



## Appendix B

### Public Consultation Meeting Closure of Inveravon Primary School 27 September 2022 at 1.30pm

#### In Person meeting at Inveravon Church

##### **Moray Council Officers present:**

Jo Shirriffs, Head of Education Resources & Communities; Andy Hall, Programme Manager (Learning Estate); Stewart McLauchlan, Quality improvement Manager; Jane Martin Community Support Officer (Learning Estate)

##### **HMI Inspector Present**

Sheila Brown

##### **Elected Members present:**

None

##### **Public attendance**

11 members of the public also attended – one of whom arrived during the discussions.

##### **Apologies:**

No apologies were received.

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Andy Hall opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the officer present and that a minute would be taken by Jane Martin. Andy Hall confirmed the format of the meeting would be an overview of the proposal by a PowerPoint presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion from the floor.

#### **2. Consultation Overview**

Andy Hall informed the meeting that the proposal currently under statutory consultation is the closure of Inveravon Primary School. The consultation proposes to discontinue education at Inveravon School, which is currently mothballed and re-assign its catchment area to other school(s) within the Speyside High School ASG.

#### **3. Consultation process**

The consultation is in line with the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The 2010 Act's principal purpose is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools.

The consultation will take into account

- Any reasonable alternatives to the proposal
- Specific requirements to be reviewed for a rural school



- the likely educational benefits;
- the likely community impact; and
- the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements

These consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and seen to be so. The process runs Monday 29 August 2022 to Friday 7 October 2022.

#### **4. Background**

No children have attended Inveravon Primary School since the end of session 2016/17, when the school was mothballed. The decision to mothball was taken as no pupils were enrolled from August 2017. There have been no parents that have chosen to enrol their children at Inveravon Primary School up to and including the 2022/23 sessions. The number of primary school children in the Inveravon Primary School catchment totals 15 for the 2022/23 session.

There were a series of Community engagement on the school in February and March 2022 with online public meetings. Comments boxes were left in key locations in the area from February to August for the general public to make comments.

The outcome of the Options Appraisal was presented to the Education, Childcare and Leisure Services Committee on 24 August 2022. After deliberation and a vote approval was agreed by Councillors for Public Consultation on the closure of Inveravon School.

#### **5. Options Considered**

##### **Alternatives to Closure:**

- to re-open Inveravon Primary School with its current catchment area
- to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement

##### **Proposed Options:**

- Option 1 - Close Inveravon Primary School and rezone to Knockando Primary School. As per current mothball arrangement. Transportation will be provided by the council. Parental option to out of school catchment, transportation will not be funded
- Option 2 - Close Inveravon Primary School and split catchment between Knockando and Aberlour Primary School. Considers Maryhill catchment shifting to Aberlour School. Council funded transportation provided to Knockando and Aberlour schools within respective catchments. Parental option to request school out of catchment, transportation will not be provided.
- Option 3 - Close Inveravon Primary School and split catchment between Knockando, Aberlour and Glenlivet primary schools. Considers Maryhill catchment shifting to Aberlour School and small are to Glenlivet, determined by



postcode. Council funded transportation provided to Knockando, Aberlour and Glenlivet within respective catchments. Parental option for request school out of catchment, transportation will not be funded.

## **Discounted Options:**

- Option 4 - Close Inveravon Primary School and rezone with Aberlour Primary School
- Option 5 - Close Inveravon Primary School and rezone with Glenlivet Primary School

## **Public submissions during consultation**

- A copy of our statutory consultation document which proposes the closure of Inveravon Primary School can be accessed on the Moray Council website at:
- [http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_105407.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_105407.html)
- Full copies of the proposal are available for reference at Elgin Library; Aberlour Library; Ballindalloch Post Office; Glenlivet Medical Practice; Aberlour Primary School; Glenlivet Primary School; Knockando Primary School; and Speyside High School.
- If you would like to receive a copy by email or post, please contact the Learning Estate Team by emailing [learningestate@moray.gov.uk](mailto:learningestate@moray.gov.uk).
- The consultation will run from 29 August until 7 October 2022 and an online survey will be available as part of the process. This can be completed at the following address or by scanning the QR code.  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/InveravonConsultation>
- Any written comments on the proposal must be received by Moray Council within this time in order for them to be taken into account. They should either be posted to Learning Estate Team, Moray Council Office, Room 207a, High Street, Elgin, Moray, IV30 1BX or emailed to [learningestate@moray.gov.uk](mailto:learningestate@moray.gov.uk)

## **6. Next Steps**

- Phase 2 - Consultation (concludes 7 October 2022)
- Phase 3 – on submission of consultation and other documentation Education Scotland will prepare report on the educational aspects of the proposal (3 weeks)  
HMI visit 25/26 Oct  
Meetings at schools/parental sessions
- Phase 4 – Preparation and publication of consultation report
- Phase 5 – Decision process
  - 25 January 2023 - Recommendation to Education, Childcare and Leisure Services Committee
  - 1 March 2023 - Recommendation to and decision at Full Council
  - If closure decision: Authority must notify Scottish Ministers with 6 working days Publish notice on website



## Closure Decision

- Phase 6 – Ministerial call in
  - Initial 3 weeks from notification of decision anyone can make representation to Ministers
  - Further 5 weeks for Ministers to decide whether or not to issue a call-in notice
  - During 8 week period the Authority cannot proceed to implement proposed closure
- Phase 7 – School Closure Review Panel
  - If Ministers call in
  - Max 9 to 17 weeks

## Non-closure Decision

- Phase 8 – Restriction on school closure for 5 years

## 7. Questions from the floor

Andy Hall opened the floor for questions, asking anyone wishing to comment may do so.

**Deputy Lord Lieutenant** – The school is in bad order, how has this been allowed to happen what will the cost to get the building back into order.

**AH** – Although this is a valid criticism, Inveravon is on par with other schools across Moray. A make-do-and-mend approach has been adopted across the Moray school estate. The school has been maintained wind and watertight and a flood issue was addressed last winter. During Covid there authority had different priorities to meet. The school and land is not owned by the authority but Ballindalloch Estate and would be handed back.

**Deputy Lord Lieutenant** – appreciate that not enough resources from the government are given to councils to look after schools.

**Glenlivet & Inveravon Development Trust** – Is this why we did not get parents signing up for the school as it is not viable.

**AH** – There are historical reasons not related to school condition; the size of the school role, peer interactions, parental choice.

**Resident** – I spoke to parents who were opposed not all parents were of the same mind.

**Resident** – Parents won't put their children to a school that has been mothballed.

**Resident** – How many schools have been mothballed in Moray?

**AH** – I am aware of only one school within last 15 year, Cabrach Primary School. The mothballing of Inveravon came into play when the school role fell to zero. Parents took the decision to move their children when families relocated and the role fell to five in August 2017. The council had no policy at the time to trigger numbers to consider mothballing.



**SM** - In terms of Education Benefits, we outlined the range of experiences and opportunities presented from attending neighbouring schools in line with HMI guidance. Inveravon has been mothballed for 5 years and is not operational. Children indicate from responses that they are happy attending other schools and have wider opportunities for mixing with peers, ages, engagement in group activities and wide educational benefits. Description is not provided regarding education benefits for Inveravon where currently the school is mothballed and any commentary would have been in past times, when the school was operating in a very different climate.

**Glenlivet & Inveravon Development Trust** – Is Glenlivet Primary School at risk of closing?

**AH** – It is not at risk, the current school role is twenty four and is steady for the foreseeable future. The Scottish Government Policy is to keep rural schools open.

**Resident** – My granddaughter had a great experience at the school, my daughter was disappointed that she had to take her daughter out. My personal view is that other parents campaigned to keep it open.

**Resident** – I went to Inveravon has a child, we had a large room compartmented to peer groups, this is as healthy as a large peer group.

**AH** – Nobody has said that the school was not performing. The evidence we have on the situation was that parents elected to move their children from the school therefore the role fell to zero.

**Resident** – Once a school is mothballed it is doomed and becomes a foregone conclusion, it is economically driven rather than educational.

**AH** – That is not the approach of Moray Council. The 2010 Act protects all rural schools. If there is evidence of a desire to re-open Inveravon Primary School we would, but we cannot remain in a mothballed situation indefinitely. The driver is that the school role is zero and there has been no interest in children enrolling over the last 5 years.

**Resident** – Why was the school not showing on the Moray Council website as an available school? This was not an ideal situation to encourage parents to choose. Why has it taken 5 years? The decision has already been made.

**AH** – We are a relatively new team who have inherited the situation and realise that errors may have been made in the past, when we were made aware of this previously by yourself we remedied it immediately. Covid put a halt on moving forward with the school.

**JS** – We want to ensure you that we will presenting everything fully, notes are being taken today of discussions and will be presented in the report.

**AH** – We have been open and honest about how things may have been done better in the past. Please respond to the consultation. This information will be



collated and included in the final report for Councillors to inform their future decision.

**Resident** – Why has it taken over the 3 years recommended for mothballing?

**JS** – Acknowledge that this should have happened earlier. Various circumstances led us into this situation. Covid was one of the main contributing factors, also there has been a staff restructuring within the Council during this same period. There is now the new team established to take forward the Learning Estate and ensure this does not happen again.

**Resident** – Have you had discussions with councillors for the ward?

**AH** – Pre engagement discussions have been made with all councillors.

**Resident** – How much has been taken into account for the social circumstances for residents, many who move into the area for rural living. If the school is closed the community have no chance for regeneration.

**AH** – The land and building is owned by the Ballindalloch Estate, if the school is closed everything will be transferred back to them. We have and will continue to forward ideas for the use of the school building should the decision to close be taken that are provided to use via the previous engagement and current consultation process. A number of these ideas – such as rural business hub – seek to support area regeneration.

**Resident** – The Church built the school

**AH** – I was not aware of that. We do not have access to the original full title deeds (which would be over 100 years old), our legal department are working on getting access to these. What is not in doubt is the ownership issue – the land and, by inference the building on it, would transfer to the Ballindalloch Estate if the school closes. A small strip of ground in the playground is owned by the council, it is not viable in isolation and would be transferred also.

**JS** – This is a unique historical situation regarding the building, as Andy has said our legal team are working on this.

**AH** – The Ballindalloch Estate have their own thoughts on regeneration. Although we have no influence on the future we will share ideas from the engagement and consultation process

**Resident** – The discussion with the council is about the social loss. Speyside receive a disproportionate contribution are they looking at support for the social factors.

**JS** – This was picked up in the consultation proposal document, we can only work with the information and data we have, it is difficult to invest if we cannot plan.

**AH** – Moray council does look at economic growth and nothing has changed in the last 5 years



**AH** – This will go to committee with elected members who will have the final decision on the school with the information presented to them from the consultation.

**Resident** – My mothballing understanding that the building stays in a functional state.

**JS** – We have been dealing with a make-do-and-mend focus on schools that are in use.

**AH** – I inherited the approach and is not the best way to manage old buildings. Incidents have happened in the school building over the last few years and these have been addressed. A recent Conditions survey states that it is at a category C which is in line with the majority of schools across Moray.

**Resident** – You should have come across and email I sent in 2018 regarding the Gazebo and Polly Tunnel that the school fundraised for, that was destroyed and taken down following mothballing.

**AH** – I have been made aware of this but do have any historical communications – we continue to try and ascertain the facts about what happen will look to provide a formal response in our consultation report. We appreciate that issues during mothballing could have been handled better and we have explained that this was partly due to organisational restructuring, resourcing and COVID issues during this same period.

**Resident** – There is a pattern in every step you have taken to close the school, foregone conclusion!

**Resident** – What has been the involvement of the Councillors? I contacted Walter Wilson and received no reply.

**AH** – We went through the proposal document with local Councillors and they have seen the evidence presented to them informally and in Committee.

The key things for what next is we have published and shared the proposals with the community and councillors and engaging with the community with meetings this afternoon and evening with an online meeting tomorrow

We have two weeks to submit our consultation proposal and feedback to Education Scotland. They will have three weeks to respond, during this time they will meet with parents and children of the schools and report.

Once complete we will prepare and publish the final Consultation report, capturing all comments, but note that there may be some gaps in historical data for reasons previously stated

**Resident** - In terms of options for the catchment, why has Glenlivet School not been included we are a community.

**AH** – A full re-zoning to Glenlivet was not consider as there had been on historical or recent desire at engagement session earlier this year for parents to send their



children to Glenlivet. In addition we also considered average distances of travel and winter road conditions.

**Resident** – Did parents choose Knockando School and the few that went to Aberlour?

**AH** – Our understanding is that the majority of parents choose to send their children to Knockando as the schools share a Head Teacher and it was similar rural school setting. During mothballing the Inveravon catchment has been temporarily rezoned to Knockando so that transportation is provided. We are not aware of the reasons why a couple of families elected to enrol their children at Aberlour but that was their parental choice. These families do not benefit from Council provided transport.

**Resident** – Moray Council has hostility, actions and attitude to rural schools

**AH** – We have not seen evidence of this. We have acknowledged that the Council could do better at communicating the situation since mothballing – but since the Learning Estate Team has been established the lessons learnt have been addressed.

**Resident** – Has there been a Moray Quality audit since 2012.

**SM** – We undertake regular Quality Improvement Visits to schools undertaken by link Quality Improvement Officers. We currently use How Good is Our School? Version 4 quality indicator framework where at that time, pre 2016/2017 we used an older framework – How Good Is Our School? 3 which is not current. Any commentary made is now time-served based on education standards at that time. HMLe have also removed older pre-2016 Inspection Reports from their website for this reason, showing only a moment in time based on staffing etc. at that time. It would not be possible to compare time-served reports and audits with current status quo in schools, post-pandemic. Learner views are central to our processes. We currently base our visits and evaluations on How Good is Our School version 4.

**Resident** – You are taking the heart out of the community there is a broader philosophy to education. I am shocked what is going on, this effects the widespread community with other things closing the Hotel what next the shop?

Why in a number of weeks did the school role go from 10 to zero? Has there been an investigation to quantity and quality of school staff.

**JS** – The consultation process will allow us to capture the feelings of the community and parents. We are new to the process and building a picture of what has happened and ensuring that lessons learnt for the future.

**AH** – Responses from parents at the time have not commented on issues of quantity and quality of school staff impacting any decisions to move their children out of school.





**Deputy Lord Lieutenant** – I am appalled at what has happened and will be writing to the Chief Executive to ask for a full investigation, I appreciate that you have inherited this but we need to know what happened.

**Resident** – The remote possibility that the school will re-open what will happen if it is not fit for purpose.

**AH** – If the decision is to keep the school open it will be made fit for purpose. This will be dependent on parents establishing an interest to put their child to Inveravon Primary.

**Resident** – The Head Teacher left and a temp in her place what happened.

**SM** – Staff leave for a number of reasons and this may include progression on to new roles as experienced. We cannot stop career development or staff desire to move on but work to support schools where this may have happened with backfill and appointment. I know that schools may want to keep teachers they hold in high regard but this is out with the local authority control and down to individual teacher's wishes. We continue to support recruitment to posts and staff professional development but at times have a limited supply available.

**Resident** – Rural Schools are on a knife edge regarding their viability

**AH** - Rural schools in Moray, as with many Local Authorities in Scotland pose a challenge with a majority with falling rolls and increasing costs. However, the School Act 2010 makes clear additional factors that should be applied and considered when considering the closure of a rural school. These have been applied during the options appraisal and detailed in the closure proposal for Inveravon Primary School.

## **8 Close**

Andy Hall thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the importance of officers gaining feedback. He encouraged everyone to participate fully in the consultation and promoted the online survey, the Speyside High School meeting in the evening and the online meeting the next day, 28th September, an invite to which can be obtained by emailing the learning estate team.