



THE MORAY COUNCIL

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

**PROPOSED CLOSURE OF
CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

CONSULTATION REPORT

Friday 12 November 2011

The statutory guidance regarding school closure proposals requires the authority to publish a report on the consultation. This report must contain:

- An explanation of how it has reviewed the proposal
- The HMIE Report and a summary of the authority's response to it.
- A record of responses received together with a summary of points raised during the consultation – both written and oral and the authority's response to them
- The substance of any alleged inaccuracies and details of the authority's response and any action taken
- Any omitted information
- For rural school closure proposals the authority is required to explain how, in reviewing the proposal, it has applied the three factors to which it must have special regard including any resulting change in attitude.

The following report addresses all of the above.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 18 August 2010 the Children and Young People's Services Committee of The Moray Council agreed to issue the closure proposal papers relating to Cabrach Primary School. The proposal is to close Cabrach Primary School permanently and add the area currently zoned for Cabrach Primary School to the area currently zoned for Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown, with effect from the same date.
- 1.2 The closure proposal papers are attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. The Consultation

- 2.1 The consultation was carried out with reference to, and meeting the requirements of, the Schools [Consultation] [Scotland] Act 2010.
- 2.2 This included:
 - A six week consultation period from 23 August to 4 October 2010
 - Consultation with a very wide range of stakeholders:
 - Parents of children currently attending Cabrach Primary School.
 - Parents of children who would be likely to become pupils at the school within two years
 - Local Community Councils
 - Cabrach/Mortlach Community Association
 - Speyside Council
 - Moray Forum [Charles Bestwick]
 - Mortlach Parent Council
 - Staff at Cabrach Primary School
 - Staff at Mortlach Primary School
 - Pupils currently attending Cabrach Primary School
 - Pupils currently attending Mortlach Primary School
 - Trade Unions representing teachers and support staff
 - Community Planning Partnership – Bridget Mustard
 - Other Council departments and services

- Election Returning Officer
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
- Two public meetings on 6 and 7 September 2010
- Publication of the proposal on The Moray Council website, in the affected schools and in local libraries.
- Consultation with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

3. Responses

3.1 Meetings

A summary note of the oral responses given at two meetings held on 6 and 7 September 2010 is attached as **Appendix 2**.

3.2 Written responses

Forty three written responses were received within the deadline of 4 October 2010 and one further written response from the Cabrach Community Association was received on 11 October 2010. This further response has been added to the earlier responses and has been taken into account.

All of the written responses are attached at **Appendix 3**.

3.3 Almost all of the public responses are supportive of the proposal to close Cabrach Primary School. In the main, these responses indicate agreement with the educational and financial benefits detailed in the proposal.

The responses from the children consulted are, not surprisingly, split with those from Cabrach Primary School opposing the closure proposal and those from Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown, being in favour.

The parents of the two children currently attending Cabrach Primary School expressed their satisfaction with the school, their desire to retain this provision and therefore their opposition to the proposal. In support of their opposition, they also expressed certain weather related concerns.

The responses from the three Community Associations offered differing views. The Dufftown Community Association supported closure but wished to see the building retained as a community asset. The Speyside Area Forum supported the closure but also expressed a desire to maintain the building for a period of time [unspecified] to afford the recently appointed local development worker an opportunity to support regeneration efforts. The Cabrach Community Association opposes the closure but also asks, that in the event of the closure proceeding, for the building to be retained for some period of time to see whether or not they will be successful.

3.4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education [HMIe] Report and Council Response

HMIe was consulted and their report and response is attached as **Appendix 4**. In paragraph 4.1 of the HMIe report, the Inspectorate indicates that "The proposal from Moray Council to close Cabrach Primary School and transfer children to Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown offers educational benefits to

children directly affected by the proposal and to the wider community in Moray. The proposed move to the larger school offers children from Cabrach an enhanced range of educational experiences. The proposal will not adversely affect the quality of education for children at Mortlach Primary School.” The Inspectorate report asks officers to provide further information on weather related issues and outline its position with regard to the issues raised by the Cabrach Community Association. In response, the authority has detailed these later in this report. Finally the HMle report asks the Council to indicate the date of the proposed closure and transfer of the children to Mortlach Primary School – it is proposed that the date of closure take effect from Thursday 10 February 2011 with pupils commencing attendance at Mortlach Primary School on Tuesday 15 February 2011. [This is a natural break in the term being the mid-term holiday weekend]

4. Issues Raised During the Public Consultation and The Moray Council Response

The issues raised by respondents who are opposed to the closure proposal can be summarised as follows:

- **Weather and Transport**

Issues Raised – Concerns regarding length of journey time, overall length of pupil day and potential impact of adverse weather on care arrangements made for children resident at Cabrach if they are stranded away from home.

Council Response - The journey times of 20 to 30 minutes to Mortlach Primary School compared to 5 to 20 minutes currently for Cabrach Primary School are considered to be reasonable and compare favourably with journey times undertaken by many other children across Moray. A number of queries were raised regarding the dangers of children being stranded in Dufftown and unable to get home to Cabrach during severe winter weather. The Council has however well established procedures and practices in place to ensure the safety of all children. These procedures include the requirement for parents to provide emergency contact names and contact numbers. Schools also have arrangements in place to notify parents when there is to be an early and/or unanticipated closure of a school due to adverse weather and finally arrangements are made for children to be accommodated should they be unable to return home due to road conditions. It is worth noting that even during the most recent Winter which was by common agreement the worst for over thirty years, at no time were children unable to get home to Cabrach from Dufftown or indeed from Aberlour where secondary education provision is accommodated. Head Teachers and local transport providers are well experienced in these matters. The Council is content therefore that appropriate and safe arrangements are in place for all pupils. It is worth noting that at the end of paragraph 4.1 of the HMle report [attached as **Appendix 4**] HMle state

“the Council has appropriate plans in place to transport children to Mortlach Primary School”.

In the past three years the closures due to adverse weather affecting Cabrach and Mortlach Primary Schools are as follows:

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08
Cabrach Primary	19	6	1
Mortlach Primary	10	5	2

The Council is of the view that there will be no additional adverse impact on the educational provision for children being transferred to Mortlach Primary School as a result of weather related issues. Furthermore, with increasing use of Information Communications Technology [ICT], it is anticipated that even on occasions when the road conditions are such that children cannot attend school, an element of educational provision will still be able to be delivered through appropriate ICT mechanisms.

▪ **Use of the facilities by Cabrach Community Association**

Issues Raised – Views expressed regarding use of the school for a variety of activities and assertions that the Council has thwarted various attempts by the Community Association to utilise the building.

Council Response – In their response the Cabrach Community Association indicates that in their view there has been some form of vendetta waged against Cabrach over the years by the Council and cite the removal of the play equipment – this was done as a result of an independent Health and Safety assessment; the removal of the recycling provision – The Moray Council took this decision on the basis that the recycling provision was neither cost effective nor was there any justifiable demand; Radon gas remediation – once again this work was undertaken as a result of Health and Safety requirements and once the works were completed, Cabrach Primary School was reopened.

The Cabrach Community Association also indicate that their attempts to house various community activities in the building have been frustrated by the Council. It is important to note that no such formal requests have been received by The Moray Council in the recent past. Furthermore, the suggestion by the Cabrach Community Association to house a library in the school is not feasible and would not have been progressed given that (a) there is no appropriate space in the one available room and (b) there is currently no public library provision in the Cabrach in any event and therefore the Council’s current policy of integrating **existing** libraries with certain primary schools does not apply in this case. The suggestion of utilising the building for indoor bowling is completely impractical given that in order to do so this would require the virtual dismantling of the classroom equipment. The suggestions of chess clubs, luncheon clubs and coffee clubs, whilst potentially viable, have never been actually progressed by the Community Association.

- **Mothballing**

Issues Raised - Each of the three Community Associations has indicated a desire for the building, should the school be closed, to be retained for a period of time in order to allow sufficient time for the recently established regeneration group to undertake its work.

Council Response – Whilst the Community Associations express the view that the loss of the building will have an impact on the community's viability, there is no concrete evidence to support this view. It is acknowledged that the regeneration work is only at a preliminary stage and therefore there is no indication at this stage of its likely success or otherwise. Any decision regarding mothballing will be a matter for Elected Members.

5. Alleged Inaccuracies

There have been no alleged inaccuracies raised during the consultation period.

6. Any Omitted Information

There have been no indications during the consultation period that any information has been omitted.

7. Rural School Closure Proposals – 3 Factors

The Council, as per statutory regulations, has considered the three additional factors with regard to rural school closures:

- Any viable alternative to closure
- Likely effect on the community, sustainability and access to the building by the community
- The effect of different travelling arrangements on the environment, on pupils and other school users

Having reviewed the responses to the consultation, the Council takes the view that no new information or evidence, other than the regeneration project, has been raised to support the retention of the school. The regeneration project is at a very early stage and therefore has not produced any evidence to alter the views expressed in paragraphs 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of the original proposal.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

The proposals contained within the closure paper have been equality impact assessed. This impact assessment indicates that there is no adverse impact or any disproportionate effect on any section of the community.

9. Next Steps

This report will be considered by the Children and Young People's Services Committee of The Moray Council at its next meeting at 09:30 on 8 December 2010 and, should that Committee recommend closure, this recommendation will be considered by a Special Meeting of the Full Council scheduled for the afternoon of 8 December 2010. Should the Council decide to close the school then all relevant parties to this consultation have a period of three weeks after that Council decision to bring to Scottish Ministers attention any matter which they consider would justify the decision being called in under Section 15 [4] of the Act. Ministers will only call in a decision if there is strong evidence of either:

- (a) The local authority failing to comply in a significant way with requirements set out in the Act.
- (b) The local authority failing to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision.

Contact details for Scottish Ministers:

schoolestate@scotland.gsi.gov.uk copied to
james.newman@scotland.gsi.gov.uk and katie.hislop@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

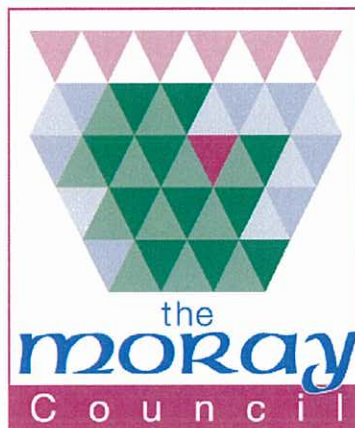
or addressed to The Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Finally the purpose of the publication of this report fully three weeks in advance of the Council meeting scheduled for 8 December 2010 is so that interested parties will have time to see and digest the contents of this consultation report and also have time, if they so wish, to voice concerns and approach and lobby the Elected Members who will be deciding on the proposal.

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THE MORAY COUNCIL
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

CLOSURE PROPOSAL

August 2010

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of school session 2009-2010 the roll in Cabrach Primary School was four but in April 2010 it reduced to two before these two pupils moved from the area leaving the school with no pupils on the roll from mid June 2010. In late June 2010 a further two pupils were registered to commence attendance on 17 August 2010. There seems little prospect of an increase in the roll in the foreseeable future, with several parents of children currently resident in the Cabrach Primary School zone already having taken the decision to place their children in attendance at Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown.

Consequently, The Moray Council is proposing to close Cabrach Primary School permanently and this document contains details of the various elements of that proposal including:

- notification of the proposal to close
- details of statistical information relating to Cabrach primary school
- details of alternative provision at Mortlach primary school
- details of the educational benefits of the proposal
- details of the financial implications of the proposal
- details of the consultation procedures
- details of how you can communicate your views and responses

The following proposal takes account of the Schools [Consultation] [Scotland] Act 2010 and the statutory guidance related to the Act which came fully into force on 5 April 2010.

1. PROPOSAL

That the Children and Young People's Services Committee of The Moray Council, at its meeting scheduled for 8 December 2010, considers the outcomes of this consultation and the future of Cabrach Primary School.

It is proposed that Cabrach Primary School be closed permanently and that the area currently zoned for Cabrach Primary School be added to the area currently zoned for Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown, with effect from the same date. **[Note: zone maps attached as Appendix 1].** There are two main reasons for this proposal:

- (a) a very small school roll restricts educational opportunities
- (b) the very inefficient use of limited Council resources

2. STATISTICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- (a) **Actual roll and occupancy of Cabrach Primary School as at 18 August 2010**

School Roll – August 2010	Functional Capacity	% Occupancy
2	25	8%

(b) Previous and projected roll and occupancy figures – Cabrach Primary School

School Year	Roll	Functional Capacity	% Occupancy
2007-08	4	25	16%
2008-09	5	25	20%
2009-10	4	25	16%
2010-11	2	25	8%
Projected 2011-12	2	25	8%
Projected 2012-13	2	25	8%

(c) Building facilities – Cabrach Primary School

The facilities are housed in one single storey modern facility which is in a satisfactory state of repair and is satisfactory in terms of suitability. In 2009-10 £14,000 was spent on roof and sundry repairs and £4,000 on radon gas remediation works. Urgent backlog maintenance repairs are costed as follows:

- Lighting £13,500
- Electrical and heating works £15,500
- Roof £6,000

Total £35,000

Principal repair issues for the next 2-5 years are:

- Internal walls £7,000
- Floor coverings £7,000
- External areas £6,000
- Fences £5,000
- Switchgear £6,000
- Phones/alarms £5,000
- Roofs £50,000

Total £86,000

(d) Financial information – Cabrach Primary School

The current annual budgeted running costs of Cabrach Primary School are £111,552 [calculated on a roll of 2 pupils for the entire school year]. This translates as follows into cost per pupil:

Calculated with a roll of two = £55,800 per pupil

Moray average cost per pupil = £3,184

Scottish average cost per pupil = £3,948

NB: Whilst the average cost per pupil is a useful indicator, a variety of factors can and do affect the running costs of schools including their condition, location, roll etc. Direct comparisons therefore need to be treated

with a degree of caution. The Moray and Scottish average figures are the latest published figures and relate to 2009/10.

(e) Previous and projected roll and occupancy figures – Mortlach Primary School

School Year	Roll	Functional Capacity	% Occupancy
2007-08	154	211	73%
2008-09	157	206	76%
2009-10	146	201	73%
2010-11	155	201	77%
Projected 2011-12	153	201	76%
Projected 2012-13	153	201	76%
Projected 2013-14	150	201	74%

(f) Building facilities – Mortlach Primary School

The facilities are housed in a traditional building in good condition and the suitability is also good. The addition of the Cabrach Primary School zone would have no adverse impact on Mortlach Primary School as there is more than sufficient space to accommodate any likely roll increase.

(g) Financial information – Mortlach Primary School

The current annual budgeted running costs of Mortlach Primary School are £523,800 [calculated on a school roll of 155 for the entire school year]. This translates as follows into cost per pupil:

Mortlach = £3,379

Moray average cost per pupil = £3,184

Scottish average cost per pupil = £3,948

NB: Whilst the average cost per pupil is a useful indicator, a variety of factors can and do affect the running costs of schools including their condition, location, roll etc. Direct comparisons therefore need to be treated with a degree of caution.

3. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- 3.1 The Moray Council is committed to providing a high quality educational service whilst ensuring that the resources are used in the most effective way at all times. The quality of the educational provision is central to the delivery of effective learning and teaching. The transfer of the Cabrach Primary School zone to Mortlach Primary School will have educational benefits for the very small number of children who might otherwise have attended Cabrach Primary School. In general, the learning opportunities and experiences will be broadened significantly. Specific benefits and advantages are listed below.

- (i) More effective delivery of a balanced and stimulating curriculum. The delivery of a stimulating and challenging curriculum to two pupils is very difficult given the very limited opportunities for the children to experience peer support and challenge, group work with opportunities to participate in collaborative learning and class based activities involving larger numbers of children.
 - (ii) Increased opportunities for pupils, including curricular and extra-curricular activities including group challenges, sporting and recreational team activities, musical events with choirs and ensembles and large scale events such as school concerts and participation in festivals. All of these form part of the regular experience of children in Mortlach Primary School but are not able to be provided with a roll of two pupils in Cabrach Primary School or even in the event of a small increase in roll which is unlikely.
 - (iii) Greater flexibility in grouping children appropriately for learning and teaching.
 - (iv) Greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
 - (v) Guarantee of an educational experience that will be more socially enabling.
 - (vi) Access to a broader range of school experiences and access to a wider range of resources and staff.
 - (vii) The larger staff in Mortlach Primary School offers a wider range of experience resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice and more collegial support.
 - (viii) The larger staff in Mortlach Primary School provides additional management support to promote continuous school improvement.
- 3.2 The facilities in Mortlach Primary School, the receiving school, are superior to those currently in Cabrach Primary School as they include additional general purpose spaces, a hall, internal facilities for physical education, a library, etc.
- 3.3 The potential future pupils of Cabrach Primary School will not be disadvantaged educationally by the transfer to Mortlach Primary School. The most recent HMle report and follow-up report on Mortlach Primary School indicate a significant number of strengths with some areas for improvement. All of the areas for improvement have seen progress as indicated in the follow-through report. Since that time the school has continued to make good progress as indicated in a recent Quality Audit undertaken by officers of the authority. Cabrach Primary School has not been subject to a recent full inspection.
- 3.4 Given current financial pressures, it is essential to make best use of available resources. Whilst it is acknowledged that a school closure can cause local disruption, there are however gains to the wider community. The savings arising from these proposals will ease the pressure on the overall resources available for learning and teaching across Moray. It is more efficient, effective and beneficial to have fewer, better resourced schools than to spread resources more thinly across a larger number of partly empty buildings.
- 3.5 In summary therefore these proposals will improve the depth, breadth, balance, coherence, relevance, challenge and enjoyment provided by the curriculum and will therefore be of significant educational benefit to the children concerned.

4. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Transport to school

Pupils resident in the current Cabrach Primary School zone will be entitled to home to school transport following any decision to close Cabrach Primary School. The financial implications of this are stated in section 4.6.

4.2 Staffing

Given the very small roll in Cabrach Primary School, there will be no requirement for additional staff in Mortlach Primary School consequent upon the closure of Cabrach Primary School.

All surplus staff from Cabrach Primary School will be dealt with according to the Council's current redeployment and redundancy procedures. The Moray Council is committed to trying to avoid any dismissal of staff as a result of this closure proposal.

4.3 Secondary education

The current zoning arrangement for secondary education is that pupils attending Cabrach Primary School and Mortlach Primary School transfer to Speyside High School, Aberlour. Therefore, no change to the primary/secondary transfer arrangements is required as a result of this proposal.

4.4 Class sizes

The class sizes in Mortlach Primary School will not be adversely affected by these changes given the very small number of children attending Cabrach Primary School.

4.5 Future use of the building

Should this closure proposal be approved, Educational Services would then declare the building surplus to requirements and thereafter the Estates Section of the Council will make recommendations on its future use or disposal in line with Council policy. Any such recommendations will be formulated as part of The Moray Council's overall asset management plan.

4.6 Financial implications

The table below shows the financial implications of this closure proposal. It is estimated that there will be annual savings of between £96,000 -£108,000. In addition there may be capital receipts from the disposal of the building in due course.

Annual budgeted running costs of Cabrach Primary School:	£111,552
Transport – additional cost:	£3,800
Potential staffing conservation costs:	£11,500
Projected annual savings are therefore in the region of:	£96,352

However, any staff redeployed as a result of the proposed closure will be entitled to additional travel costs incurred for a period up to three years. These costs will require to be funded from any savings arising from this proposed closure. Therefore the figures in the above table should be seen as approximations at this time.

In addition to these projected annual savings there would be one-off savings from repairs and maintenance as detailed in Section 2(c).

5. THREE ADDITIONAL FACTORS REQUIRING SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION WHEN CONSIDERING RURAL SCHOOL CLOSURES

5.1 Any viable alternative to closure

The Council last reviewed the provision at Cabrach Primary School in 2006-07 and took a decision at that time to close the school. This was subsequently overturned by Scottish Government Ministers. In the intervening period of three years, despite efforts to revitalise the community, there has been no significant change to the circumstances and this, combined with the effect of the recession and current financial situation, makes it seem even less likely that there will be any upturn in the fortunes of this community. There are no realistic options to increase the school roll due to its isolated location and the evidence of recent years. Taking all of these factors into account, it is the considered professional view of officers that there is no viable cost effective or educationally sound alternative to the closure of Cabrach Primary School.

5.2 Likely effect on the community, sustainability and access to the buildings by the community

As indicated in 5.1 above, it is the considered view of officers that the closure of Cabrach Primary School would not adversely affect the sustainability of the community any more than is currently the case. This community has for over ten years now struggled to sustain a viable school population. There is currently no community use made of the building nor any current demand for such use. It is used as a polling station but the returning officer is content that alternative polling station facilities can be made available elsewhere. Community facilities are available in Dufftown and these are readily accessible from the Cabrach area. It is the view of officers therefore that there is no significant adverse effect on the local community with regard to sustainability or subsequent access to the buildings.

5.3 The effect of different travelling arrangements on the environment, on pupils and other school users

School transport is already provided for secondary age children from this area to Aberlour. This closure proposal would result in transport being provided for primary age children within the current Cabrach Primary School zone to Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown. There are currently families providing transport for their own children on their own accord and therefore the provision of Council home to school transport will negate this requirement on behalf of parents who have already made

placing requests to attend Mortlach Primary School. The home to school travel times to Mortlach Primary School for children currently attending Cabrach Primary School are estimated at 20-30 minutes compared with the current travel time to Cabrach Primary School of 5-20 minutes. There are no other users of the school other than the polling station and therefore this closure proposal is unlikely to have any negative impact on the environment.

6. EQUALITIES

These proposals do not impact adversely on the Council's ability to fulfil its obligations in terms of relevant equalities legislation.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 At its meeting on 18 August 2010 the Children and Young People's Services Committee of The Moray Council agreed to issue this document for consultation.

7.2. It is important to note that the Children and Young People's Services Committee has not yet finalised a view on these proposals. This will happen at a meeting of the Committee scheduled for 8 December 2010 at which time the Committee will consider the responses to this consultation.

7.3 Consultation timetable:

There will be a six week consultation period commencing on **Monday 23 August 2010 and ending on 4 October 2010**. As part of the consultation two public meetings will be held as follows:

- Monday 6 September 2010 – 7pm – Cabrach Primary School
- Tuesday 7 September 2010 – 7 pm – Mortlach Primary School, Dufftown

Educational Services officers will be present to answer questions on the proposals. After the closure of the consultation on 4 October 2010 Education Officers will send to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education [HMIe] colleagues a report on the responses to the consultation. Between the period 11 October and 29 October 2010 HMIe will give this consideration and will compile their own report which will then be submitted to the Council. No later than 12 November 2010 Education Officers will publish a report on the consultation, including the HMIe report referred to above. This Consultation Report will also form the basis of a paper to Children and Young People's Services Committee meeting scheduled for 8 December 2010. During the period 12 November 2010 to 3 December 2010 the Consultation Report will be available for further public consideration and any other views which may be submitted for consideration. On 8 December 2010 the Children and Young People's Services Committee of The Moray Council will consider the responses to the consultation proposals and should this Committee take the view that the school should close, then a recommendation to that effect will be made by the Children and Young People's Services Committee to the meeting of Full Council scheduled for 2 pm on 8 December 2010. It will be up to the Full Council to take the final decision. Should the Council decide to close the school, a report will then be submitted by Education Officers to the Scottish Government within six working days

and there then follows a six week period during which Ministers may decide to “call in” the proposal. During this period members of the public may bring to the attention of the Scottish Ministers any matter which they consider may justify the decision being “called in”. This six week period will end late January 2011 and if the Ministers decide to indicate prior to late January that they do not intend to call in the proposal then the Council’s closure decision will proceed. If there is a “call in” then the final decision will rest with Scottish Ministers and they will reach a decision within a timescale that is not yet specified.

7.4 All interested parties are invited to submit their views on the proposals to:

Cabrach School Closure Consultation
C/o Alistair Farquhar
Head of Educational Resource Services
The Moray Council
High Street
Elgin
IV30 1BX

or by email to alistair.farquhar@moray.gov.uk

All views will be taken into account by the Children and Young People’s Services Committee in deciding on the proposals.

7.5 Copies of this closure proposal are available from:

- Alistair Farquhar, Head of Educational Resource Services, The Moray Council, High Street, Elgin IV30 1BX
- Cabrach Primary School, Cabrach
- Mortlach Primary School, York Place, Dufftown
- Speyside High School, Mary Avenue, Aberlour
- Local libraries
- Council website – www.moray.gov.uk

The Consultation Report will also be made available at these locations no later than 12 November 2010.

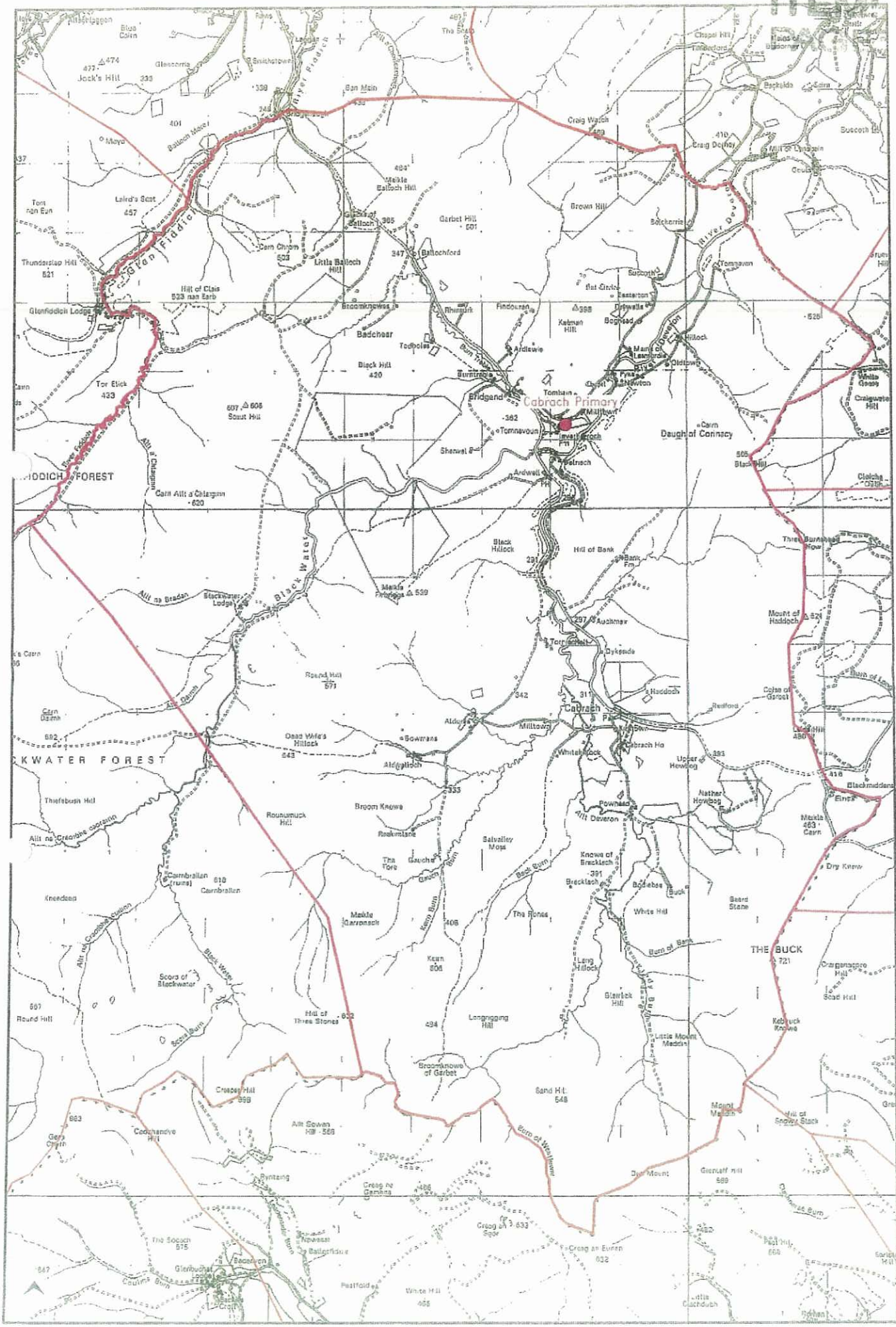
Alistair Farquhar
Head of Educational Resource Services
The Moray Council

August 2010

List of Consultees

1. Parents of children currently attending Cabrach Primary School.
2. Parents of children who would be likely to become pupils at the school within two years
3. Local Community Councils
 - Cabrach/Mortlach Community Association
 - Speyside Council
 - Moray Forum [Charles Bestwick]
4. Mortlach Parent Council
5. Staff at Cabrach Primary School
6. Staff at Mortlach Primary School
7. Pupils currently attending Cabrach Primary School
8. Pupils currently attending Mortlach Primary School
9. Trade Unions representing teachers and support staff
10. Community Planning Partnership – Bridget Mustard
11. Other Council departments and services
12. Election Returning Officer
13. Aberdeenshire Council
14. Highlands and Islands Enterprise
15. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

17
14

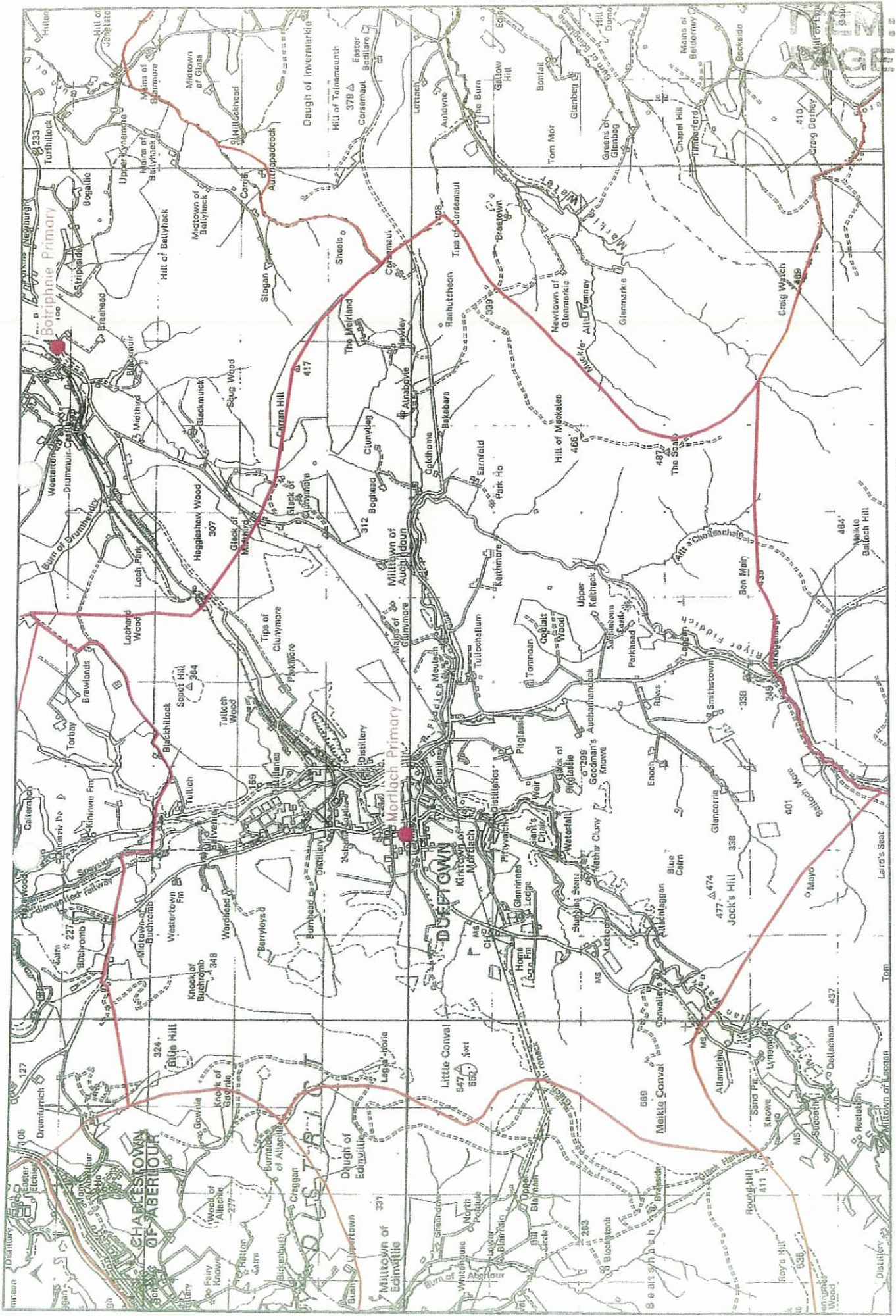


5050 metres

Scale 1:50000

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CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL
LOCATION AND DRAFT CATCHMENT AREA

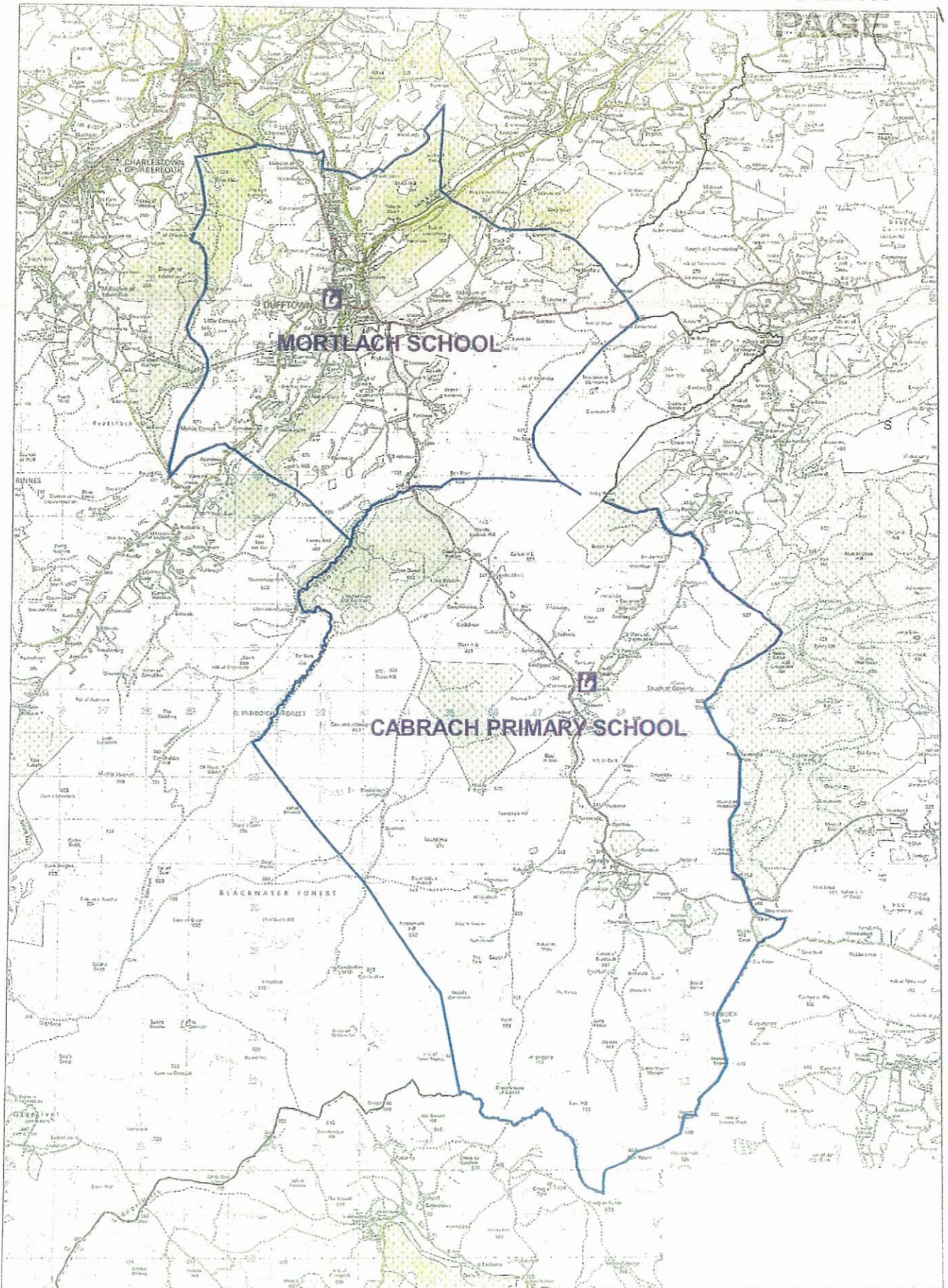


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Mortlach Primary School
 LOCATION AND DRAFT CATCHMENT AREA
 Drawn on 28.04.05

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Cabrach and Mortlach Primary School Catchments



1:85000

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Moray Council Representatives:

Donald Duncan [Director of Educational Services], Alistair Farquhar [Head of Educational Resource Services], Councillor Jeff Hamilton [Chair of Children and Young People's Services Committee]

HMle: Douglas Marr

Public: Eleven individuals [9 adults and 2 children]

Minutes: Janet West, Secretary

1. WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

1.1 Councillor Hamilton welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the Moray Council representatives.

1.2 Alistair Farquhar, Head of Educational Resource Services, gave a short presentation on the main points contained in the consultation paper and invited members of the audience to raise any concerns/questions.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

2.1 **Statements:** You state there is no viable cost effective or educationally sound alternative to the closure of Cabrach Primary. I would like to raise 3 issues regarding this statement:

(i) If you close the school there will be no community heart – the main reason for people coming to the Cabrach is the school. A lot of people don't want big schools and the Government are seeking to reduce class sizes. People at Mortlach may want to look at sending their children here to the Cabrach. The bus comes from Dufftown every day to take our children to school, they could bring children up from Dufftown.

(ii) We have concerns that our children may be bullied at Mortlach Primary. Dufftown people have become aggressive about the continuation of education at Cabrach and parents carry this down to their children.

(iii) We have not experienced Winter in the Cabrach yet but we understand that the past Winter was severe. Who is going to look after our children if we are snowed in here and they are at school in Dufftown?

Response: [AF] You state that the reason for coming to the Cabrach was the school – this has not been replicated by other families. The school roll has been precarious for years. No Mortlach parents have made the choice to send their children to Cabrach Primary in the past three years.

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Bullying is taken very seriously and each school has a policy in place. We as the Directorate also take this very seriously. Many people throughout Moray have fairly fixed views on the Council's expenditure on Cabrach Primary. [DD] The incident at Dufftown which you refer to was outwith our control but we held discussions with the school and Parent Council to try to put a lid on it.

[AF] Yes, the Winter was the worst we have experienced for 30/40 years and some schools in Moray were shut for the first time ever due to snow. The likelihood of this happening again is very small but it is our responsibility to look after children if such a situation arose.

2.2 Question: If Cabrach Primary School is closed why do the children have to go to Mortlach Primary?

Response: [AF] Because it is the closest Moray school.

2.3 Question: Our son attended a 93 pupil school in the Borders and we felt that because of the class size he wasn't given the attention he required. Mortlach is double the size – how can that help? 20 is not a small class.

Response: [AF] I cannot comment on the education provided in any Borders school. I can comment on the quality of education in Moray schools and assure you that children's needs will be met. Mortlach Primary is not classed as a large school in Moray. [DD] It is our responsibility to ensure that children's needs are met and oversee the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom.

2.4 Statement: Individuals get more attention in small classes. We would love it if the other parents in the area were to send their kids to Cabrach Primary.

Response: [AF] There are many reasons for parents not sending their children to Cabrach Primary. All these issues have been explored previously and we find ourselves in the position of having a roll of 2 and no real prospect of roll growth.

2.5 Statement: The Community Association didn't exist until very long ago. We have taken advantage now of the change in the political landscape. The Church of Scotland and former landlords have sold off land and we now have a variety of landlords to approach for support. We would hopefully be proposing in the following months rather than years to be asking for your support in the development of housing. There is no commitment at this moment in time but the wheels are in motion. From the feedback we have received we have a greater chance of a lot of funding with a school here. Our case will be diminished if the school is not here.

Response: [DD] We cannot give you a commitment but can assure you that if you can outline what you have in mind we can ask our Environmental Services Department to look at and comment on how realistic your

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proposals are. Give us a picture of what you are doing and an idea of timescale and we can present this to Councillors as part of the collated consultation response. [AF] My job is to collate the responses received. Environmental Services Directorate will give a viewpoint on how realistic your proposals are.

- 2.6 Question: This is our most serious attempt at regenerating the community and there are more funds behind it. Is mothballing the school an option to give us a bit more time? A community building would have a lot more use if there were more houses – it could be used for regular meetings, as a library or for computer classes for example. We will also hopefully have a Regeneration Officer coming. If there is no community building this will deter people coming.**

Response: [DD] You should include this option in your consultation response. If the school closure goes ahead the building will be classed as surplus to requirements and it will be up to the Council to make the decision on whether to mothball or sell the building.

- 2.7 Question: You have already made the decision – you are just doing the legal stuff.**

Response: [JH] You are entitled to your opinion but I can assure you no decision has been made. This is a decision for elected members. [AF] It is not my or Donald's decision to make, we are only employees of the Council. My job was to draw up the proposal paper.

Response: [JH] I can assure you that any papers we as Councillors receive from Mr Farquhar are very fair and balanced.

- 2.8 Statement: You ride roughshod over this area. As a group we didn't have the necessary skills to put forward our case. You try and help and walk away. The Community Association has 6/7 members, there are less than 70 on the Electoral Roll. Nothing has happened after 6 months. We feel we have been rubbished.**

Response: [DD] I can't change your view. If you have a legitimate aspiration and if there is something to it then it may not change the decision but it will be there for Elected Members to consider.

- 2.9 Statement: The school is the only public building in the area. If the school is not here no-one will want to come – it will kill the Cabrach. The harshness of the Cabrach is not for the older generation. The school will be a big draw for the younger generation.**

- 2.10 Question: We are just one opinion. There will be greater numbers of parents and pupils at Mortlach giving their opinion. What chance do we have against such numbers? Are we going to get proper representation in the report? The landlord wants to write a letter of support – will that be taken into account?**

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Response: [AF] Some of the consultees noted in the report are set in law. I can reassure you that when I write the final report I will be saying “the following number of responses came in” and “these responses said”. The content of the responses will be what is taken into account. In the past we have been inundated with petitions but what is taken into account is the content of the actual responses. Your landlord is free to respond also the consultation – it is a public consultation and open to all.

- 2.11 Prior to becoming a teacher I was the National Ski Team Coach and worked with groups with a maximum of 6 members. In a previous school with 28 in class there were 6/7 boys who if I had had them here I could have helped their future development much better.**

Response: [AF] Class sizes are many and varied – the most important element in my view is the quality of learning and teaching regardless of class size.

- 2.12 Could the school also be used as a Nursery? I know there are other families in the Cabrach who would use it rather than send their children to Mortlach.**

Response: [AF] This is the only available space. This would be challenging given the various requirements of the Care Commission and other organisations. The reality is there is no demand and we have provision available at Mortlach.

I would suggest that your plans/hopes/aspirations are clearly set out in your response for consideration by Councillors. Present as much detail as possible grounded on reality.

- 2.13 Question: How much sway is support of the landlord going to have?**

Response: [AF] This is a public consultation. He can respond the same way as any member of the public.

- 2.14 Question: How much will the saving be if the school is closed?**

Response: £100,000 taking into account staff and transport.

- 2.15 Question: We did try and find out how that figure was reached.**

Response: [AF] This information is available in the consultation document. The teacher will be moved to another post that is vacant.

- 2.16 Question: How were the projected maintenance costs reached?**

Response: [AF] These figures were provided by our Property Services Department. The roof needs significant repair over the new few years. The repairs and maintenance budget is held centrally and an annual review/condition survey is carried out. The school then takes its place with the rest of the Moray schools for work to be done.

- 2.17 Question: If the school is mothballed would you just do maintenance etc?**

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Response: [AF] If the decision is to mothball the school then the Council has to maintain the building to keep it wind and water tight.

2.18 Question: Will the meeting at Dufftown take the same format as this meeting and should we attend?

Response: [AF] The meeting will take the same format as this evening. You may find it worthwhile to hear what is said at that meeting.

2.19 Question: Has it been put to parents of children at Mortlach that they might like to have their children attend Cabrach Primary?

Response: [DD] We have neither offered nor suggested this. People could have made this decision on their own volition.

2.20 Question: Are there any people who have expressed an interest in this?

Response: [AF] The placing request process has been in existence for a couple of decades and no-one has shown any interest. There is also the fact that we cannot provide transport to out of zone pupils..

2.21 Question: Can the bus that comes up from Dufftown to take our children to school at Cabrach Primary not be utilised as transport for kids to come from Dufftown? What is the best way to raise this with Mortlach parents?

Response: [JH] There is nothing stopping your wife raising this at the Mortlach meeting.

3. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

3.1 Alistair Farquhar advised those present that they should go back and read the consultation document again in the light of what they had heard tonight and that any responses made are in as much detail as possible. Responses must be with him by 4 October 2010, no submissions will be accepted after this date.

3.2 Councillor Hamilton thanked those attending for their input and again assured them that no decision has been made reiterated Alistair Farquhar's request that they respond in as much detail as possible.

Meeting closed at 20.20

**Public Consultation on the Closure of Cabrach Primary School
Meeting Held at Mortlach Primary School
On Tuesday 7 September 2010 at 19:00**

Moray Council Representatives:

Donald Duncan [Director of Educational Services], Alistair Farquhar [Head of Educational Resource Services], Councillor Jeff Hamilton [Chair of Children and Young People's Services Committee], Councillor Mike McConachie

HMle: Douglas Marr

Public: Eleven individuals and one Press representative

Minutes: Janet West, Secretary

1. WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Councillor Hamilton welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the Moray Council representatives.
- 1.2 Alistair Farquhar, Head of Educational Resource Services, gave a short presentation on the main points contained in the consultation paper and invited members of the audience to raise concerns/questions on the consultation exercise.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

2.1 Question: If a decision is made not to close Cabrach Primary School how do you justify other cuts in Education to the people of Moray?

Response: [JH] No decision has been made and it will be up to the 26 Elected Members to make this decision. [AF] There have been a range of cuts implemented this year including ½% off Primary Schools devolved budget. The level of savings the Council is looking to find is £30-£40m. It is clear that the future finances of the Council will not stand or fall on the basis of £100,000 from the proposed closure of Cabrach.

2.2 Question: A percentage of the figure quoted is teaching and support staff. What happens to them? How will this be a saving?

Response: [AF] Staff will be slotted in where there are vacancies and thereafter paid from the staffing budget of that school.

2.3 Statement: My daughter has gone through primary school here and benefited so much from being taught in groups. I don't understand how Cabrach can teach when there are no groups. Children need the competition and stimulus of working with other children and certainly benefit from the challenge and support of peer groups.

Response: [AF] Our view as professional officers is that there is a greater educational benefit working in groups and indeed the expectations and demands of Curriculum for Excellence are such that our view is clear regarding the educational benefits of the closure. Some parents however have expressed the view that the advantages of the very small Cabrach roll outweigh any perceived benefits arising from the move to Mortlach.

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- 2.4 Statement: We had snow on the ground in the Cabrach from 17 December to mid-March. Road clearance was totally inadequate. You have a duty to educate our children.**

Response: [AF] This was the worst Winter across Moray for years. This school [Mortlach] was closed for two weeks and even schools on the Buckie coast were closed for a week which is highly unusual. The Council faced a very challenging set of circumstances and routes to schools and areas around schools were treated as a priority. A review is currently under way to look at improving on snow clearing should such severe weather be repeated in the future. We have looked at how we can still engage with children involving GLOW and E-boards etc.

- 2.5 Question: I represent the Community Association and there is now serious input into regeneration of the community. The school is the only community building and we would ask that mothballing is considered which would give us more time.**

Response: [AF] It is important for anyone who has an idea to put this forward. If the school is declared surplus to requirements it passes to the Council's Estates Department following which the future of the building will not be an Education decision. If included in your response is a desire to keep the school open then I will put that to Elected Members.

This is a proposal to close Cabrach Primary School and merge zones. The Council may take a view to mothballing potentially for some future opening but given the current financial position this is highly unlikely. [DD] We have to be realistic here. If the building was mothballed it would have to be for a stated time and then the Council would have to make a decision.

3. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- 3.1 Alistair Farquhar highlighted the various timescales involved in the consultation process and requested that any responses made are in as much detail as possible. Responses must be with him by 4 October 2010, no submissions will be accepted after this date.
- 3.2 Councillor Hamilton thanked those attending for their input and again assured them that no decision has been made, this would be taken by all 26 Elected Members. All responses will be looked at and encouraged as many people as possible to submit a response.

Meeting closed at 19:35

The school should be closed as the cost per pupil is criminal in the present or any other economic climate. The educational experience for the pupils in a school as small as Cabrach can hardly be effective and efficient given the lack of peers. They are missing out on so much that school should be offering them.

This response is made on behalf of the Returning Officer for Moray [Chief Executive – The Moray Council].
 Cabrach is currently used during Elections for the purposes of Policy, and currently serves 52 voters in the Cabrach Polling District [MM0122].
 Due to a number of factors including staffing and cost implications and the provision and uptake of absent voting and turnout, the Elections Office is already in the process of making arrangements for the voters to cast their votes at the next nearest Polling Place at Mortlach Memorial Hall. The Election Office will also make the necessary amendment to the Polling Districts and Electoral Register to show this from the 1 Dec 2010. This is pertinent given that a major election and possible referendum will occur in May 2011 and arrangements need to be made well in advance.
 Consultation with the local members has already been undertaken in this respect.
 Communication of the venue change and awareness of the availability of other forms of absent voting will be undertaken prior to the next electoral register being published.

The cost does not equate to the output. For £55,000 per year children could attend a top private school. A school with two pupils cannot possibly provide suitable opportunities for social inclusion and interaction. This is not inclusion. These pupils will be like “fish out of water” when they transition to secondary school if they stay in this primary school. In times of budget cuts and fear of services being reduced this is a provision which Moray cannot sustain.

I agree with the 8 specific benefits and advantages of closing Cabrach Primary and to keep this school open is not best value in times of financial hardship.

Whilst I think it is very important to keep rural schools open where there is a viable roll, I do not believe that it is good for the mental or social health of children to attend a school where the roll has fallen so low. I also believe that keeping the Cabrach school open is not financially viable.

Dear Mr. Farquhar, as discussed last night at the meeting, would you please send us a detailed breakdown of the annual budgeted running costs for Cabrach Primary.

Response: *Good morning*

The figures are as follows

Head Teacher £52,305

Teaching staff £25,890

Support staff £23,607

Property costs (energy etc) £ 6,869. This is the budget which the Head Teacher controls. In addition there are budgets held centrally for repairs & maintenance and major refurbishments. These are not calculated as part of the annual revenue budget for the school so do not feature as part of the overall £111,555

Supplies & services (Mainly an allocation for furniture & equipment) £439

Transport & plant (An allocation for the Head Teacher to use for transporting pupils to various events) £596

Administrative costs (this includes the budget for “per capita” which is used to purchase text books, jotters, pens/pencils etc as well as the budget to cover telephone and postages) £ 2,703

There is also a “savings line” which is applied pro-rata to all schools and Cabrach savings are £857 which of course need to be deducted from the budget totals above.

This therefore gives a total budget allocation of £111,555 for the current financial year

I trust you find the above information helpful

Regards meantime,

Alistair

- 1) Expense of keeping school open is too high particularly since there are places available in local schools within reasonable travelling distance.
- 2) Social skills and social development of children at such a school will hamper them in future, working in a class with so few pupils and always the same teacher does not provide the opportunity for pupils to mix with other children and adults, work in groups, attend clubs, play in teams.
- 3) If the school were closed the pupils living in Cabrach would all be transported by the council rather than in individual cars which would be more "Eco friendly".

Dufftown & District Community Association: At our last meeting we discussed the Cabrach Primary School closure proposal consolation response form that was sent to us. I will cut and paste directly from the minutes of our meeting

"A letter was produced asking for comments about the closure of Cabrach School.

The Community Association agreed that we would write saying that due to the small class size and cost to the education budget that we could understand Moray Councils reasoning for closing this school.

We feel the building should be left as a community asset and we recommend that the energy efficiency improvements be left in place to help any new community based group with energy bills."

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to air our views.

I would like The Moray Council to take account of the following issues when considering the closure of the Cabrach Primary School:

Clearly there are a huge number of concerns regarding the education, health and well being of the pupils. With such a small number of pupils in the school there are no opportunities for group work and collaborative working within peer groups as suggested by the "Curriculum for Excellence". Nor is there any opportunity to work with other age groups. For example, P2 and P7 pupils at Mortlach are currently working together on a weaving theme.

Having potentially spent seven years at Cabrach the transition to secondary school would undoubtedly be traumatic. To be thrust from such a small number to being one among hundreds of pupils would not only test the social skills of such pupils, it has the potential to severely affect their mental health and well being.

Not only do the pupils in such a small school have limited opportunities, the same applies to the teacher. I am aware of how lonely the job can become. There are no colleagues to share ideas with, no-one to discuss and evaluate practice with, no-one to share the daily highs and lows of teaching. Teachers need to be able to bounce ideas off each other, work collaboratively for the benefit of the pupils, support each other in developing and sharing skills, in order to make them better teachers.

In the current economic climate leaving the Cabrach School open will affect **every other school in Moray** to the detriment of all pupils, staff and parents throughout the Authority. Cabrach Primary School must therefore close.

Education is about far more than academic achievement as each and every child has, at some point in their life, to meet and relate to the many different people of the outside world. Teaching a very small number of children in an isolated setting will not prepare these children for the rough and tumble of today's world. Education should be as broad based an experience as is possible. Every child should have the opportunity of meeting with as many different children of all ranges of ability, social standing [including social deprivation] and of physical ability/disability and of different nationalities.

Aberdeenshire Council is grateful for being included on the list of organisations to be consulted. Because the proposals do not directly impact upon the Council, we wish simply to note the Consultation Proposal and make no comment.

Pupils have NO interaction with other peers and this WILL have a major effect on social skills, self confidence, self esteem which are very important to get through life – THIS IS A MAJOR CONCERN!! Today's education is very much group work, talking partners etc, which encourages to make new friends, new experiences, not possible if you're with you're your sibling!!

MONEY – Moray Council's budgets have been cut and it's difficult to get resources, so why can it justify education one child costing more than £50,000 it's crazy.

I think for two schools to be run by Moray Council and the difference in cost for pupils is shocking the Cabrach School is a luxury for the children going. They're getting a private education on council funding and the Dufftown children aren't getting the same plus there's 2 children at that school. It's unfair on them as children need social skills and interaction. They're a bit isolated. The money spent on the Cabrach School should be put to better uses like transport for kids to attend Dufftown etc.

With an average cost of £55,800 per pupil at Cabrach and an average cost of £3,184 per pupil in Moray, it is obvious that by closing Cabrach School and re-dispersing the funds, the majority of pupils in Moray will benefit. Mortlach Primary School, being the nearest to Cabrach Primary for relocation purposes, has excellent facilities providing opportunities for pupils that Cabrach Primary simply cannot compete with. A roll of 2 pupils does not allow for the children to fully interact and learn social skills – an area that Mortlach Primary School excels in.

With such a low roll the children at Cabrach School are missing out on developing social skills, group work with their peers, peer assessment, sports, choir, drama and many other group activities which are available at Mortlach Primary School which is only a very short distance away. I feel that they would benefit enormously if they were to attend a larger school. In addition to this I do not feel it is justifiable for the Council to spend so much on so few when a superior education experience is available close at hand and need is so great across the whole of Moray at this time.

The pupils at Cabrach are unable to learn important social skills. They are unable to take part in group work, enjoy the fun of sports and gym classes and having a mixture of friends. They are inhibited in their development by having too much adult attention. The children currently at Cabrach's parents were aware on moving into the area that the school was about to close and so could have made arrangements for their children, who will be transported to and from the next nearest primary school. At a time when money has become so important to spend £55,000 per pupil is outrageous, this money being better spent on larger schools who desperately need more funding.

This school should have closed years ago, ask any local person and they will tell you the "heart" of Cabrach has always been the Grouse Inn and with only 2 pupils this is unlikely to attract locals especially since the pupils are from outside the area. The present family must have known the school was closing before they moved there. The last time the school was put forward for closing xxxxxxxx was most outraged and appeared on TV and radio but seems to be keeping out of this affair. xxxxx is back from xxxxxx and obviously none of the children are back at Cabrach. The money it costs is disgraceful and people in this area are sick of funding privileged pupils and the Council would do well to think about the next local elections!

Resources would be better allocated for the benefit of lots of children rather than very few. Long term benefits would be apparent for Cabrach pupils if transferred to a larger school eg social interaction, range of activities and smoother transition to secondary school.

I feel that the educational benefits that would be gained by pupils if the Cabrach School was closed will enhance their learning experience. I also feel that in the current economic climate that the Council should make the best use of resources and I don't think the Cabrach School does this. I feel that closing the Cabrach School would benefit more people and do not feel that there would be a detrimental effect.

In the current financial climate I do not feel it is justifiable to keep such a small and rural school open. I feel the pupils may be socially disadvantaged by attending such a small school and could benefit from integrating with their peers.

Cabrach Community Association: We the Cabrach Community Association wish to object to the Council plans to close the Primary School in the Cabrach. Since day one of the closure proposal we feel there has been a vendetta against the school. A vendetta that the council seemed unwilling to quash and seemed quite keen to play down. A decision that lead to your own council employees being accosted in the streets of Dufftown and staff frightened to leave the safety of the school building for fear of what lay in wait. A most disconcerting state of affairs for all concerned.

The removal of play equipment on the grounds of health and safety is also questionable – after twenty odd years of accident free status the climbing frame is deemed unsafe and removed without ever being responsible for any serious injury in all its years.

This was followed by the play equipment which again was a much loved item being removed on grounds of health and safety as it was reportedly rotten although no rot was visible. The fact that there was a more than adequate floor covering of bark chippings for safety seemed to fuel the need for an alternative reason for removal to be found while not leaving the School time to receive a second opinion on the condition of the equipment.

Next to go was the recycling bins, a facility used by the entire Cabrach and situated after much research by the school children to prove that such a facility would be viable in the first place.

This facility was removed without consultation or prior notice and the Councils own reasons for their removal do not make sense but seem to stem from a belief that they

had to be removed because the school and adjacent land was for sale – a fact that the property department at Moray Council have stated they have no knowledge of given they would be handling any such transaction.

The community use of the school is the next point we would like to raise. It was stated in the Press & Journal that the school was never used outwith an education provider as it was never requested for any other activity – all attempts to use the building for any other activity were always blocked by the Council or education department.

The use of the school as a library was blocked as adults would be able to access a children's play area and classroom yet access has been granted for a library in Rothes Primary School. The same applied with the application for a chess club, indoor bowls, kids cafe, lunch club for the elderly, whist / beetle drives and a weekly coffee club.

The School is the only Publicly Owned Building left in the Cabrach since the demise of the hall to dry rot and asbestos – the Cabrach Community Association has been left with no option but to hold their meetings in the Grouse Inn, a public house but never the less still privately owned. The removal of the school building from community use will inevitable see many if not all Cabrach functions being held outwith the Cabrach.

Much was made in the report about costs and savings that would be made or spent if the school was to remain open. The C.C.A. greatly dispute these predictions and wonder if these costs are true then perhaps the council should look closer to home when trying to save money. The school was built circa 1981 and seemed to function perfectly well for over twenty five years with out the roof falling in, the staff being poisoned by radon gas or the carpet needing to be replaced once. I personally remember during my time as a pupil a water pipe freezing in the kitchen and being sent home early for the day and on another occasion a tree falling on the power line cutting off the supply leaving the cook unable to prepare lunch but that was about it. Suddenly the whole place is falling down – requiring new carpets a year or so after they were replaced, a new fence that is quoted so expensively that one wonders if you got the right quote back and the most convenient and localised outbreak of radon gas to hit Moray in years.

A great deal has been made about how much better things would be for the school children if they were to be moved to Dufftown. If this is the case why is there no need to extend the school at Mortlach to accommodate all the children in the existing catchment area, perhaps it has something to do with the fact that a significant percentage of Dufftown parents choose to send their children to school at Craigellachie, Aberlour and Rothes.

The Cabrach school has worked hard over the years and has been generously supported in it's fund raising to provide many extras including a poly tunnel in which the children were taught how to grow flowers, vegetables, herbs and vines. They also brought on their own butter flies, lady birds and stick insects. All wonderful achievements for ones so young.

The solar energy project was another feather in their cap and a very proud day for the school, staff and children.

The Cabrach Community Association understand the need for cost cutting in this time of recession and understand that a role of two pupils is not an ideal situation. If no case can be made to keep the school open then we would implore of you that the school be mothballed to give us the time to develop the Cabrach starting with our much anticipated new housing scheme. We propose to develop and populate in the first stage five new houses before the end of what would be the two year period of mothball status.

It is with much regret that we would see the school close but if we could ask that you make the case for the building to be mothballed this would help us to sell the Cabrach as a community with a future and an area worth moving to. As you will understand the school is a major factor when looking for a place to raise children.

Help us make the change from dying to prosperous community and support our efforts where you can and make the case for the mothballing of Cabrach Primary School.

The pupils at the school are not able to interact with others except their own siblings.

The pupils would find social interaction when moving to secondary education a major transition as the role number and size of school are considerable larger. The cost of providing education to these pupils is too expensive in this economical time. The council have closed other rural schools with role number much higher.

It would be cheaper for the council to home educate these pupils. The distant they have to travel to the nearest school is not that unacceptable. As a parent of four I would not like my children to be the only children in the school as I would see that as a disadvantage to them.

As we are the only parents of pupils attending Cabrach Primary School at the moment we feel that it is important that our opinion is lodged before you send off your report.

As you know from the meeting at Cabrach Primary, we are strongly committed to keeping Cabrach Primary School open. We are in the process of talking to the parents in the Cabrach about reconsidering where they are sending their children, in the hopes that the fact that we are committed will persuade them to possibly choose Cabrach Primary for their children as well. Knowing that we have two more waiting to go is helping in that respect. Unfortunately we cannot give you any guarantees and or numbers yet.

Due to the fact that we did just move here, people tend to be wary, I suppose we will have to survive a winter and still be upbeat before people take us seriously around

here. I do hope this is not the case with our point of view concerning the school.

We do have one issue we would like to raise in respect to the report you are about to present:

Seeing that Mrs. Collins is now Head teacher for two schools, are we right in assuming that her salary should be split between the two? In that case the running costs for Cabrach Primary should decrease quite considerably, unless she is still being paid solely through Cabrach Primary School, which would be highly unfair as she is not actually on-site!

Will you take this fact into account before writing up your report? I do believe it will make a difference as the head teachers salary does take up the majority of the budget....

Please do bear in mind that we do not have any other facilities provided by the council left in the Cabrach. We might only be a few people at the moment, and we speak as newcomers to the area, but please, do not let this community die just for financial reasons! We came here and we know others would come to. But for that to happen we will need the school to stay open.

I want to limit my comment to three areas that I hope are not related to the rights or wrongs of the proposed school closure.

The first is the consultation document makes out that somehow the children would get a better standard of education at Dufftown. I would beg to differ and I agree with Mr Alistair Farquhar, Head of Educational Resource Services comment at the consultation meeting held at the Cabrach Primary School, that if you put a bad teacher in a class of 2 you will get the same results as putting a bad teacher in a class of 22. Using that logic therefore if you put a good teacher in a class of 2 or a class of 22 you will get the same result. I personally feel, that too little has been said, that acknowledges the very professional job done by previous teachers at the Cabrach Primary School and the high standard of education received by pupils who have previously attended the School. Something I am hopeful is being continued at present for the new pupils.

The second point that I would like to make relates to the timetable of the proposed closure. If the school was closed in February that would mean the pupils would have to leave the Cabrach half way through a term and start their new school half way through a term. I feel that this would be detrimental to their education and would prefer if they could finish their term at Cabrach, starting their Term 4 at a new school. I feel that it doesn't add too much to the cost of running the school by keeping the school open for another couple of months. The educational benefit to the present pupils in terms of continuity and completing all aspects of their term 3 work would be tremendous.

Finally if the proposed closure goes ahead I would like all the resources at the school to be sent to schools that were identifiable short of specific resources that are at the Cabrach school. That might mean that one school might get the library. Another may get the sport equipment. Another, the SMART boards and so-on. Rather than all resources being allocated to one school where they may end up unused if the school already has them it would be better to spread them widely and have them in use.

The people of the Cabrach have fought hard to keep their school open over the years. They keep fighting on as it is now the only building left in use. The area is working tirelessly on a regeneration programme which needs to be taken into consideration. The school is and always has been at the heart of the community in this area.

Tirelessly fundraising for extras for the school and also raising money for charitable purposes. As in last weeks McMillan coffee morning which was very successful.

There is no doubt that many councils are feeling the pinch at the moment but taking away rural schools is not the answer. At the moment new houses are being built in the Dufftown area and many more are for sale, which could result in a lot more people coming to the area with young kids. There are at the moment kids going from Dufftown to other nearby schools, if all attended their nearest school, would there be room for them? As at the time of the Radon gas there was no spare classroom at Mortlach resulting in kids having to work in canteen, library, computer area etc. It is only a few years ago that a ceiling collapsed at Mortlach in the holidays. Luckily no kids were present then. Which shows that schools are in need of repair as many are crumbling and in need of repair! According to the report the school at the Cabrach needs thousands spent on roofs, ceilings etc which in my opinion is rubbish! All former and present staff have worked tirelessly to maintain an excellent and safe learning environment for former and present pupils. Over the years we have lost our play equipment, including a climbing frame all much loved equipment. Apparently it was supposedly unsafe! However was away home by the time the person came to look it over! I can assure you no one ever fell off or injured themselves on it over the years. They were allegedly tested and supposedly unsafe by someone sent by the council. Many people have commented on the proposal of the Cabrach Primary School Closure Proposal and were horrified to read about Mortlach staff and then about the Cabrach staff. They all said the same the way it was written was horrendous. They could not believe anyone could write that.

We recently also lost our recycling facility from the school which was used by all the locals. We acquired it a few years ago. The kids asked for it and did a survey. It is a great loss to the community. You cannot expect elderly people to take bottles, tins, paper and card to Dufftown! In my opinion the school should stay open. I wouldn't want kids going to Dufftown in the winter. Where are they staying if they get stuck! Going by last years horrendous storms the weather up here can and does change in a

very short time. Instead of trying to close small schools savings can be made in other areas. I'm sure the council could keep using their present offices and not squander money on a huge new office complex! Also a few years ago they put white posts at the end of all roads etc. What on earth for! And the horrendous mess opposite the library in Dufftown narrowing the road for safety. It's a bigger hazard than ever now! Resulting in buses going up on the edge to get round it. I wonder how much this all cost?

So Moray Council consider where other savings can be made! And leave our small schools! If closure goes ahead I would hope it is mothballed!

Speyside Area Forum: Based upon the evidence placed in the consultation, Speyside Area Forum believe that the school, at Cabrach should be closed at this time and the children accommodated at the Mortlach School in Dufftown.

This subject was considered during last years budget consultation and we repeat here the views expressed by Speyside at the time.

The unit cost per child is unacceptable and the child's social development is limited.

We also express concerns that the projected repair bill for this school cannot be justified.

Mortlach school offers the children a stronger peer interaction and wider and more expansive extra-curricular programme than could be likely at Cabrach.

We ask however that consideration is given to maintaining the school in a watertight condition for a period to be determined on the basis of possible increased development in the area.

The Cabrach has just received funding for a three year development worker post. They have now appointed a local development worker. A new possible wind farm development could also inject vital funds into the area.

We ask that the community is given a fair chance to regenerate the area to a position where the facility could be re-instated to its original purpose if the demand is created.

Cabrach Community Association: We would ask that the Council take into consideration the following points before making their decision on the Cabrach School.

The Cabrach has just been successful in achieving funding to appoint a local development worker for a minimum of three years. The Cabrach Association have only within the last two weeks appointed that worker. The whole purpose of this appointment and investment is to regenerate the Cabrach Community.

We would urge the Council to give us their support in this exercise by at the very least maintaining the Cabrach School building for the next few years to allow the effect of this regeneration to take effect. This would allow us to at least have the possibility of having a school in the Cabrach in the future if our efforts are successful.



PUPIL CONSULTATION



CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Moray Council is thinking about closing Cabrach Primary School because there are only two children in it and sending the children from Cabrach to Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown. In Mortlach Primary School there are more children to meet and become friends with, to learn and work with in classrooms and more children to play with at break times. The Council thinks that the Cabrach children would get a better education if they attended Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown. What do you think? The Council would like to know what your thoughts are and you should use the spaces and pictures below to tell the Council what you think.

Please tick



one ✓

1. I think it is good to be in a school with only two pupils.	 Yes 1	 No 1
<p>Why did you say Yes or No?</p> <p><u>Yes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because I get lots of time to play hockey, tennis and computers. <p><u>No</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think this is a trick question, if I say "Yes" I sound selfish, if I say "No" your decision will to move me to a bigger school. What I think is from my topic population survey that there are more children that could come to Cabrach primary school. My survey shows that 5-6 children live in the area and could be in primary and if a nursery was started there would be 5-6 infants in it. So I think "No" because I would like to see more pupils at Cabrach school which I would love to keep going to! 		

2. I think it would be good/better for the Cabrach children to go to the school in Dufftown	 Yes	 No 2
<p>Why did you say Yes or No?</p> <p><u>No</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. I don't think it would be a good to go to Dufftown. The reason is I have younger brothers and a younger sister. While the long journey each day would be not so tough for me, my younger brother won't be able to manage because we live a long way off road and it takes 30-40 min after the we are dropped off to walk home. In the 		

snow we may take 1hour-1hour15min because it's all uphill and Robbie has short legs. This is going to take too long for my brothers and sister. Also, this school is a modern school with smartboards and computers which the pupils use every day for our maths English and Topic. We also use footballs, tennis racket, hockey sticks, limbo bars and more and we don't just use them for P.E we have a teacher who comes and plays with us outside at morning break and lunch break.

- Because this school is close to my house and I can play with hockey sticks.

3. The Cabrach children will need to get a minibus to Dufftown. This journey will take about 20-30 minutes. What do you think about this?	 This is ok	 This is not ok 2
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Why do you think it will be ok or not ok?

Not ok

- This is not OK for my brothers and sister, maybe for me because I am older, but my brother is too young and when I go to Speyside High School my brothers and sister will only be 7, 5 and 5 that is too young for such a journey every day. Also if we get stuck in Dufftown because of snow, Who is going to look after us? Who is going to feed us? Who is going to help my brother if he is crying because he wants his Mum at night? What if we are stuck for more than only one day, I have heard from a neighbour the road was shut for a week last year. I don't think it would be fair for my brother to be away from his Mum for a week. At the meeting someone used the word 'responsibility' but no-one made clear who would look after us.
- I want to come to school quickly.

Questions for Cabrach Primary School Pupils only:

<p>4. What do you like about being in Cabrach Primary School?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love everything about my school. Everyday we have learning which is active, a challenge and fun. We have been baking and we have been on many trips for our topic to see stone circles, a castle, Elgin Cathedral, our local church. We are looking forward to more trips such as Xmas trip and skiing in the winter snow. • I like active learning. I like nature walks. I love maths on the smartboard. I like baking cakes. I like PE. I like my teacher.

5. What would make being in Cabrach Primary School better?

- Not much, the other children in the Cabrach should come here. But also maybe a climbing frame, tennis net and a music teacher!
- A music teacher. A swing, a slide, a climbing frame.

Questions for Mortlach Primary School pupils only:

6. As a Mortlach Primary School pupils, what would you say is good about your school and what would the Cabrach children enjoy if they came to your school?

7. What would make Mortlach Primary School even better?

For Cabrach Primary and Mortlach Primary children:

8. Is there anything else you want to tell the Council about its plans for the future of Cabrach Primary School?

- My topic building survey showed me that 80% of the buildings in the Cabrach are unoccupied that is surely wrong when so many people don't have anywhere to live in Scotland. I found these quotes while I was looking for information on housing in the Cabrach.

"In Scotland, more than 200,000 people are on house waiting lists, while over 8,000 households are in temporary accommodation."

BBC News Online Tuesday, 15 May 2007, 23:38 GMT 00:38 UK

Surely more people could come and live here if they were given a chance to rent or buy some of the houses. If the school closes there will be less chance that anyone will move into this area. Recently we held a Coffee morning to support Macmillan Cancer appeal, lots of old people and some families came they told me if the school closes the community will lose its heart. I think closing this school would be terrible for the Cabrach.

Thank you for reading my answers, please don't close our school.

- Please keep my school open.



PUPIL CONSULTATION



CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Moray Council is thinking about closing Cabrach Primary School because there are only two children in it and sending the children from Cabrach to Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown. In Mortlach Primary School there are more children to meet and become friends with, to learn and work with in classrooms and more children to play with at break times. The Council thinks that the Cabrach children would get a better education if they attended Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown. What do you think? The Council would like to know what your thoughts are and you should use the spaces and pictures below to tell the Council what you think.

Please tick

one ✓



<p>1. I think it is good to be in a school with only two pupils.</p>	 Yes	 No
<p>2 12</p>		
<p>Why did you say Yes or No?</p> <p><u>Yes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because you would get a lot more work done. • Because they should get their choice where they want to go. <p><u>No</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because they would get more money than us • More friends • More people to play with • Because they would not have much friends and they'd have to do everything themselves. • Because it is better with the class so you can work together or play together. • Because you would not have any friends really • I think it could be closed down because they would get more money than Mortlach School. • I would feel lonely • I wouldn't like it because I might not get along with that person. • Because if there is only two pupils you might end up feeling lonely and if it was a group task how would you do it? • You would be lonely. • I like playing with other people at the sandpit. 		

2. I think it would be good/better for the Cabrach children to go to the school in Dufftown	 Yes 14	 No
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Why did you say Yes or No?

Yes

- Because we could all get the same amount of money.
- They could have more friends
- Mortlach is good
- I said yes because they would have a lot more friends
- Because they would be happy with more people to play with.
- Because they would get more group work completed and they wouldn't be so lonely.
- Because you can make new friends or you will be lonely and you can get more work done.
- It is a good school and you can get good friends.
- Because we all could get the same amount of money.
- I would like to come here so I could make more friends
- I would like to come here to make more friends and work in groups
- Because it would be better and if there are only you and another person and when you get a job and if they stay at the Cabrach they will probably not be used to a lot of people.
- You have more friends to play with.
- Because they wouldn't be lonely.

3. The Cabrach children will need to get a minibus to Dufftown. This journey will take about 20-30 minutes. What do you think about this?	 This is ok 12	 This is not ok 2
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Why do you think it will be ok or not ok?

Ok

- I like the bus
- Because the bus is good x 2
- This is ok as people do this already though it is a long way to come.
- Because some people already do this.
- To make new friends.
- Lots of pupils come on the bus. It is ok for them to go on the bus.
- Lots of children come on the bus to Mortlach. They would like the bus.
- Well Mortlach pupils come on the bus so there is nothing wrong with them going on a bus.

- It would be ok because Mortlach pupils take the bus so they can take a bus as well.
- Because lots of other pupils from Mortlach do it so they could do exactly the same with the minibus.
- You would have even more friends and it would be worth it.

Not Ok

- Because it would be too far.
- Too long a ride for me.

Questions for Cabrach Primary School Pupils only:

4. What do you like about being in Cabrach Primary School?

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5. What would make being in Cabrach Primary School better?

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Questions for Mortlach Primary School pupils only:

6. As a Mortlach Primary School pupils, what would you say is good about your school and what would the Cabrach children enjoy if they came to your school?

- They would make new friends and so some after school activities and enjoy their dinner.
- Play time
- I like playing with my friends. Gym. The Cabrach school would like gym.
- Playing. The school dinner is very good. PE is great fun and playing in the sandpit. Getting our marble jar treat and getting bee points.
- School dinners are great. And they would like to be mixed in with other children. Teachers are great and really hard working.
- School dinners are excellent. Lots of good friends and helpful teachers/assistants.

It's not all about work! After school activities. Smartboards.

- Playing with friends, Maths, school trips, Music, PE, school dinners, Smartboards, Mrs Robb, having marbles in the jars, Miss Murray's homework.
- Fun things to do. Playing with friends after school activities. I think they might like the school dinners and the treats.
- They would make new friends. And the choices you get at school dinners would be delicious and you would get to play sometimes in the classrooms.
- Playing with my friends. Gym. They would like the choice of the school dinners.
- Gym, playing with my friends, Music. They would like the after school activities.
- They could enjoy fun lessons, enjoy playtimes and lunchtimes. They could enjoy other stuff that they don't already have. They could make new friends and enjoy their lunch.
- The PE games, the fun lessons, good break time, fun times with Mrs Burnie, having fun with Miss Murray.
- Playing with my friends and school dinners. Like Music, PE and going on the computer. Puppets – snake for spelling.

7. What would make Mortlach Primary School even better?

- If they got to go outside three times and make new friends.
- Heaps of play time x 2
- Nothing would make Mortlach Primary better it is the best.
- Nothing would make Mortlach better it is great the way it is.
- More school dinner quantity or get soup and pudding.
- Mortlach Primary School has bought enough already.
- I don't know right now.
- If you got to play 3 times an hour.
- I don't know because Mortlach School is already brilliant x 3
- More toys for P4-P5 and P6 and P7
- More for dinner, more sand in sandpit, more painting
-

For Cabrach Primary and Mortlach Primary children:

8. Is there anything else you want to tell the Council about its plans for the future of Cabrach Primary School?

- I think they should close the Cabrach Primary because Dufftown would be better for the kids.
- Close the school because Mortlach would be even better.
- Close the school and just put them to Mortlach because it costs too much.
- Close the school so we can get more pupils.

Cabrach Community Association

www.cabrachcommunityassociation.org.uk

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Alistair Farquhar,

In response to the email I received yesterday from Donald Duncan regarding the Cabrach primary school. I would like to try and draw a picture of the Cabrach in the future as we see it so to speak.

As I expressed at the consultation meeting held in the school on Monday the 6th of September the C.C.A. in association with our development arm the Cabrach Development Company "C.D.C." we intend to develop houses, a community hall and a business centre all within the Cabrach.

The idea being that people require the ability to work in the area that they live in, socialise with other residents in their leisure time and be able to commute to work in as short a time frame as possible regardless of the weather or road conditions.

We have employed a Local Development Officer "Kim Siu" who is leader funded and in place for three years. In coordination with Kim Siu and H.I.E. we hope to have finalized the first stage of our regeneration plan in the next two to three years.

The first stage of this plan is to acquire an area of land in the location of the school and renovate and extend the current building there already into five family homes. Surveys have been conducted and negotiations with the current owners have begun. We are extremely hopeful of a successful outcome regarding this acquisition although I cannot unfortunately go into more detail for legal reasons.

I would like to stress that this five house development is only the first stage of our future development plan for the area. We intend to continue negotiations with all the land owners in the Cabrach area and work with them to see the old houses brought back into use.

We would like also to develop a business centre incorporating the computer / internet era along with the more manual hands on industries. Basically we would like to develop the work space that allows the inhabitants of the area the opportunity to rent a suitable environment to engage in their chosen career.

A plan of ours would be to acquire the former community hall from the council and redevelop it into an I.T. centre by day and a community centre by night.

This would create an income from the hall with the users of the I.T. centre paying a rental income going towards funding the community centre.

To answer the question asked, our plan would be to acquire the property and land necessary in year one. The planning and development of the sites in year two and our intention would be to have the properties occupied in year three.

If the Council would assure us that the School building would be kept in good order for that period of time we would be in a position to know the outcome of our



endeavours. Therefore by year three we would be in a position to re-negotiate with the Council based on the success or otherwise of our plans.

Efforts would be made by the C.C.A. to work with the council during the period of mothball status. Hopefully some use could be found for the building which would raise a revenue to offset the costs involved.

So much hangs in the balance of the school and its future. I understand from Donald Duncan that the idea of mothballing the school was never considered as a way forward by the Council nor is there any precedent for such a move to be followed but this does not mean that it is not the right course of action at this time.

By closing the school you would make our task harder to undertake but we must believe not impossible or we are doomed from the outset. The selling point of our development plan to interested parties is that we have a local school open or waiting to reopen.

Once a sustainable community has been established and support can again be demonstrated, the community in association with the council could then re-establish the school and demonstrate to all that the Cabrach is back on the world map and vibrant once more.

Never has the Cabrach been so determined to turn the tide of depopulation and decline of the area as it is now.

This is the moment, this is the time. We call upon Moray Council to join with us and believe in a future for the Cabrach once more.

Yours Sincerely

Martin Sheed
Secretary C.C.A.

7th October 2010

REPORT BY HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION (HMIE) ON THE EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL BY MORAY COUNCIL TO CLOSE CABRACH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND TRANSFER CHILDREN TO MORTLACH PRIMARY SCHOOL, DUFFTOWN

October 2010

1. Introduction

1.1 Moray Council proposes the closure of Cabrach Primary School and the transfer of the children to Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown.

1.2 This report has been prepared by HMIE in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

1.3 HM Inspectors' role is to report on the educational aspects of the proposal. HMIE undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meetings on the 6th and 7th September 2010 in connection with Moray Council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- scrutiny of further information on the establishments affected, including the contents of an HMIE report prepared in 2007 in response to an earlier proposal for closure.

1.4 HMIE considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children at the school, for any other users of the school building, for children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of the proposal paper, and other children in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.5 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school as defined in the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*, HMIE also took account of the council's consideration of:

- viable alternatives to the closure of Cabrach Primary School;

- the likely effect on the local community with regard to sustainability and on the community's access to the buildings, grounds and facilities if the school were to close, and
- the likely effect of different travelling arrangements on the environment and on children and young people and other school users occasioned by the closure.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The council carried out the consultation with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. The consultation included an invitation for written submissions and public meetings, held in September 2010.

2.2 Parents of the two children who currently attend Cabrach Primary School are opposed to the proposed closure. They feel that their children benefit from the very small class at Cabrach. They are concerned that their children might be unable to return home in the event of severe weather. They are of the view that the closure of Cabrach Primary School could discourage families with young children from moving to the area.

2.3 Children from both Cabrach and Mortlach Primary Schools completed questionnaires. The views expressed were unsurprising with the Cabrach children wishing to retain their provision while those attending Mortlach supported closure.

2.3 Almost all members of the general public, from various localities across Moray, who responded are supportive of the closure proposal citing financial benefits for all young people in Moray and educational gain for Cabrach children.

2.4 Three community associations responded to the consultation. There was some variation in the views expressed. Dufftown Community Association recognised the validity of the rationale for school closure. Speyside Area Forum supported closure at the present time. Cabrach Community Association opposed the closure proposal indicating that, given the very recent appointment of a local development worker, it would be detrimental to future regeneration efforts and would result in the loss of the last remaining public building in the area.

2.5 Should the proposed closure proceed, all three associations support mothballing the school for a defined period to give the community the opportunity to implement regeneration proposals.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The roll at Cabrach Primary School has continued to decline and is now operating at an 8% occupancy rate with two pupils. There are currently two pre-school children in the local area.

3.2 Mortlach Primary School is located in Dufftown, approximately ten miles from Cabrach. The school currently operates at 77% occupancy with approximately 155 pupils. The school also offers pre-school education. The transfer of children from Cabrach would have no impact on provision at Mortlach Primary School.

3.3 The council's papers detail sound educational benefits arising from its proposals. These include the argument that by moving from Cabrach Primary School to Mortlach Primary School, children will benefit socially and educationally from being part of a larger cohort. They will have greater opportunities to learn collaboratively and interact with more of their peers as well as participating in a wider range of educational activities such as sporting and arts activities. By doing so, they would more readily develop the capacities embedded in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

3.4 There is sufficient space in the proposed receiving school to accommodate the two children currently attending Cabrach Primary School. The children will also benefit from improved access to physical education and library facilities.

3.5 The council's proposals will enable efficiencies accruing from the closure to contribute to the overall benefit of children and young people elsewhere in the authority's area.

3.6 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school as defined in the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*, the authority has considered the viability of alternative arrangements. In the three years since the council last proposed closure of Cabrach Primary School there has been no evidence of an upturn in the school population and based on the current economic climate in the wider Moray area it is unlikely that the school roll will increase to a viable level. Over the past two years there have been no requests for community use of the school.

3.7 The Cabrach Community Association has recently appointed a development officer. A proposal to build five new houses is at a very early stage and, should it proceed, is unlikely to have a significant impact on the school population in the foreseeable future. At the public meeting in Cabrach education officials advised that the Community Association should forward details of their proposals together with outline timescales. Officers indicated this information would be included in the collated response which would be presented to elected members. Information on the proposed housing does not appear to have been submitted during the consultation period.

3.8 The children transferring to Mortlach Primary School would be provided with school transport. The change to the delineated catchment area will eliminate daily journeys by families who are currently transporting children to Mortlach Primary School due to placing requests. The education service has clear procedures for the transportation and accommodation of children in severe weather. During the unusually severe weather conditions last year the education service ensured that all children were able to return to their own home safely.

4. Summary

4.1 The proposal from Moray Council to close Cabrach Primary School and transfer children to Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown offers educational benefits to children directly affected by the proposal and to the wider community in Moray. These benefits relate to the social and personal development of the children moving to the larger school and to the efficient and effective use of available resources for the education service. The proposed move to the larger school offers children from Cabrach an enhanced range of educational experiences. The proposal will not adversely affect the quality of education for children in Mortlach Primary School. The council has appropriate plans in place to transport children to Mortlach Primary School.

4.2 In taking forward the proposal, officers should provide a reasonable estimate of the likely impact of adverse weather for those involved, over and above what would happen if Cabrach Primary School remained open. The council should outline its position with regard to the issues raised by the Cabrach Community Association. The council should also indicate the date of the proposed closure and transfer of children to Mortlach Primary School.

**HM Inspectorate of Education
October 2010**