Argyll and Bute Council

Education

Review of Education Provision

Kilchrenan Primary School

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: December 2023

Proposal for the closure of Kilchrenan Primary School

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that education provision at Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024.

The catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

Following examination of several options, this is the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:

- Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 21 months. The school roll is currently zero 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 13.17 fte (full time equivalent) vacancies for both teachers and Head Teachers in Argyll and Bute.

- While the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating, with limited budget for maintenance. The costs of continued mothballing, and of bringing the fabric of the school to the required standard for any re-opening, are also considerable.

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)
- Kilchrenan Community Council
- Taynuilt Community Council
- Community Planning Partnership
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Oban Public Library, Albany St., Oban PA34 4AL
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Taynuilt Primary School, 2 Strathview, Taynuilt, PA35 1JF
- Oban Education Offices, Willowview, Soroba Road, Oban PA34 4SB
- Kilchrenan Village Hall, Kilchrenan, PA35 1HE

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 10th March 2022, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School. It was agreed that the premises be retained for two years on a care and maintenance basis and that a review of the school's mothballing would be prepared for the Committee's March 2023 meeting, when Members could decide on a continued period of mothballing, or request that officers begin an engagement process, carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to consider the future options for Kilchrenan Primary School. It was also agreed that the community could have pre-arranged access to the School premises for community functions during the period of mothballing.

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Community Services Committee, 10/03/2022 10:30 (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

1.2 On 9th March 2023, the Community Services Committee approved the continued mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School and agreed that the Education Service begin gathering necessary information and carry out the exercise of assessing the options for the future of Kilchrenan Primary School, in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010.

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Community Services Committee, 09/03/2023 10:30 (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

1.3 The Community Services Committee received a report on 24th August 2023 providing details of the Options Appraisal for Kilchrenan Primary School, carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended. The Committee agreed to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and requested that officers formulate a draft proposal for consideration at the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 14th December 2023 which, if approved, would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Agenda for Community Services Committee on Thursday, 24 August 2023, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

1.4 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, 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.

1.5 In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a statutory 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.

1.6 Kilchrenan Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved its mothballing.

1.7 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**.

1.8 A new Corporate Plan (2023-2027) was agreed by the Council on 29th June 2023. The Plan contains the new set of Council Priorities. The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan 2023-2027 states its vision of a successful and vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and thriving economy. The area has a rich mix of remote, rural and island communities. The Council will use its strong track record in partnership working, at all levels, to secure the best possible outcomes.

In the Corporate Plan for 2023-2027, through the agreed priorities, the Council undertakes to ensure the following:

- Children and young people will attain and achieve at all stages We will improve outcomes for our children and young people;
- Our schools are effective, sustainable learning environments;
- Continued support for all of our children and young people with additional support needs across Argyll and Bute, within our schools and other service areas;
- We will support connections to, from and within Argyll and Bute;
- Recognition of the importance of marine connections to and from our island and mainland communities and our role in maintaining these links;
- We will reduce our carbon emissions;
- We seek to increase availability of all types of housing, including affordable homes;
- We build up and strengthen our communities as attractive, vibrant places to live, work and do business;
- We make assets work now while we plan for and invest in the future;
- We commit to working in partnership wherever we need to as well as calling on others, with responsibility, to take the action that is required to safeguard Argyll and Bute's success.

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 its 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 Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024, and that the catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School.

Reasons for the Proposal

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

1. Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 21 months. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.

2. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing, there are 13.17 full-time equivalent (fte) vacancies across Head Teacher and teacher posts.

3. While the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating, with limited budgets for maintenance. The costs of continued mothballing, and of bringing the fabric of the school to the required standard for any re-opening, are also considerable.

Additional Considerations

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

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future. This proposal document contains an Educational Benefits Statement;

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

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

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

3 PRELIMINARY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Kilchrenan Primary School, as it has been mothballed for almost two 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 have also been considered. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the Options Appraisal was produced.

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

3.3 The place of the school in the community was also considered, in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. Since the mothballing of the School, the community has not used the school or the school grounds. Kilchrenan Village Hall is used as the community hub, is situated centrally within Kilchrenan village and is well equipped and appointed, having been recently refurbished.

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 were to be implemented, as children would have to travel by bus to attend Taynuilt Primary School, although extensive use of bus transport had previously been necessary to bring children to Kilchrenan each day.

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

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

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

When considering the above options during the Options Appraisal process, the following factors were key in arriving at option (d) as the most appropriate response to the underlying reasons behind consideration of this proposal:

- the positive educational benefits of attendance at Taynuilt Primary School;
- projected low pupil numbers at Kilchrenan Primary School, and the associated impact on pupils' educational progress and social development;
- the challenges in recruiting and retaining teaching staff;
- the considerable expenditure needed to bring the Kilchrenan Primary School building up to the required standard for reopening;
- the lack of expressed local support for reopening Kilchrenan Primary School.

3.7 Following an initial Options Appraisal which was presented to the Council's Community Services Committee on 24th August 2023, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements had been satisfied enabling this Proposal Paper to be formulated, with the option to close Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Taynuilt Primary School being identified as the most adequate means of addressing the reasons for considering possible proposals.

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

3.9 Almost all in the community felt that continuing to mothball the school was not an option. It was felt that a decision should be made as the building would only continue to deteriorate. The option of re-opening the school, but with a wider catchment area was not seen by any consulted during the Options Appraisal as a viable option. A small number of those consulted expressed a wish for Kilchrenan Primary School to reopen, but the majority conveyed their contentment with the provision and situation which had been in place since mothballing: principally, the quality of educational provision at the other schools children were now attending; the positive effect attendance at such schools was having on children; the relative lack of change in transport arrangements; the benefits to the receiving school(s) and the absence of negative impact experienced thus far on the Kilchrenan community following mothballing.

3.10 Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel arrangements in place since mothballing. There would be little or 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 Kilchrenan Primary School. Full details of the community engagement, and the findings from the fulfilling of preliminary requirements, are set out in **Appendix 5**.

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

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024. The catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School.

4.2 Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 21 months. The school condition is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.

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 13.17 fte vacancies for Head Teachers and Teachers in Argyll and Bute.

4.4 The costs of continued mothballing, and of bringing the fabric of the school to the required standard for any re-opening, are also considerable.

4.5 The current annual cost of mothballing the school premises is £13,317

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

4.7 This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future.

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

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

4.10 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.

4.11 As part of the preliminary requirements in the drafting of this proposal, the Council considered four options. The favoured option by the Council is (d), below, as it was considered it most adequately addressed the reasons for the proposal.

a) Re-open Kilchrenan Primary School;
b) Continued Mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary with the pupils zoned to Taynuilt Primary School;
c) Re-open Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area;
d) Close Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Taynuilt Primary School (The Proposal).

4.12 Having considered these other alternatives the Council does not consider them to be viable alternatives to the closure proposal at this juncture, and will proceed to consult on the proposal to close Kilchrenan Primary School and extend the catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School to include the current catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School.

4.13 The Council has undertaken an appraisal of impact were this proposal to be implemented.

4.14 This includes an assessment of:

- the school roll and predicted school roll;
- teacher numbers;
- 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 reduction to zero of the school roll, and no material increase being predicted in coming years, the Council mothballed the school almost two years ago as a result of such changes to the school's circumstances. The Education Authority 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 could become 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 there was demonstrated a sufficient level of demand for the school to justify its re-opening. During the period of mothballing, no placing requests have been made to Kilchrenan Primary School, and no children within the catchment area have applied to enrol in the school. As mentioned above, the school has been mothballed for 21 months, and its roll is not predicted to rise in coming years to a level which would make the school suitable for re-opening. As there has been no material change in the

circumstances evidenced, and having kept the position under review over the past two 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 Kilchrenan 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 regarding recruitment of teachers, the issues that have been faced by the Education Service regarding the recruitment of teachers to Kilchrenan Primary School are detailed at Section 6 of this Proposal Paper. When the previous Head Teacher retired in February 2022, attempts to recruit a new Head Teacher were unsuccessful, which triggered considerations relating to the mothballing of the school. 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 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, and constitutes 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 while 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. While the school remains mothballed, it costs the Council £13,317 annually. Accordingly, if the Proposal is subsequently subsequently implemented following a statutory consultation process, it will allow the Education Service to use any savings generated to the benefit of the other occupied schools and all pupils within the Education Authority's area. It would also allow any plans for alternative usage of the school property to be progressed, as the school building will require to be permanently discontinued as an educational establishment before any such initiatives can be pursued. Further details about the condition of the school building are set out within Section 7 of this Proposal Paper.

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 of the closure proposal) 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 As Kilchrenan Primary School is classified as a very remote rural school, the Council has also given special regard to the following factors if this proposal were to be implemented:

- the likely effect on the local community, as assessed in terms of:
    - the sustainability of the community; and
    - availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the school community.

- the likely effect caused by different travelling arrangements, as assessed in terms of the impact of such arrangements on:
    - the environment; and
    - the school's pupils and staff and other users of the school's 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 school rolls as shown below is drawn from the yearly pupil census which takes place in September each year. Past pupil numbers are historic data from past pupil censuses. Pupil projections are based on the 2022 pupil census. School rolls by their 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 and parents/carers exercising their right to make placing requests.

The school roll of Kilchrenan Primary School has seen a considerable and consistent declining trend since 2006.

Table 1 shows the historic and current pupil numbers for both Kilchrenan and Taynuilt Primary schools. Table 2 shows the predicted roll for both schools until 2026-2027. It should be noted that the projected roll figures for Kilchrenan Primary School are based on the number of primary school-age children projected to be within the catchment area, and does not take account of parental decisions to send their children to other schools in the authority.

Table 1

	Kilchrenan PS	Taynuilt PS
Capacity	41	163
	Roll	Roll
2006-07	23	72
2007-08	20	77
2008-09	19	79
2009-10	18	78
2010-11	10	88
2011-12	10	81
2012-13	8	81
2013-14	7	83
2014-15	4	91
2015-16	4	83
2016-17	9	82
2017-18	6	79
2018-19	7	72
2019-20	8	69
2020-21	12	67
2021-22	6	70
2022-23	0	66
2023-24	0	55

Table 2

	Kilchrenan PS	Taynuilt PS
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	41	163
2024 -2025	0	60
2025-2026	2	55
2026-2027	0	48

In August 2023, no primary 1 pupils registered to attend Kilchrenan Primary School for session 2023-24.

5.2 The Kilchrenan Primary School roll dropped to zero over the course of the 2021-2022 school year (see Table 1, above). Projected pupils within the catchment area (as set out in Table 2, above) do not reflect the number of

pupils who would be attending Kilchrenan Primary School because parents choose to send their children to Taynuilt PS or to the local denominational primary school for the area, St. Columba's PS in Oban.

5.3 Kilchrenan Primary School catchment area includes the following development management zones: Inverinan, Dalavich, Kilchrenan and Annat settlements, also countryside and remote countryside zones.

5.4 An area of the Kilchrenan Primary School catchment falls within the Tobermory-Oban-Dalmally Growth Corridor identified in the Proposed Local Development Plan 2.

5.5 There are approved consents for 19 dwelling houses within the past three years, the majority being in close proximity to the primary school.

5.6 There are an additional two dwellings under construction with consents over three years old. The two dwellings under construction are technically from consents for two dwellings each where one dwelling has been completed on each site. There is no evidence that either of these second units are actively under construction. With the consents being over three years old, neither second dwellings may ever reach construction stage.

5.7 Six further housing units are allocated to H4026.

5.8 The number of planning permissions for dwellings do not include any granted after 30th June 2023. They include both planning permission and planning permission in principle. They do not include any dwellings from planning applications that are pending a decision. One consented dwelling has been discounted from the figures as it involves the demolition of a fire damaged dwelling.

5.9 There is a mineral allocation M4005, Barachander Quarry, within the catchment area.

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 two years, the issue of recruitment of staff to Kilchrenan Primary School has not changed. At the time of writing, there are 13.17 fte vacancies for Head Teachers and class teachers in Argyll and Bute. Schools within the area have struggled to recruit staff, particularly in relation to Head Teachers and supply staff. Despite a sustained effort to secure staff, there is no reason to think that staffing would not continue to be a considerable challenge for Kilchrenan Primary School.

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

7 CONDITION OF THE BUILDING

7.1 Argyll and Bute Council's School Estate Management Planning process identified in 2022 that the condition of Kichrenan Primary School was satisfactory and graded a B. Outlined in the Options Appraisal (**Appendix 5** – section 6.3) are the full financial details of costs relating to the re-opening the building or continuing to retain the building in mothballed status (the latter is also detailed in **Appendix 4**).

7.2 As part of the consultation process, the Council would be open to discussion with the community with regard to the future of the building. There would exist the possibility of transferring the building to a recognised community group through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 or some other agreed mechanism, which could provide the opportunity to utilise the building for benefit of the community and as a potential driver of regeneration that could enhance the sustainability of the community.

One such proposal from a local group relates to the use of the building as a hub for local small businesses, and subsequently as a key part of the infrastructure of a proposed Regional/National Park, proposals for which have been submitted to the Scottish Government by the local community.

8 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

Assessment of likely educational benefits for pupils

8.1 Should this proposal be implemented, the Council believes that there will arise considerable educational benefits. These centre around:

- Learning and teaching;
- Educational Outcomes;
- Broadening the range of opportunities for children; and
- The environment for learning.

8.2 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers in exercising freedom and responsibility in their practice, within the context of broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. All schools in Argyll and Bute implement Curriculum for Excellence, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

8.3 Scottish Government classification defines both Kilchrenan and Taynuilt Primary Schools as remote rural schools. However, Taynuilt Primary School

has a more accessible location in a larger village. Children from the Kilchrenan area attending Taynuilt Primary School are benefitting from learning with a greater number of peers of the same age and stage as themselves, as opposed to experiencing a single, multi-composite classroom. Pupils also benefit from the increased friendship groups that a larger school can offer, and 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 larger groups of children, take part in team activities and move with an established group of friends and peers to secondary school at Oban High School.

8.4 Learning and Teaching

8.4.1 The following focuses on learning and the curriculum at Taynuilt Primary School, which is the school most children in the Kilchrenan Primary School catchment area have been attending since February 2022, and which would be the future receiving school for children presently living within the Kilchrenan Primary School catchment area.

8.4.2 The curriculum at Taynuilt Primary School includes a broad range of planned experiences, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

8.4.3 In Taynuilt 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 a high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning – curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement.

8.4.4 In Taynuilt Primary School, children are taught in composite classes composed of children from no more than two year groups. 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 through a variety of learning activities, as well as take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school.

8.4.5 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.

8.4.6 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of such professionalism in exercising autonomy, creativity and responsibility, in the context of broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. The Head Teacher of Taynuilt Primary School leads a team of staff who are challenged and supported through a range of continuing professional review and development opportunities. The school is part of the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Schools Cluster, which means that staff can be supported to work together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work collaboratively across stage-appropriate groups. Colleagues within Taynuilt 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.

8.4.7 Taynuilt Primary School has been focusing strongly on the development of children's understanding of their rights – the role of children's rights in wellbeing, sustainable living and school improvement – and working towards Rights Respecting School accreditation. A further key focus for the school is the empowerment of parents/carers in shaping and participating in policy, learning and the life and ethos of the school through a strong parent council and a vibrant parental voice. A third improvement focus for the school community has been to develop further the use of self-evaluation and attainment data to inform improvement planning at whole-school level, and to support appropriate, effective, timely interventions for children in their learning and attainment. Other ongoing improvement priorities include supporting digital learning, developing Reading through targeted interventions, supporting progress in Numeracy through the use of *Stages in Early Arithmetical Learning,* and promoting Pupil Leadership of activities and initiatives, and ownership of and engagement with their own learning.

8.4.8 Taynuilt Primary School encourages outdoor learning activities and learning through play. Partnership working with local employers and the Parent Council has helped to develop resources and outdoor learning zones to support this approach. The poly-tunnel supports children's understanding of health and wellbeing, bio-diversity and sustainability.

8.4.9 Taynuilt Primary School is located within the village of Taynuilt, which, like Kilchrenan Primary School, is classed as a very remote rural school. The Head Teacher has a strong understanding of the rural communities that the school serves.

8.4.10 Taynuilt Primary School has its own linked ELC on site, with which it coordinates an active transition calendar. The school also has strong links with Oban High School with which it liaises, alongside all other OLI schools, throughout the year to ensure a smooth transition for P7 pupils into S1.

8.5 Educational Outcomes

8.5.1 Through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a key priority for staff at Taynuilt Primary School, 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 analysis of pupil work. As a result of such practice, appropriate interventions are put in place, involving parents/carers and other agencies to ensure the needs of each child are met.

8.5.2 In Taynuilt Primary School, most children are achieving the expected levels for their stage in Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking and Numeracy. The attainment of children at Taynuilt Primary School is strong: between 2019 and 2023, attainment levels for P1, P4 and P7 pupils at Taynuilt Primary School in Numeracy and across the three areas of Literacy (Reading, Writing and Listening and Talking) were above the Argyll and Bute and National averages.

8.5.3 Taynuilt Primary School continues to develop positive relationships within the school through a focus on Nurture and Rights Respecting Schools. The larger staff, parent/carer body and partner group of the school naturally 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, languages, science, expressive arts teaching.

8.6 Experiences – Broadening the Range of Opportunities

8.6.1 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. Taynuilt Primary School has been evaluating its community links as part of its Covid Recovery Plans, providing enhanced opportunities for social interaction and skills development.

8.6.2 There is also a strong transition planning process between Taynuilt Primary School and Oban High School, which creates increased opportunities for children to participate and to make new connections.

8.6.3 Children at Taynuilt Primary School are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and to develop their creativity and enterprise skills.

8.6.4 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. The pupil voice is strong, and young leaders feel confident, entrusted and empowered to take developments forward.

8.7 Environment for Learning

8.7.1 Taynuilt Primary School is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in the village of Taynuilt. The school building is graded highly suitable for effective educational provision (Suitability Rating A) and the grounds and surroundings are extensive and attractive, providing ample space for play and outdoor learning. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

8.7.2 Children from Kilchrenan Primary School attending Taynuilt Primary School maintain links with friends who live in their own villages as well as creating links with children from within the present Taynuilt catchment area. These relationships also extend into clubs and activities that take place in Taynuilt and Oban beyond the school day. Such relationships enhance learning in school for pupils.

8.7.3 In summary, were this proposal for the closure of Kilchrenan Primary School to be implemented, there would be a range of educational benefits for pupils, as summarised in the paragraphs above. There are benefits for the development of social and emotional skills, as well as the educational benefits resulting from access to a more diverse curriculum. Overall, the learning environment in Taynuilt Primary School also offers children the opportunity to participate in a wider range of high-quality learning experiences across the four curricular contexts – learning across subject areas, interdisciplinary/project learning, the broader life of the school and pupils' opportunities for achievement.

8.8 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities

8.8.1 Implications for staff

8.8.1.1 Should this proposal be implemented, there will be no new implications for teaching and ancillary staff in Taynuilt Primary School.

8.8.1.2 Should this proposal be 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.

8.8.2 Implications for Early Learning Centre Users – Pre-Five Children

8.8.2.1 Prior to the mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary school, children from the school's catchment area attended Taynuilt Primary School Pre-Five Unit. The closure of Kilchrenan Primary School would see no change in such arrangements. The transition process and transition experience of children from pre-five to primary education would be enhanced as a result of the close relationship which exists between the nursery and the school in Taynuilt, and the joint Early Level learning which is in place.

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

8.9.1 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.

8.9.2 The proposal could increase the roll of Taynuilt Primary School over time, thus extending the peer group for all pupils, present and future, living within both the present Kilchrenan and Taynuilt catchment areas. The larger school should be able to support a wider range of social and extra-curricular activities.

8.9.3 Pupils who would otherwise have attended Kilchrenan Primary School, would benefit from daily interaction in a larger peer group and from improved educational arrangements as described above. Pupils in the combined school will have more shared experiences and opportunity for friendships. This will enhance their confidence and make the transition to secondary easier. Larger year groups make the provision of specialist services more viable and provide enhanced opportunities for school trips.

8.10 Assessment of likely educational benefits on the pupils of any other schools in the Council area

8.10.1 The current mothballing of the Kilchrenan Primary School has had an indirect positive effect on other pupils in Argyll and Bute. The reduction in the running costs for the school means that this is a saving to the Council, which is not taken from elsewhere. If Kilchrenan Primary School were to close, the current mothballing costs being incurred

would be re-directed and therefore indirectly benefit other school pupils in Argyll and Bute.

8.10.2 There are no other significant impacts from this proposal, positive or negative, on other pupils in the authority or who attend other schools.

8.11 Placing requests

8.11.1 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.

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

8.12.1 The main adverse effect resulting from this proposal would be the length of the journey to school for children who live in the Kilchrenan Primary School catchment area. However, children who previously attended Kilchrenan Primary School and who for the past 21 months have attended Taynuilt Primary School have made this this journey daily, and families in the area engaged with thus far do not regard the length of journey as a major consideration. The village of Taynuilt is 6.7 miles from Kilchrenan. It is visited routinely the by residents in the Kilchrenan catchment area as an aspect of everyday life, and it is the first village residents pass through when travelling to Oban. Funded school transport would also continue to be provided for pupils should this proposal be implemented, as a result of the catchment area extension. Pupil and parent feedback from the community engagement event provided positive feedback with regards to present transport arrangements.

8.13 Summary of educational benefits statement

8.13.1 Consequences of this proposal, such as the ability for children to participate in a more broad range of experiences and the ability to better meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the children, represent significant educational benefits. 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**.

8.13.2 While the positive educational benefits are numerous, the sole negative aspect identified arising from children attending Taynuilt Primary School centres around the fact that children have to travel by either bus or car to school. However it is considered that the positive aspects of this

proposal outweigh the negative aspect of some travelling for children. It is worth noting that the broad and very rural nature of the Kilchrenan catchment area naturally requires pupils to travel to and from school by bus or car, as was the case prior to Kilchrenan Primary School's mothballing.

9 FACTORS RELATING TO RURAL SCHOOL CLOSURES

Kilchrenan Primary School is classified as a very remote rural school. The council is therefore required, under the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014), to assess the likely effects of school closure in terms of the following three factors:

- The likely educational benefits (See Section 8, above);
- The likely effect on the local community;
- The likely effects of different travel arrangements

9.1 The likely effect on the local community should the proposal be implemented

The Scottish Government focuses on four key areas of importance pertaining 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 not 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.

9.1.1 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.

9.1.2 Research[1] has shown that when communities feel empowered, there is:

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

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

9.1.3 There is the potential, should this proposal be implemented, to capitalise on the existing will and drive in this community, with opportunities to support and enable local leaders to organise, motivate and inspire their neighbours. The opportunity for the local community to acquire the building under the terms of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* could be key to developing the community as an independent, resilient place to live. The proposal being presented by community leaders at both local and national levels, centres on the use of the school building as a community drop-in office for small local home-based businesses, and as the hub for the Kilchrenan Community Council's campaign to create a Regional or National Park around Loch Awe, as supported by four further Community Councils in the Loch Awe area.

9.1.4 It is acknowledged that the closure of a local school can have a detrimental effect on the local community. However, community management of assets such as Kilchrenan Primary School may be an important step in building community confidence, promoting growth and enabling communities to realise their aspirations. Formal closure would mean that the community's plans and proposals for the building could potentially be progressed. This could enhance community life by establishing a community enterprise focus.

9.1.5 Within the village of Kilchrenan is Kilchrenan Village Hall which is used for community events and activities. This facility – recently renovated and well-equipped – fulfils the role of a central hub for the community in a way that the school building could not. The closure of Kilchrenan Primary School would not have a negative impact on the community in terms of its capacity to meet, plan, collaborate and implement initiatives and activities which are for the benefit of all in the community.

9.1.6 It is therefore considered that formal closure of this school could have a positive impact on the wider community, leading to agency, empowerment and participation in the community, an increase in users of the facility, and consequential improvement in economic growth.

9.2 **The likely effect of the proposal on travel arrangements**

9.2.1 The travel distance from Kilchrenan PS to Taynuilt PS is 6.7 miles via the B845. Travel time is approximately 14 minutes. The travel arrangements, both in terms of funded transport by the council and families' private transport arrangements, have been in place for 21 months. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Kilchrenan community and the occasional issues relating to adverse weather, particularly in winter, are acknowledged.

9.2.2 The proposal to close the school would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils, the associated costs or the environmental impact of travel.

10 FINANCIAL IMPACT

10.1 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 £9,888 to £13,317. This information gives details on the estimated cost if Kilchrenan Primary School were still an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Kilchrenan Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is estimated at £13,317 per year. Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £179,118. In addition, the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is £29,000.

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

10.3 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.

10.4 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. The costs noted against teachers in column 2 of Table 1 at Appendix 4 have not directly impacted on Taynuilt Primary School but have been subsumed by the Authority as a whole, specifically the costs of the teacher from Kilchrenan having transferred to another school, which was then overstaffed. Similarly, the costs relating to transport do not impact on Taynuilt Primary School

10.5 As the school is mothballed, there are currently no annual transport costs for pupils to attend Kilchrenan Primary School. Were Kilchrenan Primary School to be reopened, transport costs are estimated at £27,295 per year, which is identical to the present cost to transfer children in the Kilchrenan catchment areas to Taynuilt Primary School, as the routes are identical and the bus

leaves from the same original starting point in Oban. As a result, no saving has been indicated in Appendix 4 (column 4 of Table 1), but neither is this an additional cost for Taynuilt Primary School.

10.6 Table 2 in Appendix 4 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 Kilchrenan Primary School is £222,252 and for Taynuilt Primary School this is £955,392.

10.7 Table 3 in Appendix 4 contains the annual running costs during mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School and these are estimated at **£13,317** per year, which would constitute an immediate saving on closure**.** If the school were to be formally closed, this would allow the Council to take steps towards selling the school to a third party or transferring ownership to the local community.

11 EQUALITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty (Part one of the Equality Act) and the Islands (Scotland) Act (2018) to have due regard to equality and socio-economic impact factors when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of decisions on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs).

The Council will engage with the EQSEIA process and carry out such an 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.

12 CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

12.1 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, has considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives to the possible proposal as a response to those reasons, and has assessed each of the options in accordance with Section 12A(2)(c) of the 2010 Act. After considering a paper addressing these preliminary requirements, on 24th August 2023 Community Services Committee decided that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Kilchrenan Primary School and redraw its catchment area to Taynuilt Primary School is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

12.2 The proposal to close Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Taynuilt Primary School was considered at the Community Services Committee Meeting on 14th December 2023, where it was adopted as a "relevant proposal" in terms of the 2010 Act, to be issued as a basis for statutory consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in this paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.

12.3 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

12.4 As part of a consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it and notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act, inviting them to make representations on the proposal. The consultation period will be from 21st December 2023 until 5pm on 23rd February 2024, which includes at least 30 school days.

12.5 A public meeting will be held at 6pm in Kilchrenan Village Hall on Thursday 25th January 2024. 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 23rd February 2024.

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

12.7 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 three weeks.

12.8 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 made a

minimum of three weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within six 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.

12.9 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of eight weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This eight week timeframe would consist of an initial three weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further five 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.

12.10 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 seven 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 eight weeks of the Panel being constituted.

12.11 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 five years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1 It is proposed that education provision at Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024. The catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School.

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

a) Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 21 months. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise significantly in the near future.

b) Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing, there are 13.17 full-time equivalent (fte) vacancies across Head Teacher and teacher posts.

c) While the School is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance. The costs of continued mothballing, and of bringing

the fabric of the school to the required standard for any re-opening, are also considerable.

Other Considerations

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

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable into the future. This proposal document contains an Educational Benefits Statement.

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

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

- 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

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Policy Lead for Education
For further information contact:

Jennifer Crocket
Chief Education Officer/ Head of Education: Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement
Jennifer.Crocket@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Simon Easton
Education Manager
Simon.Easton@argyll-bute.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Letter to consultees with Summary Proposal

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: 01436 657681 **Fax:**
Our Ref: **Ref:**
If phoning or calling please ask for:
e-mail: Simon.Easton@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Council Website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Kilchrenan Primary School

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision
Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Kilchrenan 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 Kilchrenan 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 21st December 2023 and will conclude on 23rd February 2024. 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 Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024. The catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

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

- Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for almost 2 years. The school roll is zero 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 25.23 fte vacancies for both teachers and headteachers 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 £13,317.

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 Kilchrenan Primary School;
b) Continued Mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School with the pupils zoned to Taynuilt Primary School;
c) Re-open Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area;

d) Close Kilchrenan Primary School and realign its catchment area to Taynuilt Primary School (the Proposal).

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

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

What will we do?

We will consult with people by:

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

What to do now?

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 25th January 2024 at 6.00pm in Kilchrenan Village Hall.
- Let us know what you think by:

Letter to: Education Services
School Consultations
Argyll & Bute Council
Argyll House
Alexandra Parade
Dunoon
PA23 8AJ

Returning the attached response sheet by post, or by Email to: argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk

What next?

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

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

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

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

- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Oban Public Library, Albany St., Oban PA34 4AL
- Lochgilphead Service Point, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- Taynuilt Primary School, 2 Strathview, Taynuilt, PA35 1JF
- Oban Education Offices, Willowview, Soroba Road, Oban PA34 4SB
- Kilchrenan Village Hall, Kilchrenan, PA35 1HE

It is also available electronically via our website:

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

Yours faithfully,

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director with responsibility for Education

APPENDIX 2

Argyll and Bute Council
Education

RESPONSE FORM

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

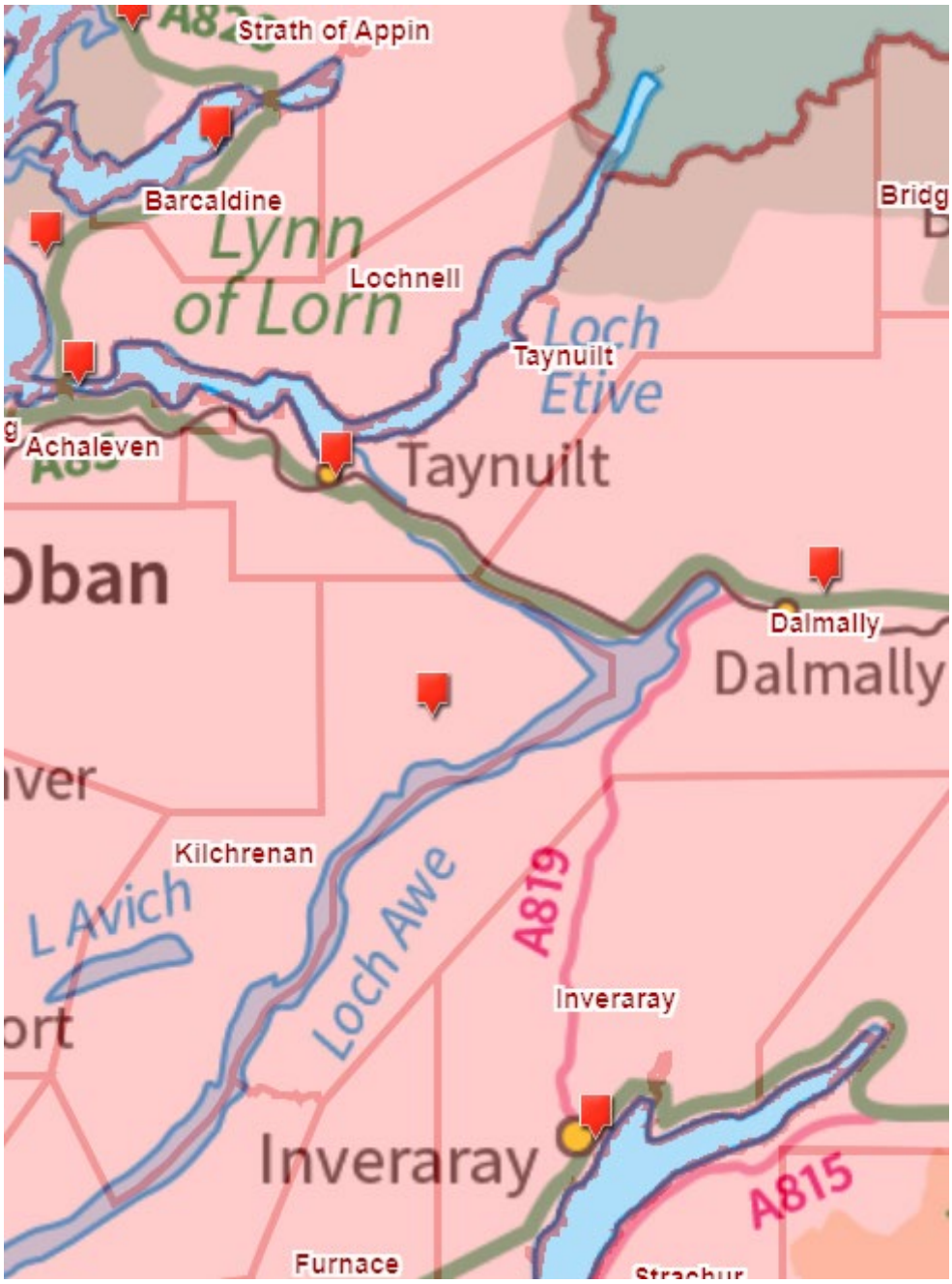
Proposal	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Kilchrenan Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29th November 2024. The catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School.	
This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:	
Name: (please print)	Address: Post Code:
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature:	Date:

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

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

APPENDIX 3 – Map of current primary school catchment areas

MAP OF CURRENT KILCHRENAN AND TAYNUILT PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS TO BE COMBINED



APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1[2]

Name of School Kilchrenan Primary School	**Projected annual costs for full financial year 2023/24**	**Additional financial impact on receiving school – Taynuilt Primary School**	**Annual recurring savings** (column 2 minus column 3)
School costs			
Employee costs -			
teaching staff	101,074	0	101,074
support staff	20,638	0	20,638
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	0	0	0
support staff training	0	0	0
Supply costs	3,030		3,030
Employers Liability Insurance	181	0	181
Public Liability Insurance	165	0	165
Staff Group Life Assurance	269	0	269
Building costs:			
property insurance	516	0	516
non domestic rates	514	0	514
water & sewerage charges	142	0	142
energy costs	13,305	0	13,305
cleaning (contract or in-house)	367	0	367
building repair & maintenance	1,060	0	1,060
grounds maintenance	388	0	388
facilities management costs	0	0	0
revenue costs arising from capital	0	0	0
other - refuse collection; telephones	1,070	0	1,070
School operational costs:			
learning materials	2,757	132	2,757
catering (contract or in-house)	7,802	941	7,802

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

SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0	0	0
Transport costs:			
home to school	27,295	27,295	0
other pupil transport costs	0	0	0
staff travel	0	0	0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	**179,958**	**28,368**	**152,643**

Income:			
Sale of meals	-840	-840	0
Lets	0	0	0
External care provider	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	**-840**	**-840**	**0**
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	**179,118**	**27,528**	**151,590**
UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	**29,853**	**4,588**	**25,265**

Table 2

Capital costs	**School proposed for closure** Kilchrenan Primary School	**Receiving school** Taynuilt Primary School
Capital Life Cycle cost	222,552	955,392
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	516
non domestic rates	514
water & sewerage charges	129
energy costs	5,720
cleaning (contract or in-house)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	2,140

grounds maintenance	388
facilities management costs	3,490
Other: equipment lease and alarm rental	420
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	**13,317**

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
Securing building	4,390
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	4,390

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
The Primary Indicator determining the GAE allocation for Primary School Teaching Staff is based on the number of primary school pupils with the Secondary Indicator being the percentage of pupils in small schools (roll < 70 pupils averaged over 2 years). Taynuilt Primary has a roll of < 70 pupils so the transfer of pupils from Kilchrenan will not impact on the small school element of GAE funding for Taynuilt. Argyll and Bute Council, however, is supported by the floor mechanism therefore any calculated reduction in GAE is unlikely to be significant in terms of the overall GAE allocation.	0
GAE IMPACT	0

EDUCATION

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

AUGUST 2023

1.0 INTRODUCTION

4.15 Immediately before the retiral of the Head Teacher of Kilchrenan Primary School (PS) in February 2022 there were four pupils residing within the Kilchrenan catchment area who were still attending the school. At that point, the children transferred to Taynuilt Primary School. Three further pupils at Kilchrenan PS had transferred to St. Columba's Primary School in Oban at the start of the 2021-2022 school session. There were no Primary 1 pupils registered to attend Kilchrenan Primary School in session 2021-22, and one possible primary 1 enrolment for August 2022.

4.16 At the Community Services Committee on 10th March 2022, Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School on a temporary basis. It was agreed that the premises be retained for two years on a care and maintenance basis and that a review of the school's mothballing would be prepared for the Committee's March 2023 meeting, when Members could decide on a continued period of mothballing, or request that officers begin an engagement process, carried out in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to consider the future options for Kilchrenan Primary School. It was also agreed that the community would have pre-arranged access to the buildings for community functions during the period of mothballing.

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Community Services Committee, 10/03/2022 10:30 (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

4.17 On 9th March 2023, Community Services Committee approved the continued mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School and that the Education Service begin gathering necessary information and carry out the exercise of assessing the options for the future of Kilchrenan Primary School, in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010.

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Community Services Committee, 09/03/2023 10:30 (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

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.

Kilchrenan Primary School has had no further pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.

At the aforementioned committee meeting on 9th March 2023, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the preliminary requirements as set out in the 2010 Act, and prepare an Options Appraisal for Kilchrenan Primary School, to enable the Education Service to identify and consider the options for the school's future.

The 2010 Act makes special arrangements with regard to rural schools that are, in effect, a presumption against their closure. There is a requirement to examine specifically factors particularly relevant to rural schools 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, the impact of any different travel arrangements, and the educational benefits or otherwise for pupils should a rural school be closed. These factors have been considered in this Options Appraisal.

2.0 REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

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

4. Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for eighteen months. The school roll is currently zero and is not predicted to rise in the near future.
5. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time of writing, there are 15.0 full-time equivalent (fte) vacancies across Head Teacher and teacher posts.
6. While the School is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for maintenance. The costs of continued mothballing, and of bringing the fabric of the school to the required standard for any re-opening, are also considerable.

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

3.0 BACKGROUND

Argyll and Bute is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a strong cultural identity. Today, the culture of Argyll and Bute is reflected in its traditional

industries of fishing, farming and crofting, sports such as shinty and in its world class musicians and artists as well as its modern commercial industries such as wind turbine production and fish farming.

Argyll and Bute is geographically the second largest authority in Scotland. Education is delivered in a range of settings including schools, Further Education, thorough partnerships and via 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 plan, with 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 the 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 new developments.

AB_CorporatePlan_3.pdf (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

3.2 Our Children Their Future

Education Authorities, 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.

argyll_bute_vision_strategy_final_web.pdf (argyll-bute.gov.uk)

3.3 Kilchrenan and the Local Area - the Kilchrenan Primary School Setting

Kilchrenan is a village situated in a scenically beautiful area to the west of Loch Awe, six miles south of the village of Taynuilt, from where it is reached by a single track road. The area around Kilchrenan features some of the rural industries with which Argyll and Bute is associated, particularly forestry and renewables, in the form of wind farms. Tourism is also a key element of the local economy. Other villages in the area, from which children attended Kilchrenan PS include Dalavich, Inverinan and Ardanaiseig. A plan to establish a Regional or National Park around Loch Awe, applications for which are already in motion, encompasses the whole catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School, and is supported and is being promoted by members of the local community.

3.4 The School within the Community

Kilchrenan PS was previously active within the community, as a focus for social and educational events. The pupils invited the community to attend events on several occasions every year. During the period of mothballing, there were no requests for the building to be used for community events. The newly-refurbished Kilchrenan Village Hall is a community-managed facility that hosts various community events and activities, and forms the civic hub of the village.

Some members of the local community in Kilchrenan have expressed interest in exploring options for a transfer of the school building form the local authority to the local community, under the terms of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*. The proposal centres on the use of the school building as a community drop-in office for small local home-based businesses, and as the hub for the Kilchrenan Community Council's campaign to create a Regional or National Park around Loch Awe, as supported by four further Community Councils in the Loch Awe area.

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. Accurate 2011 census data for the specific Kilchrenan Primary School catchment area is not available. More up-to-date data is detailed in table 1 below, which contains details from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) Small Area Population Estimates for the Loch Awe 2 datazone which includes the Kilchrenan catchment area. It shows the changing population from 2011 to 2021 for the whole datazone population and for age groups 0-11, 12-67 and over 67.

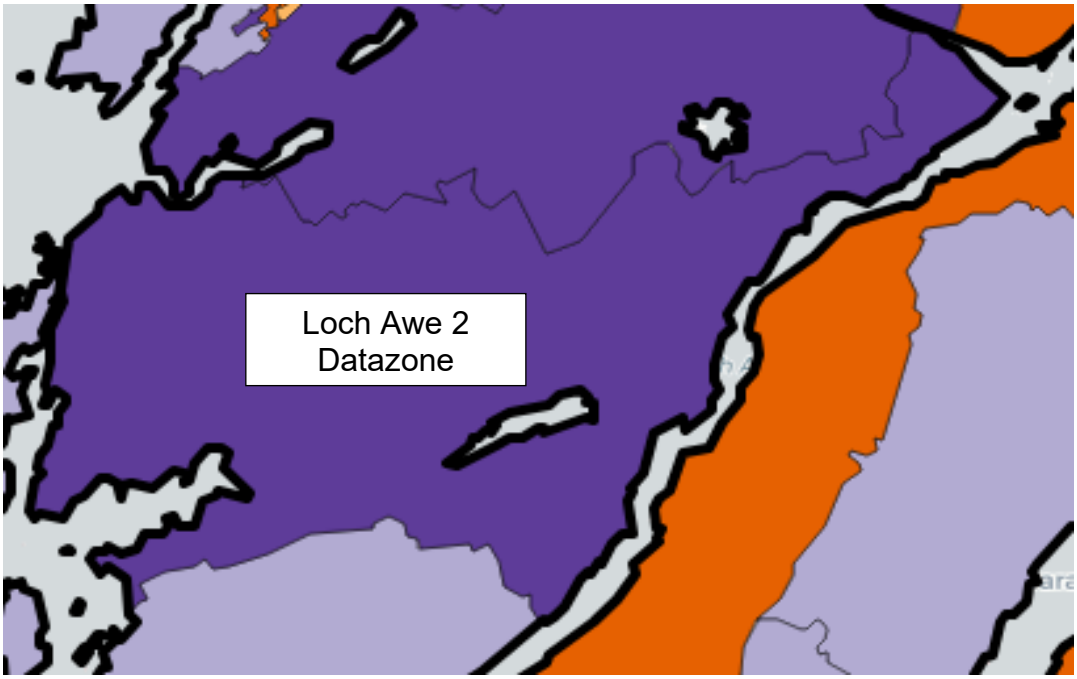
Table 1: Population Information

Kilchrenan Area (Loch Awe 2 datazone) NRS Population Estimates			
2011		**2021**	
Total Resident Population	637	Total Resident Population	703
Population under age of 12	58	Population under age of 12	54
Population aged 12-67	486	Population aged 12-67	492
Population aged over 67	93	Population aged over 67	157

It can be seen that the population as a whole in the datazone has increased, and that the increase is primarily in the 67 plus age-group. The number of children under the age of 12 has fallen slightly in the last 10 years. It is recognised that the datazone area and the catchment area of Kilchrenan Primary School do not match exactly. The datazone also encompasses part of the Kilninver Primary School catchment area.

The map in Figure 1 below shows the extent of the Loch Awe 2 datazone:

Figure 1



3.6 Development and House Building

A new Local Development Plan (LDP2) is now available, which sets out planning and development proposals for the next 10 years from 2020, and a vision for 20 years. The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan provides the local planning framework for the Council area, excluding the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park area. The Plan is divided into the written statement and proposals maps. The written statement provides the general

policy context against which planning applications for new development proposals should be assessed. This is supported by the proposals maps which show the range of development opportunities and constraints within the area, for example:

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

- *Appendix 1* shows the LDP2 for Kilchrenan
- *Appendix 2* shows the LDP2 for Taynuilt
- *Appendix 3* provides the key for Local Development Plans.

3.7 Kilchrenan Primary School

Kilchrenan PS is situated in the heart of the village of Kilchrenan and was built in 1878. The school is co-educational and non-denominational. It has a catchment area extending from south of Dalavich to north of Kilchrenan, including Ardanaiseig to the northwest of Kilchrenan. The school comprises two classrooms and a smaller room which is used for storage and teaching smaller groups. There is a library/quiet room between the two classrooms and a kitchen from which the lunches, brought daily from Taynuilt PS, are served. The school grounds are used as an outdoor classroom, although areas of the grounds are considered unsafe for pupils to use.

Appendix 4 shows the Kilchrenan PS Floor Plan.

Kilchrenan Primary School is 6.7 miles from Taynuilt Primary School, along the B845, beside which Kilchrenan PS is located.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2021 classifies Kilchrenan PS 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. Kilchrenan Primary is one of 18 primary schools associated with Oban High School.

Rural schools in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

3.8 Taynuilt Primary School

Following the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS, children from the Kilchrenan catchment area have attended Taynuilt PS. Taynuilt PS is a non-denominational and co-educational school situated in the centre of Taynuilt village. The present school building opened in 1989. The school

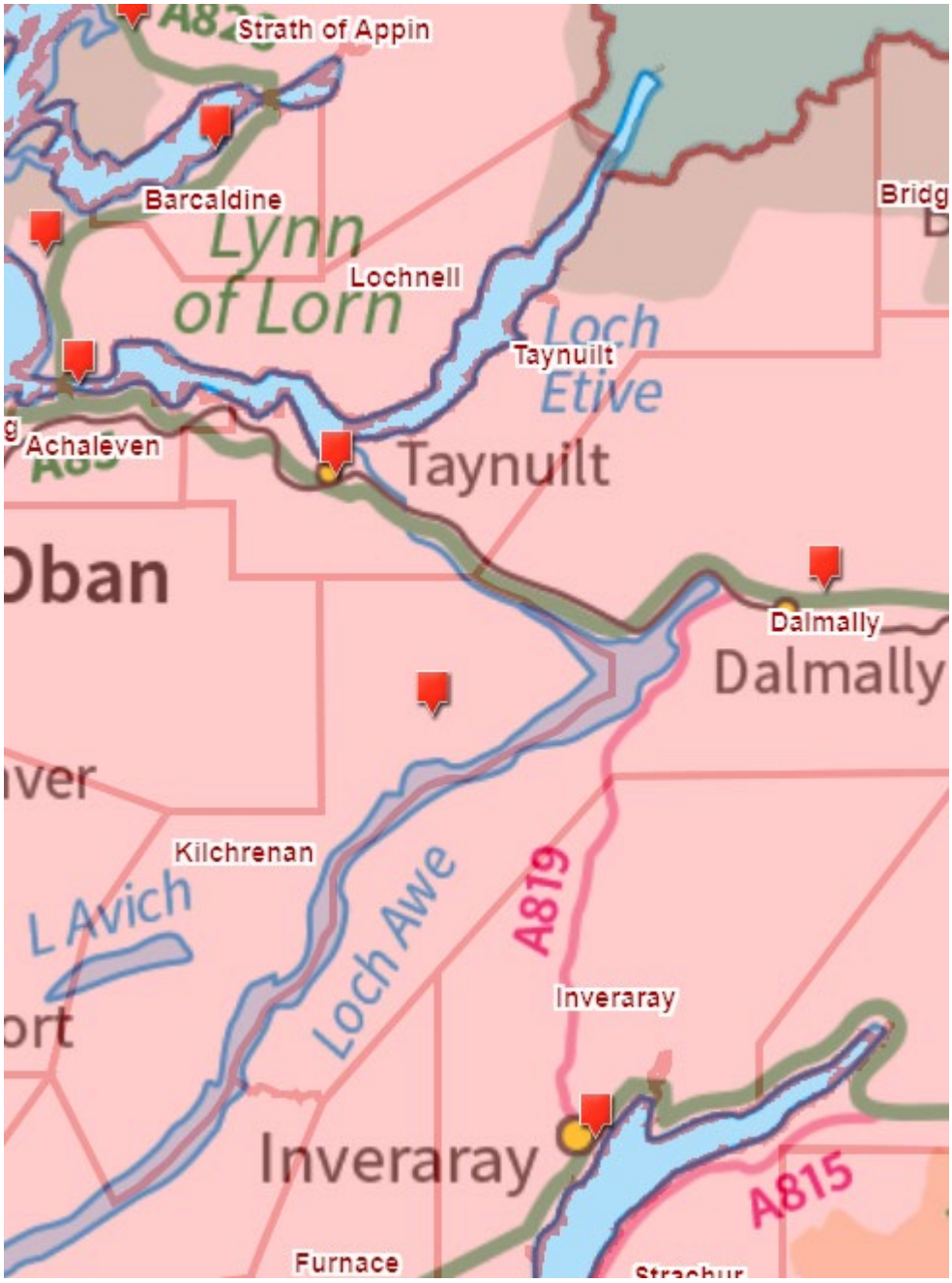
accommodation is of semi-open plan design, with one double and two single class bays opening onto a shared open area. There is a large gymnasium, which also acts as an assembly hall, lunch hall and houses the pre-school unit each afternoon. In 2008, a purpose built nursery adjacent to the school building was opened.

Appendix 5 shows the Taynuilt Primary School Floor Plan.

The school has strong and active traditions in outdoor learning, the creative arts, STEM, ITC and in sport and physical activity. The school enjoys the support of an active Parent Council and strong community partners.

Like Kilchrenan PS, Taynuilt PS is classified as very remote rural by the Scottish Government. The Map in Figure 2 below shows the adjoining catchment areas of Kilchrenan and Taynuilt Primary Schools:

Figure 2



3.9 **Pupil Numbers**

Pupil projections, and data for 2023-24 are based on the 2022 pupil census, a return prepared annually for the Scottish Government. Past pupil numbers are historic data taken from past pupil censuses.

Table 2 shows the historic and current pupil numbers for both Kilchrenan and Taynuilt Primary schools:

Table 2

	Kilchrenan PS	Taynuilt PS
Capacity	41	163
	Roll	Roll
2006-07	23	72
2007-08	20	77
2008-09	19	79
2009-10	18	78
2010-11	10	88
2011-12	10	81
2012-13	8	81
2013-14	7	83
2014-15	4	91
2015-16	4	83
2016-17	9	82
2017-18	6	79
2018-19	7	72
2019-20	8	69
2020-21	12	67
2021-22	6	70
2022-23	0	66

Table 3 shows projected rolls for Taynuilt PS and estimated numbers of pupils in the Kilchrenan PS catchment area, according to figures held by Argyll and Bute Council:

Table 3

	Kilchrenan PS	Taynuilt PS
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	41	163
2023 -2024	8	58
2024 -2025	8	60
2025-2026	10	55
2026-2027	8	48

The Kilchrenan PS roll further dropped to zero over the course of the 2021-2022 school year (see Table 2, above). Pupils within the catchment area (as set out in Table 3, above) do not reflect the number of pupils who would be attending the school because parents choose to send their children to Taynuilt

PS or to the local denominational primary school for the area, St. Columba's PS in Oban.

In August 2022, no primary 1 pupils registered to attend Kilchrenan Primary School for session 2022-23, and there have been no registrations for session 2023-24.

4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Meetings

A Community Engagement Meeting was held in Kilchrenan Village Hall on 31st May, 2023 from 09:00-18:00 hours. The meeting's purpose was to seek the views of the community on the future of Kilchrenan Primary School. Over the course of the day, the meeting was attended by 20 people.

A meeting also took place with the Head Teacher of Taynuilt PS as the formally assigned receiving school in the event of the closure of Kilchrenan PS, to gauge the views and of staff on the future of Kilchrenan Primary School.

There was also a meeting with the Chair of the Parent Council of Taynuilt PS to gather opinions from parents/carers on the potential impact of any decision that is made on the future of Kilchrenan PS.

A virtual meeting also took place with children living in the Kilchrenan catchment area who now attend Taynuilt Primary School. The purpose of the meeting was to gather pupils' views on the future options for Kilchrenan Primary School, and, where applicable, on their educational provision before and after leaving Kilchrenan Primary School.

A number of children from the Kilchrenan PS catchment area attend St. Columba's PS in Oban, and movement of pupils from Kilchrenan PS to St. Columba's PS in 2021 was one of the reasons for the Kilchrenan roll falling significantly. In terms of catchment area, the Kilchrenan area falls within the catchment for St Columba's PS in its role as the sole denominational school in the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area. Parents/carers within the Kilchrenan catchment area therefore have the automatic right to enrol their children in St Columba's PS. Meetings with the HT of St. Columba's PS, the Chair of the St. Columba's Parent Council and with the children attending St. Columba's PS from the Kilchrenan catchment area were held, to gather their views on the future of the school.

4.2 Attendees at the Community Engagement Event and at the other meetings detailed above were provided with an overview of the information that the Council would be using in this Options Appraisal. This included school roll

projections, and information relating to the recruitment and retention of staff, transport and on local services and facilities.

The questions put to stakeholders were as follows:

Over the last 18 months, what has been the effect of mothballing Kilchrenan Primary School on you, your family and community?

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

- *Re-open the school*
- *Continue with mothballing*
- *Re-open the school but widen the catchment area*
- *Close the school*

4.3 **Feedback**

There was a range of viewpoints on the future of Kilchrenan PS:

- **Community and Parents**

  Almost all in the community felt that continuing to mothball the school was not an option. It was felt that a decision should be made as the building would only continue to deteriorate, although two parents with children of pre-school age suggested that mothballing could continue until such time as the school became a viable option once more, allowing pre-5 children in the area to get to the stage where they were ready to attend school.

  Eight of those attending the Community Engagement Event supported the re-opening the school, only two of whom were parents of pre-school-aged children who might wish to attend the school, although some indicated they have families who may wish to move to the area, and that they wished there to be a school for their grandchildren to attend in such circumstances.

  Some members of the community were of the view that the community of Kilchrenan would be negatively impacted by not having its own primary school. They felt the village would be less attractive to families who may wish to move to the area. They also suggested that attracting people to the area was key to ensuring more affordable housing for local people was built. The view was expressed by one attendee that, as a result of children travelling to Taynuilt every day, they and their parents were already spending significant amount of time in another community, to the possible detriment of the Kilchrenan community. The point was also made that the absence of a school in Kilchrenan was having a negative

impact on the finances of the Kilchrenan Village Hall, as it was no longer being hired by the council for PE sessions.

However, others made clear that they felt that Taynuilt was relatively close by and offered a school which could still be viewed as being within the local community, albeit six miles from Kilchrenan. The point was also made that the present Kilchrenan catchment is not one single community, Dalavich being eight miles from the school. As regards social or more affordable housing, the point was made that it is the absence of such, and not whether there is or is not a school in the area, that prevents people from moving into and sustaining the community, and it is this issue which should be addressed above the closure or re-opening of the school.

Distances to be covered by pupils in getting to school each day was a further area raised by a minority of attendees. They pointed to transport issues as a reason for keeping the school open: the travel implications for pupils, particularly in the Dalavich area, travelling daily to Taynuilt were seen as impracticable, and attendance at school would be prey to adverse weather conditions. However, parents of children currently travelling daily to Taynuilt and Oban from both Kilchrenan and Dalavich said that the weather had also been a factor prior to the mothballing of the school, and that the now direct bus journey to Taynuilt, and even to Oban, took less time than the previous school bus to Kilchrenan, as the latter took a circuitous route and detours to pick up pupils. They also pointed out that the majority of the after-school or evening activities in which children engaged were in Taynuilt or Oban, and that the journey would therefore have to be made anyway. Furthermore, parents were aware that secondary education would be in Oban, and that the journey would therefore become a necessity at some point. Some also spoke of their own daily commute via Taynuilt, and observed that they were often able to take their children to school themselves without issue.

As well as being clear on the advantages of attending a small rural school, all attendees who wished to the school to be re-opened nonetheless acknowledged the issues associated with very small school rolls, and that this was not every parent/carer's preference. They also acknowledged the associated problems with the recruitment and retention of staff, and the consequences of both issues for a school's sustainable future.

The option of re-opening the school, but with a wider catchment area was not seen by any attending the Community Engagement Event as a viable option. It was acknowledged that this could lead to increased transport costs for the local authority. It was also felt that extending the catchment area would not necessarily bring more pupils to the school, and could also negatively impact on neighbouring schools which are also small in size. The specific

geography of the area was also seen as making any extension of the Kilchrenan catchment area non-viable.

The majority of the community, and all parents attending who had experience of sending their children to Kilchrenan PS, believed that the most viable option is to formally close the school, as the decline in school roll has been a result of parents actively choosing to send their children to Taynuilt and St. Columba's Primary Schools. Some of those in attendance viewed the challenge of recruiting and retaining high-quality staff as a reason to close the school. Five parents of children now attending other primary schools said there were many identifiable benefits of their children having moved from Kilchrenan Primary School.

Parents/carers of pupils now at other schools pointed to what they see as a higher quality of educational provision due to less broad composite classes and more individualised learning and support.

They also spoke of children now having a greater range of opportunities across the curriculum, particularly in PE and in practical subjects.

A wider scope and choice relating to socialisation and the development of personal friendship groups and relationships was also seen as an advantage for pupils who have moved from Kilchrenan PS.

The outdoor spaces at Kilchrenan were criticised by some parents/carers, who pointed out that sections of the outdoor spaces at the school had been deemed unsafe for pupils to use. The facilities available at Taynuilt were praised by parents/carers.

The absence of catering facilities at Kilchrenan was criticised by parents/carers, who felt that it restricted the variety, choice and freshness of food and drink on offer, and that it was not a cost-effective means of catering for children's dietary needs.

The general state of the fabric of Kilchrenan PS, and its recent further deterioration, was also seen as a negative by parents who had experience of sending their children there. The limited accessibility of the building was also seen as problematic.

The absence of a breakfast club at Kilchrenan was seen as restrictive of flexibility for families. Some parents/carers also spoke of the absence of wrap-around childcare and registered child minders in the Kilchrenan area. They said any increase in flexibility created by Kilchrenan PS being reopened was negated by the restrictions such an absence of childcare had on parents' ability to work.

The reopening of Kilchrenan PS was also seen by some parents as having a potentially divisive effect on the local community. They felt that, despite reopening, a significant number of parents/carers would nevertheless continue to choose primary education in Taynuilt or Oban. Parents spoke of the risk of resentment from those in the community sending their children to Kilchrenan PS towards those sending their children elsewhere; being potentially seen as disloyal to the local community, and putting at risk the long term viability of the school.

As part of the engagement around this Options Appraisal, the parent/carer body at Taynuilt PS expressed its concern about the falling roll at their school. From their point of view, the re-opening of Kilchrenan PS could mean children who would otherwise attend Taynuilt PS may not do so, and despite the small number of children involved each year, they see the closure of Kilchrenan PS as having positive consequences for Taynuilt PS, in terms of pupils numbers and its effect on the number of classes and teachers, the broadening of the mix of children in the school, and the number of parents potentially able to give of their time and resources for the benefit of the school community.

- **Children/young people**

As part of the pre-consultation on the future of Kilchrenan PS, the views of children living in the catchment for Kilchrenan PS were sought. Of the eight children spoken to in both Taynuilt PS and St. Columba's PS, five had had experience of being at Kilchrenan PS.

Almost all children who could make a comparison spoke of the very small group of which they were part at Kilchrenan PS. They said that they had enjoyed this, one pupil saying that the close relationships were missed, but were glad to have a wider group of peers with whom to make friends and develop relationships. Two pupils spoke of not having enough choice of people to play with at Kilchrenan. Two pupils spoke of how attending Taynuilt PS was preparing them better for meeting large groups of people in secondary school and beyond. One pupil said that he was enjoying doing much more group work in Taynuilt PS. One pupil said that after an argument or if there was a problem, there were now more people to approach than at Kilchrenan.

Almost all children spoke of the better facilities and range of activities on offer in their new schools, with better PE and more sports on offer.

Views on the travel from home to Taynuilt or Oban were mixed. One pupil said the journey was too long, and others acknowledged that

there can be travel problems in bad weather. Others said they had good fun on the bus and had special “bus friends”.

When asked to sum up their feelings, only one pupil said that Kilchrenan should reopen and indicated a wish to return to Kilchrenan as a pupil. The other pupils were happy to remain where they were. Another indicated that the Kilchrenan building was in too poor a state for it to be used as a school, and it should be made into a sports centre, with football pitches.

- **Staff**

There was no contact with previous teaching staff from Kilchrenan PS in the pre-consultation. The Head Teacher retired in 2022, and the teacher at the school was redeployed elsewhere. However, the views of staff in Taynuilt PS were summarised by the Head Teacher, who indicated that the enrolment of former Kilchrenan pupils had been positive for the school and posed no issues in terms of capacity or provision to all learners. The same view was offered by the Head Teacher of St. Columba’s PS, within the catchment area of which the Kilchrenan area falls in terms of denominational educational provision.

For details of individual comments made by attendees at the Community Engagement Event, please see Appendix 4.

5.0 THE PROPOSAL AND REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSAL AS CONSIDERED AT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT

To summarise information provided above, Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 18 months. The school roll reduced to zero in February 2022 following the Head Teacher’s retirement, attempts to recruit a replacement Head Teacher having been unsuccessful. At that point, the remaining pupils in the school transferred to Taynuilt PS. Their parents’/carers’ view was that the very small school roll was not conducive to the type of education they sought, and was limiting opportunities for social interaction and development. This followed the moving of several pupils to St Columba’s PS the previous August. The school was mothballed in the period after February 2022, and there have been no attempts to register pupils for primary one, or any other stage, since then.

While the building is mothballed it continues to deteriorate. The Community has been proactive in making positive suggestions as to how the building could be used.

Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. At the time or writing there are 15.0 full-time equivalent vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers. Recruitment in the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area is challenging due to the rural location of almost all of its schools.

Of those who attended the Community Engagement Event on 31st May 2023, the majority were in favour of closing Kilchrenan PS permanently, including almost all parents/carers with children in primary education at present. A minority of attendees wished to see the school re-open, primarily on the grounds that the community is negatively impacted by the absence of a primary school, although a small number said they wished their pre-school-aged children to attend a re-opened Kilchrenan PS.

The Council is required to consider the future of Kilchrenan PS, taking all factors and views into account. The following options are explored within this paper:

a) Re-open Kilchrenan PS;
b) Continue the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS with the pupils zoned to Taynuilt PS;
c) Re-open Kilchrenan PS and realign/extend its catchment area;
d) Close Kilchrenan PS and realign the catchment area for Taynuilt PS to include the Kilchrenan PS catchment area.

6.0 OPTION A: RE-OPEN KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Community Feedback

Eight of those attending the Community Engagement Event supported the re-opening the school. Their reasoning can be summarised as follows:

- Parents/carers of children presently under the age of five wish their children to attend a local school which is within walking distance and which reflects the local context;
- Residents with no children of school age foresee their families moving to the area and wish there to be a school for their grandchildren;
- Community members believe the absence of a school makes it less likely that the community will be sustained by families moving to the area;
- Travel to schools outside of the immediate community is inconvenient, potentially expensive and is at the mercy of adverse weather conditions.

6.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 3 above details the projected roll for Kilchrenan PS. If the school were to reopen in August 2023, there would be no pupils on the roll, as there are no children of primary one age in the catchment, and the parents/carers of the other eight pupils living in the catchment have said they will not move their children back to Kilchrenan PS, as their children are settled in their schools and friendships have been established. As stated, the provision at the schools pupils now attend in Taynuilt and Oban is viewed by those parents consulted to be preferable to that which was available at Kilchrenan.

The numbers presently projected to enter primary one, should the school re-open and should parents decide to send children to Kilchrenan PS, over the next three years is as follows:

August 2024 – 1 pupil
August 2025 – 4 pupils
August 2026 – 1 pupil

Were the school to re-open, a sustainable future for the school may not be viable unless other parents in the catchment area reversed their decision to keep their children at Taynuilt PS and St. Columba's PS, which they have indicated they will not do. As attendance at Taynuilt PS becomes more of a norm in the area, and through positive reports of educational provision there, it is not guaranteed that local children attaining primary school age will automatically attend Kilchrenan PS, placing future viability further in doubt.

6.3 Financial Information

The finance to re-open the school, including costs relating to employees, premises, supplies and services and catering is **£150,763.**

In addition, the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£29,000.**

The annual cost of mothballing Kilchrenan Primary School is **£9,888**. This does not include costs related to the transfer of a member of staff to another school, and the associated over-staffing costs.

The annual cost of transporting pupils to Taynuilt Primary School during the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS is **£27,295**. Were the school to re-open, this cost would no longer apply, although the previous costs of transporting pupils from Inverinan, Dalavich and other areas of the catchment would be re-incurred.

6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

Section 12A(2) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) requires the education authority to identify its reasons for the closure proposal of a rural school, and consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives

to the proposal which could respond to those reasons. For the proposal and any alternatives identified, the education authority is required to assess the likely educational benefits, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The reasons why the future of Kilchrenan Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report.

6.4.1 *Community Impact*

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

However the community have demonstrated that there is a limited desire for the school to reopen. Some who attended the Community Engagement Event indicated the desire for the school to become a hub for the many local small businesses, and a base for the campaign to establish a Regional or National Park around Loch Awe, and subsequently a key facility within it, both of which could have significant positive impact on the local community.

Although still available for such use, Kilchrenan Primary School has not been used by or for the community since it has been mothballed. The presence of a newly refurbished village hall near to the school means that there is an existing, high-quality resource for community events in the area.

Other than the points about the school's role in attracting potential residents to the area, respondents did not note any negative impact on the community of the school's mothballing.

6.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Kilchrenan PS to Taynuilt PS is 6.7 miles via the B845. Travel time is approximately 14 minutes. The B845 is a single track road, access to which can be limited during adverse winter weather.

The travel arrangements for pupils travelling to Taynuilt PS have been in place since February 2022, and travel by car or bus is an accepted aspect of living in the communities of Kilchrenan, Inverinan and Dalavich. If Kilchrenan Primary school were to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of some pupils who are

able to walk or cycle to school. However, the lack of safe walking and cycle routes and the considerable distances involved would limit this. For example, it is 8.3 miles from Dalavich to Kilchrenan. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, reopening the school would mean increased car usage by staff with commensurate negative environmental impact.

6.4.3 *Educational Benefits*

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers in exercising freedom and responsibility in their practice, within the context of broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to such needs. All school in Argyll and Bute implement Curriculum for Excellence, and there are therefore no specific educational benefits associated with the re-opening the Kilchrenan PS.

However, the reopening of the school would entail those local children choosing to attend being part of a very small school roll, which a number of parents/carers, and indeed children, in the catchment area viewed as disadvantageous to educational development for a number of reasons, including limited social groups and interaction, fewer curricular opportunities and experiences and less individual attention on account of composite classes covering a wide range of age groups.

A small number of attendees indicated their views on the potential benefits of attending a school with a very small roll.

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

As a result of the continued mothballing of the building, there would be issues with respect to the current condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities which could negatively impact learning and teaching. The building itself, when recovered from its mothballed state, would still present the limitations which impacted learning previously, including issues relating to its accessibility, the safety of its outdoor spaces and the absence of dedicated PE and catering facilities.

6.5 **Summary**

Of the 20 people who attended the Community Engagement Event, less than half supported the re-opening of Kilchrenan Primary School. If the school reopened, the school roll would still be unsustainably low, most likely standing at a maximum of one, five and and six pupils respectively over the next three years, based on the projected numbers of primary one pupils.

There are financial implications associated with the reopening of Kilchrenan Primary School. The total cost of re-opening the school is **£150,763,** while the cost of bringing the property to the level and standard required for reopening is **£29,000.** The annual expenditure of **£9,888** mothballing costs would no longer apply.

If the School were to be reopened, the premises and facilities would be available for use by the community, in addition to its use as an educational facility. However, with the village hall being in regular use, this impact would be limited. 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 present pupil travel arrangements have been in place for almost 18 months. 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 travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact.

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.

Considering all of the above, re-opening Kilchrenan PS is not considered to be a reasonable option.

7.0 OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS ZONED TO TAYNUILT 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."* Kilchrenan Primary School has been mothballed for 18 months.

7.1 Community Feedback

Only one attendee was of the view that mothballing of Kilchrenan PS could continue, to allow children of pre-school age to attend the school once they attained the required age. All others at the Community Engagement Event who expressed an opinion felt that mothballing the school over a longer period would be wasteful due to deterioration of the property, and that a firm decision to close or re-open the school should be made.

7.2 Pupil Numbers

Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next four years, as per Table 3 above. The table reflects the maximum school roll possible, and does not take into account the choices of all parents/carers of primary-aged children to send children to Taynuilt PS or other schools outwith the catchment area by virtue of making a placing request.

7.3 Financial Information

The annual cost of mothballing Kilchrenan Primary School is **£9,888**. This does not include costs related to the transfer of a member of staff to another school, and the associated over-staffing costs. Neither does this take into account the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard for any re-opening of the school, which is **£29,000.**

The annual cost of transporting pupils to Taynuilt Primary School during the period of mothballing of Kilchrenan PS is **£27,295.**

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

Section 12A(2) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) requires the education authority to identify its reasons for the closure proposal of a rural school, and consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal which could respond to those reasons. For the proposal and each and any alternatives identified, the education authority is required to assess the likely educational benefits, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The reasons why the future of Kilchrenan Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report.

7.4.1 *Community Impact*

If mothballing of Kilchrenan PS were to continue, pupils would continue their education at Taynuilt PS, or elsewhere, and there would be no change to the current impact on the community. The building has not been used by the community during the period of mothballing, with the nearby Kilchrenan Village Hall fulfilling the civic requirements of the community. Furthermore, if the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS were to continue, the building would deteriorate further, with the result that it may not be available for community use under any circumstances.

Some members of the community view the buildings and grounds as an opportunity to develop a local small business hub, and as both a base for the campaign to create a Loch Awe Regional/National Park, and a key facility within such a park should it be established. Continued mothballing would stall any such developments, or any alternative plans for the building brought by the local community.

It can therefore be seen that to continue to maintain KIlchrenan PS in its mothballed state will have no positive impact on the local community, which is reflected in the views of almost all those consulted during the preliminary engagement exercise.

7.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The continuation of the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS would entail no change to the travel arrangements for children that are currently in place, nor to the environmental impact of such travel arrangements, both of which are detailed in section 6.4.2 above.

7.4.3 *Educational Benefits*

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers in exercising freedom and responsibility in their practice, within the context of broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. All schools in Argyll and Bute implement Curriculum for Excellence, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to such needs. For these reasons, the continued mothballing would bring no specific educational benefits for pupils.

The continued mothballing of Kilchrenan PS would continue the arrangements which have been in place for the last 18 months. However, any continued deterioration in the fabric and fittings of the school building as a result of mothballing would exacerbate the issues associated with re-opening, as described in section 6.4.3 above, and their potentially negative impact on the quality of educational provision in the building in any future scenario.

7.6 **Summary**

Almost all of those who attended the Community Engagement Event were against continuing the 18 month mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School. There was a view that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful due to deterioration of the property and the costs involved, and that a decision to close or re-open the school should be made.

The current annual cost (2022/23) to the Council of the mothballed Kilchrenan Primary School is **£9,888.** This includes electricity, heating oil, and ground maintenance, building maintenance and repair costs. It does not include the cost of over-staffing in another school to which the member of Kilchrenan's staff transferred. Neither does it take into account the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard should mothballing be followed by re-opening of the school, which is **£29,000.** Continuation of mothballing would mean no change to the annual transport cost of taking pupils to alternative schools, which is **£27,295.**

The present travel arrangements have been in place for 18 months. Should the school continue to be mothballed these travel arrangements would continue.

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

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

8.0 OPTION C: RE-OPEN KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EXTEND ITS CATCHMENT AREA

8.1 Community Feedback

As detailed in the map at section 3.8 above, the existing catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School is very rural and very sparsely populated. It already covers a broad area, characterised by small communities which are mostly situated along a single road over a distance of approximately 13 miles. This linear aspect to the geography of the catchment area, and the absence of any further significant habitation immediately to the south of the existing catchment areas – the only direction in which the catchment area could realistically be extended – means that there is limited scope for increasing the catchment area.

Were the catchment area to be extended to the north, towards Taynuilt, again, this would include very few dwellings, and, depending on the extent of the extension, would impinge on the intake for Taynuilt PS, as would any significant southwards extension on Kilmartin PS. This could have negative consequences for staffing in these schools should their rolls fall to any degree. Loch Awe to the east and inaccessible, unpopulated land to the west make any extension in those directions unviable.

All those attending the Community Engagement Event felt that extending the catchment area was an unrealistic proposal for Kilchrenan Primary School. The community felt that moving the boundary in any of the ways described above would add very few, if any, pupils to the roll, and could increase transport distances and times.

8.2 Pupil Numbers

It is very unlikely that the establishment of any new catchment area would increase the potential roll of Kilchrenan PS, particularly as there is no guarantee that children living in any newly-extended catchment area would necessarily attend Kilchrenan PS – as placing requests can be made for children to attend schools other than their catchment school.

8.3 **Financial Information**

The finance required to re-open the school, including costs relating to employees, premises, supplies and services and catering is **£150,763**

In addition, the cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard to re-open the school is **£29,000.**

There would also be a financial cost associated with the transport to school of pupils within a larger catchment area.

8.4 **Assessment of Rural Factors**

Section 12A(2) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) requires the education authority to identify its reasons for the closure proposal of a rural school, and consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal which could respond to those reasons. For the proposal and each and any alternatives identified, the education authority is required to assess the likely educational benefits, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The reasons why the future of Kilchrenan Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report.

8.4.1 *Community Impact*

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

However the community have demonstrated that there is a limited desire for the school to reopen. Some who attended the Community Engagement Event indicated the desire for the school to become a hub office for the many local small businesses, and a base for the campaign to establish a Regional or National Park around Loch Awe, both of which could have significant positive impact on the local community.

Although still available for such use, Kilchrenan Primary School has not been used by or for the community since it has been mothballed. The presence of a newly refurbished village hall near to the school means that there is an existing, high-quality resource for community events in the area.

Other than the points about the school's role in attracting potential residents to the area, which could benefit the community's economy and sustainability, those consulted did not note any negative impact on the community of the school's mothballing.

8.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Kilchrenan Primary to Taynuilt Primary is 6.7 miles via the B845. Travel time is approximately 14 minutes. The B845 is a single track road, access to which can be limited during adverse winter weather.

The travel arrangements for pupils travelling to Taynuilt PS have been in place since February 2022, and travel by car or bus is an accepted aspect of living in the communities of Kilchrenan, Inverinan and Dalavich. If Kilchrenan Primary school were to reopen with a wider catchment area, there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of some pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. However, the lack of safe walking and cycle routes and the considerable distances involved would limit this. For example, it is 8.3 miles from Dalavich to Kilchrenan, and the extension of the catchment area could extend distances to school for pupils within the catchment to over 10 miles. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, reopening the school with a wider catchment area would mean increased car usage by staff, and greater distances for pupils to travel to school by vehicle, with commensurate negative environmental impact.

8.4.3 *Educational Benefits*

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers in exercising freedom and responsibility in their practice, within the context of 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 associated with the re-opening the Kilchrenan PS with a wider catchment area, as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

However, the reopening of the school, albeit with an extended catchment area, would still mean those local children choosing to attend were part of a very small school roll, which a number of parents/carers, and indeed children, in the catchment area viewed as disadvantageous to educational development for a number of reasons, including limited social groups and interaction, fewer curricular

opportunities and experiences and less individual attention on account of composite classes covering a wide range of age groups.

A small number of those consulted indicated the potential benefits of attending a school with a very small roll.

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

As a result of the continued mothballing of the building, there would be issues with respect to the current condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities which could negatively impact learning and teaching. The building itself, when recovered from its mothballed state, would still present the limitations which impacted learning previously, including issues relating to its accessibility, the safety of its outdoor spaces and the absence of dedicated PE and catering facilities.

8.5 **Summary**

Of the 20 people who attended the Community Engagement Event, none expressed support for the re-opening of Kilchrenan Primary School with an extended catchment area.

All who reflected on the option acknowledged that the unique geographical character of the area makes an extension unviable. They saw it as unlikely that any extension of the catchment area would increase the school roll, as there are few dwellings that could be included in such an extension. Pupils now attending Taynuilt PS or St. Columba's PS would be very unlikely to transfer back to Kilchrenan PS, and those families included in a newly-extended catchment area may wish their children to remain in the school they presently attend. Therefore, if the school reopened with an extended catchment area, the school roll would most likely still be unsustainably low.

There are financial implications associated with the reopening of Kilchrenan Primary School with an extended catchment area. The total cost of re-opening the school for educational provision is **£150,763,** while the additional cost of bringing the property to the level and standard required for reopening is **£29,000.** The annual expenditure of **£9,888** mothballing costs would no longer apply. Additional transport costs could also be incurred by the local authority.

If the School were to be reopened with an extension of the catchment area, the premises and facilities would be available for use by the community, in addition to its use as an educational facility. However, with the village hall being in regular use, this impact would be limited. 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 and time from Kilchrenan PS to Taynuilt PS is 6.7 miles in 14 minutes, via the B845. Adverse weather can be a factor, however this is no

different to other rural schools and areas. The present pupil travel arrangements have been in place for almost 18 months. Should the school reopen with an extended catchment area, 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, and further for pupils to travel by vehicle, which may mean travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact.

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.

Considering all of the above, reopening Kilchrenan PS with an extended catchment area is not considered to be a reasonable option.

9.0 OPTION D: CLOSE KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR TAYNUILT PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT KILCHRENAN CATCHMENT AREA

9.1 Community Feedback

The majority of people who attended the Options Appraisal meeting were not in favour of re-opening Kilchrenan PS as a school, and saw closure as the only viable option. Parents/carers of school-age children commented that the mothballing of the school after the roll fell to zero in February 2022 was a result of parental choice – several pupils had left the school at the beginning of the 2021-22 school session, transferring to St Columba's PS, and the remaining pupils moved to Taynuilt PS on the retirement of the Head Teacher in February 2022. Parents spoke of their greater satisfaction with the overall educational provision in their children's new schools. Among the key reasons for this were less broad composite classes, more focus on children's individual learning needs, a wider social mix and increased choice in terms of friendship groups, wider curricular opportunities and a greater range of sports and activities on offer. Parents acknowledged the benefits of a small and close school community, but pointed out both that Taynuilt is not too far away, and that there are already great physical distances within the Kilchrenan catchment area. Some parents also said that the travel arrangements involved in getting to Kilchrenan each day were not greatly different from those involved in getting to their present schools in Taynuilt and beyond.

Parents also felt that the absence of wrap-around childcare and child minders in the Kilchrenan catchment area negated any benefits of there being a school in Kilchrenan, as travel beyond Kilchrenan was required to access such services, allowing parents to work.

Some members of the community spoke of their active intentions to repurpose a closed Kilchrenan PS for the benefit of the community. They wish to use the school as a hub office for local small businesses, and as a base for the

campaign to establish a Regional/National Park in the Loch Awe area, as well as a key facility in the park if it is subsequently established.

9.2 **Pupil Numbers**

Table 4 below details the occupancy level for Taynuilt PS over the next four years as a percentage of its maximum capacity, taking into account the likely intake of pupils from the present Kilchrenan PS catchment area were Kilchrenan PS to be closed.

Table 4: School Occupancy

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Approved Capacity Taynuilt PS	163	163	163	163
Projected Roll Taynuilt PS	58	60	55	48
Kilchrenan PS Projected Roll	8	8	10	8
Maximum Roll Projection Taynuilt Primary	66	68	65	56
Taynuilt PS Occupancy %	40%	42%	40%	34%

Should Kilchrenan PS close, pupils from the Kilchrenan PS catchment area would attend Taynuilt PS, other than any pupils choosing denominational education at St. Columba's Roman Catholic PS, in the catchment for which Kilchrenan lies. There is a declining trend in the school roll at Taynuilt PS and the predicted occupancy rate for Taynuilt PS varies between 42% and 34% over the next four years. There are no issues associated with the capacity of Taynuilt PS to receive pupils from the present Kilchrenan catchment area, and such a scenario can be seen as beneficial to the Taynuilt PS school community.

9.3 **Financial Information**

Since the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS, there has been a bus service for pupils travelling to Taynuilt PS, at an annual cost of **£27,295**. The closure of Kilchrenan PS would therefore not incur any additional transport cost. It is possible that the closure of Kilchrenan PS and the establishment of Taynuilt PS as the catchment school could result in a gradual reduction of the numbers of pupils attending St. Columba's PS in Oban. Were this service from the Kilchrenan/Dalavich district no longer required, a saving on transport to St. Columba's PS may be possible. At present, the cost of transporting pupils to St. Columba's PS from the Kilchrenan catchment area is **£26,726** annually.

If Kilchrenan Primary School were to be closed it would generate an annual saving of **£9,888**, the current annual cost of mothballing (2022-23) not including the cost relating to overstaffing in another school as a result of staff transfer from Kilchrenan**.** The potential cost of reopening the school, totalling **£150,763** on an ongoing annual basis, plus **£29,000** to bring the building up to the required standard for reopening, would also require no further consideration.

9.4 **Assessment of Rural Factors**

Section 12A(2) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) requires the education authority to identify its reasons for the closure proposal of a rural school, and consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal which could respond to those reasons. For the proposal and each and any alternatives identified, the education authority is required to assess the likely educational benefits, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The reasons why the future of Kilchrenan Primary School is being considered are as stated at Section 2 of this Report.

9.4.1 *Community Impact*

If Kilchrenan PS were to close, pupils would continue their education at Taynuilt PS – the catchment area of which would incorporate the present Kilchrenan catchment area – or elsewhere, and there would be no change in terms of the current impact on the community. The Kilchrenan school building has not been used by the community during the period of mothballing. The nearby Kilchrenan Village Hall fulfils a wide range of civic requirements in the area, and is newly-refurbished, well-equipped and community-co-ordinated.

Some members of the community view the buildings and grounds as an opportunity to develop a local small business hub, and as both a base for the campaign to create a Loch Awe Regional/National Park, and a key facility within such a park if established. The closure of the school would permit the local community to take such ventures forward, under the terms of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act* 2015. Such a

re-purposing of the building could potentially have a very positive impact on the economy and sustainability of the community in the longer term.

The closure of the school may have a negative impact on the numbers of those with children considering a move to the area, a concern held by some of those who attended the Community Engagement Event. This could have an adverse effect on the sustainability of the local community, although others pointed to a lack of affordable housing being the greatest issue for community sustainability.

Other than the possible role of the reopened school attracting new residents to the area, attendees at the Community Engagement Event did not detail any further negative consequences of the school being closed.

9.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Kilchrenan PS to Taynuilt PS is 6.7 miles via the B845. Travel time is approximately 14 minutes. The travel arrangements have been in place for 18 months. Travel is an accepted aspect of living in the Kilchrenan community and the occasional issues relating to adverse winter weather are acknowledged. The option to close the school would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils, the associated costs or the environmental impact of travel.

9.4.3 *Educational Benefits*

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers in exercising freedom and responsibility in their practice, within the context of 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 associated with the closure of Kilchrenan PS, as all schools in Argyll and Bute implement Curriculum for Excellence, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

Scottish Government classification defines both Kilchrenan PS and Taynuilt PS as remote rural schools. However, Taynuilt PS has a more accessible location in a larger village. Children from the Kilchrenan area, attending Taynuilt Primary School are benefitting from learning with a greater number of peers of the same age and stage as themselves, as opposed to experiencing a single, multi-composite classroom. Pupils also benefit from the increased friendship groups that a larger school can offer, and 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 larger groups of children, take part in team activities and move with an established group of friends and peers to secondary school at Oban High School.

In interview, two pupils spoke of not having enough choice of people to play with at Kichrenan. Two pupils spoke of how attending Taynuilt PS was preparing them better for meeting large groups of people in secondary school and beyond. One pupils said that he was enjoying doing much more group work in Taynuilt PS. One pupil said that after an argument or if there was a problem, there were now more people to approach than at Kilchrenan.

Almost all children spoke of the better facilities and range of activities on offer in their new schools, with better PE and more sports on offer.

9.5 **Summary**

From those who attended the community engagement event, there was majority support for the closure of Kilchrenan PS as a school, and realigning the catchment area of Taynuilt PS.

The projected roll for Taynuilt PS ranges between 42% and 34% of the school's maximum capacity over the next four years. Upon the closure of Kilchrenan PS, the intake of a small number of children from the previous Kilchrenan catchment area will put no pressure on the school's capacity, and will be positive for the school in terms of the greater mix of children attending, the potential input of additional engaged parents and the potentially positive impact on the school's staffing.

The closure of Kilchrenan PS would incur no increased annual transportation costs, and the annual costs of maintaining the school building in its mothballed state, **£9,888,** would be saved by the council. The projected substantial costs of re-opening the school would require no further consideration.

Travel arrangements to Taynuilt PS, which almost all children and their parents have deemed to be satisfactory, are already in place for children within the Kilchrenan catchment area, and would continue should Kilchrenan PS be closed. There would be no clear negative environmental issues associated with the closure of the school. The vehicular transport arrangements would remain as they are.

In Taynuilt PS, children benefit from a positive learning environment, and from learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of the young people who attend the school. In addition there are more opportunities for personal and social development, and for access to a potentially broader range of learning experiences and activities.

After consideration of all that has been discussed above, the closure of Kilchrenan PS and the realignment of the Taynuilt PS catchment area to include the present Kilchrenan catchment area has been identified as a reasonable option for further consideration and consultation.

10.0 OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Option	Option Description	Outcome
A	Re-open Kilchrenan Primary School with the existing catchment area.	Not a reasonable option.
B	Continued Mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School with the pupils zoned to Taynuilt Primary School.	Not a reasonable option.
C	Re-open Kilchrenan Primary School and extend its catchment area.	Not a reasonable option
D	Close Kilchrenan Primary School and realign the catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School to include the current catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School.	A reasonable option, with consideration given to the present school building becoming a facility the community can develop for its benefit and sustainability.

11.0 ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION: CLOSE KILCHRENAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR TAYNUILT PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE CURRENT KILCHRENAN CATCHMENT AREA

11.1 The closure of Kilchrenan PS, and the realignment of the Taynuilt PS catchment area to include the current Kilchrenan catchment area, is assessed to be the only reasonable option to be presented to members at committee, and, if approved, to subsequently progress to formulation of a "relevant proposal" under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010, as amended by the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act* 2014.

This section of the report both summarises and provides more information on the key factors considered in such an assessment, and goes into significant detail regarding the educational benefits of closing Kilchrenan PS, particularly as regards the educational provision offered by Taynuilt PS.

11.2 Pupil Projections

As detailed above, the realignment of the Taynuilt PS catchment area to include that of Kilchrenan PS, and the subsequent enrolment of additional pupils, will not substantially affect the school occupancy in relation to the

school's maximum capacity. As detailed in the table below, the predicted occupancy rate for Taynuilt PS varies between 42% and 34% over the next four years. There are no issues associated with the capacity of Taynuilt PS to receive pupils from the present Kilchrenan catchment area, and such a scenario can be seen as beneficial to the Taynuilt school community.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Approved Capacity Taynuilt PS	163	163	163	163
Projected Roll Taynuilt PS	58	60	55	48
Kilchrenan PS Projected Roll	8	8	10	8
Maximum Roll Projection Taynuilt Primary	66	68	65	56
Taynuilt PS Occupancy %	40%	42%	40%	34%

11.3 Assessment of Rural Factors

11.3.1 *Educational Benefits*

Learning and Teaching

The following focuses on learning and the curriculum at Taynuilt PS, which is the school most Kilchrenan PS pupils have been attending since February 2022, and would be the future receiving school for children presently living within the Kilchrenan PS catchment area.

The curriculum at Taynuilt PS includes a broad range of planned experiences, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

In Taynuilt PS, 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 a high level of achievement, providing a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential within the four contexts of learning – curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement.

In Taynuilt PS, children are taught in composite classes composed of children from no more than two year groups. 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 through a variety of learning activities, as well as 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 autonomy, creativity and responsibility, in the context of broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. The Head Teacher of Taynuilt Primary School leads a team of staff who are challenged and supported through a range of continuing professional review and development opportunities. The school is part of the Oban Lorn and the Isles Schools Cluster, which means that staff can be supported to work together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Colleagues within Taynuilt 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.

Taynuilt PS has been focusing strongly on the development children's understanding of their rights – their role in wellbeing, sustainable living and school improvement – and working towards Rights Respecting School accreditation. A further key focus for the school is the empowerment of parents/carers in shaping and participating in policy, learning and the life and ethos of the school through a strong parent council and a vibrant parental voice. A third improvement focus for the school community has been to develop further the use of self-evaluation and attainment data to inform improvement planning at whole-school level, and to support appropriate, effective, timely interventions for children in their learning and attainment. Other ongoing improvement priorities include supporting digital learning, developing Reading through targeted interventions, supporting progress in Numeracy through the use of *Stages in Early Arithmetical Learning,* and

promoting Pupil Leadership of activities and initiatives, and ownership of and engagement with their own learning.

Taynuilt PS encourages outdoor learning activities and learning through play. Partnership working with local employers and the Parent Council has helped to develop resources and outdoor learning zones to support this approach. The poly-tunnel supports children's understanding of health and wellbeing, bio-diversity and sustainability.

Taynuilt PS is in a village location within Taynuilt, which, like Kilchrenan Primary School, is classed as a very remote rural school. The Head Teacher has a strong understanding of the rural communities that the school serves.

Taynuilt PS has its own linked ELC on site, with which it coordinates an active transition calendar. The school also has strong links with Oban High School with which it liaises, alongside all other OLI schools, throughout the year to ensure a smooth transition for P7 pupils into S1.

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 analysis of pupil work. As a result of such practice, appropriate interventions are put in place, involving parents/carers and other agencies to ensure the needs of each child are met.

In Taynuilt PS, most children are achieving the expected levels for their stage in Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking and Numeracy. The attainment of children at Taynuilt PS is strong: between 2019 and 2022, attainment levels for P1, P4 and P7 pupils at Taynuilt PS in Numeracy and across the three areas of Literacy were above the Argyll and Bute and National averages.

Taynuilt PS continues to develop positive relationships within the school through a focus on Nurture and Rights Respecting Schools. The larger staff, parent/carer body and partner group of the school naturally 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.

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. Taynuilt PS has been evaluating its community links as part of its Covid Recovery Plans, providing enhanced opportunities for social interaction and skills development.

Environment for Learning

Taynuilt PS is a suitably-equipped and well supported school, situated in village of Taynuilt. The school building is graded highly suitable for effective educational provision (Suitability Rating A) and the grounds and surroundings are extensive and attractive, providing ample space for play and outdoor learning. The building has facilities for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

11.3.2 *Community Impact*

While there was some variance of community views at the Community Engagement Event, the majority of attendees supported closure of Kilchrenan PS.

It is understood that a school closure may have an effect on the community's sustainability, as a result of families with children being put off moving into the area. However, members of the local community are being proactive in developing proposals for the Kilchrenan school building, which, if fulfilled, could have a positive effect on the economy and sustainability of the area and community. Present proposals are to request the transfer of the Kilchrenan PS building into local community ownership/management under the terms of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*. It is proposed that the building become a hub office for local small businesses, and a centre for the campaign to establish either a new Regional or National Park in the Loch Awe area, the application processes relating to which are already underway. Should a park be established at regional or national level, it is envisaged that the school building could become a key facility within the park infrastructure. The formal closure of the school would allow such plans to progress.

Any civic role which the school building may have previously played in the Kilchrenan community, or which it could continue to play were it to remain open, can be adopted by the Kilchrenan Village Hall, which is run and co-ordinated by local community members. Having been recently refurbished, the hall is well equipped to play a key role in staging key local events and activities, and is doing so effectively.

The closure of Kilchrenan PS could have positive consequences for the future of Taynuilt PS, and by extension, the community of Taynuilt. Against the backdrop of a school roll at Taynuilt which is projected to fall in coming years, even a small increase in the number of pupils coming to the school as a result of the closure of Kilchrenan could have benefits in terms of the school's staffing complement, the number of composite classes, the mix and diversity of the pupil cohort and the number of parents potentially able to contribute to the life and work of the school.

11.3.3 *Travel Arrangements*

Travel by vehicle is an accepted aspect of living in the Kilchrenan community, and there were already considerable transport considerations for those travelling from Inverinan or Dalavich to Kilchrenan before Kilchrenan PS was mothballed.

The travel distance from Kilchrenan PS to Taynuilt PS is 6.7 miles via the B845. Travel time is approximately 14 minutes. The travel arrangements for pupils in the Kilchrenan catchment area travelling to Taynuilt have been in place for 18 months. Occasional issues relating to adverse winter weather are acknowledged. The option to close the school would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils, the associated costs to the Council or families or the environmental impact of travel.

11.5 **Financial Impact**

The main elements included within a school budget are teacher employment costs (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 (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 pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational, the teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), as 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 will be deployed elsewhere within the authority and therefore their salary costs still exist, and there is an increase to the receiving school's budget. This is also in line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers. This methodology also applies to the school's discretionary budget which again is formula-based. The budget of the receiving school, in terms of any pupils being transferred, will increase. The figures outlined below take account of the fact that the staffing and discretionary budgets for Kilchrenan PS have been adjusted to nil.

The annual running costs during mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School are **£9,888.** Therefore, annual savings generated through closing Kilchrenan Primary School would be **£9,888.**

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

handover to local community groups under the terms of the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.*

11.6 **Environmental Impact**

Pupils currently travel to Taynuilt PS. The option to close Kilchrenan PS would have no further environmental impact, and would have no impact on the current travel arrangements for staff and pupils. Travel to access services and amenities is an accepted aspect of rural life.

12.0 CONCLUSION

Four alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of Kilchrenan 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, 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 Kilchrenan Primary School and realigning the catchment area of Taynuilt Primary School to include the current catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School has been identified as the most reasonable option to address the underlying reasons for the proposal.

Members are asked to:

- Note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements;
- Agree that Officers now formulate a draft closure proposal that will come back to the December 2023 meeting of the Committee for consideration by Members. If approved it would subsequently trigger a statutory consultation process under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010.

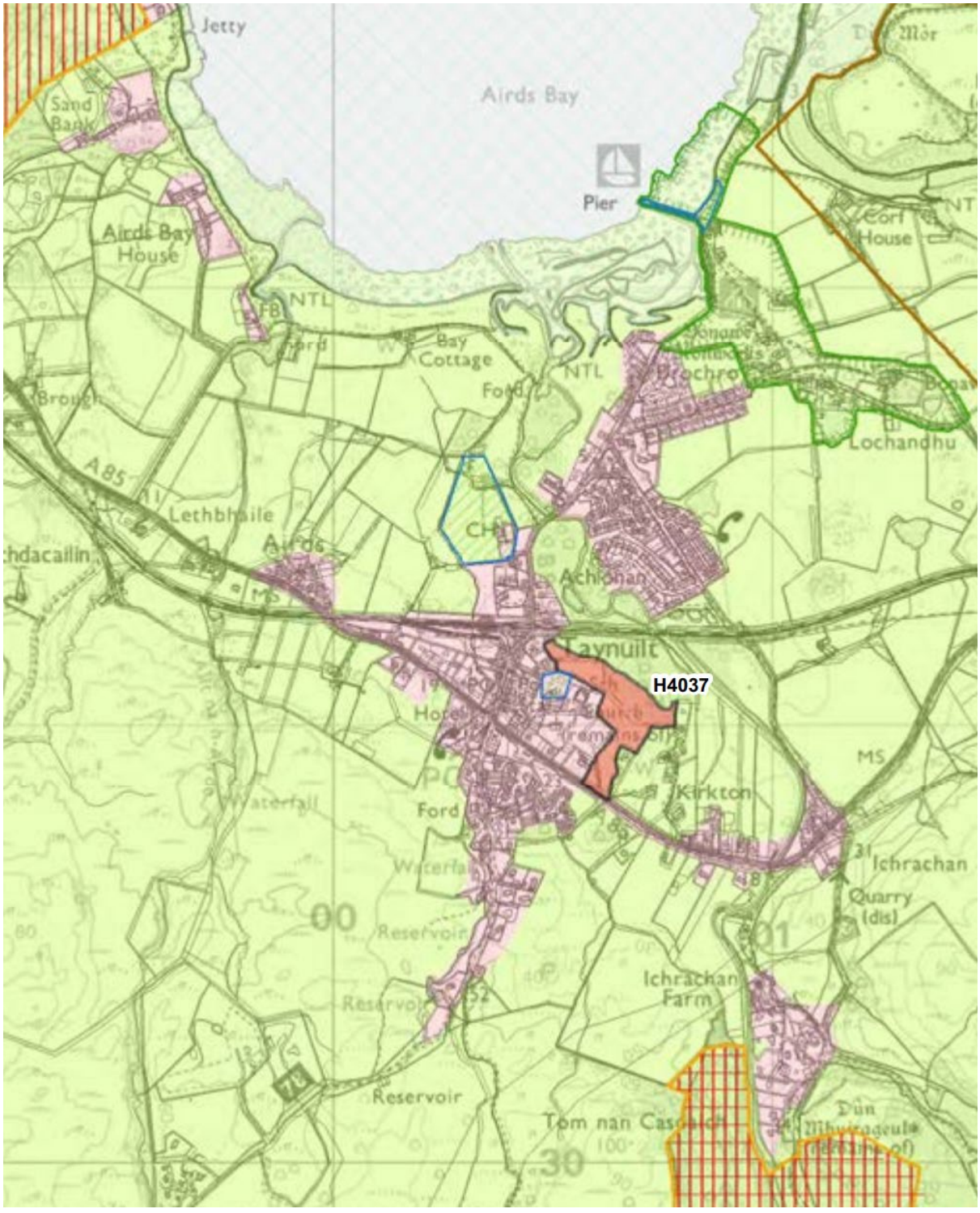
Appendices

- Appendix 1 – LDP2 for Kilchrenan
- Appendix 2 – LDP2 for Taynuilt
- Appendix 3 – Key for Local Development Plans
- Appendix 4 – Floor Plan of Kilchrenan PS
- Appendix 5 – Floor Plan of Taynuilt PS

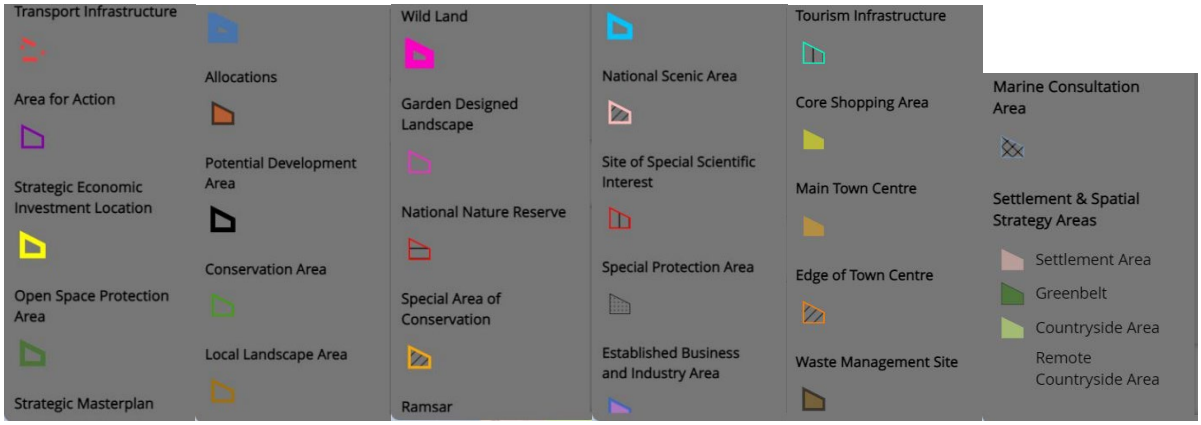
- Appendix 6 – Record of views expressed at Community Engagement Event, Kilchrenan Village Hall, 31st May 2023

Appendix 1 – LDP2 for Kilchrenan

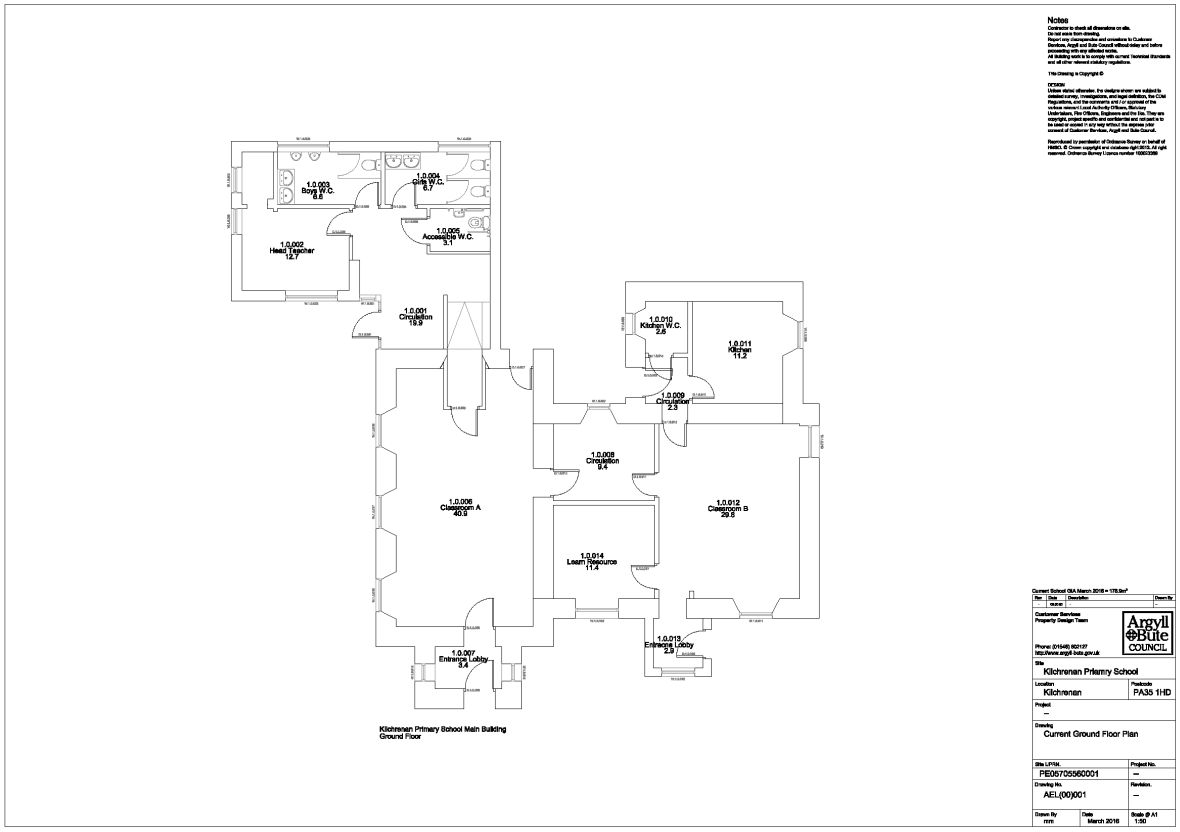
Appendix 2 - LDP2 for Taynuilt



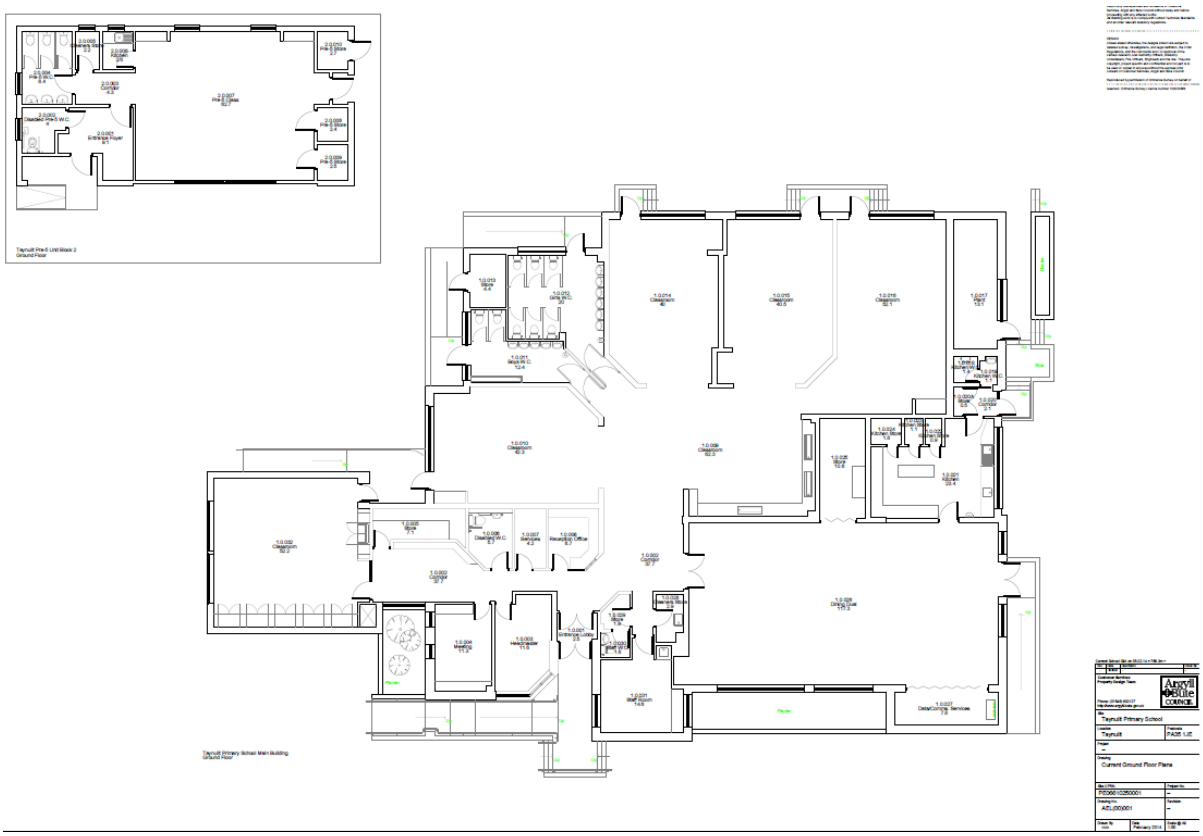
Appendix 3 – key for Local Development Plans



Appendix 4 – Floor Plan of Kilchrenan PS



Appendix 5 – Floor Plan of Taynuilt PS



Appendix 6 – Record of views expressed at Community Engagement Event, Kilchrenan Village Hall, 31st May 2023

What has been the effect of the mothballing of Kilchrenan PS on the local community?

- "None – some may say having a local primary school attracts young families to the area, but as there is no affordable or social housing available, this is not relevant."
- "It is less likely that families will move to the area."
- "Quieter without children in the playground."
- "The Community Village Hall has lost revenue as the council no longer hires it for PE lessons"
- "Children and parents are necessarily spending more time as part of a different community."
- "Very little change for a lot of us to be honest."

Option 1 – Continue with Mothballing of Kilchrenan PS

- Wider range of professionals moving to area due to improvement in connectivity. There may be more children in the community in the future.
- Continue with mothballing until viability improves

- Having a school in the area may support the creation of more social/affordable housing in the area, as families are more likely to move to the community.
- Continuing mothballing would be the worst of both worlds – better to make a firm decision. (several attendees were of this view)

Option 2 – Reopen Kilchrenan PS with the current catchment area

- The area is less attractive to families without a school – it is the hub of the community
- There are concerns about transport for pupils from Dalavich travelling to alternative schools further away.
- Kilchrenan could reopen within a hybrid model – links to other schools to deliver aspects of the curriculum virtually.
- We would like our child to attend the local school here in the village of Kilchrenan
- We would prefer to send our child to Taynuilt – better opportunities and a wider social circle
- If Kilchrenan doesn't reopen, the community is at risk as there will be nothing to attract young families.
- 45 minutes to an hour on a bus to get to further away alternative schools is too much for young primary pupils.
- The school could reopen for children in ELC and P1-P4 only
- Reopening the school is a lovely thought, but it feels unrealistic and economically unlikely

Option 3 – Reopen Kilchrenan PS with a widened catchment area

- Extending the catchment area would lead to increased transport costs and longer bus times for pupils within the catchment
- Greater distance within the catchment area would increase the risk of pupils not making it to school because of travel problems or weather.
- Extending the catchment would take pupils away from other primary schools, which are also small
- It is impractical due to the geography of the area.

Option 4 - Close Kilchrenan PS permanently

- At Kilchrenan PS, children don't get the same opportunities as in other schools.
- Kilchrenan PS pupils don't get the PE choices of pupils in other schools.
- The building is dilapidated - fabric of the building is a concern.
- The answer from the previous HT to every complaint or suggestion was that there is insufficient funding.
- Kilchrenan PS has no suitable play areas – play areas deemed "unsafe".
- Closing the school is a no-brainer.

- In Kilchrenan PS, the standard of teaching for children was not good – wide composite classes meant pupils weren't getting individual attention.
- The travel options to Taynuilt and St Columba's are not a problem – journey times are comparable from Dalavich to Kilchrenan and Dalavich to St Columba's in Oban because of the detours on the route to Kilchrenan.
- There is no wrap-around childcare in Kilchrenan, and an absence of registered childminders. Regardless of whether Kilchrenan is open, parents working is difficult.
- There are no cooking facilities in Kilchrenan – meals have to be brought from Taynuilt which is not a cost effective or efficient way of doing things and restricts what children can have.
- No breakfast Club at Kilchrenan which affects flexibility for families.
- Children who were attending Kilchrenan were having to go to Oban and Taynuilt anyway for after-school activities.
- By attending a larger, better-resourced school rather than Kilchrenan, children are benefitting greatly socially, and have wider opportunities. "They can be who they want to be, can choose who they are friends with"
- Kilchrenan is not accessible as a building, eg. for those with disability
- If Kilchrenan was closed, the cost of keeping it open could be redirected towards enhanced transport for pupils
- Closing Kilchrenan would be our choice, as we would rather send our child to Taynuilt.
- We are very satisfied with provision in Taynuilt PS and would not move our children to a reopened Kilchrenan PS
- If Kilchrenan reopens, pressure may be brought to bear on those families who choose and alternative – community pressure to attend the village school
- (From pupil) We could turn Kilchrenan school into a play areas – football goals, rugby posts
- (From pupil) We could turn the grass into a football pitch