and predicted number of children within the Luing Primary School catchment area is insufficient to make the school viable.
- 12.10 Therefore, the Education Service has had regard to the points made at the public meeting, the written consultation responses and Education Scotland's report. It thereafter carried out a review of the proposal and all the reasonable alternatives and has concluded that the proposal remains the best solution to address the underlying reasons for the proposal as set out at Section 2 of this Report. Implementation of the proposal will allow children to have access to



increased learning opportunities, wider experiences and better socialisation through being part of a larger school. The current, and projected, number of primary school aged children within the Luing Primary School catchment area is insufficient to make the school viable in the foreseeable future. If the school were to remain mothballed this would be a continuing drain on the Council's resources. The proposal will assist the Council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. Furthermore, the Council acknowledges points raised in written submissions highlighting the fact that Luing already has several community spaces, but will follow-up on working with the Luing community to explore options for future use of the school premises, in ways which could benefit the local community, should they wish to progress this.

### **13. Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies**

- 13.1 Section 10(3) of the 2010 Act places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission in the Proposal Paper which has either been identified by the Council or raised by consultees. This provision also requires the Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.
- 13.2 In the course of the statutory consultation, there were a number of areas identified by the respondents as being inaccurate or omitted from the Proposal Paper.
- 13.3 Respondents felt that no assessment of the effect of travel arrangements had been carried out and that current risk assessments were inadequate. They also felt that no assessment of alternatives had been conducted and that current travel arrangements had dissuaded families from moving to Luing. During the course of the consultation, the Council have considered the current travel arrangements and the impact of these. A full risk assessment is in place. The Education Service are currently working with colleagues in Transport to explore alternatives.
- 13.4 Respondents felt that there were significant omissions and inaccuracies concerning the likely effect on the local community. They felt that no assessment of the impact on sustainability of the island should the school close. This includes the fact that there are already 3 community facilities located on Luing. An Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) can be found in **Appendix 7**. The Education Service are fully aware that there are already 3 community facilities located on the island, and are of the position that impacts of the proposal and all reasonable alternatives have been adequately assessed in this Consultation Report, within the Proposal Paper, and in the Options Appraisal (prepared in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the 2010 Act).

- 13.5 Respondents felt that no reference was made to the fact that the community on Luing have taken steps in order to attract new families to the island, progress and action taken by the Island Community Trust as part of the sustainable development framework and, as part of this, the work to date and underway to boost the local economy and attract new businesses and industry to the island. Whilst the work being undertaken by the local community in this regard is laudable, there is limited evidence to demonstrate any impact of work in this area to date. Through consultation responses, several initiatives were mentioned, however, there was no evidence submitted to demonstrate that these will come to fruition and in turn attract new families to the island in the foreseeable future in a manner which could impact on this proposal.

## **14. Opportunity to Make Representations to the Scottish Ministers**

- 14.1 If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.
- 14.2 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the Ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.
- 14.3 If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.
- 14.4 If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report the Education Authority decides not to implement the closure proposal, the Education Authority cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

## **15. Conclusion**

- 15.1 It is proposed that education provision at Luìng Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luìng Primary School.
- 15.2 This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:
- Luìng Primary School has been mothballed for 3 years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future.
  - Whilst Luìng Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064;
  - Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. As of the end of January 2024, there were 10.84 fte (full time equivalent) vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.

## **16. Recommendation**

- 16.1 On the basis of the consultation responses received, Education Scotland's report, and having particular regard to the specific factors for rural school closures, it is recommended that education provision at Luìng Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024; and that the delineated catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Luìng Primary School.



# Argyll and Bute Council Education

Review of Education Provision

Luining Primary School

**PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: June 2023**

# Proposal for the closure of Luing Primary School

## SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

### Reasons for this proposal

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

- Luing Primary School has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building £12,064.

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in regard to a proposal in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended. This document has been prepared by the Council's Education Service with input from other Council Services.

## DISTRIBUTION

A copy of this document is available on the Argyll and Bute Council website:

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

A summary of this document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document
- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors – Ward 5 (Oban North and Lorn)
- Easdale and Luing Community Councils
- Community Planning Partnership
- Relevant users of the affected schools

- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Easdale Primary School, Easdale by Oban, PA34 4RF
- Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4TB
- Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX

This document is available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English.

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please apply to the Executive Director, Argyll and Bute Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT.

Jezeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymaO ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeeli potrzebna jest pomoc Uumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh an sgrìobhainn seo ann an cànan no riochd eile, no ma tha sibh a' feumachdainn seirbheis eadar, feuch gun leig sibh fios thugainn.

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

本文件可以翻译为另一语文版本，或制作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要传译员的协助，请与我们联系。

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Luing Primary School. As no pupils have been attending Luing Primary School since August 2020, it was recommended that the School was mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022. The Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School.

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

- 1.2 The Community Services Committee received a report on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 providing details of the Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School; carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, as amended. The Committee agreed to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and requested that officers formulate a draft closure proposal for consideration at the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 which, if approved, will subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

[Community Services Committee on Thursday, 25 August 2022, 10:00 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

- 1.3 The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of certain preliminary requirements which must be satisfied prior to the formulation of a proposal.
- 1.4 In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. This may be something that the Community wish to consider as part of or as a consequence of this process. Public bodies including Councils must consider such requests and make a decision within six months of receiving a valid request.
- 1.5 Luing Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.
- 1.6 There is a requirement to have special regard to the rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in the preliminary requirements which were undertaken prior to this proposal being written. A full assessment of the preliminary requirements is set out in the Options Appraisal, which is attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 1.7 At the time of writing, the new set of Priorities and new Corporate Plan were still in the process of being finalised. The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan for 2018-2022 identifies Argyll and Bute as an area of Scotland with outstanding places, people and potential for a prosperous future for everyone. Our Council, along with our Community Planning Partners,



is committed to ensuring that Argyll and Bute's economic success is built on a growing population.

1.8 In the corporate plan for 2018-2022 our agreed priorities were to ensure that:

- The education we provide meets the needs of all our young people and their families
- We make the most of our assets to build the local economy
- We support individual and community wellbeing
- We strengthen and empower our communities
- We ensure there are homes for all, we tackle poverty and build opportunity
- We have greener and cleaner communities
- We are an employer of choice
- We manage our finances prudently

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

## **2 Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed that education provision at Luig Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luig Primary School.

### **Reasons for this proposal**

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

- Luig Primary School has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The projected school roll is very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. In the last year the school was open, families with children of primary school age expressed their desire for their children to attend a bigger school.
- Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget for maintenance. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064.

### **Additional Considerations**

- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services;

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future. This proposal document contains an Educational Benefits Statement;
- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;
- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils; and
- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

### **3 Preliminary requirements**

- 3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Luing Primary School, as it has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The Council have considered the reasons for making this proposal, and have also considered other viable alternatives, the likely effect on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a consequence of this proposal. Financial implications were also considered. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was produced.
- 3.2 The Council considered how the implementation of this proposal would impact on the education of the children affected. The Council also considered the impact on the children who currently live in the catchment area but attend other schools, as well as children who may potentially live in the catchment area in the future.
- 3.3 The place of the school in the community was also considered, in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. Since the mothballing of the School, the building has been used on one occasion for a community event and by a local parent and toddler group. The island has an active community council who have indicated that they are continuing to try and attract families to the area.
- 3.4 Impact on the environment was taken into account during the initial pre-consultation process. This included a consideration of the transport implications if this proposal was to be implemented, as children would have to travel by minibus, ferry and service bus to attend Easdale Primary School.
- 3.5 Three options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase, as required by section 12A of the 2010 Act.
- 3.6 Of the three options which were considered by the community and the Council; (c) was established as the Council's favoured option (at the Community Services Committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022), as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.
- a) Re-open Luing Primary School,
  - b) Continued Mothballing of Luing Primary with pupils zoned to Easdale Primary School,

- c) Close Luing Primary School and realign its catchment area to Easdale Primary School (The Proposal).

When considering the above options; the positive educational benefits of Easdale Primary School alongside the factors of projected low pupil numbers, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard at Luing Primary School, and the mixed views of local residents, option (c) was considered the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons behind consideration of this proposal.

- 3.7 Following from an initial Options Appraisal which was presented to the Council's Community Services Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements were satisfied enabling the draft proposal to be formulated, with the option to close Luing Primary School and realign its catchment area to Easdale Primary School being identified as the most adequate means of addressing the reasons for possible proposal.
- 3.8 During the preliminary consultation regarding the future options for Luing Primary School there were a range of viewpoints gathered from parents, young people and members of the community.
- 3.9 The community reflected that Luing Primary School had been an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Luing Primary School. However there is a will that the school be retained for community use and not be allowed to fall into disrepair. Luing Community Council and a local parent and toddler group submitted requests to use the building. The building has been used for a community event and by a local parent and toddler group on one occasion.
- 3.10 Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel from the current arrangement. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

### **Alternatives to the Proposal**

- 3.11 The community engagement process prior to the drafting of this proposal considered the views of members of the community and also considered any other alternatives to the closure of Luing Primary School. Full details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, including an assessment of the identified reasonable alternatives to closure, are attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 3.12 In conclusion, after the pre-consultation with the community, the Council feels that the proposal to close Luing Primary School and realign its catchment area to Easdale Primary School is the most reasonable means to address the underlying reasons for considering the future of Luing Primary School. Further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

## **4 Assessment of the Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

- 4.2 Luing Primary School has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The school condition will continue to deteriorate, with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064. Mothballing costs have since increased since the collation of the Options Appraisal, and therefore the figures within this paper have been revised accordingly.
- 4.3 Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- 4.4 The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services.
- 4.5 This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future.
- 4.6 The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high.
- 4.7 Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils.
- 4.8 There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.
- 4.9 As part of the preliminary requirements in the drafting of this proposal, the Council considered three options. The favoured option by the Council is (c), as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.
- a) Re-open Luing Primary School;
  - b) Continued Mothballing of Luing Primary with the pupils zoned to Easdale Primary School;
  - c) Close Luing Primary School and realign its catchment area to Easdale Primary School (The Proposal).
- 4.10 Having considered these other alternatives the Council has made a decision that these are not viable alternatives to the closure proposal, and will proceed with the option to consult on the proposal to close Luing Primary School and extend the catchment area of Easdale Primary School to include the current catchment area for Luing Primary School.
- 4.11 The Council has undertaken an appraisal on impact if this proposal was to be implemented.
- 4.12 This includes an assessment of:
- The school roll and predicted school roll;
  - Teacher numbers; and
  - The condition of the building.

- 4.13 The Council has carefully considered and reviewed the steps it has taken to address the underlying reasons for the proposal (as outlined at Section 2.2, above), prior to formulating this Proposal Paper.
- 4.13.1 In relation to the decline in the school roll, and no material increase being predicted in the forthcoming years, the Council mothballed the school almost three years ago as a result of a change to the School's circumstances – i.e. the school roll falling to zero as of August 2020. The Education Authority therefore decided to mothball the school as a temporary measure – in order to monitor the situation and assess whether there was any likelihood of the school roll increasing to the extent that the School became viable again in the near future. The mothballing was subject to review at least annually and the Education Service undertook to review the position should any further school age pupils move into the catchment area and/or if they demonstrated a sufficient level of demand for the School to justify its re-opening. As mentioned above, the School has been mothballed for almost three years, and its roll is not predicted to rise in the forthcoming years to a level which would make the School suitable for re-opening. As there has been no material change in circumstance evidenced, and having kept the position under review via mothballing for almost three years, the Education Service are of the view that matters should now move forward in the form of a statutory closure consultation in order to determine the future of Luing Primary School. This approach aligns with that suggested by the Statutory Guidance for the 2010 Act, and Paragraphs 63-65 in particular. Further details in relation to the School roll are set out at Section 5 of this Proposal Paper
- 4.13.2 In relation to the underlying reason for this proposal in regards to recruitment of teachers, the issues that have been faced by the Education Service regarding the recruitment of teachers to Luing Primary School are detailed at Section 6 of this Proposal Paper. Since 2020, in order to address this particular issue, and prior to formulating this proposal, the Education Service have offered a number of posts across the Authority area on a permanent basis to a locality, rather than to a temporary school, as an attempt to increase the likelihood of attracting a permanent post. The Council has also entered into a strategic housing agreement with social housing partners to support staff with sourcing accommodation (which is a particular pressure in remote areas of Argyll and Bute), as well as offering relocation packages. Furthermore, the Education Service continues to work with UHI Argyll to recruit more local candidates for teacher training. Notwithstanding these efforts, the recruitment of teaching staff within Argyll and Bute remains a considerable challenge, hence why it is still a main underlying reason for this closure proposal.
- 4.13.3 In relation to the underlying reason for this proposal concerning the condition of the school premises, the school property will continue to deteriorate whilst it remains mothballed. As mentioned at Paragraph 4.13.1, above, there is currently no evidence to suggest that the School will become viable for re-opening in the near future. Whilst the School remains mothballed, it costs the Council £12,064 annually. Accordingly, the Education Service are now seeking approval to proceed with a statutory closure consultation which, if subsequently implemented, will allow the Education Service to use any savings generated to the benefit of the other occupied schools and pupils within the Education Authority's area. It would also allow for any plans for other

uses of the School property to be progressed, as it will need to be permanently discontinued as an educational establishment in the first instance.

4.14 The Council has also undertaken an assessment of likely educational benefits or effects which this proposal may have if implemented on:

- The pupils of any affected school;
- Any other users of the school's facilities;
- Any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school; and
- The pupils of any other schools in the Council area.

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

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

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

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

## **5 School Roll**

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

The school roll of Luing Primary School has been fluctuating in recent years and has had no pupils since 2020. The school roll is predicted to rise only very slightly over the next 5 years.

<b>Table 2:</b>	<b>Luing PS</b>	<b>Easdale PS</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	49	92
	<b>Roll</b>	<b>Roll</b>
<b>2011-2012</b>	17	29
<b>2012-2013</b>	12	28
<b>2013-2014</b>	15	33
<b>2014-2015</b>	14	26
<b>2015-2016</b>	8	28
<b>2016-2017</b>	8	21
<b>2017-2018</b>	14	14
<b>2018-19</b>	10	14
<b>2019-20</b>	7	16
<b>2020-21</b>	0	17
<b>2021-22</b>	0	20

### Predicted Roll

<b>Table 3:</b>	<b>Luing PS</b>	<b>Easdale PS</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	49	92
	<b>Roll</b>	<b>Roll</b>
<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

\* A prediction based on information available March 2023.

- 5.2 There are currently 2 school aged pupils living in the Luing catchment area who attend Easdale Primary School (1 child only attends on a part-time basis) There are also two children currently attending the ELC at Easdale who reside on Luing Island.
- 5.3 The school roll is not predicted to rise significantly in the future. The area around Luing is a small settlement and is not identified for growth in the Local Development Plan:  
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp>.
- 5.4 There are no allocations of development proposals for Luing within the current plan.

## **6 Teacher numbers**

- 6.1 Teacher numbers are improving nationally, with a 6.3% increase in the number of teachers nationally from 2016 - 2022. In Argyll and Bute there has been a 3.1% reduction in the fte number of teachers from 2016- 2022.
- 6.2 As the school has been mothballed for almost 3 years, the issue of recruitment of staff has not improved. At the time of writing this report there are 8.59 fte vacancies for class teachers in Argyll and Bute. The school has not been able to secure stable staffing in recent years. There were 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 can be the case in schools across the authority. Despite a sustained effort to secure permanent staff, there is no reason to think that staffing would not continue to be a considerable challenge for Luing Primary School.
- 6.3 At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Easdale Primary School.

## **7 Condition of the building**

- 7.1 Argyll and Bute Council's School Estate Management Planning process identified in 2016 that the condition of Luing Primary School was satisfactory and graded a B. Outlined in the Options Appraisal (**Appendix 5** – section 6.3) are the full financial details in reference to costs for the re-opening the building or continuing to retain the building as mothballed.
- 7.2 As part of the consultation process the Council would be open to discussion with the community in regard to the future of the building. This might involve the transfer of the building to a recognised community group through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 or some other agreed mechanism. This may provide the community with an opportunity to utilise the building as a driver for community benefit and potential regeneration that could also enhance the sustainability of the community.

## **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT**

### **8 Assessment of likely educational benefits on pupils**

- 8.1 If this proposal is implemented, the Council believes that there will be considerable educational benefits arising from this. These centre around;
- Learning and teaching;
  - Meeting learners needs;
  - Broadening the range of opportunities; and
  - The environment for learning.
- 8.2 This statement focusses on Easdale Primary School, which is the school pupils from the Luing Primary School catchment area have attended from August 2020.



- 8.3 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening Luing Primary School as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the School and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.
- 8.4 Luing and Easdale Primary Schools are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). There are currently 2 school aged children in the Luing Primary School catchment area. Children from Luing who have attended Easdale Primary School, since the mothballing of Luing Primary School, continue to benefit from education in a locality familiar to them, and still relatively close to home.
- 8.5 The co-location of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Easdale Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and school and includes joint early level learning every week.

## **9 Learning and Teaching**

- 9.1 The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work. In 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.
- 9.2 The learning environment encourages high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning. In 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, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school.
- 9.3 There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
- 9.4 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community.
- 9.5 At 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, Lorn and the Isles Cluster, which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within 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.

- 9.6 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 sports day and in the dining room when groups of children are together in a social context. This system develops and benefits both the 'buddy' and the 'buddied'. This system works well and benefits the wide range of children in the school.

## **10 Meeting learners' needs**

- 10.1 Through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work.
- 10.2 The school also has planned meetings and discussions with parents. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met. In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. Health and Wellbeing continues to develop within the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme, which supports positive behaviours and relationship within the school.
- 10.3 The staff, parent body and partner groups also bring opportunities for increased collaborative working. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise e.g. PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching.

## **11 Broadening the Range of Opportunities**

- 11.1 Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.
- 11.2 There is also a strong transition planning process between Easdale Primary School and Oban High School, which involves increased opportunities for children to participate and to make new connections.
- 11.3 Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude.

- 11.4 Across the school children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons. Staff promote positive relationships at all levels, the impact of this being that children enjoy good relationships with their peers, young leaders feel confident and entrusted to take these developments forward.

## **12 Environment for Learning**

- 12.1 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 Easdale Primary School. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.
- 12.2 The children maintain links with friends who live in their own village as well as creating links with children from other rural communities.
- 12.3 The total travelling time from Luing to Easdale Primary School is approximately forty five minutes, depending where precisely on the island one departs from. As the journey involves a ferry crossing, there is scope for adverse weather conditions and/or technical breakdowns to cause travel disruptions on occasions. However, these travelling arrangements have been in place since Luing Primary School was mothballed. If the proposal is implemented, funded school transport will continue to be provided to pupils making this journey. Accordingly, the Education Service are of the view that the educational benefits of attending that will be derived by learners by attending a larger educational setting, such as Easdale Primary School, outweigh any adverse effects in relation to additional travelling time, or occasional service disruptions. In exceptional circumstances due to adverse weather conditions impacting on transport being unavailable, remote learning could be offered to pupils living on Luing.
- 12.4 In summary, there are a range of educational benefits for pupils if this proposal was to be implemented, as summarised in the paragraphs above. There are benefits for the development of social and emotional skills, as well as the educational benefits resultant from access to a more diverse curriculum. The learning environment in Easdale Primary School also offers children the opportunity to participate in a wider range of active learning strategies.

## **13 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities**

### **Implications for staff**

- 13.1 If this proposal is implemented, there will be no new implications for teaching and ancillary staff in Easdale Primary School.
- 13.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal in respect of staffing. Should issues arise however, these will be mitigated through the Council Educational Management Team support structure.

### **Early Learning Centre Users – Pre Five Children**

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

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

### **Existing and future pupils**

- 14.1 Children who may live in this catchment area in the future will benefit from the broad range of educational opportunities which are presented through this proposal, as detailed above.
- 14.2 There would be positive educational benefits associated with this proposal. The management arrangements of the school would be strengthened and there would be opportunities for increasing the range of the curriculum and increasing the use of active pedagogies.
- 14.3 The proposal could increase the roll of Easdale Primary School and would thus extend the peer group for all pupils, present and future. The larger school should be able to support a wider range of social and extra-curricular activities.
- 14.4 Pupils who would otherwise have attended Luining Primary School would benefit from daily interaction in a larger peer group and from improved educational arrangements as described above. Pupils in Easdale Primary School (with the proposed extended catchment area) will have more shared experiences and opportunity for friendships. This will enhance their confidence and make the transition to secondary easier. Larger year groups make the provision of specialist services more viable and provide enhanced opportunities for school trips. Easdale Primary School meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

- 15.1 The current mothballing of the school has had an indirect effect on other pupils in Argyll and Bute. The reduction in the running costs for the School, by virtue of the mothballing, means that this is a saving to the Council, which is not taken from elsewhere. If Luining Primary School was to close, the current mothballing costs being incurred would be re-directed and therefore indirectly benefit other school pupils in Argyll and Bute.
- 15.2 There are no other significant impacts from this proposal on other pupils in the authority or who attend other schools, in either a positive or a negative way.

### **Placing requests**

- 15.3 This proposal will not affect the right of parents to request that their child attend a school of their choice rather than the designated school in whose catchment area the family lives as provided by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

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

- 16.1 The main adverse effect from this proposal would be the length of the journey to school for children who live on Luing. However, these travelling arrangements have been in place for almost three years now, since the school was mothballed. Funded school transport would also continue to be provided for pupils should this proposal be implemented.

## **17 Summary of educational benefits statement**

- 17.1 Educational benefits of this proposal, such as the ability for children to participate in a broad range of experiences, the development of the strategic leadership of the head teacher in taking forward improvements in learning and teaching, and the ability to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the children are significant benefits to this proposal. During the pre-consultation phase, these benefits were explored in detail and details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, to include the alternative proposals and the authority's assessment of other likely effects of the proposal and the reasons for that assessment are attached as **Appendix 5**.
- 17.2 Whilst the positive educational benefits are numerous, there are two negative aspects identified which arises from the children attending Easdale Primary School. The first negative aspect is principally around the fact that children have to travel by either bus or car, and ferry, to school. However it is considered that the positive aspects of this proposal outweigh the negative aspect of some additional travelling for children. The second negative aspect is that if the ELC at Luing Primary were to close permanently, in the future, parents/carers of any ELC aged children would be required to make the journey to the ELC at Easdale themselves as transport is not provided for ELC children. Parents/carers would be reimbursed for 50% of the costs. One possible mitigation discussed with the community is that qualified and registered childminder(s) could deliver the 1140 entitlement on the island, this would be funded through the Early Years budget. This option can be explored further by the Education Service, in consultation with the community, in the event that this proposal is subsequently implemented.

## **18 Factors for rural school closures**

- 18.1 The Council has had special regard to the following factors in relation to this proposal, as Luing Primary School is classified as a rural school.

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

- 18.2 The Council has made an assessment on the sustainability of the community should this proposal be implemented and considers that this may have a positive impact.
- 18.3 The Scottish Government focuses on four key areas of importance to rural communities;

- a strong and diverse rural economy, harnessing traditional strengths and with an appetite for change,
- thriving rural communities where everyone can enjoy a decent quality of life, where the young are not forced to leave their communities to get on and where the vulnerable are no longer excluded,
- strong, community focused public services that are accessible, of the highest possible quality and with the greatest possible choice,
- a rural Scotland whose natural and cultural heritage flourishes in all its diversity

18.4 In rural communities, the challenges and opportunities are largely defined by the local area and can often best be met by a bottom-up, community-led response. Strong community leadership is vital to articulating local priorities and driving forward change and growth.

18.5 There is the potential if this proposal is implemented to capitalise on the existing will and drive in this community, with opportunities for local leaders to enable them to organise, motivate and inspire their neighbours. The opportunity for the local community to acquire the School building could be key to helping to make this community an independent, resilient place to live. Management of assets such as Luing Primary School may be an important step in building community confidence, promoting growth and enabling communities to realise their aspirations.

18.6 Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that when communities feel empowered, there is:

- greater participation in local democracy;
- increased confidence and skills among local people;
- more people volunteering in their communities; and
- greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood.

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

18.8 It is considered that formal closure of Luing Primary School could have a positive impact on the wider community, and may lead to an increase in other users of the facility, which may lead to an improvement in economic growth.

18.9 Indeed, a school closure may help to empower the local community, should the community wish to undertake an asset transfer process for the building. This could have a positive impact on community sustainability. Formal closure would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community. This may enhance community life by giving a community enterprise focus.

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/>

- 18.10 During the pre-consultation phase, members of the community had varying opinions on the closure of the school. There were a number of attendees who suggested that more time is required to attract more families to the area. Many were keen that the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. All people who attended the pre-consultation meeting felt that the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the aesthetic of the community.
- 18.11 It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a community hub could be an asset to the community. If any local plans for the future of the building subsequently progress, this could have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community and in particular the availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the community. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

### **The likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements**

- 18.12 The travel distance from Luing Primary to Easdale Primary is 5.95 miles with a stretch of water between. A local ferry link, minibus and West Coast Motors service bus currently transport pupils. The ferry crossing takes 4 minutes and total travel time is approximately forty five minutes depending on where children live on the island. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Luing community.
- 18.13 Implementation of the proposal would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Luing Primary School, in terms of current travel arrangements would have a neutral effect on the environment. The current annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Easdale Primary School is £21,676.
- 18.14 It is anticipated that the effect on the travel arrangements of staff and other users of the facility would not differ materially from that of the pupils accessing the school.

### **Environmental impact**

- 18.15 Currently 2 pupils (1 on a part-time basis) travel to Easdale Primary School from the Luing Primary School Catchment area. Therefore, this option would have a neutral environmental impact on the current position and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils.
- 18.16 If this proposal was to be implemented there would be little or no impact on the natural environment.

## **19 Financial Impact**

- 19.1 The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in **Appendix 4**. Some of this information has been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was prepared. In particular the annual cost of mothballing the school has been recalculated from £6,050 to £12,064. This information gives details on the estimated cost if Luing Primary School was still to be an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Luing Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is estimated at £12,064 per year. Should the school

be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £198,773.

- 19.2 Column 2 of Table 1 at **Appendix 4** shows the projected annual running costs of Luing whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on Easdale Primary as the receiving school. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.
- 19.3 The main elements included within a school budget are teacher employment costs (i.e. basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value.
- 19.4 In line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers, the Education Service operates on the basis that supernumerary teachers are redeployed and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. Some of the costs noted in column 3 of Table 1 will not directly impact on Easdale Primary School but they will be a cost to the Authority as a whole, for example school transport, and the costs of maintaining the teachers employed in Luing Primary School.
- 19.5 The current annual transport costs for pupils to attend Easdale Primary School are £21,676. Transport costs per year to attend Luing Primary School, if it were to be reopened, are estimated at £18,427 per year.
- 19.6 Table 2 contains the notional 30 year lifecycle costs that would arise based on the GIA of the various schools irrespective of the number of pupils accommodated. Lifecycle costs are representative of the cost needed to keep the building in a good state of repair. The cost over the next thirty years therefore to maintain Luing Primary School is £258,795 and for Easdale Primary School this is £625,725
- 19.7 Table 3 contains the annual running costs during mothballing of Luing Primary School and these are estimated at £12,064 per year. This includes non-domestic rates, utility costs, insurances, etc. If the school was to be formally closed, this would allow the Council to take steps towards selling the school to a third party or local community.
- 19.8 The transfer of pupils from Luing to Easdale Primary School would impact on the council's Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocation for Easdale Primary School Teaching Staff as there would be a reduction in the Percentage of Primary Pupils in Small Schools. This reduction is estimated at £4,000. However Argyll and Bute Council is supported through the floor mechanism so would not see a reduction in their overall funding.

## **20 Equality and Socio Economic Impact**

- 20.1 The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty (Part one of the Equality Act) and the Islands (Scotland) Act (2018) to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial



decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs).

- 20.2 The Council will undertake the process of assessment during the consultation process in respect of this proposal to ensure that due regard is given to such matters in the decision making process. A final EQSEIA in respect of this consultation exercise will be published alongside the Consultation Report.

## 21 Consultation arrangements

- 21.1 Prior to formulating a rural school closure proposal under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* (the 2010 Act), as amended, the Education Authority must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act. The Authority has previously identified its reasons for formulating a possible proposal, considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives to the possible proposal as a response to those reasons, and assessed each of the options in accordance with Section 12A(2)(c) of the 2010 Act. After considering a paper addressing these preliminary requirements, the Education Authority decided on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Luing Primary School and redraw its catchment area to Easdale Primary School is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

- 21.2 This document was considered by the Council as Education Authority on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 when it was agreed that it should be adopted as a relevant proposal and issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in this paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation (the Consultation Report) and will reach a view on the proposal.

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

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

- 21.4 As part of the consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it and notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act, inviting them to make representations on the proposal. The consultation period will be from 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 until the close of business on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 which lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and includes at least 30 school days.

- 21.5 A public meeting will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1.30pm, in Luing Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education Authority and the Education Authority will present reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered. However, the Education Authority will also consider written comments which should be sent to Education Services, School Consultations, Argyll & Bute Council, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ and should be received no later than 5.00pm on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

- 21.6 Written representations may be made on the proposal and the alternatives to the proposal. Written representations may also suggest other alternatives to the proposal.
- 21.7 Following the close of the consultation, the Education Authority will provide Education Scotland with copies of the written representations submitted, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting and any other relevant documentation. This will allow Education Scotland to prepare a report on the proposal within a period of 3 weeks.
- 21.8 After receiving Education Scotland's report, the Education Authority will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9, 10 and 13 of the 2010 Act. The Education Authority will thereafter make its final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be published a minimum of 3 weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.
- 21.9 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.
- 21.10 If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.
- 21.11 If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report the Education Authority decides not to implement the closure proposal, the Education Authority cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

## **22 Conclusion**

- 22.1 It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.
- 22.2 It has been assessed that the proposal is the most appropriate means of addressing the underlying reasons for formulating it, which are:
- Luing Primary School has been mothballed for almost three years. The school condition will continue to deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school

roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064;

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute; and
- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services.

### **Other Considerations**

- This proposal will bring educational benefits to all present and future users of the affected schools and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future;
- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;
- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate;
- Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect the educational attainment of pupils;
- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present condition is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

### **DOUGLAS HENDRY**

Executive Director with responsibility for Education

### **Wendy Brownlie**

Head of Education: Performance and Improvement

### **Councillor Yvonne McNeilly**

Policy Lead for Education

### **For further information contact:**

### **Brendan Docherty**

Education Manager

[Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

16<sup>th</sup> May 2023

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Consultation Letter

Appendix 2 - Response form

Appendix 3 - Maps

Appendix 4 - Financial template

Appendix 5 - Options Appraisal

## APPENDIX 1

### *Argyll and Bute Council*

Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry



*Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RT*

Telephone: 01546 605522

Fax:

Our Ref:

Ref:

e-mail: [Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Council Website: [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

### **Luing Primary School**

Dear Consultee,

### **Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Luing Primary School Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010**

#### **Background**

Argyll and Bute Council, through its Education Service, aims to realise ambition, excellence and equity for all.

The Council is consulting on a proposal to close Luing Primary School. This notice provides a summary of a proposal that you may have an interest in or are required to be notified of, giving you key information about the proposal.

The Council is conducting a public consultation process. This will commence on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and will conclude on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This is the period within which you will be able to make written representations to the Council in respect of the proposal. If you wish your view to be taken account of in the consultation exercise you must submit your written representation within this period. This notice and summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal may be obtained or referenced and also advises on how you can make written representations to the Council.

The Council will hold a meeting where officers will be able to provide information on the proposal. The details of the public meeting are contained in this notice and summary.

It is important that everyone we are consulting tells us what they think of the proposal. Please read this notice and summary and then consider the contents of the proposal document. You can then tell us what you think of the proposal by making written

representation and/or by attending the public meeting. This notice and summary tell you how to do that.

## **The Proposal**

It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

## **Reasons for this proposal**

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

- Luing Primary School has been mothballed for almost three years. The school condition will continue to deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is zero and is only predicted to rise slightly over the next 5 years.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

## **The Council's education strategy Our Children Their Future**

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

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

## **Alternatives to the Proposal**

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

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

Written representations may be made on those alternatives as well as on the proposal.

Written representations on the proposal may suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

## What will we do?

We will consult with people by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees **this is that notice and summary**
- Placing an advert in the local press
- Putting information on our website <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/schoolconsultations-and-proposals>
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal
- Ask parents, carers, children, young people, teachers, support staff and others to tell us what they think of the proposals.

## What to do now?

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1.30pm, in Luing Primary School
  - Let us know what you think by:  
Letter to: Education Services  
School Consultations  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Argyll House  
Alexandra Parade  
Dunoon  
PA23 8AJ

Returning the attached response sheet by post or by;

Email to: [argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

## What next?

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

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

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

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

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Easdale Primary School, Easdale by Oban, PA34 4RF

- Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4TB
- Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX

It is also available electronically via our website:

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

Yours faithfully,

**Douglas Hendry**

Executive Director with responsibility for Education





Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

**Proposal**

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.  
 The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)		Address:	
		Post Code:	
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available			
Signature:		Date:	

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

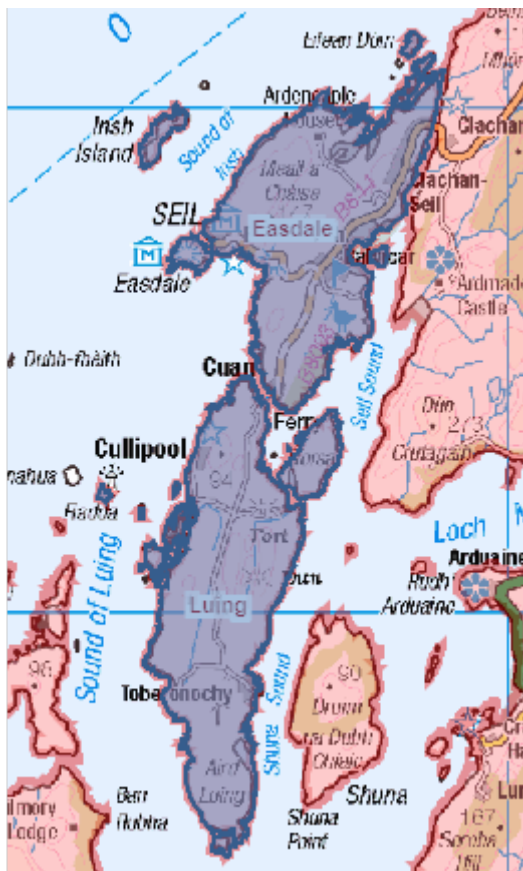
Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>		

\*Other: (please specify)

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

## APPENDIX 3 - MAP

MAP OF CURRENT ADJOINING PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS FOR LUING AND EASDALE PRIMARIES- THIS ALSO INDICATES THE PROPOSED CATCHMENT AREA FOR EASDALE PRIMARY



## APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1<sup>2</sup>

Name of School	Projected annual costs for full financial year 2023/24	Additional financial impact on receiving school	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Luing Primary		Easdale Primary	
<b>School costs</b>			
<i>Employee costs -</i>			
teaching staff	117,989	137,344	-19,355
support staff	21,239		21,239
teaching staff training (CPD etc)			
support staff training			
Supply costs	3,195		3,195
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	841		841
non domestic rates	668		668
water & sewerage charges	416		416
energy costs	9,788		9,788
cleaning (contract or in-house)	323		323
building repair & maintenance	3,595		3,595
grounds maintenance	241		241
facilities management costs			
revenue costs arising from capital			
other - refuse collection; telephones	848		848
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	2,757	551	2,206
catering (contract or inhouse)	20,299	1,107	19,192
SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0	0	0
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school			
other pupil transport costs	18,427	21,676 <sup>3</sup>	-3,249

<sup>2</sup> These figures have been calculated based on Luing Primary school roll the last full year prior to mothballing.

<sup>3</sup> This figure is based on current financial costs if transport was necessary to be provided.

staff travel			0
<b>SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>200,627</b>	<b>160, 678</b>	<b>39,949</b>

Income:			
Sale of meals	-1,854	-1,854	0
Lets			0
External care provider			0
Other			0
<b>SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>-1,854</b>	<b>-1,854</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL</b>	<b>198,773</b>	<b>158,824</b>	<b>39,950</b>

<b>UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR</b>	<b>28,396<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>9,926</b>	<b>1,737</b>
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**Table 2**

Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
	Luing Primary	Primary
Capital Life Cycle cost	258,795	625,725
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

**Table 3**

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	841
non domestic rates	668
water & sewerage charges	416
energy costs	2,936
cleaning (contract or in-house)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	0
grounds maintenance	241

<sup>2</sup> This figure has been calculated based on Luing Primary school roll of the last full year prior to mothballing.

facilities management costs	5,643
other	1,319
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	<b>12,064</b>

**Table 4**

<b>Non-recurring revenue costs</b>	
Securing building	5,648
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	<b>5,648</b>

**Table 5**

<b>Impact on GAE</b>	
The Primary Indicator determining the GAE allocation for Primary School Teaching Staff is based on the number of primary school pupils with the Secondary Indicator being the percentage of pupils in small schools (roll < 70 pupils averaged over 2 years). The pupils from Luing are designated to attend which has a roll of > 70 pupils. The additional pupils from Luing will maintain the roll of above the small school threshold. There will be a loss of small school GAE for those pupils attending Luing equating to approximately £4,000. <b>Argyll and Bute Council, however, is supported by the floor mechanism therefore any calculated reduction in GAE would not have an actual impact on the overall GAE allocation.</b>	0
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	<b>0</b>



**EDUCATION**

**OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

**LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Isle of Luing**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 No pupils have attended Luig Primary School since August 2020. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Community Services Committee agreed Luig 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 Luig 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 Luig 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 Luig Primary School. This review will enable the Elected Members to consider the various options put forward in relation to the future of Luig 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 Luing 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 Luing within the current plan.**

*Appendix 1* shows the Local Development Plans (2) for Luing.  
(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 Luing Primary School**

Luing 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 Luing Primary School Floor Plan.

Luing 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. Luing Primary School is situated on the side of a road that leads towards Toberonochy.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Luing 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. Luing 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)
Total	£119,432.10 (£120k)	£151,053.10 (£155k)

### 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.

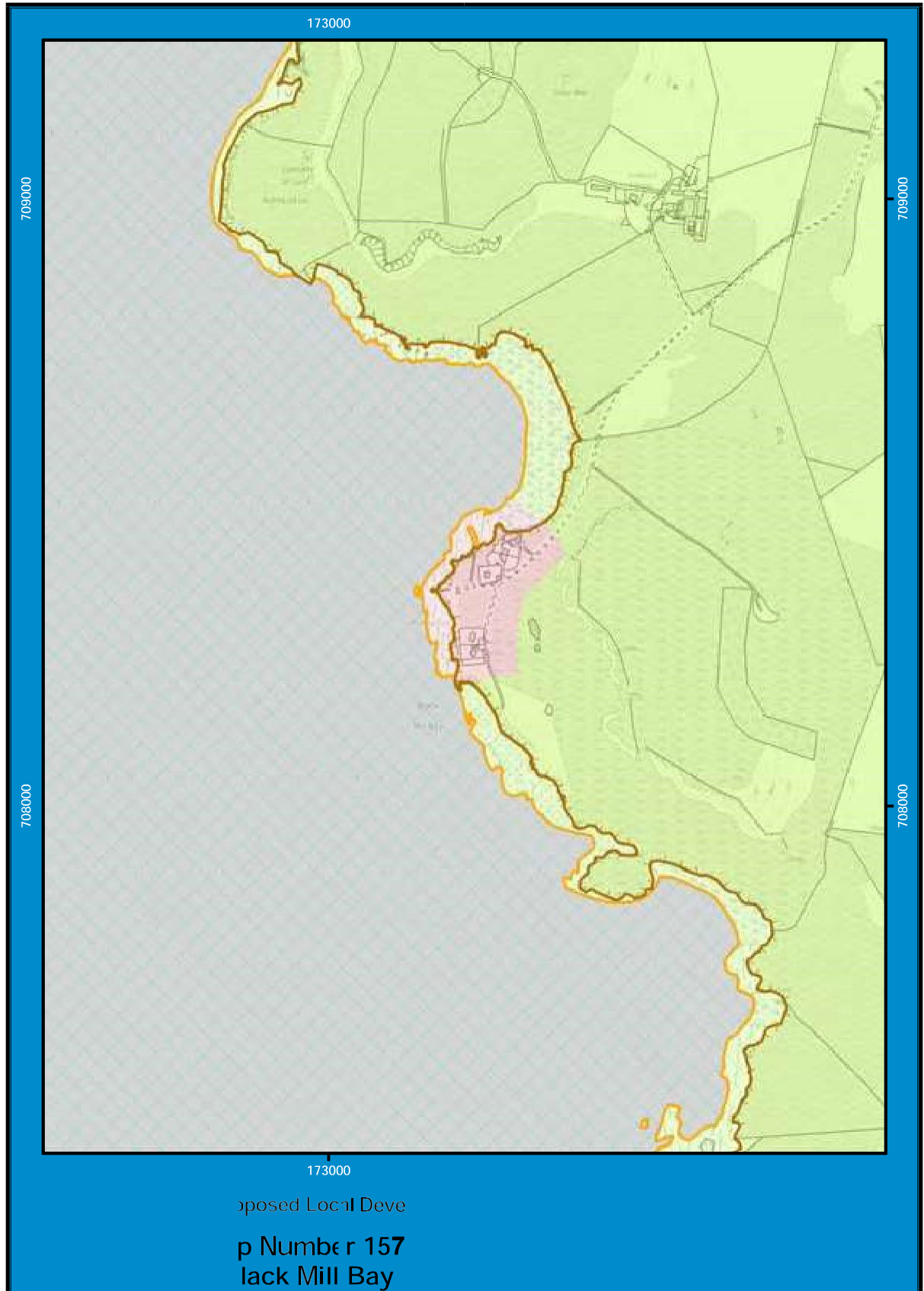
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

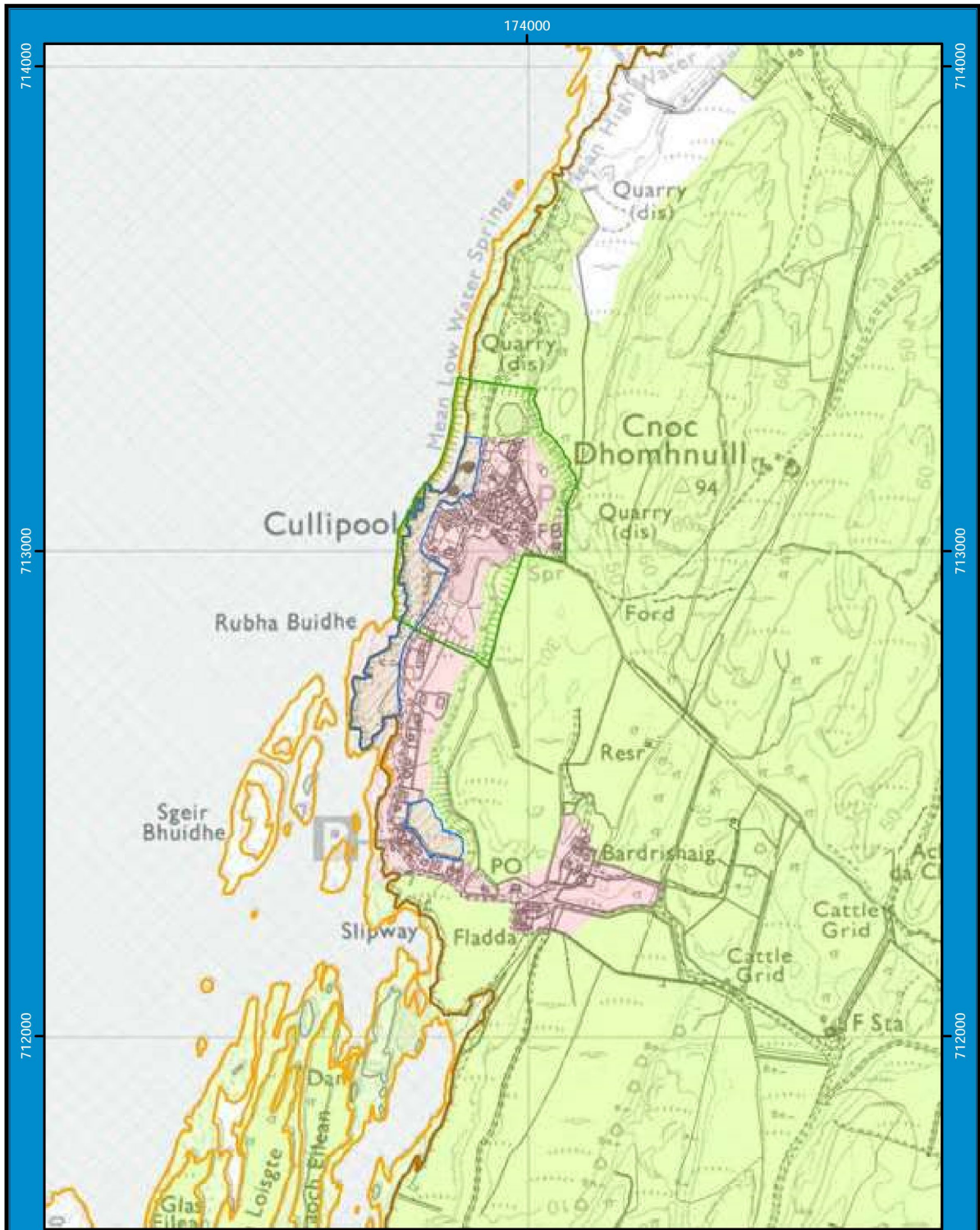
- a. Note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements; and,
- b. Agree that officers now formulate a draft proposal that will come back to the June 2023 meeting of the Committee for approval by members which would subsequently trigger the formal



consultation process under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

## Appendix 1 Local Develop Plans for Luing Area





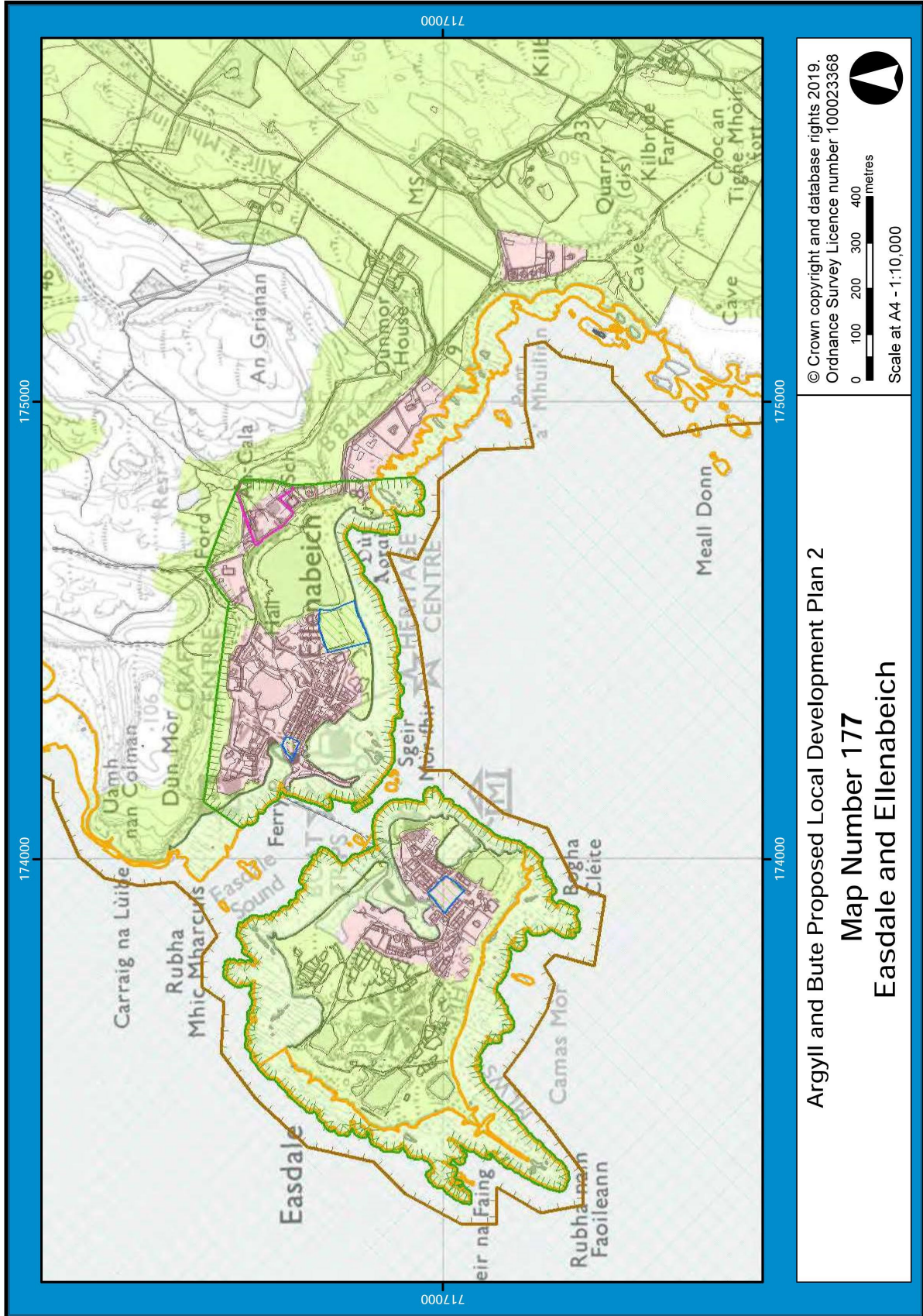
Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2

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





## Appendix 2 Local Development Plans for Easdale Area



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

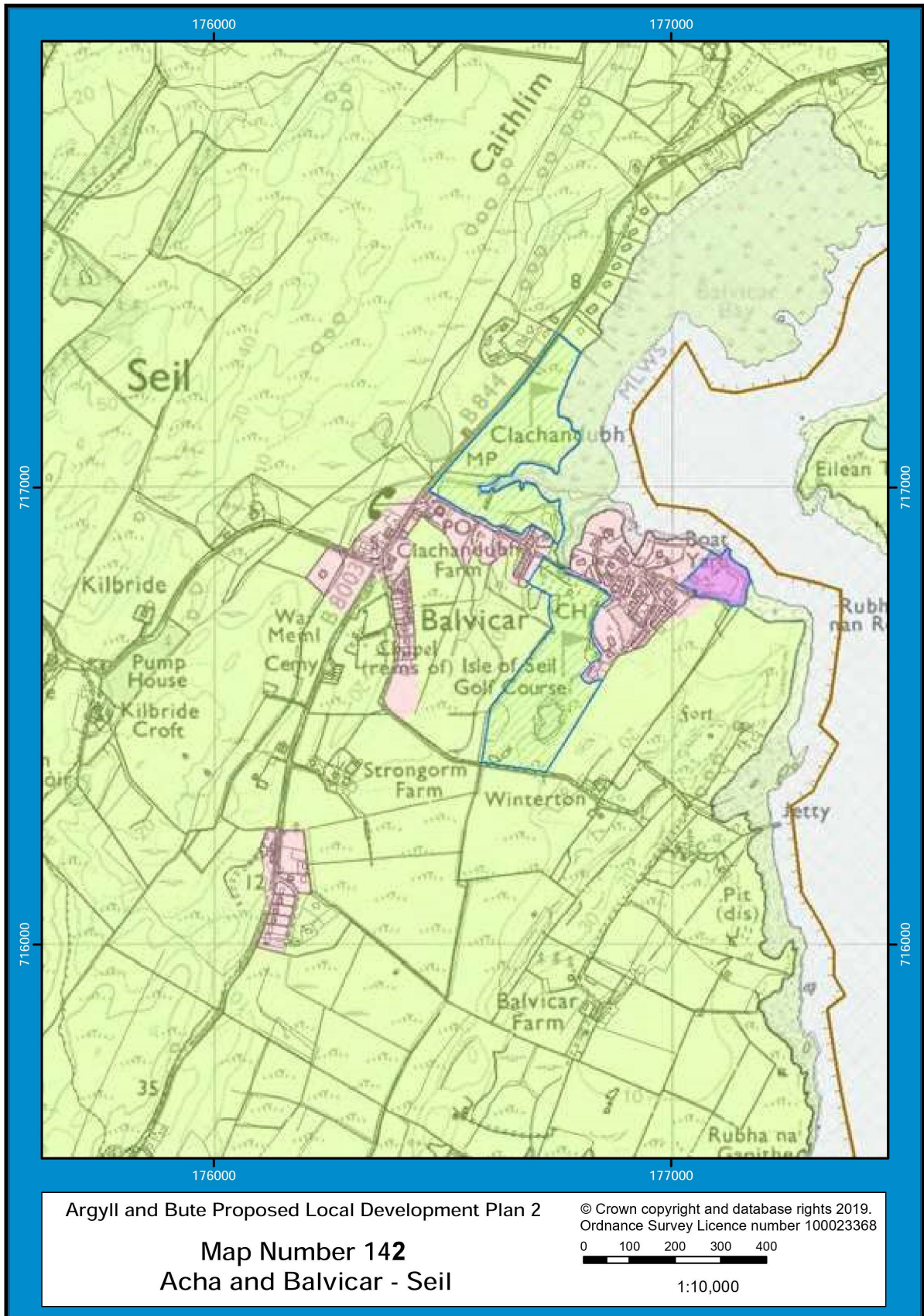
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0 100 200 300 400 metres

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.





## Appendix 2 - EQSEIA

### Argyll and Bute Council

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



### Section 1: About the proposal

#### Title of Proposal

To close Luing Primary School.

#### Intended outcome of proposal

The proposal is to close Luing Primary School. Currently, we are in the consultation phase, at this stage it is vitally important that we seek the views of all stakeholders affected by this proposal. Once this has been done, there will be a consultation report prepared on the issue by Local Authority Officers, with input from Education Scotland. This report will be presented to the Community Services Committee (CSC) for their decision.

Ultimately, the intended outcome is the closure of the school, which has been mothballed since 2020. If, after consideration of the consultation responses and Education Scotland's report on the proposal, the CSC feel that closure is not a reasonable option, then the closure would not take place.

#### Description of proposal

Consideration of this proposal means that a decision is being taken about permanently closing Luing Primary School. As per the legislative requirements set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Argyll and Bute Council has sought views on the following proposal, namely:

It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

#### Reasons for this proposal

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

- Luing Primary School has been mothballed for 3 years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12, 064.

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budget for maintenance.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Argyll and Bute Council's Community Services Committee agreed that a consultation with all stakeholders be undertaken on the proposal.

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

BO18: All our children and young people are supported to realise their potential.

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

**Lead officer details:**

Name of lead officer – Brendan Docherty  
 Job title - Education Manager  
 Department - Customer Services: Education

**Appropriate officer details:**

Name of appropriate officer – Jennifer Crocket/ Wendy Brownlie  
 Job title - Heads of Education  
 Department - Customer Services: Education  
 Sign off of EqSEIA

Date of sign off  
 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023

**Who will deliver the proposal?**

Should the closure go ahead, there will be, at present, no change to the current arrangements which have been in place since the school has been mothballed.

The Head Teacher of Easdale Primary will be the senior officer of the Council who provides the leadership of the educational experience for the children attending the school, who would have otherwise attended Luing Primary School. The Education Central team of the Council will be responsible for the support and challenge of the school as per standard protocols.

Transport colleagues will be responsible for any travel arrangements for children who are entitled to this (including any review thereof), and this has already been in place since the school was mothballed.

## Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA Consultation / engagement

Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, if a local authority proposes to close a school it must undertake a statutory consultation with the 'relevant consultees' affected by this proposal. In this instance;

Luing Primary School and Easdale Primary School are the 'affected schools'.

The formal consultation on the proposal within this document was undertaken under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the Act"). The consultation period commenced on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (with due written notice of the proposal issued to the relevant consultees listed in terms of the 2010 Act) and ended on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

A copy of the proposal document was provided to the following 'relevant consultees' in terms of the Act:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of the Proposal Paper
- The pupils, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute local Ward Councillors
- Luing Community Council
- Community Planning Partnership
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

The Proposal Paper was also published on the Argyll and Bute Council website; and could be made available in alternative forms and/or translated by contacting the Education Service. These measures were taken to ensure that information on the proposal was made widely available to all.

Hard copies of the Proposal Paper were also made available for inspection at the following locations:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT

- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Easdale Primary School, Easdale by Oban, PA34 4RF
- Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4TB
- Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX

A public meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1:30pm in Luing Primary School where reasons for bringing forward the proposal were set out by the Education Authority and those in attendance were given the opportunity to ask questions and/or make comments in relation to the same – which were recorded by the Education Authority as part of the consultation feedback.

## DATA

The catchment area for Luing Primary School is classed as remote rural. The definition for remote rural are settlements with a population of less than 3,000 with a greater than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.

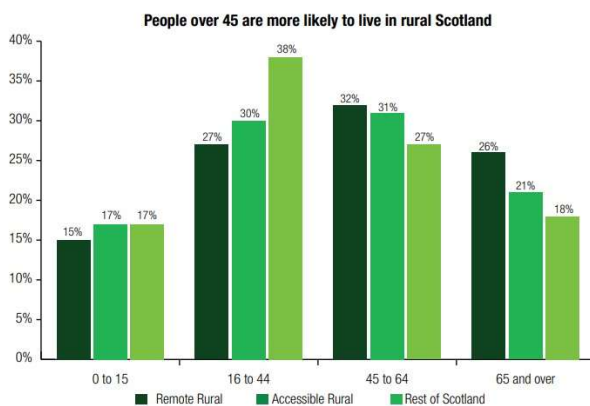
**Table 1: Population and land share by 3-fold Urban Rural category, 2011 & 2019**

	2011	2019	% change 2011-2019	% of 2019 population	% of land area
<b>Remote Rural</b>	315,945	316,166	0.1%	6%	70%
<b>Accessible Rural</b>	573,407	616,536	8%	11%	28%
<b>Rest of Scotland</b>	4,410,548	4,530,598	3%	83%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,299,900</b>	<b>5,463,300</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Mid-year small area population estimates, National Records of Scotland  
(Using Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016)

Over the period of 2011-2019 Remote Rural areas have seen a 0.1% increase in population this contrasts with an 8% increase in the same period in Accessible Rural and 3% increase in the rest of Scotland.

**Figure 1: Age distribution of population by 3-fold Urban Rural category, 2019**



Source: Mid-year small area population estimates, National Records of Scotland  
(Using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016)

Remote rural areas have a lower percentage of the population in the 0-15 and the 16-44 age groups but a higher proportion of people aged 45-64. For example, in 2019 27% of the population in remote rural areas and 30% of the population in accessible rural areas were 16-44 year olds, compared to 38% in the rest of Scotland.

Conversely, 58% of the population in remote rural areas and 52% of the population in accessible rural areas were aged 45 and over, compared to 45% in the rest of Scotland.

In 2019 the proportion of people aged 65 or over was 21% in accessible rural areas was and 26% in remote rural areas compared to 18% in the rest of Scotland.

54% of journeys to school were made by walking or cycling in 2019. 61% of those aged 4-11 and 43% of those aged 12-18 usually walked or cycled to school. For those aged 4-11 the next most popular mode was as a passenger in a car or van (29%). For those aged 12-18, the next most popular was school bus (25%). 7% of children aged 4-11 usually used school transport. 21% of children living in the most deprived SIMD areas (centile 1 and 2) used school transport. 44% of children living in remote rural areas used school transport.

## OTHER INFORMATION

Evidence for this proposal was found in the Equality Evidence Finder, and in the Guidance for the Fairer Scotland Act.

Additional evidence was found in the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, in terms of legislative compliance. Education management circulars, 1.33 on capacity, 3.01 on admission and 3.09 on transfers were also consulted. The circular 3.23 on child protection and safeguarding was also considered.

The national policy of GIRFEC – Getting it Right for Every Child, was also considered in the formation of this proposal as was the Argyll and Bute Education vision and strategy, Our Children, Their Future

### Gaps in evidence

There are no gaps in evidence

## Section 3: Impact of proposal

### Impact on service users:

Description	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age		X		
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Sex		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population				x
Island populations	x			
Low income				X
Low wealth				X
Material deprivation				X
Area deprivation				X
Socio-economic background				X

Communities of place				X
Communities of interest				X

**If you have identified any impacts on service users, explain what these will be.**

Closure could impact negatively on the island population by dissuading families with school age children from moving to the island, this in turn could impact on the economy of the island and overall community sustainability.

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

If the proposal is accepted, there will be no immediate impact on pupils and families, as the children are already currently attending Easdale Primary School, who would otherwise have attended Luig Primary School.

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

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

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

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age				x
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Sex		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population				x
Island populations	X			

Low income				X
Low wealth				X
Material deprivation				X
Area deprivation				X
Socio-economic background				X
Communities of place				X
Communities of interest				X

**If you have identified any impacts on service deliverers, explain what these will be.**

Closure of Luing Primary School would mean that employees would be retained within their current posts.

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

The Proposal had a consultation period that ran from June 15<sup>th</sup> 2023 to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 where all interested parties were given the opportunity to submit a written representation. A public meeting was held on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2023 where interested parties were able to ask questions of, and/or make comment on, the Proposal.

**How has 'due regard' been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?**

In looking at the educational benefits statement of this proposal these have been considered. All information is contained in the proposal paper.

[Luing Primary Proposal Paper June 2023 \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://argyll-bute.gov.uk)

#### **Section 4: Interdependencies**

**Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?**

Impact on transport, as more children may require transport who may move into the catchment area.

**Details of knock-on effects identified**

Increased number of children requesting free school transport may add pressure to the transport system.



## **Section 5: Monitoring and review**

### **How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?**

The Education Central Team including locality Education Managers will monitor the impact this catchment area change would have, if implemented.

Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)	Address:
Zoë D. Fleming	23 Cullipool, Isle of Luing
	Post Code: PA34 4UB

I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: <i>Zoë D. Fleming</i>	Date: 6/8/23
----------------------------------	--------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---

Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--

\*Other: (please specify) Luing resident, 20 years. Volunteer helper at Luing School with PVG scheme, Disclosure Scotland.

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

I write to object most strongly to the proposal to close Luing Primary School.

I am in total agreement with the response submitted by Luing Community Council. I wish to emphasise some points in that response, particularly in relation to inaccuracies in and omissions from Argyll & Bute Council's proposal. I have been involved in education of schoolchildren for over 20 years and in various voluntary youth activities (Duke of Edinburgh Award, Ecton field centre.)

The school on Luing has been a centre of island community life throughout my time here, and much valued. The community is already losing touch with the Easdale Primary School because of distance, ferry timetable and ferry fares. A school event on Luing would bring out many residents in support. In the same way the children are having a compromised education as their attendance at extra-curricular events and the Seil island community events are limited by the Cuan ferry and transport links and expenses.

It is sad to find a situation in which a downturn in young population on Luing is used as a pretext for closing the school, when we know that population numbers rise and fall in much longer time-scales than the Council use when it makes short term decisions about the viability of a school. This proposal seems to have the hallmarks of such financial short-termism, and not taking a considered long term view of the future of the community served by the school. This is a very serious omission in this Proposal document.

The Isle of Luing Community Trust has been striving for the past 19 years to secure a better future for the island and its community. The construction of the Atlantic Islands Centre (AIC) to provide a community hub for the islanders and the visitors, the erection of information panels for visitors, the provision of jobs for islanders in the AIC, the efforts to control shore erosion in Cullipool. Ongoing efforts on Luing focus on much-needed affordable housing and on the reopening of small-scale slate extraction, both of which need younger adults to be involved, with consequent increase in the number of families, and requirement for primary education. This Proposal sadly fail to recognise any of this progress, in spite of the community efforts to inform the Council. It feels that the community, is being ignored and dismissed as irrelevant to the Council. Several meetings on Luing with council members and officials have occurred over the past year to do with the school, yet little of the information discussed has influenced or been recognised by this Proposal document.

The Proposal document seems to be an example of a standard off-the-shelf document that ignores the specifics of the actual school and the effects of its closure on both children and community. The fact that it matches closely with earlier closure documents and was already printed well ahead of some meetings with the islanders suggest a poor piece of work.

The Proposal fails to examine and report on the negative effects on the wider community, as well as the children concerned. Recruiting for job vacancies in all the businesses (eg farming, fishing, engineering and tourism) will be made more difficult without the prospect of an island school for primary and pre-school children. Currently the sheer weekly time and expense involved in transporting children to and from Easdale School by the parents is excessive. We already have some children being home-schooled on Luing and as a professional educator I cannot in all conscience consider that to be a good alternative. There is a bus on the island and a school driver of the bus, so transporting the children to Easdale School as happened prior to 2020 is an obvious answer to a problem that the Council have created for themselves.

Reinvigorating an ageing island community with a younger population demographic is the aim of the Scottish Government, aware as it is of the problems of population decline across almost every Scottish island which led to the National Island Plan and the Islands (Scotland) Act of 2018 . I find it difficult to understand why this is not reflected in the policies of the Council, which has 23 inhabited islands within their remit. It is essential that our primary school is considered to be an essential part of an island's future.

The presence of a primary school on an island with a reasonably substantial community should be a given, and not under a threat of closure when pupil numbers fall for a few years – the school should be held in readiness (i.e. mothballed) for the time when all the efforts for re-

invigoration of the community come to fruition. We are already seeing signs of an upturn in the number of young children on the island who will require primary education in just a few years. The arbitrary number of 2 years mothballing should be removed and a decision taken to revisit in a few years more. It is not just a minor detail that Luing has had a school for over 250 years and as an island with a dynamic community it deserves to continue this tradition.

As a teacher and volunteer, I spent much time on risk assessment for children's activities in various outdoor situations (eg Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and Ecton field centre). It is clear that the risk assessments being done for transport to Easdale School are so poor as to create unnecessary hazards for the young children going to and from school on transport provided by the Council. It is difficult to believe these assessments have been properly carried out for the actual journeys as a child would experience them, (at dawn and dusk, in poor weather as well as fine), and not just as a digital exercise of ticking boxes, safe and sound within an office! The fears of the Luing parents for their young children's safety in this disconnected set of transport links are very understandable - and have been going on for two years now, without satisfactory resolution. The criteria for these risk assessments should be those set by education professionals, who understand the psychology and behaviour of children. The position of the Council on this matter is reprehensible.

I trust that all the points I have raised as well as those in the Luing Community Council report will be carefully considered and taken on board. This situation is far too serious for Luing to be dismissed as an exercise in paperwork alone.

**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** Closure of Isle of Luing School [OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** 14 September 2023 08:57:07

---

**Classification: OFFICIAL**

Good morning Brendan

Please find below.

Kind regards

Aileen

**From:** Fiona Cruickshanks <fificruickshanks@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 13 September 2023 21:39  
**To:** Argyll House Reception <argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Closure of Isle of Luing School

I am unable to download the form made available online - but I wish to make my view clear - I support all the points made on my behalf by Isle of Luing Community Council in their response. They are our community council and as such have listened and responded to our concerns on this matter.

I oppose the closing of Luing School. If the council goes ahead with this it will be the end of the community - a community that is striving. The school should be mothballed, not closed. The numbers of children from Luing are keeping Easdale School Open.

I attended the meeting in the Primary School a few days ago and wasn't impressed with the response from the education department to the questions.

This process is not easy to access - for lots of people, and so our community council and community trust have to take the lead and represent our views.

thank you

Fiona Cruickshanks

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**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

*Non public sector business i.e. does not require protection.*

**OFFICIAL**

*Routine public sector business, operations and services.*

**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

*Particularly sensitive information that can be shared on a need to know basis, where inappropriate access or release could have damaging consequences. Disclosure in response to FOISA should be verified with the data owner prior to release.*

**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE PERSONAL**

*Particularly sensitive information that can be shared on a need to know basis relating to an*

**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** Closure of Luìng Primary School [OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** 14 September 2023 08:58:02

---

Classification: OFFICIAL

Good morning Brendan

Please find below.

Kind regards

Aileen

-----Original Message-----

From: Julia Shuff <jjshuff@gmail.com>  
Sent: 13 September 2023 20:34  
To: Argyll House Reception <argyllhouwereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
Subject: Closure of Luìng Primary School

Dear Sirs,

I wish to draw your attention to my comments on parent travel time, unsafe pupil travel arrangements and community use of the school building. I refer to the Proposal Document of June 2023.

With reference to 4.14 'the effects which the proposal may have if implemented' no mention is made of the adverse impact on pupils' parents. If Luìng children continue to attend Easdale Primary School, every effort should be made by EPS to make contact with their children's school as simple and economical as possible.

Parents' evenings, Parent Council meetings, and other school events will need to be held during Cuan Ferry vehicle ferry hours. An evening event at 20:00 would necessitate the following logistics for two families who only have one car each:

Two Luìng parents take two cars to the ferry no later than 17.30; Parent A takes his car over the ferry and leaves it there; Parent A waits half an hour for the next ferry back to Luìng; Parent B takes parent A home; Later, Parent B takes parent A to the ferry; Both parents cross on the 19:30 passenger ferry; Parent A takes parent B back to the ferry after the meeting; They wait for the only other evening ferry at 22:00 and cross to Luìng; Parent B takes parent A home; The next day parent B takes parent A to the ferry; Parent A waits half an hour for the next ferry, picks up his car and drives home.

This amounts to 2.5 hours' travel for a meeting lasting an hour and a half at EPS. And a return trip on the ferry costs £8.00 for a car and a driver.

The logistics are from my experience as a parent of former Oban High School pupils when attending evening events.

Daytime events exclude many working parents.

You may consider that lengthy pupil travel time is compensated for by a superior learning experience, but do not expect the remarkably strong parent support experienced at LPS when pupils attend EPS.

The result is that parents living on Luìng are disadvantaged. During the period when LPS and EPS shared a head teacher, Seil parents attended a Parent Council meeting only once when it was held on Luìng. It is only too easy for off-island parents to feel less involved.

Item 12.3 re pupil travel. The current travel arrangements for pupils are unacceptable.

1h 30mins daily travel time is too long for a child of four and a half years, when four transfers on and off the ferry are involved. No provision is made for children wearing life jackets, and one accompanying adult can hold

only two pupils' hands when negotiating the slipways, boarding, travelling on and leaving the ferry. This is not safe. The children need to be taken from their houses to the school in a single vehicle. And yes, I realise this would be expensive for the Council, but the fact is that Argyll and Bute does have many islands and this does incur costs, but the Council cannot put their most vulnerable residents at risk.

Incidentally, when I and a parent video'ed a dummy school run calling at the houses of contemporary pupils in Toberonochy, Blackmill Bay and Cullipool, 14 years ago, with a stop of one minute for each pick-up, for the pupils to board and be supervised putting on seat belts, the total travel time to EPS was almost exactly an hour. If pupil numbers on Luing rise, the Council may find that pupil travel time exceeds its guidelines

Please also consider the arrangements that need to be put in place if Luing pupils are stranded on Seil owing to weather or ferry breakdowns.

16.1 'Travel arrangements have been in place for nearly three years'. You cannot be unaware that there are Luing parents who do not permit their children to use the current arrangements.

18.5 It is totally unrealistic to expect the local community to take over the school building. The present cost of £12,000 pa would be exceeded if the building were in regular use, as there would be additional costs such as testing fire alarms, cleaning etc. Luing already has surplus capacity: two village halls and the Atlantic Islands Centre. It cannot be realistically maintained that closing the school would benefit the community in this way.

18.12 'Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Luing. Yes, Luing residents do plan their lives round the ferry, but we are realistic and economical and limit our excursions and those of our children. The time and cost that would be involved in attending events off the island are precisely what has created the close community spirit and the plethora of island activities on Luing. I would never have come to live on Luing if I had thought my children could not go to school here.

Yours faithfully,  
Julia Shuff

Resident on Luing for 44 years,  
Parent of two pupils formerly attending LPS and OHS for a total of 15 years, Secretary to the Luing Parent Council for 17 years, Clerical Assistant at LPS for 14 years.

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**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE COMMERCIAL**

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Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

<u>Proposal</u>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.	
This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:	
Name: (please print) David G Sibbald MBE	Address: 24 Tobernochy, Luing, Argyle,
	Post Code: PA34 4UE
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: <i>David G Sibbald MBE</i>	Date: 11/09/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>		Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>	
*Other: (please specify) 2nd Home, owner			

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

I purchased a second home in Tobernochy, Luing approx. in 1990, when my youngest son was 5 years old and my eldest was 9 years old. One of the main attractions was that there was a lot of children of all ages around. The local kids were great, well mannered, respectful and we were more than happy for our boys to mix/ play with them. I am sure that for these reasons it attracted young families to Luing. One of the main reasons that attracted people and specially young families was the local school. Any sensible parent does not want their children to have to get a taxi, boat then local bus to get their kids, ages 5 - 12years, to school, in summer or winter.

So if you close the school permanently the island shall loose all its young families and also there would be no attraction for young families to want to come to Luing and bring up a family. It is already showing by the number of houses on the market and the lack of buyers, even to buy as a holiday home, like myself, who would not have bought a property on the beautiful island without knowing young people would be around. Please think very carefully before you make the harsh choice that may possibly be the disaster it looks like being.

*David G Sibbald MBE*



**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Amended letter from K Griffiths re: Luìng School closure proposal. Thank you. [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL]  
**Date:** 12 September 2023 13:57:54

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**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL**

**From:** Kathie Griffiths <kathiegriffiths66@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 12 September 2023 13:20  
**To:** Argyll House Reception <argyllhoureception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Amended letter from K Griffiths re: Luìng School closure proposal. Thank you.

I'm writing this letter as a full-time Luìng resident.

I wholly oppose Argyll and Bute Council's proposed closure of our island primary school.

I'm gobsmacked that despite the council's current proposal being riddled with errors the plan is still to submit it although we, at the public consultation meeting, were told all our remarks would be added in an appendix.

Sided in to an appendix is not acceptable.

Why would any accountable and reasonable council go ahead with submitting a proposal that includes mistakes and glaring gaps? It is unthinkable and wrong. Our community's views have been misrepresented. We are not of a mixed response about the school's future as it states. Our message is loud and clear. Save our school, mothball it longer. The proposal has not included what impact shutting the school would have on our island - our economy, our future. This is a vibrant, forward thinking, growing community. We have a development officer. We are working on more housing, creating more jobs, sustaining and nourishing ourselves, regenerating Luìng. None of this is in the council's equation but it should be. Also, we already have 2 successful halls and a visitors centre so how out of touch to suggest we could take on another community venue to run ourselves, this again shows a clear lack of understanding. We don't need another venue! We need to preserve our school building for future pupils. I appeal to the council to work with us. Luìng could be a showcase for the council - 'look how we have worked with this community and see what we have achieved together. Instead, closing the school would slam the door of opportunity in our face. So much for the Island Act. Closing the school is removing our island identity. The council's mission statement is to support and see island communities grow and thrive. Proposing to shut the school for good, rubbishes any commitment to the council's own statement.

It was heartbreaking to hear parents at the public meeting say although their children currently attend Easdale school, they are not a part of it and how they are missing out.

The council should completely review and rewrite its proposal, working properly with the community in true and accurate consultation. We have a right to be listened to - deaf ears do not count.

I was also disheartened at the September meeting by Douglas Hendry's behaviour towards respected community stalwart Norman Bissell. Three times he accused Mr Bissell who was speaking on behalf of the Save Our School campaign of being disrespectful by pointing out errors made by officers who had compiled the report. Mr Hendry's bullish tone was not what you would expect from an executive director. He did go on to unreservedly apologise to Mr Bissell if it was taken as a personal attack but it was still offensive and not healthy for community relations. I appreciate this is a side line to my main letter but felt it should be included. All this will be in the official minutes, as we were assured everything would be minutes.

Please work with us, not against us. Prove you are listening to us and that you respect our island identity.

Yours,  
Kathie Griffiths  
43 Cullipool Village

---

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**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

*Non public sector business i.e. does not require protection.*

**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Luing primary school [OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** 12 September 2023 08:12:00

---

Classification: OFFICIAL

-----Original Message-----

From: Julia Galbraith <jrgalb7@gmail.com>  
Sent: 11 September 2023 21:47  
To: Argyll House Reception <argyllhoureception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
Subject: Luing primary school

> I sincerely hope that Argyll and Bute Council will take note of the unanimous comments regarding the Isle of Luing children's access to primary education - comments given them by the residents of the Isle of Luing. There would have been a lot more people at the afternoon meeting recently if it had been held in the evening. It was ironic that parents of the children had to leave  
> before the end of the meeting because the children needed to be collected by their parents, a trip which includes a ferry crossing and takes one hour minimum. Luing school is there with school furniture etc. Please use it.  
J. Galbraith, Toberonochy, Isle of Luing

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**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE COMMERCIAL**

Commercial or market-sensitive information, including that subject to statutory or regulatory obligations, that may be damaging to Argyll and Bute Council, or to a commercial partner if improperly accessed. Disclosure in response to FOISA should be verified with the data owner prior to release.

**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Luing proposed school closure [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL]  
**Date:** 11 September 2023 16:52:55  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

---

**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL**

Good afternoon Brendan

Please see email below regarding Luing Primary School.

Kind regards

**Laura**

Laura Macleod  
Admin Assistant  
Customer Services: Education  
Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ  
Tel: 01546 604346  
Email: [Laura.MacLeod2@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.MacLeod2@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

cid:image001.png@01D88F86.80137CA0



**From:** phyllis malcolm <phyllismalcolm@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 11 September 2023 16:49  
**To:** Argyll House Reception <argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Luing proposed school closure

We fully support the luing campaign group who vehemently oppose the proposed closure of the previously very successful and thriving school on the island. At one time the heart and soul of the island extremely well supported by all islanders young and older and it's closure permanently will be a huge loss to the sense of community, ethos, future prosperity and success as a thriving developing island as the Scottish government purports to encourage and support.

The proposed closure is a backward step in the hopes to encourage lively island communities supported by local and central government. Luing is growing again in many directions.

Please allow it to be mothballed for a few more years to accommodate the rising numbers and many potential newcomers to the island .

Phyllis and Ian Malcolm  
Tapsalteerie  
Cullipool  
Isle of Luing

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**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

*Non public sector business i.e. does not require protection.*

**OFFICIAL**

*Routine public sector business, operations and services.*

**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

*Particularly sensitive information that can be shared on a need to know basis, where inappropriate access or release could have damaging consequences. Disclosure in response to FOISA should be verified with the data owner prior to release.*

**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE PERSONAL**

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**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Plans for Luing School [OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** 12 September 2023 08:12:16

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**Classification: OFFICIAL**

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**From:** Andrew and Jane Lendrum <seapath@btinternet.com>  
**Sent:** 11 September 2023 22:22  
**To:** Argyll House Reception <argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Plans for Luing School

Dear Sir,

You will have received many letters from the community of Luing who, without exception, are united in opposition to the closure of the school. We wholeheartedly support the community in this.

We have 52 years experience of living on Luing and over these years have seen a community that flourishes on account of all ages of people working together. There is a vibrancy, that is exceptional by any standard, in supporting local interests, groups and island needs. Examples are found in the support of the church, the school, the local village halls and the Atlantic Island Centre, and also in the organisations that protect the island such as the First Responders and the Fire Service personnel. What is critical for these activities that make a society cohesive is a range of ages of the people involved. Without younger people, much of this is liable to collapse. Already there is a need for younger people to become First Responders or Fire Service volunteers.

Having a mixed age of population is vital for a vibrant community like Luing and the loss of the school is a major issue in this respect. We have seen these changes take place over the years and deeply dread the longterm outcome of the school being closed. It has been such a major and important part of the community and has allowed younger people with young children to be part of it. Thereby we feel it is critical for the future of the community on Luing that the school is kept open, as a result of which younger people will continue to want to live and work on Luing.

Yours sincerely  
Dr and Mrs Andrew Lendrum

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**OFFICIAL**

*Routine public sector business, operations and services.*

**From:** [Argyll House Reception](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Proposed closure of Luing School "Consultation" [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL]  
**Date:** 13 September 2023 08:07:45

---

**Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL**

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**From:** ianlaw379 <ianlaw379@btinternet.com>  
**Sent:** 12 September 2023 18:12  
**To:** Argyll House Reception <argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Proposed closure of Luing School 'Consultation'

Argyll and Bute council has failed to engage with the people of Luing. If you close the school you will discourage young families from living on Luing. Is this your secret agenda? Do you want to depopulate the island? The provision for transporting primary school children to Easdale is inadequate and dangerous. We do not have school age children, but have watched this debacle from the side lines with despair.

Ian and Jane Law.  
Kinloch, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, Oban, PA34 4UB.

---

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**From:** [Margaret](#)  
**To:** [Docherty, Brendan](#)  
**Subject:** FWD: Education Incident  
**Date:** 13 September 2023 09:26:19  
**Attachments:** [raw message.mht](#)

Forwarded By: Margaret - [Margaret.Mcgeachy@customerservices.argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Margaret.Mcgeachy@customerservices.argyll-bute.gov.uk)



## Subject

### Education Incident

#### Primary Contact Information:

First Name: Angela  
Last Name: McLeod  
Organisation (if applicable):  
Email Address: [angelamcleod84@btinternet.com](mailto:angelamcleod84@btinternet.com)  
Home Phone: 01852314183  
Mobile Phone: No value  
Contact Address:

Address	Post Code
Ardinamir, Luing, Oban, PA34 4UD	PA34 4UD

#### Secondary Contact Information:

Enquiry about the above Contact was made by:

The only contact associated with this incidents is the primary contact.

#### Incident Reference # 230912-000758

Assigned: Margaret McGeachy  
Date Created: 12/09/2023 07.01 PM  
Date Last Updated: 13/09/2023 09.25 AM  
Status: Passed to Service for Resolution

Incident Address: No address found - this incident does not have a full address associated to it.

#### Note By (Margaret) (13/09/2023 09.25 AM)

Hi

Please see email received by CSC. Please reply direct to customer using the attached contact details.

Many Thanks  
CSC

#### Customer By Service Email (Angela McLeod) (12/09/2023 07.01 PM)

Dear Sirs, I have been a resident of Luing for fifteen years and was involved with the last prevention of the island school closure.

The arguments for keeping the school for the future of the island are quite simple.

Without a school, Luing cannot expect to attract younger families to move here. This is particularly important at the moment when a great deal of development of different kinds is expected. There will be no young people for the jobs which will be created. This would jeopardise several projects now in progress.

The school is NOT in bad condition and could affordably be restored to the required standard. Luing residents are particularly good at helping with this kind of situation.

IF, as is hoped, the school is mothballed, it would make sense to use it for childrens' projects. To my knowledge, all Luing residents are in favour of this.

Lastly, and most importantly, the welfare of the children transported daily to Easdale school is at risk. The time taken for travel, the early starts and late returns home are NOT acceptable. I have four children and eleven grandchildren and would never have accepted such a situation.

I very much hope that the Council will re-consider any decision to close the school on Luing. Monetary considerations should not be paramount where children are concerned.....Angela McLeod

Angela McLeod

[angelamcleod84@btinternet.com](mailto:angelamcleod84@btinternet.com)

01852 314 183

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This email has been scanned for viruses, vandals and malicious content.

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Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.  
 The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print) <i>Patricia Felton</i>	Address: <i>Thundergay Cullipool Oban</i>
Post Code: <i>PA34 4TX</i>	

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: <i>PA Felton</i>	Date: <i>13.9.23</i>
-----------------------------	----------------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

\*Other: (please specify) *Luing Resident*

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

*Please continue to mothball our school until it can be reopened.*



Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luìng Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luìng Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)

Alastair Fleming

Address:

23 Cullipool, Isle of Luìng

Post Code: PA34 4UB

I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature:

*D. L. Fleming*

Date: 6/8/23

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify) Luìng resident, 20 years. Director of the Scottish Islands Federation. Former Chairman of the Isle of Luìng Community Trust.

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

I write to object most strongly to the proposal to close Luìng Primary School.

I am in total agreement with the response submitted by Luìng Community Council. I wish to emphasise some points in that response, particularly in relation to inaccuracies in and omissions from Argyll & Bute Council's proposal. I have been involved in education of schoolchildren for over 40 years, and in previous school closure considerations.

The school on Luìng has been a centre of island community life throughout my time here, and much valued. It is sad to find a situation in which a downturn in young population is used as a

pretext for closing the school when we know that population numbers rise and fall in much longer timescales than the Council use to make shorter term decisions about school viability. It is a commonly recognised failing of governments at all levels that they tend to take a short term view governed by the approach of the next election, and this proposal seems to have the hallmarks of such financial short-termism, and not taking a considered long term view of the future of the community served by the school. This is a very serious omission in this Proposal document.

The Isle of Luing Community Trust has been striving against many odds for the past 19 years to secure a better future for the island and its community. This has taken years of time and effort by the community, and one by one the successes for such effort have fallen into place, namely the construction of the Atlantic Islands Centre (AIC), the erection of information panels for visitors, the provision of jobs for islanders in the AIC, the efforts to control shore erosion in Cullipool. Ongoing efforts focus on much-needed affordable housing and on reopening of small-scale slate extraction, both of which need younger adults to be involved, with consequent increase in the number of families, and requirement for primary education. This Proposal sadly fail to recognise any of this progress, in spite of the community efforts to inform the Council. It simply feels that we, as the community, are being ignored and dismissed as irrelevant to the Council. Several meetings with council members and officials have occurred over the past few years, yet little of the information we have supplied has influenced or been recognised by the Proposal document.

The Proposal document seems to be an example of a standard off-the-shelf document that ignores the specifics of the actual school and the effects of its closure on both children and community. It signally fails to examine and report the negative effects on the wider community. Recruiting for job vacancies in farming, fishing, engineering and tourism will be made seriously more difficult without the prospect of an island community school.

Reinvigorating an ageing island community with a younger population demographic is the aim of the Scottish Government, aware as it is of the problems of population decline across almost every Scottish island which led to the National Island Plan and the Islands (Scotland) Act of 2018 . I find it difficult to understand why this is not reflected in the policies of the Council. The presence of a primary school on an island with a reasonably substantial community should be a given, and not under a threat of closure when pupil numbers fall for a few years – the school should be held in readiness (i.e. mothballed) for the time when all the efforts for re-invigation of the community come to fruition. We are already seeing signs of an upturn in the number of young children on the island who will require primary education in just a few years.

As a teacher and teacher trainer, I spent much time on risk assessment for pupil activities in various situations. It is clear that the risk assessments being done for pupil transport to Easdale School are so poor as to create unnecessary hazards for the pupils going to and from school by transport provided by the Council. It is difficult to believe these assessments have been properly carried out for the actual journeys as pupils would experience them, and not just as paper exercises. The fears of parents about this situation are very understandable, and the criteria for these assessments should be those set by education people, not transport people. As an example, if a 5-year old child running up the ferry slipway were to trip and fall in the water en route to or from school, the tragedy could put the Council in very hot water and much disgrace. Has this actually been risk-assessed?



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that: Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: (please print) Address: 60 Easdale Island Post Code: PA34 4TB

I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: (signed) BA DOUGHTY-GODCHAUX Date: 11-9-23

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent [X] Child / Young Person [ ] Staff [ ] Other \* [ ]

Elected Member / MSP / MP [ ] Member of Community Council [ ]

\*Other: (please specify)

Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary) I feel that the Luing School should not be permanently closed until there is an agreement that addresses the concerns of the community council and the families with children on Luing. As a parent in the community, watching families struggle to homeschool children because of lack of on-island transport while a council vehicle was available to transport children but was left unused was senseless and pretty shocking. Knowing that on Easdale, we are provided reasonable provision to attend the Parent and Carer Forum (parent council) because our ferry runs an amenable timetable, that we can easily, time-efficiently and without cost transport our

**children to school and home again with (again) an amenable timetable for the ferry & with the cost being taken care of without a battle on our parts exposes the discrepancy in provision, even between two neighbouring islands. The Luing community hasn't had the consultation that any community should expect, to be listened to and to have concerns reasonably addressed, but particularly an island community with additional protections for being on an island. The Luing families and this community deserve a fair chance to be supported to support their children and the life and survival of the community. It is the council's duty, literally and ethically.**

Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Names: (please print)

Colin Buchanan  
Vice convener Luing Community Council

Address:

Scaraben  
Cullipool  
Isle of Luing

Post Code: PA34 4UB

We agree that our responses can be made publicly available

Signature:

Date:

12/09/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify)

Board Member and Chair of Isle of Luing Community Trust

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

**The attached** document is expressing my personal views as a Luing Community Councillor and as Chairman of the Isle of Luing Community Trust on the effects of proposed closure on travelling arrangements.

**SUBMISSION BY COLIN BUCHANAN, VICE CONVENER, LUING COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND CHAIRMAN, ISLE OF LUING COMMUNITY TRUST ON THE LIKELY EFFECT OF THE PROPOSED CLOSING OF LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ISLAND COMMUNITY**

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

I am writing to oppose the proposed closure of Luing Primary School and I am asking the committee to properly consider the economic, social and community benefit of continuing to mothball our school until our extensive development plans start to deliver and we can work to reopen the primary school.

As other residents, parents and community organisations have done, I would point out that the closure report has significant inaccuracies and omissions concerning the likely effect on the local community. I fully endorse the submissions by our Trust Secretary, Mary Whitmore and our Community Council Secretary, Mary Braithwaite and urge the committee members to read and take on board the evidence presented.

The process of mothballing Luing Primary School and the preparation of proposals to close the only school on the Isle of Luing have been undertaken without any apparent interest in supporting the community to identify, address and mitigate the likely effects of any closure. We are merely told that it will be good for us to take on the school building, this on an island of 179 residents with three existing community hubs!

At the meeting with councillors and officials on September 4<sup>th</sup> I raised, along with others, our deep concern that there is little consideration given to the Isle of Luing children and parents being offered the same level of service that other children on the mainland and Seil island are receiving from this proposal.

The fact is that Luing children access school via a ferry and that the current transport arrangements to attend Easdale Primary School are unsuitable as outlined in detail in the Community Council submission. But more than that, the limitations of the ferry timetable, winter schedule in particular, mean that parents, friends, and family cannot easily take part in out of hours school events and activities. This is a permanent disadvantage to Luing children compared to their fellow pupils at Easdale Primary School. In addition, there is reference to ferry disruption in section 12.3 however no consideration is given to disruptive ferry events that could strand young children on Seil, unable to get back to Luing! This proposal does not consider fully the impact on the service offered to Luing Children and their families. As one parent said, 'my child attends Easdale Primary School they are not part of Easdale Primary School'.

It is my opinion that if continued mothballing does not take place, then damage will be done to our development plans that may be irreparable. Families and young people will be discouraged from moving to or remaining on Luing with an impact on businesses and employment on the island. Investment and economic growth will be made significantly more difficult. The population average age will increase and social support services such as volunteer fire service, ambulance service and First Responders will be unsustainable.



Section 18 of the proposal document outlines the ‘special regard’ that should be given to four key areas of importance to rural communities:

- A strong and diverse rural economy, harnessing traditional strengths and with an appetite for change.
- Thriving rural communities where everyone can enjoy a decent quality of life.
- where the young are not forced to leave their communities to get on and where the vulnerable are no longer excluded.
- Strong, community focused public services that are accessible, of the highest possible quality and with the greatest possible choice.
- A rural Scotland whose natural and cultural heritage flourishes in all its diversity.

Argyll and Bute Council’s Priorities for 2022 to 2027 align well with these principles

***‘We have a vision for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy’***


I would urge the committee to show that the strategy is more than just a slogan. Supporting the underlying infrastructure so it is available for future growth is essential.

***‘A place where people want to come to live, to work and to do business as a result of action to combat and reverse decline.’***

Luìng can be one of those places, but action is needed and mothballing Luìng School would be a positive action and investment in Argyll’s future.

***‘We see the potential for thriving local economies that support our rich mix of remote, rural and island communities.’***

I would urge councillors to understand Isle of Luìng’s future growth potential by looking at all the facts and submissions. Supporting that potential and by extending mothballing of Luìng Primary School and giving us the opportunity to grow our island community.



Colin Buchanan

Scaraben

Cullipool

Isle of Luìng

PA34 4UB

Email: [colin@isleofluing.org](mailto:colin@isleofluing.org)

Mob: 07712492124



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: (please print)
Cllr Julie McKenzie

Address: Ward 5 - Oban North and Lorn
c/o Kilmory Castle
Lochgilphead

Post Code: PA318RT

I agree that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: J McKenzie

Date: 13/09/2023

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent [checkbox] Child / Young Person [checkbox] Staff [checkbox] Other \* [checkbox]

Elected Member / MSP / MP



Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify)

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

I wish to submit my formal opposition to the proposed closure of Luing Primary School.

Having received much representation from islanders on Luing over the proposed closure of the school, and having grown up and been educated myself on the neighbouring Isle of Seil, I am acutely aware of the issues and challenges being faced by this fragile; yet proactive; resilient and growing island community.

It is also incumbent upon us that we as policy and decision makers abide by the legislation set out by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

The direction for policy makers contained within the Island communities impact assessments guidance and toolkit is abundantly clear;

*'This guidance provides the tools to help you complete an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) as required under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 (the Act). In particular, this guidance is about the Section The 7 duty of the Act according to which a Relevant Authority must have regard to island communities in carrying out its functions.*

*This guidance stresses the importance of consultation and robust community engagement so that islanders are given a platform to voice their opinions, concerns and suggestions. It also addresses the need to consult island communities in order for a Relevant Authority to comply with the Section 7 duty. It's important to also note that the Act (Section 11) requires that a Relevant Authority must have regard to this guidance.*

*Our islands face particular challenges around distance, geography, connectivity and demography, so it is important that policy makers consider these properly. It is also important that you make sure islands receive fair and equitable treatment and that your policy, strategy or service outcomes are tailored to their unique circumstances.'*

I therefore continue to advocate in the strongest terms for the continued mothballing of Luing Primary School, with a view to Argyll and Bute Council and The Scottish Government working in partnership with community stakeholders, to implement an urgent Island Communities Impact Assessment on the single issue of the proposed closure of the school.

The representation which I have received to date also clearly demonstrates to me the requirement for the Council to take part in, and progress further strategic work on the Isle of Luing, as per the objectives set out in the National Islands Plan, in order to safeguard and futureproof the island and her people.



**Argyll and Bute Council Education**

**RESPONSE FORM**

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<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print) LINDA AND MARTIN LEGGETT	Address: 1 FLADDA, ISLE OF LUING
	Post Code: PA34 4UA
I agree/ <del>do not agree</del> (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: Linda Leggett Martin Leggett	Date: 29/8/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>		
*Other: (please specify) Members of Luing community and parents of 2 former Luing Primary pupils			

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

We disagree with the proposal to close Luing Primary School. We agree that the school should continue to be mothballed, until such time that there are sufficient nursery/primary numbers to attend. This will happen in the near future and it would be very shortsighted to close the building permanently when there will be educational need in the near future. Closing the school permanently will only add to the unsustainability of our island community, something that everyone is working hard to maintain.

Luing Primary building is in good condition, and would not need to have much money spent on maintenance to keep it up and running.

Having supported and helped with the previous campaign to keep Luing Primary open in 2010, which was successful, we do not want to see this vital service come to an end unnecessarily.



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luig Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luig Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Names: (please print) Mary Braithwaite, LCC Secretary; Mary Whitmore, IoLCT Secretary; Address: c/o Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luig; Post Code: PA34 4TX

We agree that our responses can be made publicly available

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]; Date: 12/09/2023

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent [ ], Child / Young Person [ ], Staff [ ], Other \* [ ]

Elected Member / MSP / MP [ ]; Member of Community Council [x]

\*Other: (please specify) Mary Whitmore, Board Member and Secretary of Isle of Luig Community Trust

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

Amended document attached expressing the views of Luig Community Council and the Isle of Luig Community Trust on the effects of proposed closure on travelling arrangements. Please replace the document on travelling arrangements sent yesterday with this final version.

# **CONSULTATION ON ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL FOR Luing PRIMARY SCHOOL: SUBMISSION BY Luing COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND ISLE OF Luing COMMUNITY TRUST CONCERNING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

## Preamble

Luing Community Council's previous submission dated July 21 2023, in response to Argyll & Bute Council's Proposal for Luing Primary School, already outlined significant omissions with respect to travel arrangements. Subsequent to this Argyll & Bute Council has proposed an improved travel arrangement for primary school children from Luing attending curricular activities at Easdale Primary School. Nonetheless there are still significant problems concerning travel arrangements, which leave pupils, parents and the wider Luing community at a major disadvantage compared to those on Seil and which amount to unequal opportunities of access, with an inevitable impact on the quality and inclusivity of the educational opportunities for young children on Luing.

This response from Luing's two principal community organisations - Luing Community Council (LCC) and the Isle of Luing Community Trust (IoLCT) - outlines the key problems, which must be satisfactorily addressed in order to ensure that young children on Luing are given the same opportunities to access education as young people on mainland Scotland. Parents of primary and pre-school pupils have been involved in preparing this response.

Travel arrangements are evidently a particular challenge for an island. This is recognised by the Islands (Scotland) Act, which requires responsible authorities to 'make sure islands receive fair and equitable treatment and that...policy, strategy or service outcomes are tailored to their unique circumstances'. Strategic Objective 12 of Islands Act includes: Ensure that young people are given the same opportunities to access education as young people on mainland Scotland. An island communities impact assessment (ICIA) is also required. Furthermore, Section 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) 2010 Act, states that 'When carrying out its review of the proposal under section 9(1), the education authority is to carry out...an assessment, in relation to any other reasonable alternative to the proposal suggested in written representations on the proposal, of (iii) the likely effect that would be caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required (assessed in accordance with section 12(5)) in consequence of such implementation.' Section 12(5) states that the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, and that the assessment should address the effect caused by such travelling arrangements, including (in particular) (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, and (ii) any environmental impact.

A ferry across Cuan Sound, operated by the Council, is the only transport link between Luing and Seil and the mainland. Apart from a 12-week extended summer timetable, most of which coincides with the school summer holiday period, a more limited winter timetable is in operation. The current ferry and timetables are in Appendix 1.

On the island, the Council provides a minibus (currently replaced temporarily by a 7-seater car, whose driver's window does not function) driven by a Council employee, which is used to transport high school pupils between home and the ferry terminal at South Cuan on Luing, and is also used as a community shopping bus for elderly residents without their own transport. On Seil and the mainland, the Council contracts West Coast Motors to operate a public bus service which doubles as a service bus for school pupils; this has a connection between the North Cuan ferry terminal and Ellenabeich.

### **1. Travelling arrangements for pre-school pupils**

Currently, parents provide transport for pre-school children attending Easdale School. The Council covers the cost of one return journey per day attended, £8 for the ferry ticket and £2.76 for the mileage. However, two return journeys have to be made each day, costing the parents an additional £10.76 for each day attended. Moreover, each return journey takes on average 75 minutes assuming no significant delays or long waits for the ferry, ie 2½ hours travelling each day. This is evidently considerably longer than any parent on Seil or the mainland will spend taking their child to and from Easdale school. This is, needless to say, a significant amount of time and money that any parent on Luing has to spend to enable their young child to participate in pre-school education. If a child is sick at school or there is a problem with the ferry due to breakdown or weather conditions, it is evidently not easy for parents to suddenly arrange or re-arrange transport; this is made worse by an unreliable system for communicating information about ferry delays or cancellations to parents.

These arrangements and their likely effects on pupils and parents are entirely omitted in the Council's Proposals for Luing School, and should be addressed.

### **2. Travelling arrangements for primary-school pupils**

Prior to the mothballing of Luing Primary School, primary-school children were provided with a door-to-door service run by the Council with a minibus and driver based on the island. Following the mothballing decision, primary-school children were expected to undertake two unsafe and arduous journeys each day in all weather conditions involving minibus, ferry and public bus and dangerous walks on ferry ramps with no barriers and in an environment of moving vehicles including commercial vans, lorries and agricultural machines. To mothball the island school and impose such unacceptable travel arrangements on Luing pupils demonstrates an extraordinary lack of care and concern towards children, parents and the wider community. Luing Community Council's previous submission to the consultation on the Proposal dated July 21 2023 outlines the problems with the arrangements.

Parents were understandably unwilling for their young children to be exposed to the risks posed by this arrangement, and have been obliged to organise transport at their own expense, which has been costly, time-consuming and stressful. In effect, the unacceptability of the travel arrangements benefited the Council's budget and passed the costs on to the parents. Attempts by parents and the Community Council – since September 2021 - to highlight the risks and problems of the Council's arrangements have been met with responses lacking any empathy and understanding, merely insisting that the transport arrangements are



safe and legally compliant (the latter highlighting the fact that the legislation takes no account of island situations). As no alternative arrangements had been proposed at the time of drafting the Proposal document, the effect of these travel arrangements should have been thoroughly assessed. The Council had ample information from parents and the community to enable this assessment to be undertaken.

In recent months there have been more considerate responses by the Council's transport officers and Councillors, and new proposals have been made.

#### **a. Participation in curricular activities**

In mid-June 2023, a meeting on Luing with Argyll & Bute Council's transport officers and Councillors, parents and Luing Community Council discussed how to improve the travelling arrangements for the primary-school children attending Easdale school. The first proposal made by the Council, in response to the request by parents for a door-to-door service, would have required the community to provide a driver to drive the children between Luing and Easdale using the island minibus; however, Luing community does not have the resources to employ a driver, or organise volunteer drivers, for a task involving two return journeys each day and a total of 25-hours per week.

A week before the Autumn return, the Council made the current proposal, which entails primary-school pupils being picked up from home by the Council's minibus and driver, taken over on the ferry and transferred from the minibus to the public/service bus at North Cuan, for onward travel to Easdale school. In the afternoon this journey will be repeated in reverse. This is accepted as a significant improvement on the previous proposals, and it is essential that, should Luing School continue to be mothballed or closed, these proposed travelling arrangements are available into the future, so that current and future parents can be assured of reliable transport between home and school. This is the absolute minimum that is acceptable to parents, given the relative time and complexity of their journey compared to other pupils at Easdale school.

However, the parents are greatly concerned about the use of a public bus by very young children for the journey between North Cuan and Easdale as the bus is used by adults as well as children and there is no chaperone on the bus to ensure the protection of children and manage challenging behaviour by some children. Abductions, attacks and aggressive and offensive behaviour do happen, even in rural areas and islands, and the concerns of parents must not be ignored. The driver is driving the bus and cannot also be responsible at the same time for monitoring, and responding if necessary to, the behaviour of the passengers, young or old. Given these concerns and the young age of the current primary school children, the travel arrangements are not being used this year. However, it is the intention of parents to make use of these arrangements in the future – and as early as 2024 – if sufficient safeguarding measures can be taken.

The parents are rightly concerned to ensure that the travel arrangements are as safe as they possibly can be for young children, including the wearing by all passengers of seat belts. Making the two daily services (09.15 from N Cuan, and 15.33 from Ellenabeich) into a

dedicated school bus would address a major concern. The provision of a chaperone on the bus is another option that should be considered.

There are other omissions in the Council's Proposal concerning travelling arrangements for primary-school pupils attending Easdale school, which also need to be addressed. Travel from and to an island in all seasons and weather conditions inevitably means additional risks, and additional measures to mitigate these risks. The Cuan ferry is 53 years old and while its reliability has been good, the Council itself is concerned about how long this can be maintained. The ferry does break down from time to time, and sometimes has to stop running at very low tide or when there are strong southerly winds; not all these can be predicted. A reliable system for rapidly communicating information to parents about potential travel delays or cancellations concerning the public/service bus and the ferry must be put in place, so that timely measures can be taken to provide alternative transport if needed. If the ferry stops running there is no way of either getting the children to school, or getting them home again; reliable procedures are needed to deal with this.

#### **b. Participation in extra-curricular activities**

Another major omission in the travelling arrangements is that no provision has been made to enable Luing children to participate in extra-curricular activities. The ferry timetable severely limits the participation of Luing children in after-school sessions or other activities, with the consequence that Luing children are not offered the same opportunities as Seil children.

### **3. Parents**

Argyll & Bute Council has rightly emphasised in its policies and priorities the importance of parental engagement and participation, and has committed to developing and strengthening these. It recognises the key role of Parents Councils, and is *inter alia* committed to ensuring that 'all parents will be welcomed and actively encouraged to become involved with and participate in the life and work of the school and early years' establishment' and that 'schools and early years' establishments will identify and reduce potential barriers to parents becoming involved with the life and the work of the school'. The Council's Proposal on Luing School omits entirely the travelling arrangements that are needed in order for parents to participate in the life and the work of Easdale school, most particularly evening meetings.

For nine months of the year, it is not currently possible for parents to participate in evening meetings at Easdale as the last vehicle ferry is at 6pm. It is exceptionally important that this omission is remedied as this affects the parents and the pupils, excluding them from key opportunities and discriminating against them compared to parents and pupils on Seil. In addressing this omission, it is also important that the Proposal assesses the extra cost of using the ferry to participate in meetings at Easdale, and considers the reimbursement of travel costs (ferry and mileage) incurred by Luing parents; without such a measure Luing parents will be placed at a disadvantage compared to Seil parents and hindered from participating.

#### **4. The wider Luìng community**

Argyll & Bute Council is already aware of the limitations of the ferry timetable concerning community engagement and consultation. Point 86 of the Statutory Guidance for the 2010 Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that 'for the convenience of consultees and other interested parties, the public meeting should take place outwith normal/office working hours'. In contravention of this, the Council's Consultation Meeting on Luìng was arranged on September 4<sup>th</sup> at 1.30pm. As explained at the meeting, this timing was for the convenience of Council officers and councillors as the last vehicle ferry is at 6pm. There are two passenger ferries at 7.30pm and 10pm that could have been booked; if the Council had requested lifts on the island, as is done for Ward Councillors attending evening LCC meetings, the LCC would have been happy to arrange this.

Partnership working with communities is identified by Argyll & Bute Council in its education strategies and priorities, but has yet to be implemented in practice and is an omission in its Proposal on Luìng School. If Luìng children are to continue to attend Easdale school then it is essential that there is active engagement between the school and the wider Luìng community and its community groups, and that the limitations and costs of the ferry service are taken into account. These aspects are currently omitted from the Council's report, in spite of the requirement to assess the likely effect of travelling arrangements on 'any other users of the school's facilities'.

#### **5. Environmental impact**

The current omissions in travel arrangements mean an overuse of private cars to ensure that pre- and primary-school children from Luìng participate in education at Easdale school. Three sets of parents have both pre- and primary-aged children, the former requiring two return journeys by private car for each day the pre-school child attends Easdale school. The environmental impact is far greater than if the children attended a school on Luìng. The parents do not want to continue to use their own cars, for reasons of cost, time and environmental impact. It makes very good environmental sense to use public transport wherever possible, but this must also be safe and secure for young children. A community e-bus service, able to provide door-to-door transport for pre- and primary-aged children between home and school and to provide other transport services for Luìng's community, is an ideal future option.

Finally, we share the Council's aspiration for an inclusive education for all Luìng children and for equal access by pupils, parents and community regardless of where they live. Safe and affordable travelling arrangements are a fundamental part of ensuring equal access to educational opportunities, especially given Luìng's island status. Remedying the current omissions in the Council's proposal is essential, by making a thorough assessment of the likely effects – on pupils, parents and the wider community - caused by the very different travelling arrangements involved in accessing school facilities off the island compared to on the island.

*Luìng Community Council, Isle of Luìng Community Trust and parents - September 11 2023*

## Appendix 1: Cuan Ferry and Winter and Summer Ferry Timetables



**Aerial photo of Cuan ferry on a quiet Sunday**  
courtesy of Luing Community Councillor Iain Cruickshanks.  
Isle of Luing in the foreground, Isle of Seil beyond, mainland in distance.

**Cuan Ferry winter timetable**  
**CUAN FERRY TERMINAL: 01852 300252**



**From Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023 to Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024**

**Monday to Saturday**

Depart Isle of Seil		Depart Isle of Luing	
0745		0730	
0800		0750	
0815		0805	
0845		0820	
0900 **	A - See note below	0850	
0915		0905 **	A - See note below
0945		0920	
1000		0950	Bus*
		1005	
Then every half hour until		Then every half hour until	
1200		1205	
1215		1220	
1230	See note below	1235	
<b>Break for lunch</b>		<b>Break for lunch</b>	Commences on completion of 1235 hours sailing
1330		1335	
Then every half hour until		Then every half hour until	1435 to meet Bus*
1730		1735	
1745		1750	Bus*
1800		1805	Last vehicle ferry to Seil
1815	Last vehicle ferry to Luing		
1930	B	1935	B
2200	B	2205	B
1930	Friday & Saturday Passenger Ferry only	1935	Friday & Saturday Passenger Ferry only
2000		2005	
2100		2105	
2200		2205	
2230		2235	

Bus\* - use this ferry to meet  
up with the service bus

**Note:** Single crossing only at 12:30hrs with any traffic in excess of vessel capacity crossing on next scheduled run at 13:30hrs.

**SUNDAY**

**Vehicle ferry**

Seil depart	Luing depart
1100	1105
1130	1135
1200	1205
1230	1235
1300	1305
1500	1505
1530	1535
1600	1605
1630	1635
1700	1705
1730	1735
1800	1805

Sunday service – car ferry all day from 1100 to 1805. No service between 1300 and 1500

No after-hours sailings are available on Sunday

A - \*\*Monday to Friday during school term only

B – Passenger only service is available on request for 1930 or 2200 sailing Monday to Thursday – to be booked before 12noon on the day of travel, 01852 300252





## Cuan Ferry Summer Timetable – Monday to Saturday

From Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2023

### Vehicle Ferry

Depart Isle of Seil		Depart Isle of Luing **	** vehicles to arrive a minimum of 5 minutes prior to sailing time
		0730	
0745		0750	
0800		0805	
0815		0820	
0845		0850	
0900 **	See note below	0905 **	See note below
0915		0920	
0945		0950	Bus*
1000		1005	
Then every half hour until		Then every half hour until	
1200		1205	
1215		1220	
1230		1235	See note below
<b>BREAK FOR LUNCH</b>		<b>BREAK FOR LUNCH</b>	<b>Commences on completion of 1235 hours sailing</b>
1330		1335	
Then every half hour until		Then every half hour until	1435 to meet Bus*
1730		1735	
1745		1750	Bus*
1800		1805	
1820			
1930	Mon – Sat	1935	Mon – Sat
2000	Mon – Sat	2005	Mon – Sat
2100	Mon – Sat	2105	Mon – Sat
2200	Mon – Sat	2205	Mon – Sat
2230	Fri & Sat only	2235	Fri & Sat only

Bus\* - use this ferry to meet up with the service bus

Note: Single crossing only at 12:30hrs with any traffic in excess of vessel capacity crossing on next scheduled run at 13:30hrs.

\*\* Monday to Friday during school term only

### SUNDAY SERVICE

**Car ferry all day from 1100 to 1805. No service between 1300 and 1500**

No after-hours sailings are available on Sunday

CUAN FERRY TERMINAL: 01852 300252

Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

Bute

<u>Proposal</u>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print)  NORMAN BISSELL	Address: 51 CULLIPOOL, ISLE OF LUING OBAN, ARGYLL  Post Code: PA34 4UB
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available I AGREE	
Signature: Norman Bissell	Date: 12 September 2023
Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>
*Other: (please specify) I am a Luing resident since 2007.	

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

1 Please don't close Luing Primary School.

2 Please continue to mothball our school until it can be reopened.

3 The procedure followed in the proposal document of June 2023 by the Argyll and Bute Council Executive Director with responsibility for Education is seriously flawed and its proposal should not be approved by the Council's Community Services Committee or by Scottish Government Ministers for the following reasons:

4 The Council has failed to engage with Luing Community Council, the Isle of Luing Community Trust or the people of Luing in any meaningful way regarding its proposal and has ignored and gone against the overwhelming views it has received from them.

5 The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* defines to 'consult' as to 'discuss something with someone, especially in order to get their approval or permission.' The Council has not got the approval or permission of the Luing community to close Luing Primary School. The Executive Director decided in advance on his preferred outcome of closing the school and skewed his proposal document to justify that decision. The Council went through the motions of consulting the community but it was a sham consultation since none of the views it received were taken on board.

6 The Director's proposal document has serious omissions which should have been considered prior to a decision being taken. For example, it fails to mention the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the National Plan for Scotland's Islands 2019 and subsequent guidance which require Councils to have regard to island communities in carrying out their functions. It fails to consider seriously and to reflect in a meaningful way the views of the Luing community.

7 The Council did not conduct an Island Communities Impact Assessment which would have shown that closing Luing Primary School permanently would negatively impact on the Island Development Plan of the Isle of Luing Community Trust which includes economic development, affordable housing and a net zero project to make the island more self-sufficient in food production. Closing Luing Primary School permanently would also adversely affect the viability of the island's businesses, and the sustainability of community services and facilities which require more people of working age residing on Luing.

8 Over 30 people have come to live on Luing since 2019 including 4 families with 7 children between the ages of 6 months and 7 years. Closing the school permanently could lead to some of these families leaving Luing and would discourage other young families from coming to live on the island, thereby adversely affecting the many services and businesses on Luing which require more working age staff. As the joint owner of Luing Stores and Post Office (the only one on the island), I am very concerned that closing the school permanently could lead to a lack of available staff to work in the shop in the future.

9 Luing Primary School is being treated less favourably than Skipness Primary School on the Kintyre mainland which was mothballed for 6 years before being closed in December 2022. It is also being treated less favourably than 3 other Argyll schools whose consultation meetings are being held in the evenings whereas the Luing meeting was held at 1.30 pm on 4 September when residents with jobs could not attend. The Council's representatives at the public meeting on 4 September 2023 said this was because of their need to catch the Council ferry before 6 pm, but they were unaware that the Council's ferry could cross at 7.30pm and 10 pm if it was ordered before 12 noon that day.

10 The Director's proposal document contains false or misleading information which has adversely affected the process of decision making by the Council. For example, Paras 2.2, 4.3 and 6.2 omit the fact that in June 2022 there were 15.49 FTE vacancies for both headteachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute and that by June 2023 the recruitment position had improved significantly to 8.59 FTE. The reason why teachers



have not applied for headships and joint headships in small schools is because of the unreasonable form-filling workload imposed on headteachers by the Council which teachers have complained about for many years.

11 Paras 4.2 and 4.13.3: No evidence is presented that the Luings building is deteriorating, or will continue to deteriorate, and in fact it remains in good condition.

12 Para 3.3 and 3.9 There were many requests by the Luings community to use the school in 2022-2023, including for weekly children's activities over the summer of 2023, but the Council put obstacles in the way of this and then said there was a lack of use of the mothballed school.

13 Paras 3.6 and 3.8 refer to 'mixed views of local residents' and 'a range of viewpoints' when in fact almost all Luings residents favoured continued mothballing of the school not closing it. This was clearly shown at the large public meeting on 4 September 2023 which was reported on the front page of the Oban Times of 7 September 2023 under the headline "Loud and clear message: save our school".

14 Para 5.1 and 8.2: Predicted roll: There would be 7 not 6 children attending Luings Primary School by 2028.

15 Para 6.2 and 12.3: There have been very few Luings ferry cancellations and closures of the school over the years compared to ferry cancellations to other islands. Any ferry cancellations and school closures would have a greater adverse impact on children if they were permanently attending Easdale Primary School since they could be stranded on Seil for hours.

16 Paras 7.2, 18.5, 18.10 and 18.11 The community already has responsibility for maintaining two Village Halls, the Church and the Atlantic Islands Centre and no one, or community body, has expressed interest in taking on the burden of another building. There are no 'local plans for the future of the building.' Para 18.5 is particularly patronising and insulting since the Luings community has already exhibited significant 'community confidence in making Luings a resilient place to live', not least in raising £1.3 million to build the Atlantic Islands Centre which opened in 2015 and in its campaign against the Council's damaging school closure procedures and decisions.

17 Para 8.10 misleads regarding the views of residents when in fact almost all asked for the School to continue to be mothballed until it could be reopened.

18 Paras 10.2 and 10.3 There would be far less parental and community engagement with Easdale Primary School than with Luings Primary School because of ferry timetables, thereby disadvantaging Luings children and their parents. At the public meeting on 4 September 2023, several parents with children attending Easdale Primary School said that their children were disadvantaged by attending Easdale Primary School in that they felt that 'they are not part of it' because neither their children nor themselves could attend extra-curricular activities, attend evening meetings or PTAs at the school.

19 Para 16.1 Three families have been transporting their children to Easdale and Kilninver Primary Schools since 2020 because of the unsafe transport arrangements without a risk assessment imposed on their children by the Council. This has cost them approx. £1000 annually in additional ferry fares + fuel costs. Despite many meetings involving Council and Luings representatives, this situation has still not been resolved.

20 The Executive Director's proposal to close Luings Primary School permanently is not fair or reasonable, it provides few good reasons for doing so and clearly goes against the expressed wishes of the people of Luings.

21 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 contains a presumption against closure of a rural school and requires Councils to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel

arrangements. The Executive Director's proposal fails to fully consider the damaging impact on the Luing community of closing Luing Primary School permanently and the negative impact of its unacceptable travel arrangements for children. If Luing Primary School were to be permanently closed, those children who currently live on the Isle of Luing would spend approximately two hours each day throughout the school year travelling to Easdale Primary School for between 9 years (if age 3) and 7 years (if age 5).

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: (please print) Clare Fletcher Address: 6 Fladda Cullipool Post Code: PA34 4UA

I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: C Fletcher Date: 13/9/2023

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent Child / Young Person Staff Other \* (with 'x' ticked)

Elected Member / MSP / MP Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify) Full time resident

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

Please continue to mothball our school until it can be reopened. The school is a vital part of the regeneration and repopulation of this island community.

Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

**Proposal**

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: Alison Young

Address: 1 Cruachan Cottage, Toberonochy, Isle of Luing

Post Code: PA34 4UG

I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: Alison Young

Date: 12/09/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--------------------------------	----------------------------------

Elected Member / MSP / MP

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify)

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

The proposal contains many inaccuracies and omissions. The community have not been listened to during the pre consultation. I wish to note my support for the comments submitted by Luing Community Council and Isle of Luing Community Trust. They contain detailed information which must be taken into consideration in this consultation.

***Argyll and Bute Council***



Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry

***Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RT Telephone: 01546 605522 Fax:***

**Our Ref: Ref:**

**e-mail:** [Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Brendan.docherty@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

**Council Website:** [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

## **Luing Primary School**

Dear Consultee,

### **Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Luing Primary School Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010**

#### **Background**

Argyll and Bute Council, through its Education Service, aims to realise ambition, excellence and equity for all.

The Council is consulting on a proposal to close Luing Primary School. This notice provides a summary of a proposal that you may have an interest in or are required to be notified of, giving you key information about the proposal.

The Council is conducting a public consultation process. This will commence on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and will conclude on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This is the period within which you will be able to make written representations to the Council in respect of the proposal. If you wish your view to be taken account of in the consultation exercise you must submit your written representation within this period. This notice and summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal may be obtained or referenced and also advises on how you can make written representations to the Council.

The Council will hold a meeting where officers will be able to provide information on the proposal. The details of the public meeting are contained in this notice and summary. It is important that everyone we are consulting tells us what they think of the proposal. Please read this notice and summary and then consider the contents of the proposal

document. You can then tell us what you think of the proposal by making written representation and/or by attending the public meeting. This notice and summary tell you how to do that.

## **The Proposal**

It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

## **Reasons for this proposal**

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

- Luing Primary School has been mothballed for almost three years. The school condition will continue to deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is zero and is only predicted to rise slightly over the next 5 years.
- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing there are 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

## **The Council's education strategy Our Children Their Future**

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

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

## **Alternatives to the Proposal**

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

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

Written representations may be made on those alternatives as well as on the proposal.

Written representations on the proposal may suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

## What will we do?

We will consult with people by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees **this is that notice and summary**
- Placing an advert in the local press
- Putting information on our website <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/schoolconsultations-and-proposals>
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal
- Ask parents, carers, children, young people, teachers, support staff and others to tell us what they think of the proposals.

## What to do now?

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1.30pm, in Luing Primary School

- Let us know what you think by:  
Letter to: Education Services  
School Consultations  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Argyll House  
Alexandra Parade  
Dunoon

PA23 8AJ

Returning the attached response sheet by post or by;

Email to: [argyllhousesereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:argyllhousesereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

## What next?

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

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

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

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



- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Easdale Primary School, Easdale by Oban, PA34 4RF
- Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4TB
- Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX

It is also available electronically via our website:

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

Yours faithfully,

**Douglas Hendry**

Executive Director with responsibility for Education

**APPENDIX 2**



**Argyll and Bute Council Education**

**RESPONSE FORM**

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

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
<p>It is proposed that:          Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.</p>	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print) Lauren Leggett	Address: 1 Fladda, Cullipool Isle of Luing
	Post Code: PA34 4UA
I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: L.J.Leggett	Date: 11/09/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Child /

Parent

Young Person Staff Other \*

Elected Member /  
MSP / MP

Community Council

Member of

\*Other: (please specify) Member of the community

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

**I am a former pupil of Luing Primary and I know how much the school is part of the community. If the school was to close it would mean a decline in families moving to the island. We need to keep young people moving to the island otherwise there won't be anyone living here soon! PLEASE SAVE OUR SCHOOL!**



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

Proposal


It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luìng Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luìng Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: JENNI MINTO MSP	Address: Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh
	Post Code: EH99 1SP

I agree that my response can be made publicly available.

Signature: 	Date: 12/09/23
--	----------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input type="checkbox"/>
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Elected Member / MSP / MP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>
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\*Other: (please specify)

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

I am objecting to the proposed closure of Luìng Primary School and instead support the continued mothballing until it can be reopened. I have received several representations from constituents of mine who are extremely concerned at the closure of Luìng Primary School.

These reasons include:

1. Luìng's population is rising after a period of decline. The number of residents dropped to 163 in 2020 but has since increased to 179.
2. There are several projects currently in progress on the island which have the potential to encourage regeneration of the area and which will create jobs. This will help to increase the population. Maintaining the option to reopen the school will support this regeneration assisting with sustainability and resilience.

3. A primary school is integral to encouraging more families to come and live on Luing.
4. Several pupils currently affected by the mothballing feel at a disadvantage when attending Easdale Primary School as they are restricted by ferry timetables, reducing their chance to be involved in extra-curricular activities as well as lengthy travel times to attend school.
5. There is community concern around how the public consultation meeting was conducted and they feel an Islands Community Impact Assessment should have been considered.



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.  
 The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)

BRIDGET BLYTHE

Address:

FAIRLIGHT, CULLIPOOL,  
 ISLE OF Luing,  
 OBAN

Post Code: PA34 4TX

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature:

*B Blythe*

Date:

12/9/2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Other * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Elected Member / MSP / MP <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council <input type="checkbox"/>
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\*Other: (please specify)

RESIDENT OF Luing

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

SEE LETTER ATTACHED ALONGSIDE THIS FORM

\* "Bridget Blythe letter re Luing Primary School" PDF File

Bridget Blythe  
Fairlight, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, Oban PA34 4TX

12 September 2023

Education Services School Consultations  
Argyll & Bute Council, Argyll House  
Alexandra Parade  
Dunoon PA23 8AJ

Dear Council

### **LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL**

As a relatively recent resident of Luing having moved here April 2022, I have been so impressed by the community – very welcoming and supportive, we feel privileged to be living here. We are a household of three – 71, 67 and 24. Our 24-year old daughter was reticent to move here at first from city life, but having settled in, is now thriving and so much happier in this community and in this environment. She is busy with various types of work and has become very much a part of everything – she feels valued and supported and in turn she supports others and has many things to offer. She is just the sort of person the island needs to maintain a balanced community. If in the future she settles and has children, the likelihood is that if there is no school on the island she will have to move off to enable easy access to schooling and extra-curricular activities for her children, while still allowing her to maintain her own work.

There are other young people on the island, many of whom attended Luing Primary School themselves and clearly loved their time there - some already in solid relationships, who I imagine, when the time comes that they have their own families and there is no island school, will have this same dilemma. It's heartbreaking to think that these young people may be forced to leave the island.

The community is currently HEALTHY – and I mean by that the young, middle-aged and older residents interact together, assist and support each other and respect each other. I have never lived in such a healthy and happy community before. But it so badly misses the school.

The Community Trust and Council are working hard to keep young families here and to attract more – with plans to provide affordable housing as a priority – but the main priority is a SCHOOL. Without this, why would any young family choose to move to the Isle of Luing? It's heartbreaking to think that the community as it is currently will die. It will become an island of older people (many of whom will probably have to move themselves without younger support) and holiday homes (I have no problem with holiday rentals, but there needs to be a balance).

I believe there are currently 7 children on the island between 6 months and 7 years – so by 2028 there would be 7 pupils. I know of young couples with connections to the island, some of whom attended Luing Primary themselves) who already have children and would love to be able to live here and have their children attend the Primary School. They are currently unable to because of the lack of affordable housing, however the provision of affordable housing is a key part of the Luing Community Trust Development Plan – but this all falls apart if there is no school to attract families. Luing School MUST be kept mothballed in readiness for opening as soon as there are the required number of pupils – if not the sad prospect is that the island dies as a community.

I attended the public meeting at the school on 4<sup>th</sup> September, as I did the previous meeting at the school on 24<sup>th</sup> March and I absolutely refute the claim that there are “mixed” views with regard to the closure of the school – this is totally inaccurate. As far as I am aware, the islanders are unanimous in striving towards getting the school reopened as soon as possible in the future. The whole development plan for the island falls apart if not. The Isle of Luing is a very unique and special place – as are each of the Hebridean islands in their own way. To close the school permanently could be the death of the Luing community as we know it. I plead with you to please listen closely to the views of all islanders before any decisions are taken.

Thank you  
Bridget Blythe  
07779 337738  
bblythe004@gmail.com





Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.  
 The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)  <i>GEORGE MAY</i>	Address: <i>FARLIGHT CULIPOOL ISLE OF LUING OBAN</i>
Post Code: <i>PA 34 4TX</i>	

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: <i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>	Date: <i>12/9/2023</i>
---	------------------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

\*Other: (please specify) *LUING RESIDENT*

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

*PLEASE SEE ATTACHED*

Fairlight, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, Oban PA34 4TX

12 September 2023

**Luing Primary School**

On the subject of the proposed closure of Luing Primary School, and as a resident of Luing, I would like to respond by first stating that I am adamantly against the proposal and would request the Council to take the following paragraphs into consideration.

The Isle of Luing is a small but close-knit community dependant upon attracting younger residents and families whilst also retaining it's existing population to ensure that the island continues to exist as a viable community into the future. Fundamental to this is to provide an education service that is able to attract future residents and to retain existing families on the Island if we are not to suffer a fate similar to other remote communities on the west coast of Scotland due to de-population. Surely this should be high on the list of the Council's priorities to prevent communities such as ours going into irreversible decline.

We wish to remain as a vibrant, interactive community and the green shoots of re-generation as far as new young families choosing and remaining on Luing as a place to live are starting to appear. We only ask for more time for this re-generation to establish itself and Luing Primary School is crucial to this effect.

Closing the School would be a major blow to these and future resident's expectations and I would urge that the current position of mothballing the school is continued.

It is clear from the existing proposal document that the Council has not fully engaged with the people of Luing on this issue who overwhelmingly reject the reasons put forward for the closure. More dialogue is needed with the Luing Community Council, the Luing Community Trust and Luing residents themselves. A great amount of effort is currently being put into exploring the avenues for providing affordable housing and business development opportunities on the Island. Luing Primary School is central to all of these ambitions.

Great store has rightly been put on the quality of a child's education and the inclusivity it should bring with other children. Luing being an island will always be separate from Easdale because of transport logistics, itself another huge issue for children and parents alike, and this can only have a negative impact when children from Luing do not have the same opportunities as those of their Easdale classmates.

Luing is a wonderful place to live and a great place for children to grow up. There are many generations living on the island who were educated at Luing Primary and it would be a tragedy if this tradition was not allowed to continue simply because of short-term financial limitations. What price a precious island community? For that is what is at stake.

  
George May



Argyll and Bute Council Education



RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

Name: (please print)

Mrs Jane Basford

Address: Kildonan  
10 Baycroft  
STRACHUR  
Argyll

Post Code: PA 27 8BW

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature:

Jane Basford

Date:

12/09/23

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

\*Other: (please specify)

*Family from Luing*

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

*I urge Argyll & Bute Council to work to re-open Luing Primary following the last 3 years of mothballing. The community needs their school to attract new families and give the island a viable future. The island needs people of working age to fill posts in the community - social care being one vital need. Since the pandemic some families have the option to work from home and could have their children<sup>go</sup> to the local school boosting the school roll. Luing Primary can offer a rich learning environment for pupils and secure the island's future. Any closure will go far beyond the school gate and as an island the closure proposal will undoubtedly threaten the very future of Luing.*

**Argyll and Bute Council Education**



**RESPONSE FORM**

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

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Minard Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment areas of Lochgilphead and Furnace Primary Schools shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Minard Primary School – to the extent that the north section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Blackstone Bay) will be subsumed by Furnace Primary School; and the south section of Minard’s catchment area (from Achagoyle Bay to Kilmichael Beg) is subsumed by Lochgilphead Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Name: (please print) Ian Reid	Address: 2 Firgrove, Ardconnel Rd, Oban
	Post Code: PA34 5DW
I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: Ian Reid	Date: 6 August 2023

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member / MSP / MP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council	<input type="checkbox"/>				
*Other: (please specify) Resident and Council Tax Payer of Argyll & Bute							

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

The case for closure is sensible given that the current eligible school age population living on Luing and that projected in future is too low to justify both the cost of provision of teaching staff and building maintenance and running costs.

Besides this, the undoubted benefit of attending a school with a significant pupil roll means that pupil social development must be considered and this implies attending a school with sufficient pupil enrolment.

Argyll & Bute Council is under financial pressure and is seeking ways of saving money. Every contribution to that saving where there is no detriment to current and foreseeable future needs should be sought and accepted. In this context, there is no case for continued expenditure maintaining the Luing school building and its precinct.

If a case is being made that the building has benefits for the island population in addition to those of educating primary level pupils, it should be offered for community 'buy-out'.



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print)

BRENDAN O'HARA MP

Address:

8 COLQUOUN SQUARE, HELENSBURGH

Post Code: G84 0JB

I agree/~~do not agree~~ (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature:

Date: 12.09.23

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify)

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

I have received several representations from constituents who have expressed their concerns over the proposal to permanently close Luing Primary school and realign its catchment area to Easdale Primary School. There is however clear support within the community to continue to mothball the school as put forward by Cllr Audrey Forrest on behalf of the SNP Council group earlier this year.

There is a real fear that once the school is gone, it is highly unlikely that it will ever be reinstated and will be lost forever. Without the school, in which to attract families to live and work in the area, the de-population of Luing will simply accelerate at a time when there has been a slight increase in the population. Families will simply move from Luing and this will no doubt have an adverse effect on local businesses and the local economy.

My constituents have also highlighted that due to the distance and travel involved, the children in Luig will be disadvantaged and not be able to fully take part in school life such as extra-curricular activities.

Finally, there are questions around the building itself. If not used for a school – what will be it be used for? This building will be in danger of falling into further dis-repair.

Based on these reasons, I oppose the permanent closure of Luig Primary school and support the proposal to continue mothballing the school.





Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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


Proposal

It is proposed that:  
 Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.  
 The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Name: (please print) <i>PAMELA M.E. BAKER</i>	Address: <i>3 FLADDA CALLIDOGAL ISLE OF LUNN</i>
Post Code: <i>PA34 4UA</i>	

I agree/~~do not~~ agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: 	Date: <i>29/8/2023</i>
--	------------------------

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

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

\*Other: (please specify) *ISLAND RESIDENT*

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

*PLEASE SEE MY PRINTED COMMENTS OVERLEAF*

I will make this as brief as I can.

The residents of Luing have been working hard for several years to ensure that this is a viable island. This includes the Community Council, the Isle of Luing Community Trust, the Save our School group, the landowners, and many concerned individual members of the island community.

A viable island needs younger people. Specifically we need them to join the First Responders and the Fire crew, but we need them in many other ways, simply to create a good, living and thriving community. Younger people often come with children and having a school which is convenient and without what they perceive (and I also perceive) as a risky journey to the mainland would be key to their deciding to move here. Currently we have an ageing population, of which I now form one.

Much progress is being made towards creating new jobs for these potential younger people to fulfil, but several of these schemes are currently still at the development stage. The *High Speed* Broadband cable is on its way to the island and should be here next year. Everything is on course to get the community up and running again but much of this will fail if we have no school to which the parents feel they can safely commit their children without making the ferry journey four times a day themselves.

All we are asking is for the school to be mothballed for a few more years to help all these developments come to fruition. If it is closed, it is probable that many of them will fail.





## **Argyll and Bute Council Education RESPONSE FORM**

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

### **Proposal**

Name: (please print) Birgit Whitmore

Post Code: PA34 4UB

I agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly

---

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

**This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:**

Address: 22 Cullipool, Luing

available Signature: B. Whitmore

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Child /

Parent Young Person

Elected Member / MSP / MP \*Other: (please specify)

Date: 13.09.2023

Staff Other \* Member of Community Council

Other: I have been a permanent resident on Luing for over 30 years.

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

1 I am opposed to closing Luing Primary School.

2 I should continue to be mothball until it can be reopened.

3 The procedure followed in the proposal document of June 2023 by the Argyll and Bute Council Executive Director with responsibility for Education is seriously flawed and its proposal should not be approved by the Council's Community Services Committee or by Scottish Government Ministers for the following reasons:

4 The Council has failed to engage with Luing Community Council, the Isle of Luing Community Trust or the people of Luing in any meaningful way regarding its proposal and has ignored and gone against the overwhelming views it has received from them.

5 The Director's proposal document has serious omissions which should have been considered prior to a decision being taken. For example, it fails to mention the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the National Plan for Scotland's Islands 2019 and subsequent guidance which require Councils to have regard to island communities in carrying out their functions. It fails to consider seriously and to reflect in a meaningful way the views of the Luing community.

6 The Council did not conduct an Island Communities Impact Assessment which would have shown that closing Luing Primary School permanently would negatively impact on the Island Development Plan of the Isle of Luing Community Trust which includes economic development, affordable housing and a net zero project to make the island more self-sufficient in food production. Closing Luing Primary School permanently would also adversely affect the viability of the island's businesses, and the sustainability of community services and facilities which require more people of working age residing on Luing.

7 Over 30 people have come to live on Luing since 2019 including 4 families with 7 children between the ages of 6 months and 7 years. Closing the school permanently could lead to some of these families leaving Luing and would discourage other young families from coming to live on the island, thereby adversely affecting the many services and businesses on Luing which require more working age staff.

8 The Director's proposal document contains false or misleading information which has adversely affected the process of decision making by the Council. For example, Paras 2.2, 4.3 and 6.2 omit the fact that in June 2022 there were 15.49 FTE vacancies for both headteachers and teachers in Argyll and Bute and that by June 2023 the recruitment position had improved significantly to 8.59 FTE.

9 Paras 4.2 and 4.13.3: No evidence is presented that the Luing building is deteriorating, or will continue to deteriorate, and in fact it remains in good condition.

10 Paras 3.6 and 3.8 refer to 'mixed views of local residents' and 'a range of viewpoints' when in fact almost all Luing residents favoured continued mothballing of the school not closing it. This was clearly shown at the large public meeting on 4 September 2023 which I attended and was reported on the front page of the Oban Times of 7 September 2023 under the headline "Loud and clear message: save our school".

11 Para 5.1 and 8.2: Predicted roll: There would be 7 not 6 children attending Luing Primary School by 2028.

12 Para 6.2 and 12.3: Any ferry cancellations and school closures would have a greater adverse impact on children if they were permanently attending Easdale Primary School since they could be stranded on Seil for hours.

13 Para 7.2, 18.5, 18.10 and 18.11 The community already has responsibility for maintaining two Village Halls, the Church and the Atlantic Islands Centre and no one, or community body, has expressed interest in taking on the burden of another building. There are no 'local plans for the future of the building.'

14 Para 8.10 misleads regarding the views of residents when in fact almost all asked for the School to continue to be mothballed until it could be reopened.

15 10.2 and 10.3 There would be far less parental and community engagement with Easdale Primary School than with Luing Primary School because of ferry timetables, thereby disadvantaging Luing children and their parents. At the public meeting on 4 September 2023, several parents with children attending Easdale Primary School said that their children were disadvantaged by attending Easdale Primary School in that they felt that 'they are not part of it' because neither their children nor themselves could attend extra-curricular activities, attend evening meetings or PTAs at the school.

16 16.1 Three families have been transporting their children to Easdale and Kilniver Primary Schools since 2020 because of the unsafe transport arrangements without a risk assessment imposed on their children by the Council. This has cost them approx. £1000 annually in additional ferry fares + fuel costs. Despite many meetings involving Council and Luing representatives, this situation has still not been resolved.

17 The Executive Director's proposal to close Luing Primary School permanently is not fair or reasonable, it provides few good reasons for doing so and clearly goes against the expressed wishes of the people of Luing.

18 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 contains a presumption against closure of a rural school and requires Councils to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. The Executive Director's proposal fails to fully consider the damaging impact on the Luing community of closing Luing Primary School permanently and the negative impact of its unacceptable travel arrangements for children. If Luing Primary School were to be permanently closed, those children who currently live on the Isle of Luing would spend approximately two hours each day throughout the school year travelling to Easdale Primary School for between 9 years (if age 3) and 7 years (if age 5).

Birgit Whitmore  
permanent resident for over 30 years



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luìng Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luìng Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: (please print) Mary Braithwaite, LCC Secretary; Address: Cullipool House, Cullipool, Isle of Luìng; Post Code: PA34 4TX

I agree that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]; Date: 21/07/2023

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent [ ], Child / Young Person [ ], Staff [ ], Other \* [ ]

Elected Member / MSP / MP [ ]; Member of Community Council [x]

\*Other: (please specify)

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

Attached are the views of Luìng Community Council on the proposal.

## **LUING COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO PROPOSAL TO CLOSE LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL**

As currently formulated, Argyll & Bute Council's Proposal for closing Luing Primary School is damaging to the pupils, their parents and the wider Isle of Luing community. The current pupils and parents have no problem with the education and social development offered by Easdale school. But they do have a problem with the unsafe and unacceptable travel arrangements presented in the Proposal Document. The Council knew, when the Proposal Document was drafted in May, that the proposed travel arrangements are unacceptable. It also knew that the alternative arrangements made by the parents are stressful, time-consuming and expensive - and ultimately unsustainable. Already, families have decided not to move to Luing because of the current arrangements. These facts should have been taken into account when assessing and deciding on the travel arrangements – but the Council chose to omit them, and to propose an arrangement that will have a negative effect on pupils and parents, and on the wider Luing community.

The Council in its Proposal Document has offered the worst of all worlds: no school on Luing and no safe and acceptable travel arrangements for pupils to attend Easdale school. The consequences of this on the economic development and housing plans of the Isle of Luing Community Trust, on the viability of the island's businesses and on the sustainability of community services and facilities are grave. None of these effects has been taken into account in the Proposal, which contradicts the Council's own priorities for 'a growing population and a thriving economy' and its own commitment to 'build up and strengthen our communities as attractive, vibrant places to live, work and do business'.

This document outlines the main omissions and inaccuracies in the Proposal Document, which relate to two out of the three assessments required by the 2010 Act, viz. the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect that would be caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required.

### **Travel arrangements**

The Proposal Document has a significant omission with respect to travel arrangements. These are evidently a particular challenge for an island, as recognised by the Islands (Scotland) Act, which requires ensuring that, as the responsible authority, 'you make sure islands receive fair and equitable treatment and that your policy, strategy or service outcomes are tailored to their unique circumstances', and that you complete an island communities impact assessment (ICIA). Furthermore, Section 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) 2010 Act, states that 'When carrying out its review of the proposal under section 9(1), the education authority is to carry out...an assessment, in relation to any other reasonable alternative to the proposal suggested in written representations on the proposal, of (iii) the likely effect that would be caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required (assessed in accordance with section 12(5)) in consequence of such implementation.' Section 12(5) states that the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, and that the assessment should address the effect caused by such travelling arrangements, including (in particular) (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, and (ii) any environmental impact.

The travelling arrangements to be assessed for the school's pupils are those put in place, without any consultation, following the mothballing of the school, and which the Proposal indicates are to be continued following the school's closure. Prior to the mothballing of the school, the arrangement was a direct minibus service from home to school and back, mostly to Luing Primary School and sometimes to Easdale Primary School. The proposed arrangements for travel, between the pupils' homes spread across the Isle of Luing and Easdale School on the Isle of Seil, involve four modes of transport (minibus, ferry and public bus with walking between each) and are so unsafe and jeopardising for young children that the arrangements have not been, and will not be, used.

The Proposal Document contains no assessment of the effect caused by these travelling arrangements on the school's pupils, parents and staff or any other users of the school's facilities, even though the Council has received numerous, detailed written complaints about the arrangements from parents and Luing Community Council since 2022. The only response received from the Council has been that the arrangements for the young children are legally-compliant and safe. A written request to the Chief Executive for a review of the incomplete and inadequate Risk Assessments, sent by Luing Community Council on May 1 2023, remains unanswered. The text of this email, explaining why the arrangements are so unacceptable and outlining the ways in which Risk Assessments fail to adequately address the risks, is attached in Appendix 1.

In spite of the Proposal Document indicating (para.12.3) that additional travelling time is incurred and that adverse weather conditions and/or technical breakdowns may impact on transport, there is no assessment of these effects. To imply that these are of no consequence since 'these travelling arrangements have been in place since Luing Primary School was mothballed' is inappropriate and fatuous, given that they are not being used, so the effects are totally unknown.

The Proposal Document also contains no assessment of any alternative to the current arrangements, even though parents and the Community Council have indicated that the same travelling arrangement available when Luing Primary School was open would be appropriate for travelling to Easdale school and back. This recommendation by parents and the local community for a door-to-door travelling arrangement should have been assessed as an alternative to the current arrangements, especially as an island-based Council minibus and contracted driver are already in place. This is a significant omission in the Proposal Document.

Furthermore, we can find no example of another area on the mainland or island where the closure of a local school leads to the pupils having to undertake a journey involving four modes of transport (minibus, ferry and public bus, with walking between each) in order to travel between home and school. This treatment is not fair and equitable, and amounts to a disadvantage for Luing as an island community compared to other communities, whether on the mainland and other islands. An Island Communities Impact Assessment would, without doubt, demonstrate that the transport arrangements do not meet the objectives of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and do not treat Luing's primary school children equally.

Also omitted from the Council's Proposal Document is an assessment of 'the travelling arrangements...on other users of the school's facilities' notably parents and the wider Luing community. Transferring pupils to Easdale School on the neighbouring island of Seil has already impacted negatively on parental engagement and community participation, which were such a

strong feature of Luig Primary School and which are identified by the Council's own Education services as an essential part of children's education and social development. The limited ferry timetable during most of the year and the high cost of ferry travel significantly curtail the participation of Luig pupils, parents and other community members in extra-curricular activities and events organised by Easdale school. This too is not fair and equitable, and places a disadvantage on Luig's children and on the ability of parents and community to support the education and social development of our children.

### **Likely effect on the local community**

The Proposal Document has significant inaccuracies and omissions concerning the likely effect on the local community, and the potential future school roll. The document says (para.18.2) that 'The Council has made an assessment on the sustainability of the community should this proposal be implemented and considers this may have a positive impact'. The Proposal Document contains no evidence at all that an assessment has been made of the sustainability of the community should the school close. Indeed, the absence of any assessment has led to ludicrous statements such as the school building becoming 'a community hub' (para.18.11), when Luig – with a population of 179 - already has three community hubs.

In fact, the Proposal Document demonstrates considerable ignorance of the island community, of past and current community efforts to make Luig 'an independent, resilient place to live' and of the island's experience in managing community assets. There is only one reference to anything already happening on Luig in para.18.7, which mentions 'the Atlantic Islands Centre which is used for community events'. Moreover, an assessment would have required engaging with Luig Community Council and the Isle of Luig Community Trust, who could have provided relevant information. No such engagement or communication with the community organisations has taken place. The report's authors seem not to have bothered to find out about the community affected by the school closure proposal, and - instead of a meaningful assessment of Luig community - have resorted to patronising comments, clearly copied and pasted from previous school closure documents (see the current Proposal for Minard Primary School and the March 2020 Proposal for Skipness Primary School for word-for-word similarity with the Luig Proposal Document).

The Proposal Document for Luig Primary School omits a whole range of information relevant to an assessment of the likely effect on the local community of the island school closing, just a snapshot of which is listed here:

- Luig already has two community halls, one in Cullipool, one in Toberonochy, in addition to the Atlantic Islands Centre, all managed by the community. One of the halls: is developing as a wellness centre, with skilled visiting practitioners working alongside island practitioners; runs Luig Community Cinema; offers regular soup lunches during the winter months; and provides table tennis facilities. (In what way, therefore, would acquiring the school building help 'to make this community an independent, resilient place to live'? as proposed in para.18.5?);
- The Atlantic Islands Centre (AIC) was opened in 2015 by the Isle of Luig Community Trust, providing a venue for visitors and the community. It contains: a highly-successful café; the archives and displays of Luig History Group; a shop selling local crafts and books; offices



and workshop spaces. Visit <https://isleofluing.org/atlantic-islands-centre> and the AIC Facebook page.

- The Isle of Luing Community Trust, founded in 2005, has a sustainable Development Framework for the island, which could have been provided had the Council been in contact. The Trust is currently developing a number of projects aimed at ‘promoting growth and enabling the community to realise its aspirations’, most notably:
  - With support from Historic Environment Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Trust has plans to reopen Cullipool quarry to produce crafted slate for renovation of historic buildings, thus creating an income for the community and much-needed full-time jobs, which will bring working age people to live and work on Luing;
  - Outline plans for more affordable family sized housing, as well as a community garden, have been developed. As a first step a housing needs survey funded by Argyll & Bute Council is underway. Efforts are planned to encourage property owners to make more long-term lets available.
  - The ‘Taste of Luing’ brand has been developed to promote food producers on the island and to showcase the best of island produce on menus at the Atlantic Islands Centre.
  - Craft workshops are a regular feature of Community Trust events, and island and local crafts are sold at the AIC shop.
- Private sector businesses on Luing are expanding and investing, creating jobs and economic opportunities:
  - There are now three creel fishing businesses operating four boats from Luing, compared to two previously, as well as a marine engineering business;
  - The island farm and estate has diversified, with new developments including four family-sized houses built in the last two years, extensive native woodland planting, a shooting business, and more holiday accommodation including eight glamping pods.
- Luing community is taking steps to address coastal erosion, and has already financed – without recourse to Argyll & Bute Council resources – a first phase of coastal protection at Cullipool. Community volunteers run the island ambulance, fire engine and First Responders, and run the Community Council, Community Trust, Hall Committees and various community groups.

### **In summary**

These efforts are not the mark of a decaying community - far from it. They show innovation and creativity. Our biggest island asset is the highly motivated community who support each other and island projects, and make them work! Volunteers put in thousands of hours to support Luing and its community.

However, Luing is also an ageing community, and this is the greatest threat to the sustainability of the island economy and community, and to the safety and well-being of the more elderly and frail inhabitants. Luing must increase the number of young and working-age people living on the island. The accessibility of good pre- and primary-school education is absolutely vital to making Luing an

‘attractive, vibrant place to live, work and do business’. The converse will make it impossible to achieve the Council’s own objective of ‘a growing population and a thriving economy’.

If these and other factors had been taken into account in an assessment of the likely effect on the community of the island school closing, the conclusions of the Proposal Document would have been very different. Though no specific numbers can be estimated, the development actions being taken now mean there are very good chances that the school roll will increase significantly in the future. Luing community is working hard to make this happen. On the re-use of the school building, Luing has no need of an additional ‘community hub’ and certainly has no need of the school building to make Luing ‘an independent, resilient place to live’ or to build ‘community confidence’, ‘growth’ or to realise our ‘aspirations’. If more had been known about Luing, the Proposal Document would not have told us about the benefits of community empowerment, and would not have made the suggestion (para.18.8) that the closure of the school ‘could have a positive impact on the wider community’ and ‘lead to an improvement in economic growth’. It would have been very easy to contact the Community Council and Community Trust to learn about Luing. The lack of consultation and the omission of relevant information about the community is - to be honest - insulting, given that the Council is proposing to bring to an end over 250 years of schools on Luing and put at risk the community’s sustainability. To produce a report that merely cuts and pastes from other Proposals shows contempt for the people of Luing. To ignore the consistent, clearly-expressed views of parents and the Community Council on the current school transport arrangements is the opposite of the Council’s commitments to ‘listen to what matters to our communities’ and to ‘partnership working, at all levels, to secure the best possible outcomes’.

Luing Community Council, July 21 2023

## Appendix 1: Email to Chief Executive, sent on May 1 2023

Dear Ms Milne

We had hoped, following discussions during your visit to Luing on March 24<sup>th</sup>, that a meeting with Mark Calder, planned for March 29<sup>th</sup>, would help progress the key issue of travel arrangements for the island's young children. The offer of a meeting had been made by Mr Calder at an Area Committee Meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>. He cancelled the March 29<sup>th</sup> meeting at short notice, promising to arrange a new date after Easter. We have tried to make contact with him and agree a new date, but this has so far been unsuccessful, leaving us very disappointed and wondering how to progress this increasingly critical problem.

We remain hopeful that a face-to-face meeting is possible with a member of your team. It is perhaps helpful to explain more fully our concerns, and why we believe not only that such a meeting would be useful, but also that a Formal Review of the Risk Assessments is urgently needed to ensure safe and secure transport for our young children, as well as an Islands Community Impact Assessment to ensure that the service outcome is tailored to Luing's unique circumstances.

The current risk assessments fail to address a number of key problems with the travel arrangements provided by the Council:

- The current risk assessments treat the journey as three discrete stages, not as a long, five-stage journey, involving each morning: minibus pick up from home or end of drive; travel to South Cuan ferry ramp; wait for the ferry to arrive; alight from the minibus and walk down the ferry ramp on to the ferry; travel on the ferry to North Cuan; walk off the ferry and up the ferry ramp to wait for the public bus; get on the public bus and travel on the bus to Easdale; get off the bus and enter the school. This journey is then done in reverse each afternoon.
- The current risk assessments do not take into account the stages in-between the three modes of transport, *inter alia* when children are waiting and walking on the ferry ramps at South and North Cuan, neither of which have barriers along the sea edge, and are walking on and off the ferry, often alongside moving vehicles, which can be cars, vans, lorries, farm tractors or diggers. In summer there are often visitors and tourists on foot or with bicycles.
- The current risk assessments do not take into account the times when the Belnahua is replaced by the Grey Dog, for example when the Belnahua is away for two weeks or more on its annual service or when the Belnahua is out of service. Tomorrow - Tuesday May 2<sup>nd</sup> - the Grey Dog replaces Belnahua for at least two weeks. The Grey Dog is an even less safe mode of transport for young passengers, so the use of this replacement ferry must be assessed for the risks it poses.
- The current risk assessments do not take into account changing and challenging weather conditions (especially heavy rain and wind, and potentially slippery conditions on ferry slips and ferry itself).

- The current risk assessments do not indicate who is responsible for the safety of the children and for ensuring a safe environment for them throughout the journey, not only when travelling on the three different modes of transport but also transferring from one to another.
- The current risk assessments do not address what happens when one of the modes of transport breaks down or is temporarily out of action because of weather conditions, especially if this occurs to the public bus or ferry when the children are on Seil and cannot get back home.
- The current risk assessments ignore entirely that the passengers are young children and that several young children travel together. The perfectly normal, lively behaviour of young children must be taken into account, as well as the sometimes aggressive behaviour of children with special needs, in the risk assessments.
- There is no forward-looking aspect to the current risk assessments. There are currently two children of primary-school age on Luing, but assuming no change in the families on Luing, this will increase to 4 in 2024, 5 in 2025 and 7 in 2027. To what extent do the current travel arrangements take into account this increase and its impact on potential risks, such as one minibus driver escorting 7 young children on and off the ferry?
- The current risk assessments for the ferry and public bus give no indication of what happens in the case of an emergency and who should be contacted. The risk assessment for the minibus states there is a need for pupil names and emergency contacts, but this is missing from the ferry and public bus risk assessments

As you will know well, the Islands (Scotland) Act aims to improve outcomes for island communities, which face particular challenges of distance, geography and demography. As the above list makes clear, Luing's specific challenges and needs are not being met by the current travel arrangements and our young children and parents are not receiving a fair and equitable service.

We trust that this information is helpful, and look forward to hearing how our concerns and request will be taken forward.

With kind regards,

*Innes MacQueen, LCC Convenor, and Alison Young, LCC Lead on School Transport*

cc. Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director

## **SUBMISSION BY ISLE OF LUING COMMUNITY TRUST AND LUING COMMUNITY COUNCIL ON THE LIKELY EFFECT OF THE PROPOSED CLOSING OF LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ISLAND COMMUNITY**

### **Preamble**

The Council's Proposal Document has significant inaccuracies and omissions concerning the likely effect on the local community. The document says (para.18.2) that 'The Council has made an assessment on the sustainability of the community should this proposal be implemented and considers this may have a positive impact'. The Proposal Document contains no assessment of the sustainability of the community should the school close. All it does is indicate that the school building might become 'a community hub' (para.18.11), and that this will help 'to make this community an independent, resilient place to live' (para.18.5). A school is considerably more than a building, yet this aspect is not addressed at all in the Proposal Document. There is only one reference in the Document to anything already happening on Luing in para.18.7, which mentions 'the Atlantic Islands Centre which is used for community events'.

The Council has expressed its commitment to working together in partnership with communities, yet the process of mothballing Luing Primary School and the preparation of its Proposals to close the only School on the island have been undertaken without any apparent interest in supporting the community to identify, address and mitigate the likely effects of any closure. We are merely told that it will be good for us to take on the school building, this on an island of 179 residents with three existing community hubs.

In this submission to the Consultation, the Isle of Luing Community Trust (IoLCT) and Luing Community Council (LCC) provide some essential information about Luing and identify some of the likely effects of the closure of Luing Primary School on the island's sustainability. These are not comprehensive; they are intended to demonstrate the extent to which the Proposal Document has such significant inaccuracies and omissions that it fails to justify any decision to close Luing Primary School. Extended mothballing is the only reasonable decision to be taken in the absence of an adequate assessment of the likely effects of any closure on the community's sustainability.

### **Luing's ambitions match Council and national priorities**

Luing is making every effort to create jobs, build affordable housing, tackle climate change and develop a sustainable economy and community. These ambitions and efforts match exactly with Argyll and Bute Council's priorities for 2022 to 2027, and with the Council's vision of a 'place where people want to come to live, to work and to do business as a result of action to combat and reverse decline'. And they correspond with key requirements of the National Islands Act and Strategic Objectives of the National Islands Plan, including addressing population decline and ensuring a healthy, balanced population profile, improving sustainable economic development and housing, and contributing to climate change mitigation.

The National Islands Plan recognises the importance of 'having a thriving and successful school', which 'contributes to an island and its community in multiple ways'. Families, it argues, 'will often make decisions about where to live based on the presence of good schools'. The presence of a Primary School on Luing was a key factor in the decision of families who moved to the island before lockdown.

Increasing the numbers of families with children and of young and working age people on Luing is absolutely critical to the sustainability (in many senses of this term) of the island community and to

the achievement of the priorities shared by Luing community, Argyll & Bute Council and national Government. The demographic balance must be changed - otherwise island businesses cannot find workers, essential volunteer services (the fire service, the ambulance, 1<sup>st</sup> Responders, volunteer drivers, and many more) cannot be provided, and elderly and frail residents cannot safely stay in their own homes.

### **Likely effects of closing Luing Primary School on the island's sustainability**

The negative effects of closing Luing school are not hypothetical – some of them have already happened. The mothballing of the school has impacted local jobs (school staff, cleaners, maintenance work...) and taken money out of the island economy. It is possible for the Council to assess the effects on local jobs as they hold information on who was employed (full-time, part-time and as contractors) and the wages and remunerations paid. This assessment of jobs and wages lost should be undertaken as part of the Council's assessment of the effects of closing the school on community sustainability.

There are many other ways in which the closure of Luing Primary School may adversely affect the sustainability of the island's community and economy.

### **Economic development**

As well as a Development Framework for Luing's future, which has recently been formulated after wide community consultation, major investments have been – and are being – made to develop Luing's economy, by island businesses, the Community Trust and external funders. Amongst these are:

- The creation by the farm estate of Wild Luing with eight luxury pods and a communal observatory to support its shooting business and diversify its activities and income.
- Investment in three new boats by the island's creel fishing businesses, which have increased from two to three family businesses.
- External funding of £1.3 million enabled the Community Trust to build the Atlantic Islands Centre (AIC) which opened in 2015. It operates as a community centre and café, and houses the Luing History Group, a vibrant community group researching and promoting the island's heritage. The AIC is used for displays, community meals, evening events, bar nights, workshops and a means by which local artists and crafters can sell their wares and gain an income. For example, in August 2023 sales at the AIC generated £1,000 income for island-based crafters. It is a popular tourist destination in the summer months with a highly-rated café featuring the acclaimed Luing Home Bakers cakes and bakes and island foods such as Luing beef and prawns, thereby promoting local food businesses.
- With significant support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Historic Environment Scotland, the Community Trust is developing a small-scale slate venture producing hand trimmed traditional slates, making use of the mineral rights it owns at Cullipool. This would create 5 full-time, year-round jobs as well as generate an income for local projects. Workshops for small businesses are also planned as part of the Development Framework.
- The Community Trust also has plans to create a community garden, to expand the offer of 'Taste of Luing' food for the community and tourists visiting the island.
- High-speed fibre broadband is coming to Luing in 2024 making it more attractive for homeworkers and new businesses.

All these investments and developments are put at risk without a primary school as they depend for their success on attracting enough young and working-age people to the island, who in turn are key to the island's sustainability.

### Housing plans

Affordable housing is a key factor in attracting young and working age people to stay on Luing. Like many island and rural areas, Luing has too many houses that are empty or underused and that, even when they come on to the market for sale, are unaffordable to local people. Help with bringing more of the existing housing stock into permanent occupation by island residents, especially families, is essential. One large house has received planning permission and Listed Building consent to be split into two, creating a new family-sized unit for affordable long-term rent; the building work is projected for 2025 due to the demands on local builders and additional difficulties and costs of building on an island. Efforts are being made to encourage other owners to make accommodation available as a long-term let.

More substantially, the Community Trust is working on the development of affordable homes on the island to cater for young people and families, with possible sites identified. A housing needs survey led by the Community Trust and Community Council is currently underway; this will identify the specific housing needs of residents, businesses and those wishing to live and move here, enabling concrete plans to be drawn up for new-build affordable housing.

### Viability of island businesses

There is no shortage of business enterprise and innovation on Luing, as some of the examples of economic development above demonstrate. However, all businesses on Luing struggle to find staff whether it be self-catering owners needing staff to clean houses, café staff needed at the Atlantic Islands Centre or young apprentices to join fishing crews and construction businesses. Finding staff to work in the café has become increasingly difficult with many of the younger people moving away to cities for full-time jobs and more affordable accommodation. As the population ages there are fewer people available as apprentices, employees or to run businesses. This is already limiting the growth of island businesses. Closure of the school is only likely to amplify this effect by discouraging young families to live here and putting local businesses at risk in the future.

### Sustainability of community services and facilities

The Isle of Luing is a dynamic island where the community puts in a huge amount of unpaid, voluntary effort into maintaining island services. The list of community services and facilities that are maintained by volunteer effort includes:

- the fire and emergency service, and island ambulance,
- a First Responders service,
- social care of elderly people in their own homes,
- running and maintenance of the two village halls,
- running of the shopping bus service and volunteer driving,
- organisation of social events outdoors and indoors throughout the year,
- spot maintenance of Council infrastructure including road repairs and verge cutting;
- the promotion of Luing's heritage through displays, surveys, social media and merchandise,
- and not least the Community Council and Isle of Luing Community Trust.

The community is the island's biggest asset, but even now it is becoming more and more difficult to find people able and willing to contribute as volunteers. Without an increase in young and working-age people even key services that ensure the community's safety cannot be maintained. At a time

of cutbacks in Council-run services, the work of volunteers and community bodies becomes ever more important.

In addition, essential health and care staff are needed to look after elderly people on the island. In the past almost everyone was able to stay in their own home even when they became frail and dependent on external support. This is no longer the case, and the island is becoming a less safe place for people who are less mobile and frail.

#### Long-term sustainability of the island

The greatest threat to the sustainability of Luing's community is its aging population. Luing must increase the number of young and working age people living on the island, and it is possible to make this happen. Over 30 people have come to live on Luing since 2019 including four families with seven children between the ages of 6 months and 8 years. Right now, there are family members who would like to return to live on Luing providing there is housing, but they need a local primary school for their children.

The economic development, housing and business plans all contribute to making Luing more attractive to young people and families, and should lead to an increase in primary aged school children over the next few years. But closure of the primary school could put all the plans at risk. Easy access to good schooling for nursery and primary school children is one of the most important criteria when young families are thinking of moving to an area.

#### **Extended mothballing is essential**

Luing Primary School is an asset that supports the investments now being made to grow Luing's population and economy. It was mothballed during lockdown, a time of great disruption, yet has only been given the standard 3 years before closure. Extended mothballing is required as a necessary adjunct to the planned developments, strengthening their chances of success and making it more than likely that they will attract young people and families to Luing.

The Council's Executive Director for Education argued at the Consultation Meeting on Sept 4<sup>th</sup> that Skipness Primary School was mothballed for six years because of covid, preventing the Council from organising the necessary consultation process. It was however possible for Luing Primary School to be mothballed at this time. Lockdown not only prevented Luing community from reacting to and addressing the Council's mothballing of the School, but also put a brake on the Community Trust's plans for housing and economic development. If Skipness School could be mothballed for six years due to covid, then Luing Primary School should be mothballed for at least an equivalent length of time, thus allowing Luing community to make up for the lost time and the actions that would otherwise have been taken.

The current annual cost estimated by the Council for mothballing Luing Primary School is £12,064, which is very high for a small building in good condition that is not being used. The estimate includes nearly £3000 of energy costs and £1319 of 'unspecified other' costs, as well as £5643 for 'facilities management', which seems very high considering there are no costs for cleaning, security or building maintenance and management. It is strongly recommended that a detailed breakdown of the estimated costs is provided, and that an independent assessment of the estimated costs is made.

Finally, the Islands (Scotland) Act requires that impacts of school closures are assessed for *individual islands*, recognising the proposals may affect different island communities in significantly different ways. The 2010 Consultation Act establishes a procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. Together they require a detailed assessment of the likely impact of the closure of Luing



Primary School on the specific circumstances of Luing's community and its sustainability. This assessment can only be done in consultation with those who know Luing best, the island community and its representative organisations. We are ready to engage as partners with the Council to identify the issues and undertake a thorough assessment of the likely impact of the closure of the school. The assessment must do full justice to the momentous decision being considered, and to ensure that the shared ambitions of Luing community and Argyll & Bute Council are achieved. As Argyll and Bute Council's Priorities for 2022 to 2027 state: **We have a vision for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy. A place where people want to come to live, to work and to do business as a result of action to combat and reverse decline. We see the potential for thriving local economies that support our rich mix of remote, rural and island communities.**

*Isle of Luing Community Trust and Luing Community Council – September 11 2023*



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: Susan Bissell

Address: 65 Bank Park
East Kilbride
Glasgow

Post Code: G75 0DF

I agree that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: Susan Bissell

Date: 12/09/23

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent [ ], Child / Young Person [ ], Staff [ ], Other \* [x]

Elected Member / MSP / MP

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify) I regularly visit the Isle of Luing.

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

I can see the benefit of the school continuing to be mothballed until there are school age children able to attend. The closure of the school will deter new families from moving to Luing. The residents of the Island have worked so hard to raise the numbers of residents, which has worked. Closure of the school would kill off any new families wishing to move there. Please do not close the school. Please continue to mothball the school until it can be re-opened.



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Bute

<b><u>Proposal</u></b>	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.	
<b>This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:</b>	
Jem Main	1 Cullipool Village Cullipool Luing Nr.Oban
	Post Code: PA34 4UB
I agree that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature: <i>JP MAIN</i>	Date: 13 September

**YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)**

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child / Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other *	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	
Elected Member / MSP / MP				<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Community Council				<input type="checkbox"/>
*Other: (please specify) Permanently Resident on Luing; Retired Educator									

I wish to oppose the permanent closure of Luig Primary School for the following reasons:

Whilst appreciating Luig has a small population closing its school is neither in the best interests of children, their families or the island as a whole community. Children should be the particular priority. Not just the ones already living here but the additional families the islands development plans seek to attract over the next two or three years.

Full closure of the school means Luig children - current and future - will permanently be denied the benefit extra-curricular activities throughout their early and middle years education. Given the nature of, and pressures on, the curriculum this will particularly impact their cultural and sporting development and the well recognised benefits of social interaction that goes with them. In turn, this impacts the interaction between families and undermines all the other efforts being put into creating sustainable commutes in rural areas.

Indeed, in relation to this it has to be said that the Council did not conduct an Island Communities Impact Assessment which would have shown that closing Luig Primary School permanently would negatively impact on the Island Development Plan of the Isle of Luig Community Trust which includes economic development, affordable housing and a net zero project to make the island more self-sufficient in food production.

Closing Luig Primary School would also adversely affect the viability of the island's businesses, and the sustainability of community services and facilities which require more people of working age residing on Luig. A teaching post would realise one of the opportunities being sought!

Achieving growth in this aspect is the priority of the Trust's Business Development Manager and many of the island's residents are active in supporting this focus. Over 30 people have come to live on Luig since 2019 including 4 families with 7 children between the ages of 6 months and 7 years. Closing the school permanently could lead to some of these families leaving Luig. Closure would certainly discourage other young families from coming to live on the island, thereby adversely affecting the many services and businesses on Luig which require more working age staff.

A better means to address the situation on Luig and Seil could be to federate Luig and Easdale schools and imaginatively manage the learning opportunities and fairly share the movement of people between the island communities to the long term benefit of both.

Given that the Luig community has already exhibited significant 'community confidence in making Luig a resilient place to live' - not least in raising £1.3 million to build the Atlantic Islands Centre which opened in 2015 - it is reasonable to say that given there are a number of residents qualified to act in support of the school including governance, advice and practical hands-on activities, active long-term community support is assured. This is particularly pertinent given that almost all Luig residents favour continuing to mothball while the business development plans evolve and take effect over the next two or three years.

Commitment to retaining the school was clearly shown at the large public meeting on 4 September 2023. On this basis, the Executive Director's proposal to close Luig Primary School permanently is not fair or reasonable and provides few good reasons for doing so and clearly goes against the expressed wishes of the people of Luig.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 contains a presumption against closure of a rural school and requires Councils to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. Remember, for most of the year, our last ferry - with very limited capacity - is 6.00pm



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: (please print)

HAZEL CRUICKSHANKS

Address:

Achafolla Cottage, Toberonochy

Post Code: PA34 4TY

I /do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available

Signature:

Date: 13/09/23

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

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

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify) Luing Resident & possible future parent

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

I believe that Luing Primary School should continue to be mothballed until there is sufficient numbers to support a sustainable school/nursery. Easdale Primary is a great school for the meantime but with unsuitable travel arrangements it could be better for the Children of Luing. Loosing our school definitely would be a nail in the coffin for the island, what families or working age people (potential future parents) would want to move to an island without a school or safe travel option to the closest school.



Argyll and Bute Council Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

Proposal

It is proposed that:

Education provision at Luing Primary School be discontinued with effect from 31st May 2024. The catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Luing Primary School.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:

Name: INNES MACQUEEN

Address: Braeside Cottage, Cullipool Village, Oban, Argyll

Post Code: PA34 4TX

I agree that my response can be made publicly available

Signature: I. MacQueen

Date: 13/09/23

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent  Child / Young Person  Staff  Other \*

Elected Member / MSP / MP

Member of Community Council

\*Other: (please specify)

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

The current proposal by Argyll & Bute Council to close Luing primary will be extremely damaging to the island community for now and the future. The closure of the Primary here on Luing will have negative effects on: the economic development and housing plans of the Isle of Luing Community Trust; the viability of the island's businesses; and the sustainability of community services and facilities. An assessment of these effects is omitted from the Proposal. The community are working very hard to ensure the island has a healthy and sustainable future with a healthy demographic on the island. The closure of the schools makes the island much less appealing to move here especially with the on-going transport situation.

With pupils having no choice but to attend school of the island puts a huge strain on families and make living here, for some, unsustainable. The cost of the ferry and limitation of the ferry service for parents and the wider community to participate in the wider community of the school proves very difficult. The families on the island do not feel part of the school community. If the closure is to go ahead this needs to be carefully considered and ensure the infrastructure is there for families to participate in everything they want with a subsidised ferry fare for families. Furthermore, 'Easdale Primary School' as they will be adjusting their catchment area the name of the primary should reflect this by including both Luing & Easdale Island which attend the school – possibly 'Slate Islands Primary'.

To stop educational provision on the island makes us ever more reliant on the mainland for services taking families and business away from the island. The community will not feel as connected to the young people with no school on the island. The fact that this is an island school needs to be heavily considered and cannot just be thought as the children going to the neighbouring school.

In the near-future the island hopes that we will have attracted many more families with potential job opportunities on island making it a more attractive place to live. Having no school on the island will continue to be a serious barrier to this. To compensate having no school there needs to be a door-to-door minibus introduced for families on the island. This needs to be a priority and will allow the island to continue to grow and develop. A major new enterprise is underway by the Community Trust, supported by Historic Environment Scotland and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, to re-open the slate quarry at Cullipool. It will create 5 full-time jobs, a visitor attraction, and income to support new housing. After many years of decline, the population on the island is now growing. Luing is at a turning point in its history and is an exciting place to be with a vibrant future. For these reasons I object strongly to closure of Luing Primary and ask that the mothballed is extended to allow the school to be reopened in the future if the demand is there.

I urge the council to embrace your rural communities, support us to grow and develop rather than putting catastrophic barriers such as closing the only island school.



## **APPENDIX 4 - PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

### **APPENDIX 4: Minute of Public Meeting**

#### **Luing Public Consultation Meeting**

**Luing Primary School**

**4 September 2023**

#### **Panel**

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly, Policy Lead for Education

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director

Jen Crocket, Chief Education Officer/Head of Education, Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement

Wendy Brownlie - Head of Education – Performance and Improvement

#### **In attendance**

Brendan Docherty, Education Officer

Graeme McMillan, Transformation Programme Manager

Andrea MacMillan, Education Scotland

#### **Admin:**

Fiona Ferguson

Laura Blackwood

Councillor Amanda Hampsey

Councillor Andrew Vennard

25 audience members

Councillor McNeilly opened the meeting and made introductions.

Mr Hendry outlined the statutory process, and the objective of the meeting today - to give information on the proposal and gather feedback. He advised that the meeting would take the form of a presentation and asked that questions be held until the end. He also advised that any question and answers today will be included in the final report to committee. Mr Hendry then outlined the proposal and the consultation timeline and process.

Ms Crocket and Mrs Brownlie then spoke to a prepared presentation on the proposal and this included, the background to the proposal and why an islands impact assessment has not been under taken at this stage. Key issues were highlighted in regard to traveling arrangements which would be in place should the school not re-open, financial implications and the need to consider any reasonable alternatives to the proposal.

Ms Crocket also advised that focus groups will be held with the children in the school before the consultation closes on 13 September 2023.

Questions were then invited from the audience

## **Audience**

Son goes to Easdale primary school. They do not have access to transport and it is important for the island to have children here and a school. It's important for the community to have a school to attract new people to come and live on the island.

The Secretary of Luing Community Council – advised that they have already submitted comments on the proposal which focus on the inaccuracies within the report, the transport arrangements and there being no educational benefits. The Community Council also feel there has been no assessment of the impact on the community if the school closes. The Community Council advised that no one has spoken to the community about the proposal and the impact which this will have on the community, a rural school is more than just a building. Access to extracurricular activities are also affected and there is no relationship between the community and the building.

Because of the significant inaccuracies in this report, how is the council going to remedy this? The Community Council and the Trust would be happy to speak to the council.

## **Panel**

Do not agree with all the points being made.

It was highlighted that the Executive Director along with the Chief Executive of the Council and Mrs Brownlie visited the island earlier this year and met with the community.

What we are following here is a statutory process set out in the 2010 Act. Anyone can respond to the consultation and that is why we are here today, to listen to all points even if we may not agree with them all.

## **Audience**

One of three material considerations is the impact a closure will have on the community.

No one has asked us for information or come to us for the impact assessment, how can the Council work out how it affects us?

## **Panel**

It there are things that have been missed or are not correct in the proposal then please tell us, anyone can submit a response not just the Community Council or Trust. This is your opportunity to engage and all of this will be put in to the final report.

## **Audience**

The overwhelming views of the community was to prolong the mothballing of the primary school (of 7 children not 6). We have lobbied the Council on this, however

there is no sign that the Council is taking account of these views. The report is not fair and reasonable and paints a false picture. Can you tell us that you will not close the school?

### **Panel**

There is a timeline which has been outlined and the final decision on Luing will be taken to the Community Services Committee in March 2024. Not able to speak for other elected members on this. Happy to receive any correspondence on this proposal.

Officers have done their level best to produce a report and Education Scotland will produce their report which will be sent to the Council and included in the final report.

### **Panel**

The draft proposal went to Committee in August and this consultation process was agreed and will run to 13 September 2023. Written submissions and feedback gathered from this and other stakeholder meetings will all be taken in to account. Once the consultation closes Education Scotland have a set timescale to produce a report to the educational benefits of the proposal and submit this to the Council. The Education Service will consider the terms of the report from Education Scotland and review all the feedback received from the consultation and revisit the proposal and any reasonable alternatives. The final findings report will then go before the Community Services Committee for a final decision in March 2024. Scottish Ministers can call in the proposal and this has a timeframe of 8 weeks and is why the implementation date of the proposal is 31 May 2024.

### **Audience**

Agree with previous comments on how much closing the school will change our lives. Can't attend meetings at night in Easdale Primary and the children are missing out on other activities which are held at night and at the weekends due to the ferry timetable. Understand transport issues are separate, but these are not adequate, although we are getting there.

Following on from the comments made about the report – how do we challenge what is in the paper?

### **Panel**

If you feel there are omissions/errors/failures in the proposal report then please give us the detail by submitting a response to the consultation and we will look at these. Officers do not want to put forward a flawed piece of work.

### **Audience**

Our children attend Easdale Primary School but do not feel part of the school – we want to be part of the community and if this school is not here then that has a huge effect on the children.

One of the serious omissions in the paper is the lack of the impact on the community. Lack of impact on the economic and business and the ability to recruit workers on the island. Transport to the school and not being able to attract young people to the island are also not covered.

Looking for someone from the team who could sit down with the community and note all these points.

Looking to the future Education on Seil and Luing have to be carefully considered they need to be included and the travel to the school needs to be considered moving forward. Parents can't attend Easdale at night and should not have to pay the extra cost for journeys on the ferry.

### **Panel –**

Have heard loud and clear from those here that if this proposal goes ahead the Education Service requires to consider the needs of the children attending Easdale Primary School and how extracurricular activities are scheduled and wider issues around transport. Transport although not within our power to deliver is something which we can take back and try and get pushed forward.

### **Audience**

Timings on the reports and island impact assessments will require that we meet sooner rather than later with someone.

### **Panel**

Following the closing date of the consultation, all feedback and comments gathered from this meeting along with the report from Education Scotland will form part of the final report. The Education Service are duty bound to assess and review all this information carefully before preparing the final report for consideration. Groups and individuals are encouraged to submit a response before the closing date on 13 September.

Interested in the comments about how the children attending Easdale Primary School feel and the Education Service would be keen to listen to the views of the parents and the children who attend Easdale, and will get in contact with parents to arrange this.

### **Audience**

I am a part-time janitor at the school if the school close then I will be out of a job.

**Panel**

Advised that any employees affected in this way would be offered redeployment. There are procedures and policies in place which require to be followed in this instance.

**Audience**

Luing needs a school to have a future.

The island is going down a slope. Need more young people in the community to balance the population and sad this is this happening.

Parents are taking children to school and back in their own cars. Why is adequate transport not available on Luing for pre school and primary age children?

**Panel**

The transport arrangements are not a matter which the Education Service can comment on or put in place. Our colleagues in Roads and Transport will pick up matters in this regard.

**Audience**

What is the process, will we get a copy of the note of today's public meeting? And will we get the education authorities response to the comments?

**Audience**

Why is Luing different from Skipness, this school took 6 years to close and not 3 as this process is.

Why is this meeting being held in the afternoon rather than the evening, as the guidance states would be more useful?

**Panel**

The Skipness Primary School process was started, but then delayed due to Covid. The restrictions in place meant that the public meeting could not be held for an extended period of time, this resulted in the timeframe for the whole process being lengthened.

We can set out the timeline for both these processes and share with the community.

As the last ferry sailing is at 6 it was not possible to hold a meeting in the evening, we are trying to be as helpful as possible in regard to meeting with the community.

**Audience**

Will the minutes of the meeting be available after the meeting?

## **Panel**

The feedback gathered from this meeting along with all other comments received during the consultation period will be reviewed and commented on by officers and included in the final report.

Education Scotland is an independent body not connected with Council and will produce a report on the proposal. Their report will also be part of the final report.

Councillor McNeilly thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.

**APPENDIX 5 - EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT**

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Argyll and Bute Council to discontinue education provision at Luing Primary School.**

October 2023

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Argyll and Bute Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Luing Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 4 September 2023 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of Luing Island, Easdale Primary School, Oban High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.



1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school(s), HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Luig Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements due to the proposed closure.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 Luig Primary School is a remote, rural school on an island which is accessible by a short ferry journey. Argyll and Bute Council mothballed Luig Primary School in December 2020 after no children were enrolled in August 2020. The school has remained mothballed since that time. The proposal is to permanently close the school from May 2024, with the catchment area transferring to Easdale Primary School. The council's school roll predication for Luig Primary School shows a small increase, from three in 2023 to six from 2026. Since the school was mothballed, children from the island attend Easdale Primary School, which is on the neighbouring island of Seil. During a pre-consultation in 2022, Argyll and Bute Council considered three options; to re-open, to close or continue to mothball Luig Primary School. At this stage consultations with the community raised a range of issues. These included that the school is a key part of the island community and concerns about the school building deteriorating. In its proposal the council proposes permanent closure of the school and provides several reasons for this conclusion. These are positive educational benefits of Easdale Primary School, the projected low school roll, the challenges in recruiting teaching staff and the considerable expenditure needed to bring the building up to an acceptable standard.

2.3 The statutory consultation for the closure of Luig Primary School ran from 15 June to 13 September 2023. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders, including parents and pupils. A public meeting was held on 4 September 2023 and attended by 25 stakeholders. Thirty-nine stakeholders completed an online survey and/or sent written submissions on the consultation to the council. Of these responses almost all of these were against the proposal to permanently close the school. Every respondent from Luig stated they were against the proposed closure. At the public meeting and in written responses stakeholders raised a range of concerns. These included the potential negative impacts on the island of closure, travel issues, and ensuring children and families are fully part of Easdale school community if the proposal is agreed.

## 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors consider that the council have set out a reasonable case for the permanent closure of Luig Primary School in regard to the educational benefits they have stated. Children from Luig are settled at Easdale Primary School and are experiencing opportunities to develop their capacity to work with others and build friendships. The learning environment is pleasant and schemes such as the buddy system support the children to encourage each other's learning and play. There is an early learning centre at Easdale Primary School, this supports the transition from

nursery to primary. HM Inspectors also acknowledge the challenges with recruitment that the council has identified.

3.2 Children and young people from Luing who spoke to HM Inspectors, recognise that there are advantages and disadvantages to learning at a small, island school. They think that it can provide a very nurturing experience but that children can miss out on learning alongside peers of their own age that a school with a larger roll can provide. Children like the idea of being able to walk or cycle to school if Luing Primary School re-opened but feel they would miss their friends if they left Easdale Primary School. Practitioners consider that a clear decision being made may help to settle children and make education planning easier. The council are exploring how to improve the very limited internet and phone connections at Easdale Primary School. If this proposal is agreed, or indeed if further mothballing is chosen, it will be important to resolve this. This would help, for example, parents from Luing to join Parent Council meetings online. It will also be beneficial for the continuation of learning for days when children cannot get to school.

3.3 As Luing is an island, travel is a key issue that all stakeholders who met HM Inspectors raised. Children from Luing currently travel to Easdale Primary School by minibus, ferry and service bus. Both children and young people stated that travelling to school via ferry and public buses can affect attendance, as they are late to school or miss school entirely several times a year. They also spoke how travel issues limit them joining out of school activities and meeting friends. There is a need to address parents' safety concerns about how younger children are supported to use public buses for part of their journey. Parents spoke about the significant time and costs involved in taking their children to nursery and escorting primary age children to school and out of school activities. HM Inspectors would recommend that the council continue to work with parents to mitigate issues associated with travel, whether this proposal is agreed, or the school continues to be mothballed,

3.4 All of the residents of Luing, including parents, who spoke to HM Inspectors are against the permanent closure of the school. All acknowledge that given the current small numbers of primary age children on the island that the arrangements for them to attend Easdale Primary School should continue for now. However, they challenge the council's projected school roll. Community organisations and businesses spoke about their plans to extend housing and employment on the island. They do not consider that the council has taken this sufficiently into their considerations. It will be important that the council continue discussions with the community as the island community impact assessment for this proposal is being developed.

3.5 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. Stakeholders from Luing, that HM Inspectors spoke to, would like the council to consider the Luing Primary School building for alternative educational use, with the option to re-open as a school in the future. The Community Council and local Development Trust would welcome further discussions with the council around this possibility. Residents are concerned that the permanent closure of the school would affect the long term sustainability of Luing. A range of stakeholders have identified the challenges in filling essential jobs on Luing. They are concerned that

closing the school could exacerbate the difficulty in attracting families to live on the island. Re-opening the school would shorten travel times for the children on the island. However, the energy use in reopening the school would likely offset any environmental benefits.

3.6 During the consultation period consultees identified alleged inaccuracies and omissions in the proposal, including the wider economic impact of any closure on the island. The council has confirmed that it is taking the necessary steps to investigate and as necessary address them in its final consultation report.

## 4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors consider that the council has made a reasonable educational case for the closure of Luing Primary School. Children are settled at Easdale Primary School and enjoy learning alongside their peers. However, as this is a rural, island school there are wider considerations that need to be taken into account, including the impact a closure may have on island sustainability. As the planned Island Community Impact Assessment is developed it will be important for the council to engage further with the community organisations on Luing. This will provide an opportunity to explore ways to mitigate any potential negative impacts that could result if this proposal to permanently close the school is agreed. Improving travel arrangements to better support children to attend school and take part in out of school activities may help to address some stakeholder concerns. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies or omissions notified to it.

**HM Inspectors**  
**October 2023**

Pupil Consultation - School Closure

Date of Visit / School	12th September 2023
School for proposed closure	Luing Primary School
Staff member(s) Leading.	Head Teacher and Easdale Clerical.
Number of children / age range.	one P2 one NS

Background information for pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I am meeting with you today because the Council want to find out your views, about Luing Primary School being closed. This process of asking for your views is called a consultation.</li> <li>✓ This consultation is anonymous – which means your words and ideas may be used in public reports that are written, but your name won't be written with your words and ideas.</li> <li>• We want to consult with you to find out what you think about the Council's proposal to close Luing Primary School. The Council is proposing this because             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– There are hardly any pupils from the area that would go to Luing and this number isn't going up.</li> <li>✓ – It's getting expensive to keep looking after a building that isn't being used.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It is important that we find out your thoughts and opinions because you are the most current pupils that went to that school so your views are important and this will help us make a decision for pupils that would be future pupils at Luing Primary School.</li> <li>✓ • Closing the school isn't the only option for Luing Primary School –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It could re-open.</li> <li>– It could continue to be 'mothballed' – which means it's temporarily closed like it is now.</li> <li>– Close Luing PS and change the catchment area for pupils to go to other schools nearby.- Our school (Easdale)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
If you went to Luing tell us a little bit about going to school at Luing PS.	No children currently at Easdale have ever been at Luing Primary school when it was open as a school. They recognise the building but have not experienced it as a school.
What do you think the positive things would be if Luing PS closed?	"I don't know" "I would still see my friends from Easdale"

Pupil Consultation - School Closure

<p>Do you have any concerns about Luing PS closing?</p>	<p>"It is not a good idea." "It's a nice school." "I would be worried when it closes."</p>
<p>What might other people be concerned about if Luing PS closed?</p>	<p>"I don't know"</p>
<p>If Luing PS closed is there anything that would help make this easier for pupils from Luing PS going to another school?</p>	<p>"I don't know"</p>
<p>Do you have any other comments about this that you want to add?</p>	<p>"No" "I would miss my friends from Easdale Island."</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have more ideas please let your teacher know.</li> <li>• If anything we have chatted about today has made you worried remember you can talk to your class teacher or your parents.</li> </ul>

# PROPOSAL TO CLOSE LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ISLAND COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ICIA)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The options appraisal, proposal document and consultation report have been prepared in compliance with the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended (the 2010 Act) on the above proposal. As the proposal pertains to Luing Primary School situated on Luing Island, it has been necessary to complete an Island Community Impact Assessment (ICIA).

This ICIA details the impact on island communities which were raised through the consultation, which ran from June 2023 to September 2023. The consultation process has been carried out in accordance with the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* as amended (the 2010 Act). According to the 2011 census Argyll and Bute has 23 inhabited islands. Bute, Coll, Colonsay Danna, Easdale, Eilean da Mheinn, Erraid, Gigha, Gometra, Inchtavannach, Innischoonan, Iona, Islay, Jura, Kerrera, Lismore, Luing, Mull, Oronsay, Seil, Shuna (Luing), Tiree and Ulva.

It is proposed that education provision at Luing Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024; and that the delineated catchment area of Easdale Primary School shall be extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Luing Primary School.

Luing Primary School has been mothballed for 3 years. The school roll is very low and not predicted to rise significantly in the near future. Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time the proposal was issued as a basis for statutory consultation (June 2023) there were 8.59 fte vacancies for teachers in Argyll and Bute. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £12,064. Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance.

### 2. CONSULTATION

2.1 On 8th December 2020, Argyll and Bute Council's Community Services Committee approved the mothballing of Luing Primary School. As no pupils have been attending Luing Primary School since August 2020, it was recommended that the School was mothballed on a

temporary basis until June 2022. The Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School.

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

2.2 The Community Services Committee received a report on 25th August 2022 providing details of the Options Appraisal for Luing Primary School; carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act, as amended. The Committee agreed to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and requested that officers formulate a draft closure proposal for consideration at the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 8th June 2023 which, if approved, would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the 2010 Act.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=14784&Ver=4>

2.3 At the Community Services Committee held on 8th June 2023, Members considered and agreed to adopt the draft proposal as a “relevant proposal” that would proceed to a statutory consultation under the 2010 Act. This statutory consultation opened on 15th June 2023 and ended on 13th September 2023. A public meeting was also held on 4th September 2023 at 1:30pm in Luing Primary School.

[Community Services Committee on Thursday, 12 March 2020, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

2.4 Full details of the proposal, reasons for the proposal, the reasonable alternatives to the proposal that were identified, an assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives, and an assessment of the educational benefits to the proposal and each of the alternatives are set out in the [Proposal Paper](#).

The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty and the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions.

### **3. ISLAND COMMUNITY IMPACTS**



### **3.1 Pupils**

Two pupils who reside on Luing and attend Easdale Primary School were part of a focus group discussion with the Headteacher of Easdale Primary School. Their responses were captured and submitted as part of the consultation exercise. No pupils who reside on Luing and currently attend Easdale Primary School and ELC previously attended Luing Primary School, therefore it was difficult to ascertain their understanding of the proposal and the impact that it would have on them directly. The pupils consulted do recognise Luing Primary School as a school building.

### **3.2 Community bodies**

Island community bodies emphasised the requirement of an Island Community Impact Assessment relating to a policy change. Luing Community Council (LCC) and the Isle of Luing Community Trust (IOLCT) submitted joint responses to the consultation. The groups strongly expressed their opinion that they are opposed to the closure of Luing Primary School. They highlighted a number of issues including transport infrastructure inadequacies and the impact on the sustainability and economic development of the island. The groups proposed an additional period of mothballing in order to allow them to progress work underway to attract new families and businesses to the island. A Development Framework for Luing's future has been formulated following community consultation and the groups highlighted a number of investments that have been or are part of plans to boost Luing's Economy. The groups believe that these investments and developments at risk without a primary school as they rely on attracting enough young people to the island and who are key to the island's sustainability and economic prosperity. Some of the plans that the Community Trust is formulating including the development of affordable homes on the island to cater for young people and families, have yet to come to fruition and there is insufficient evidence to indicate that significant investment in the Island will be secured in order to attract new families who will require a functioning local school.

The groups identified that all businesses on Luing struggle to find staff and that many of the younger people move away to cities for full-time jobs and more affordable accommodation. Luing has an aging population and therefore there are fewer people seeking employment thus limiting the expansion and growth of existing businesses. The groups believe that Closure of the school is likely to discourage young families from living on Luing.

The groups highlighted that parents and children like the education and social interaction provided at Easdale Primary School but are extremely dissatisfied with the current travel arrangements for reasons due to inflexibility of timetables, cost and lack of a 'door to door service'. They felt that this was an issue that was omitted from the proposal paper and that the safety of children is at risk under the current arrangements.



#### 4. FEEDBACK FROM ISLAND COMMUNITY

The majority of responses from community members on Luing echoed the sentiments of the points submitted by the Community Council and Community Trust. The majority of respondents were in favour of an extended period of mothballing and were concerned about the economic sustainability of the island if the school were to close permanently.

#### 5. NEXT STEPS

The views of stakeholders, as outlined above, as well as all other stakeholders who engaged in the statutory consultation are reflected and further assessed in the Consultation Report, which this ICIA forms part of. The Council is committed to keeping under review the impacts of the proposal on all who may be potentially affected by it, especially children and young people in the affected island communities. In particular, the Council is committed to taking any appropriate steps to mitigate any adverse impacts which may arise as a result of the proposal (if implemented). These steps are set out within the Consultation Report.

#### 6. ICIA SIGN OFF

<b>Lead officer details:</b>	
Name of lead officer	Brendan Docherty
Job title	Education Manager
Department	Education
<b>Appropriate officer details:</b>	
Name of appropriate officer	Douglas Hendry
Job title	Executive Director
Department	Education
Date of sign off	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2024