








**Abernyte Primary School Parent Council response to  
Perth and Kinross Council proposal to close Abernyte Primary**

**Appendix: Detailed representations**

**14 December 2018**

The purpose of this appendix is to set out representations from Abernyte Primary School Parent Council to Perth and Kinross Council on their paper proposing that Abernyte Primary School is closed from 1 July 2020 and its catchment area incorporated into that of Inchtute Primary School.

The proposal paper has been reproduced in this document in full, with detailed responses from the Parent Council shown in boxes in blue text. A number of documents have been referred to in our responses. These are set out below for reference.

Ref	Description	Document
1a	Options appraisal	 Reprt_No_18243.pdf
1b	Options appraisal appendix	 Abernyte_Options_Appraisal.pdf
2	Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education, published by the Scottish Government, April 2013.	 dual-reg-consultation-report-delivery-r
3	Scottish Government Response to the Commission on Delivery of Rural Education, published by the Scottish Government, June 2013.	 Scottish Government Respor
4	Determining Primary School Capacity Guidance, published by the Scottish Government, October 2014	 Determining Primary School Capa
5	Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance, published by the Scottish Government in May 2015	 Schools (Consultation) (Scotl
6	Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended Overview and guidance for education authorities, produced by Education Scotland and published by the Scottish Government in April 2015	<a href="https://education.gov.scot/Documents/AmendedSchoolsConsultationAdvice2015.pdf">https://education.gov.scot/Documents/AmendedSchoolsConsultationAdvice2015.pdf</a>
7	Participants, Not Pawns Guidance on Consulting with Children and Young People on School Closures (and Other Significant Changes) Published by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, March 2010	 ParticipantsNotPawns.pdf

# THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT



## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

### EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

#### PROPOSAL PAPER

The following schools are affected by this proposal document:

- **Abernyte Primary School**
- **Inchtute Primary School**

This document has been issued by Perth and Kinross Council for proposal in terms of The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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A link to an electronic version of this document will be provided by letter to:

- The Parent Council (if any) of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils and children at the affected schools
- The parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this proposal document
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade union representatives of the above staff
- The Community Councils
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- Elected Members of Perth and Kinross Council
- The Constituency MSP and List MSPs covering the Constituency
- The Constituency MP
- The Executive Director, Housing & Environment, Perth and Kinross Council
- Tayside Contracts
- LiveActive Leisure
- Education Scotland

### Response:

We note that two years is a very short-term view for a school which has been part of a vibrant community for over 100 years.

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Education and Children's Services, 2 High Street, Perth, PH1 5PH
- Abernyte Primary School, Abernyte, PH14 9ST
- Inchtute Primary School, Inchtute, PH14 9RN

This document is available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English. Please apply to Education and Children's Services, 2 High Street, Perth, PH1 5PH by telephone on 01738 476200; or by e-mail:

[ECSGeneralEnquiries@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:ECSGeneralEnquiries@pkc.gov.uk)

## CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Pupils will be consulted about the proposal in school and further information about this will be provided to parents/carers.

**Response:**

We have been provided with very limited information about the pupil consultation.

We have requested information on the interviewer to understand their background and level of independence from the consultation process. We have been informed that the consultation has been carried out by the school's link Quality Improvement Officer who, as far as we are aware, is employed by Perth and Kinross Council and therefore not truly independent.

This is not in line with the recommendation of "Participants, not Pawns" (reference document [7]), the report published by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People which sets out guidance for Local Authorities on how to carry out pupil consultations under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

*"This guidance strongly recommends that local authorities use an **independent** consultant to conduct the consultation exercise(s) with the affected children and young people, and to provide advice on other parts of the process to the education authority."*

## SUMMARY OF PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

### 1. Consideration by the Lifelong Learning Committee

This proposal document has been issued as a result of a decision on 22 August 2018 of the Lifelong Learning Committee of Perth and Kinross Council ([Report No 18/243 refers](#)). This is to seek views on the proposals in this paper.

### 2. Proposal document issued to consultees and published on Council website

A link to a copy of this document will be issued free of charge to the consultees listed on the preceding page, and it will also be published on the Council website: [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)

### 3. Publication of advertisement in local newspapers

An advertisement will be placed in the relevant local newspapers.

#### Response:

We do not consider that Perth and Kinross Council have appropriately advertised the proposal in such a way that it would reach the full range of consultees. The responses to the proposal paper may therefore not reflect all the views of potential consultees.

In a school closure proposal, the list of consultees in Schedule 2 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 includes the parents of any children expected by the education authority to attend any affected school within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper.

At the public meeting on November 12<sup>th</sup>, representatives from Perth and Kinross Council admitted that they have difficulties in identifying and making contact with families of children who are not already at school.

We do not consider that advertising the consultation in the local newspapers is an effective way to reach the parents of children who are not yet at school as newspapers are used more widely by older people who are less likely to have pre-primary children. From the 6 main national newspapers the youngest average reader is 43 years old. 78% of courier readers are above 35 years of age. Newspaper advertising is therefore unlikely to be effective at reaching parents of pre-school and primary school age children.

Perth and Kinross Council should have used more advertising channels, including social media, to increase awareness regarding the meetings which concern the whole village.

Four families who attended the meeting wishing to send their pre-school children to Abernyte and many of the community members who attended only knew of the meeting through information publicised by the Parent Council. It is likely that there are other families who are not aware of the proposal and therefore unable to comment on it.

### 4. Length of consultation period

An advertisement will be placed in local newspapers on Monday 29 October 2018. The consultation will run from Monday 29 October 2018 until close of business on Friday 14 December 2018, which includes a period of 33 school days.

## **5. Public meeting**

Two public meetings will be held, the details of which are given on Page 6 of this document.

## **6. Involvement of Education Scotland**

When the proposal document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Education Authority. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations received by the Authority from any person during the consultation period or, if Education Scotland agree, a summary of them. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Authority at the public meeting which will be held and, as available (and so far as otherwise practicable), a copy of any other relevant documentation.

Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 3 weeks after the Authority has sent them all representations and documents mentioned above. For the avoidance of doubt, the 3 week period will not start until after the consultation period has ended. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may enter the affected schools and make such reasonable enquiries of such people there as they consider appropriate and may make such reasonable enquiries of such other people as they consider appropriate.

## **7. Preparation of consultation report**

The Education Authority will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a consultation report. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be published on the Council website. It will be available on the Council website and from Education & Children's Services at 2 High Street, Perth free of charge. Anyone who made written representations to the Authority during the consultation period will also be informed about the report.

The report will include:

- a record of the total number of written representations made to the Authority during the consultation period;
  - a summary of the written representations;
  - a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting;
- the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report as well as any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled; and
- a statement explaining how the Authority complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the Education Scotland Report and representations (both written and oral) that it received.

The consultation report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of 3 weeks.

## **8. Decision**

This report, together with any other relevant documentation, will be considered by the Lifelong Learning Committee of Perth and Kinross Council, who will come to a decision about whether to implement the proposal.

## **9. Note on Corrections**

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this proposal document, either by the Council or any person, the Council must investigate and decide what, if any, action is required.

If relevant information has been omitted or there has been an inaccuracy, the Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction notice, the publishing of a corrected Proposal Paper or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised. The Authority must inform the person who made the allegation and what action it has taken.

## **10. Scottish Ministers Call-in**

When the Education Authority has made a final decision whether to implement the proposal, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the proposal document and consultation report. This must be done within 6 working days of that decision.

The Education Authority must also publish on its website the fact that it has notified Scottish Ministers of its decision and of the period during which consultees have the opportunity to make representations to Ministers. For rural school closures, the Education Authority must also give notice of the reasons why the Council is satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. Within the first 3 weeks of that 8 week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8 week call-in process is known, the Authority cannot proceed to implement the proposal.

If Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, they must refer it to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels for determination by a School Closure Review Panel. The Authority may not implement the proposal (wholly or partly) unless the Panel has granted consent to it (with or without conditions) and either the period for making an appeal to the sheriff has expired or, if an appeal has been made, it has either been abandoned or the sheriff has confirmed the Panel's decision.

The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the proposal, refuse consent and remit the proposal back to the Authority or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally.

- Ministers have a power to call in a closure decision, but only where it appears to Ministers that the Council has failed in a significant regard to comply with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act's requirements or, in coming to its decision, has failed to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to the proposal. Ministers have up to 8 weeks from the date of the Council's decision to decide whether or not to issue a call-in notice.
- During the first 3 weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in.
- During the call-in period, the Council may not proceed further, in whole or part, with the proposed closure. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than 8 weeks (but not before the 3 weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, as amended, gives Ministers and School Closure Review Panels the right to call on advice from Education Scotland in relation to a proposal at the call-in or determination stage.

## **11. Note**

This consultation is being conducted having regard to the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.



## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Two public meetings will be held to discuss the proposal. Anyone wishing to attend either of the public meetings is invited to do so. The meetings, which will be convened by the Education Authority, will be addressed by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services), or other senior officers of the Council.

The meetings will be an opportunity for interested parties to:

- Hear more about the proposal
- Ask questions about the proposal
- Have their views recorded so that they can be taken into account as part of the consultation process.

The meetings will be held on:

**Date – Monday 12 November 2018**

**Time – 7.00 pm**

**Venue – Abernyte Primary School, Abernyte**

**Date – Wednesday 14 November 2018**

**Time – 7.00 pm**

**Venue – Inchturie Primary School, Inchturie**

A note will be taken at the meetings of questions and views. This note will be published on the Council website, and a printed copy will be made available upon request.

### **Response:**

Notes from the public meetings are not available on the Council website as at 14 December 2018. They have therefore not been available to members of the public who were not at the meetings during the time period when responses to the proposal can be made.

When will these notes be published?

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL  
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**THIS IS A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

**Proposal :**

That, subject to the outcome of this proposal:

- Provision of a school at Abernyte Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 1 July 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- That the pupils of Abernyte Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Inchtute Primary School, from 2 July 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- That the delineated catchment area of Inchtute Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Abernyte Primary School from 2 July 2020.

This Proposal Paper should be read in conjunction with the [Options Appraisal](#) as it contains more detail regarding the options considered and rejected along with community feedback received.

**1. REASONS FOR FORMULATING THE PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 Abernyte Primary School is a single teacher primary school serving the village of Abernyte and the surrounding area and is a feeder primary school for Perth High School.
- 1.2 The capacity of Abernyte Primary School is 44 pupils. The Abernyte Primary School roll at Census 2010 was 21 pupils and at Census 2017 was 5 pupils giving an occupancy of 11.3%. At October 2018, the school roll was 6 pupils.

There were 11 pupils living within the catchment area for Abernyte Primary School at the time of the options appraisal being undertaken. However, 6 of these pupils attended other schools in Perth and Kinross as a result of successful placing requests made by their parents.

**Response:**

We request that Perth and Kinross Council provided information on the source and reliability of their data for the number of pupils living within the catchment area. We believe this information to be inaccurate and that there were at least 14 children of primary school age living in the Abernyte catchment area in 2017.

- 1.3 Data on pre-school children registered with GP practices living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment shows that although potential P1 intake numbers have remained relatively low over the last few years, they are much higher than the number of pupils who are attending the school.

## Response:

Perth and Kinross Council should provide actual figures rather than biased statements such as “much higher” and “remained relatively low”.

- 1.4 Future pupil projections have been considered using aggregated GP registration data and Abernyte Primary School pupil numbers are projected to remain static over the next 4 years. There are low numbers of pre-school children living within the catchment area projected to attend Abernyte Primary School over the next 4 years.
- Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future and there is no suggestion going forward that this is likely to change.

## Response:

We consider that:

- the pupil projections carried out are not appropriate for use in a rural area
- Perth and Kinross Council have not provided any evidence that they have assessed how accurate their pupil projections have been in the past.

The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education (reference document [2]) states in paragraph 149:

*“Roll projections have a clear and important purpose in understanding the future need for a particular school. Nevertheless, they are often a highly contested aspect of closure proposals and this is in part due to the difficulty of accurately projecting numbers of children in a small community more than a very few years ahead. Other factors include uncertainty over future development and unmet housing need in the area, and significant levels of placing requests both into and out of small schools.”*

Four years is a very short time period when discussing closing a rural school where a small change in families moving to or from the area can result in a large relative change in the school age population.

The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education continues in paragraph 150:

*“Particular difficulties arise where only one source of information is used for projections or local knowledge is not taken into account. From the evidence the Commission has heard, best practice in roll projections would include regular and transparent reviews of roll projections for all schools, informed by community knowledge and experience, as well as using other relevant data from a range of sources.”*

In contrast, Perth and Kinross Council have used only one source of information (GP data) as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the proposal paper.

The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education also provides an example of good practice in Highland Council:

*“Highland Council draws on a wide range of information to produce school roll projections. Projections are based on NHS records of pre-school children and the latest pupil census but also take into account other factors which have an impact on pupil numbers including: placing requests, house building, and population modelling.*

*Potential issues highlighted by roll projections, such as over capacity or significantly falling rolls, are discussed further at a local level and projections may be revised based on information received during these discussions. In order to improve accuracy, Highland Council reviews roll projections*

*against actual rolls once available and discusses significant variances with area education managers. This can identify reasons for variances and provides an opportunity to refine the methodology for the projections if necessary.”*

At the public meeting on November 12<sup>th</sup>, Council representatives were asked about how accurate their pupil projections have been based on past experience. We are informed that this information was not available and that back-testing of projections to check accuracy was not carried out.

The pre-consultation exercise did not reach out sufficiently widely and some families were unaware that the exercise was taking place. The members of the Parent Council have reached out to the local community and a number of other families have expressed their desire to send their children to school in Abernyte. The table below adds the information gathered by the Parent Council to the Council projection from the proposal document.

The increase in the roll of 140% compared to the Council figure highlights the difficulty in projecting the school roll for small schools. This is a conservative estimate as it does not include a number of other families who have contacted the Parent Council but who are still undecided as a result of the uncertainty surrounding the school.

	<b>Projected 2021</b>
Perth and Kinross Council projection (appendix 6) based on GP data	5
Two families who are moving to Abernyte in December 2018/January 2019	5
Families who are intending to make placement requests	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

- 1.5 These circumstances result in a diminished and unsustainable school pupil population for Abernyte Primary School. There is no foreseeable prospect of an increased, stable pupil population. The provision of primary education within Abernyte needs to be considered in the context of the needs of the pupils and the local community, both now and in the future.

**Response:**

We disagree with this statement. As stated in our response to 1.4, there are a number of factors that we could reasonably foresee resulting in an increase in the pupil population. These include:

- Families moving to the area
- Increased stability over the future of the school resulting in more parents choosing to send their children to the school
- Housebuilding in the Abernyte area
- Placement requests from neighbouring villages (in recent years children have come from Ballindean, Baledgarno, Knapp and Errol)

- 1.6 As part of an [options appraisal](#), information was collated on pupil numbers, housebuilding, the school, travel arrangements, environmental impact, the local area and community and finances to inform the options. A pre-consultation exercise was also carried out with the local community to inform the options appraisal.

**Response:**

We note that the pre-consultation exercise consisted only of a community drop-in session at Abernyte Primary School on Thursday 26 October 2017 from 3:15 pm to 7pm and an online questionnaire.

- 1.7 A full assessment has been undertaken in respect of a proposal to extend the catchment area for Abernyte Primary School to establish if this would create an increased pupil roll for Abernyte Primary School. The conclusion of the assessment is that there would continue to be insufficient pupil numbers to increase the school roll at Abernyte Primary School or make it sustainable in future years if the catchment was extended

**Response:**

Section 5.3 of the Options Appraisal paper (reference document [1b]) sets out the level of “assessment” that was carried out by Perth and Kinross Council. The description of the process is not clear but based on the information contained in the Options Appraisal, and some clarifications obtained from Perth and Kinross Council, we do not consider this to represent a “full assessment” for the following reasons:

- The only catchment change considered was to extend the catchment area of Abernyte by including that area of the Inchtute Primary School catchment area that lies north of the A90. No alternative catchment area changes were considered.
- The “assessment” was rushed and was not a formal consultation.
- Only those families which were already known to the Council were invited to speak to Council representatives. These families already have children in primary school and therefore would be less likely to support a change in the catchment area.
- The “assessment” did not target families with pre-school children. At the public meeting on November 12<sup>th</sup> Council representatives acknowledged that they were unable to identify families that did not have children already at school. The Options Appraisal states in section 5.3 that *“Families of 7 children under the age of 5 were not contactable as the NHS data the Council receives is anonymised. Therefore the actual ages of these children and the views of their parents are unknown.”*
- The Council told parents that where siblings were affected by the change in the catchment area they could not guarantee younger siblings a place at the school attended by older siblings. This would clearly discourage parents from supporting a catchment area change.

**2. VISION, BACKGROUND AND STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.1 Perth and Kinross Council works to enhance quality of life, make best use of public resources and ensure continuously improving services. Perth and Kinross Council’s corporate strategy “Securing the Future” aims to ensure that individuals, families and communities experience the best possible outcomes from a range of services.

Perth and Kinross Council has a strong identity and clear priorities which everyone works together to achieve, creating areas which are vibrant and successful; safe, secure, healthy and sustainable environments; educated, responsible and informed

citizens; confident and active communities; and places where people are nurtured and supported.

- 2.2 The Council's Transformation Strategy 2015-2020 'Building Ambition' and Organisational Development Framework were approved by Council on 1 July 2015\_ ([Report No. 15/292 refers](#)). They detail how Perth and Kinross Council will deliver transformation over the next five years. Accompanying the strategy is a programme of major reviews which are considered to be key drivers and enablers of transformation across the organisation.

On 24 August 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 16/347 refers](#)) approved principles to be used as a basis for the transformation review, 'Securing the Future of the School Estate'.

- 2.3 This approach reflects the Single Outcome Agreement National Outcome 15 that "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs", and the Local Outcome that "Our services will be responsive, of high quality and continually improving".

This report also links with the School Estate Management Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Framework Maximising Resources and with the Education and Children's Services objective to develop the range and quality learning experiences for all.

- 2.4 On 2 November 2016, the Council approved the report "Securing the Future of the School Estate – Next Steps" ([Report 16/485 refers](#)). This report detailed the outcome of the high level review and proposed to proceed with further work on the schools which did not meet the suitability, condition or occupancy principles. In this report, it approved the development of an options appraisal in relation to the future of Abernyte Primary School due to under-occupancy.

#### **Response:**

We consider that using a particular occupancy rate to assess the viability of Abernyte Primary School is not consistent with guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

The report "Securing the Future of the School Estate – Next Steps" sets out in section 2.2 that:

*"It was proposed that each school in Perth and Kinross be assessed against the principles above and proposals put forward as follows:*

- If the occupancy of a school is currently less than 60%, based on the school census 2015/16, or is projected to drop below 60% during the next 7 years, other than 'very remote rural' schools; or*
- If the occupancy of a school is projected to exceed 95% during the next 7 years;"*

The report does not explain why the threshold of 60% has been applied, nor why that threshold is a suitable measure for Abernyte School.

The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education (reference document [2]) discussed the use of occupancy figures in school closure proposals in paragraphs 110 to 113.

The Commission concluded in paragraph 112 that:

*"capacity measurements had little place in the assessment of the viability of small remote schools. For many small schools with limited facilities, one of their few advantages is a relatively large classroom space which is used to excellent effect to support the small group and individual learning necessary for multi-stage composite classes. Under-used capacity compared to urban norms is almost inevitable in serving a sparse population. Where 'real' spare capacity exists, in the form of surplus classrooms or other space, it would be better to consider it as an opportunity to base additional services at the school, such as health, childcare, adult learning or employment services. This would allow local authorities to work with partners to co-fund the building or facility, making it more economical to maintain."*

And continued in paragraph 113:

*"One solution to improving value for money should be promoting innovation in rural asset management and use, by empowering communities to support their schools, for example in accepting practical assistance from communities as discussed in Chapter 5. This reflects the aims of national and local government as set out by the Christie Commission in 2011. Where there are barriers to this, the Commission strongly encourages national and local government to work together to remove these."*

Guidance on determining primary school capacity was subsequently set out by the Scottish Government in October 2014 (reference document [4]).

Paragraph (f) of 2.1 states that:



*“The Scottish Government recognises that capacity is an important practical measure for Local Authorities which has many uses. It should however be borne in mind that capacity is only one of many measures of the school estate, and that it should only ever be considered alongside other qualitative measures such as educational issues and geography.*

***The Scottish Government does not have a recommended occupancy level for schools. It is up to Local Authorities to consider both quantitative and qualitative measures when making decisions on their school estate.”***

- 2.5 On 21 March 2018, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report 18/86 refers](#)) approved further assessment of the option to increase the catchment area for Abernyte Primary School to include the area of Inchtute Primary School catchment which lies to the north of the A90. This took account of feedback from the Abernyte community and the outcome of the online survey of the parents/carers in the Inchtute Primary School catchment to the north of the A90. This assessment would seek to clarify whether a proposal to change the catchment area would provide an increased and sustainable school roll for Abernyte Primary School.
- 2.6 On 22 August 2018, Lifelong Learning Committee considered the [options appraisal](#) and agreed to commence formal consultation on a proposal to close Abernyte Primary School ([Report No 18/243 refers](#)) in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

**Response:**

As discussed in the response to 1.7, the assessment included only families with school age children already attending Inchtute Primary School.

We consider that the decision to propose to close Abernyte Primary School was based on a small amount of data that was incorrect as it excluded families with pre-school children that do not already have children at school. More detailed consideration should have been given to the suitability and quality of the data to assess how accurately it could represent expected parental choice if the catchment area were to change and Abernyte Primary School was not under threat of closure.

- 2.7 The 2010 Act’s principal purpose is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. These consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland.
- 2.8 The 2010 Act makes special arrangements in relation to rural schools, and establishes a presumption against the closure of rural schools. The result of this is that education authorities must have special regard to a number of factors before formalising a proposal to close a rural school and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal.
- 2.9 These duties are outlined in the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010 and the accompanying Statutory Guidance](#).



- 2.10 Councils have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand.

Education and Children's Services Service Asset Management Plan 2016 (incorporating School Estate Management Plan), approved by the Lifelong Learning Committee on 9 March 2016 ([Report No. 16/108](#) refers), provides information on the whole of the school estate and the overall objectives and future priorities within Perth and Kinross Council.

- 2.11 Councils also have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value. In doing so, consideration must be given to occupancy as buildings are expensive resources. To achieve best value and optimum efficiency, the minimum number of buildings is required to deliver Council services to a particular locality. The organisation of the school estate is therefore kept under regular review, including the need for school provision and other matters, such as catchment areas and the implementation of shared headships.
- 2.12 The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 amends the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 by adding in new duties to address inequality of outcome. These duties apply in different ways to both Scottish Ministers and education authorities. Where the education authority is making or implementing strategic decisions about school education, it is required to have due regard to the need to carry out its functions in a way which is designed to reduce inequalities of outcome. This is particularly directed in the Act towards pupils who experience those inequalities through socio-economic disadvantage, but there is also a power to extend the range of pupils who are covered by this duty.

### **3. ABERNYTE AND THE LOCAL AREA**

- 3.1 The village of Abernyte is situated in the Carse of Gowrie, approximately 12 miles from Perth and approximately 12 miles from Dundee. The Carse of Gowrie stretches for approximately 20 miles (32 km) along the north shore of the Firth of Tay between Perth and Dundee.
- 3.2 Abernyte has a church, which is located approximately a mile from Abernyte Primary School. The church is linked with 3 other Carse of Gowrie churches; Kinnaird, Inchtute and Longforgan. Abernyte Church is available for use by the community.

#### **Response:**

Abernyte Primary School is the only remaining public building. The church can accommodate 8-10 in a communal seating area with the remainder of the church providing seating in pews. There is only one toilet (which is not properly accessible for disabled people), no kitchen and no outdoor area for gatherings or for children to play in. For current community groups of 40-60 persons this facility cannot accommodate the village needs.

- 3.3 Attractions in the area include the Scottish Antique & Arts Centre, a micro-brewery and local walks. Visitors to the area can be accommodated at Milton Farm Lodges as well as various holiday cottages in the area.
- 3.4 The Abernyte Community Interest Company (ACIC) was formed in 2006 to represent the community of Abernyte. They amalgamated in 2015 with the local Heritage Group. The ACIC organise and host events in and around Abernyte, for example: afternoon events at the Millennium Walk and the Abernyte Harvest Festival. Other events that occur in the area are the annual Parish Walk and the French exchange (through the Inchtute Area Twinning Association). The Abernyte community set up an 'Abernyte Heating Oil Collective' (AHOC) in 2010. Since it was set-up the group has over 40 members ordering over 100,000 litres of their heating oil per year. The ACIC

owns the large playing field that lies next to the school. This playing field is used for various activities by the community and the school.

**Response:**

This is incorrect and it highlights yet again that the council does not know the village or community of Abernyte and has not taken time to use local knowledge to furnish this report.

The playing field is owned by a local family and the children of the school use the two acre green space to play in during all breaks. This is a safe area well fenced and surrounded only by fields and gardens. The agreement is that if the school is no longer in use the family reclaim the field.

Having access to such fantastic outdoor space is a huge benefit for the pupils at Abernyte. Our views on this are discussed further in our response to 9.13.

3.5 Abernyte Primary School is approximately 3.4 miles<sup>1</sup> from Inchtute Primary School and approximately 4.4 miles from Longforgan Primary School.

<sup>1</sup> Google Maps

- 3.6 Data on pre-school children registered with GP practices living in Abernyte catchment shows that the number of children eligible to start school over the 4 year period (2018 - 2021) is 5. The data also indicates that the number of primary school pupils living in the area has decreased in recent years but also that a number of pupils are attending alternative primary schools.

**Response:**

We question the suitability of these figures for estimating the future roll of Abernyte Primary School, in line with our response to paragraph 1.4. These figures have been gathered from one data source which is an unreliable basis for projecting school roll.

- 3.7 The methodology applied for projecting future P1 intakes uses aggregated GP registration data. The anonymised data, sourced from the NHS reflects children registered with a GP, within specific school catchments areas. P1 pupils included within the data received from the NHS do not always decide to attend their catchment school. This is primarily because parents make placing requests to other schools or elect to send their child to a denominational school.

As a result of these movements, the P1 data is adjusted taking into consideration the movement of pupils in previous years. The adjusted data is the primary source of information for forward planning. It should be noted that due to the fluid nature of pupil movements within the school estate, for a number of different reasons, predicting future years' schools rolls will not be exact. It is however accurate enough to provide valuable information on forward planning for the school estate.

**Response:**

We consider adjusting the data taking into consideration the movement of pupils in previous years is inappropriate in this situation for the following reasons:

- In a small catchment area there will naturally be a greater element of statistical fluctuations than in a larger catchment area. Using previous experience could magnify such fluctuations.
- The downward trend the proportion of children within the catchment area attending the school is to some degree the result of the level of uncertainty around the future of the school in the past 5 years due to inaction by Perth and Kinross Council. In contrast, if the school had a secure future and a larger catchment area the proportion of children attending the school may well increase. We now have a permanent headteacher who is highly talented and embraces the local community. The school role has already started to rise.

- 3.8 The TAYplan sets out a hierarchical approach to directing new development to existing settlements and identifies Perth Core Area as the tier 1 settlement which should take the majority of new development.
- 3.9 There is no planned house building for the Abernyte area contained within the LDP or Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2017.
- 3.10 The Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP2) was approved for consultation by Council on 22 November 2017 ([Report No. 17/387](#) refers). The aspiration is to have a

final LDP to adopt by Spring 2019. There are no changes proposed for Abernyte in LDP2.

- 3.11 It is projected that house building in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area will continue to be limited with few, if any, additional pupils for the school.

**Response:**

Although there is no planned house building in the Abernyte area contained within the LDP, house building is permitted in line with the Housing in the Countryside supplementary guidance, which is on the Perth and Kinross Council website. In 2016-2018 alone we can see decided planning applications for 8 new house builds within the Abernyte catchment area on the Perth and Kinross Council website. There is also a further live planning application.

- 3.12 Information received from Perth and Kinross Council Business Growth Team indicated the following in relation to business activities in the Abernyte area:

- The biggest local employer in Abernyte is the Scottish Antique & Arts Centre.
- The Taypack processing and manufacturing plant (47 employees) is based in nearby Inchtute.
- Abernyte micro-brewery started up around 2015 and it is of small scale.

There is no indication at this point of any significant changes to population as a result of business growth.

**Response:**

We consider this to be a very short-term view that does not take into account changes in the way in which businesses operate. More and more businesses are already embracing remote and flexible working, which is expected to increase in future as technology advances and the nature of work changes.

#### **4. ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 4.1 Abernyte Primary School provides non-denominational education to pupils from P1 - P7 from the village of Abernyte and surrounding area. There is no nursery provision at Abernyte Primary School. A plan of the school site for Abernyte Primary School is attached as Appendix 3.

- 4.2 The school is on one level and is made up of 2 classrooms, a hall for dining and PE, toilets, resources room, school office/staff room and the kitchen. The classroom at the main entrance of the school can accommodate 20 pupils and the classroom at the rear of the school can accommodate 24 pupils.
- 4.3 The catchment area for Abernyte Primary School adjoins the catchment areas for Inchtute, Longforgan, Balbeggie, Collace, Kettins and Burrelton Primary Schools. It also shares a boundary with Angus Council area. Appendix 1 shows the present school catchment area for Abernyte Primary School.
- 4.4 The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Abernyte Primary School as an "accessible rural" school under Section 14 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The classification is based on two main criteria, settlement size and accessibility based on drive time. For Abernyte Primary School the classification criteria is "areas with a population of less than 3,000 people and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more" (Source: Scottish Government Rural School List 2017).
- 4.5 The school structure has one composite class across stages Primary 1 – 7.
- 4.6 Historical and projected pupil roll data for Abernyte Primary School is attached as Appendix 5. This data shows that the roll of Abernyte Primary School has been falling over the last 7 years, with pupil numbers unlikely to increase above their present level.

**Response:**

We do not agree that pupil numbers are "unlikely to increase above their present level."

Please see our response to 6.1.6.

- 4.7 There are 6 children in the catchment area who attend other primary schools rather than Abernyte Primary by way of placing request.
- 4.8 The school roll has been decreasing since 2011. In 2011, there were no P1 pupils enrolled at Abernyte Primary School and, in the last 3 years, there have been no P1 pupils enrolled at the school. This would leave the school roll at between 3 and 6 pupils for the period 2018 - 2022, assuming all future new P1 pupils living in Abernyte catchment area attended Abernyte Primary School.
- 4.9 Throughout Scotland, core facts are gathered and published on school buildings. The definition and assessment categorisations are set by the Scottish Government as follows:

Condition <sup>(1)</sup> -is an assessment of the physical condition of the school and its grounds. Categorisation is as follows:

- A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently
- B: Satisfactory – Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration
- C: Poor – Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately
- D: Bad – Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure

Suitability <sup>(2)</sup> -is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings and its grounds and of the impact these have on learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and the health and well-being of all users. Categorisation is as follows:

- A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently
- B: Satisfactory – Performing well but with minor problems
- C: Poor – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally
- D: Bad – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities

Sufficiency <sup>(1)</sup> -states the occupancy – pupil roll divided by capacity expressed as a percentage.

Source: (1) *Core Facts Building Our Future: Scotland's School Estate 2003*  
(2) *The Suitability Core Fact: Scotland's School Estate 2008*

- 4.10 A condition survey was carried out on Abernyte Primary School building in January 2017 and the overall site is rated as condition 'B' (Satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration). Condition is an assessment of the physical condition of the school and its grounds.
- 4.11 The overall suitability of Abernyte Primary School building is categorised as 'A' (Satisfactory - performing well and operating efficiently). Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings and its grounds and the impact these have on learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and the health and wellbeing of all users.

#### Response:

Abernyte is condition 'B' and overall suitability 'A'. We note that a suitability rating of "A" stands for "Good – Performing well and operating efficiently" rather than "Satisfactory" as is incorrectly stated in 4.11.

Inchture primary is listed as condition 'B' and overall suitability 'B'.

We conclude from these assessments that:

- Abernyte Primary School buildings and grounds are more suitable for learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and the health and wellbeing of all users than Inchture School; and
- There would be therefore be disadvantages to the children moving from Abernyte to Inchture.

In addition, we would like to understand why Abernyte is only rated "B" for condition as the building is in very good condition and we are not aware of any deterioration.

- 4.12 Planned and unplanned maintenance on the school building in the last 3 financial years cost £14,144.

The approximate cost to upgrade the property is £333,090 for building fabric, mechanical and electrical works which include ventilation, fire alarm systems, heating and hot water pipework, insulation and building fabric improvements. These works are not required immediately but in the medium term which is 2-5 years.

#### **Response:**

We do not agree with the costs quoted to upgrade Abernyte Primary School.

No description of the methodology used to calculate £333,090 for building upgrade cost is given. The Options Appraisal document [1b] quotes the same upgrade cost and states in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 that the upgrade cost is based on a “**desktop**” Mechanical and Electrical survey.

Paragraph 54 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance [5] states that financial arguments that are made must be **rigorously evidenced**. No evidence has been provided to explain why the cost of £333,090 is accurate.

At the public meeting on November 12<sup>th</sup>, it was stated that the maintenance cost was similar for most schools in Perth and Kinross.

We have requested a breakdown of quoted cost on several occasions without success. The information we have received is that the cost of £333,090 is in relation to “potential work” in a number of areas, which have been described at a very high level. We have received no information on either the costs associated with each area or indeed why the work is necessary at all.

We believe that the cost quoted in the proposal paper has been derived without anyone viewing the building to accurately assess the work, **if any**, that is required and it is both damaging and misleading to include this figure in the proposal document.

The money spent on Abernyte primary have been nominal over the last 3 years compared to the high cost of extension within Inchtute Primary.

- 4.13 The school site and the school building are owned by Perth and Kinross Council. There are no title restrictions which would prohibit the Council from selling the site.
- 4.14 The School invites local people into the school throughout the year for various events. The Wine Club and Heritage Group use the school out with school hours. The Wine Club meets monthly and the Heritage Group meets a number of times a year.

## **5. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 5.1 In arriving at the proposal set out within this Proposal Paper, the Council has considered a number of alternative options for the future of Abernyte Primary School as part of the options appraisal:
- Option 1 – School remains open with existing catchment area.
  - Option 2 - Consider mothballing the school and move pupils to Inchtute Primary School.



- Option 3 - Catchment area is reviewed to determine whether this would increase the school roll sufficiently to ensure the future sustainability of the school.

- Option 4 - Consider closing the school and move pupils to a neighbouring catchment school.

5.2 In considering the options, account was taken of the fact that there is a presumption against closure of a rural school. As part of the options appraisal, the “rural school factors” specified in the School Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 have been given special regard.

These are:

- Effect on Community
- Effect on Travel Arrangements
- Educational Benefit

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

The detail of the assessment of each option is included within the [Options Appraisal](#).

### 6.1 Abernyte Primary School remains open with existing catchment area

6.1.1 The pupil roll projections reflect that there is no evidence to suggest that the roll will significantly increase in future years. Low future pupil numbers are unlikely to lead to a sufficient increase to make the school roll sustainable.

6.1.2 There is no planned house building in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area.

#### Response:

This statement is incorrect. The data on planning applications on the Perth and Kinross Council website shows that planning applications have been approved for the Abernyte area. There is a live application on the planning system at present.

There is no planned house building in the Local Development Plan but planning applications can still be made under the Housing in the Countryside policy.

6.1.3 The financial implications of retaining the ‘status quo’ for the school are a continuation of the current running costs of approximately £120,786 per annum. There is a capital cost of approximately £333,090 required to upgrade the building in future years.

#### Response:

We believe that these figures are inaccurate in two respects:

- The Grant Aided Expenditure has not been included in the calculation of the financial implications. This is a requirement of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Paragraph 58 of the Statutory Guidance [5] states that “*Authorities should indicate clearly whether GAE is likely to be affected by the proposal, the reasons for their view, and the level of this impact, providing a narrative explanation where appropriate.*”

While the GAE is set out in table 5 of the proposal, showing an impact of £18,840, the proposal document does not explain that this means that, based on the published figures, Perth and Kinross Council would **lose £18,840 of income** as a result of closing Abernyte School. The financial implication is therefore £120,786 **less** £18,840. It is unlikely that anyone reading the proposal document would understand what the GAE represents without carrying out a substantial amount of research.

The proposal document does not highlight that the GAE increases as the roll increases. Therefore, for example, if the school role increased by 6, the GAE would increase by a further £18,840.

- As discussed above under 4.12, we believe that the capital cost is a highly inflated estimate that has not been evidenced.

6.1.4 This option will not affect the community, travel arrangements or current pupils.

6.1.5 The reason for taking forward an options appraisal for Abernyte Primary School was that pupil numbers had been consistently low over recent years and there was concern over the sustainability of the school. The pupil roll projections reflect that there is no evidence to suggest that the roll will significantly increase in future years. The key issue is that out of 11 children at Census 2017 who could attend the school, 6 of them attend neighbouring schools. In addition, low future pupil numbers are unlikely to lead to a sufficient increase to make the school roll sustainable.

#### **Response:**

We disagree with the pupil roll projections, as set out in our responses to 3.6 and 3.7.

In addition, please see our response to 6.1.6 below.

6.1.6 It has not been possible to identify other steps which could increase the roll, whilst maintaining the status quo in terms of catchment area. This is therefore not considered a reasonable alternative.

#### **Response:**

Innovative ideas to help to boost the school role have been suggested to representatives of Perth and Kinross Council over the past 10 years by families and member of the community attending the Parent Council but not one of the ideas have been supported. If these ideas are supported the pupil numbers could increase.

There is a duty on the authority to set out the steps it has taken, if any, to address the reasons for the closure proposal before formulating the proposal. Paragraph 82 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance (reference document [5]) states that:

*“The proposal paper for a rural school closure has one further significant additional component. As well as explaining the reasons for the proposal, there is a duty on the authority to **set out the steps it has taken, if any, to address these reasons before formulating the proposal.** For example, the reason for the proposal might be the falling roll at the school and understanding what action, if any, the authority has taken in the past to seek to address this would help to understand whether such measures should be tried now, or have little prospect of success. Additionally, if the authority has not taken any steps to*

*address the reasons for the proposal, the authority is required to explain why it did not do so (in terms of section 13(2)(c)).”*

Previous ideas that we have suggested include:

- Allowing pupils to travel on the school bus to and from Inchtute School to use breakfast and after-school clubs;
- Nursery provision in the school;
- Allowing pupils attending Abernyte on placement requests access to the school bus which travels to and from Inchtute.

No steps have been taken by Perth and Kinross Council to support innovative proposals or to make us aware of Scottish Government guidance that could have helped us understand more about the potential for innovation. This is particularly disappointing because, as parents we are not experts on education and rely on the team of experts at the Council.

For example, recommendation 4 of the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education [2]:

*“Local authorities should work closely in partnership with voluntary and third sector services to facilitate viable wraparound care provision in rural areas where there is demand, seeking innovative solutions to support families.”*

was accepted by the Scottish Government (reference document [3]).

We firmly believe that innovative solutions that would increase the school roll are possible, with the Council’s help and support. Putting time and energy into finding these solutions over the past few years would have been more beneficial to the Abernyte and Inchtute communities than working on a proposal to close the school.

## **6.2 Consider mothballing Abernyte Primary School and move pupils to Inchtute Primary School**

6.2.1 If Abernyte Primary School was mothballed, pupils would be accommodated at Inchtute Primary School which is approximately 3.4 miles away and is the nearest school in Perth and Kinross. Pupils would have to travel between approximately 3.3 miles and approximately 5.8 miles to attend Inchtute Primary School.

The maximum time spent travelling on the bus would be 20 minutes for the child who has to travel furthest. In some other more rural areas within Perth and Kinross, pupils are travelling greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles away from the school they are designated to attend.

6.2.2 The revenue savings generated from mothballing Abernyte Primary School amount to approximately £108,213 annually. This is made up of staff and building costs however this takes account of additional transport costs of £3,116 for current pupils to attend Inchtute Primary School.

### **Response:**

As stated in our responses to 14.1, the saving quoted of £108,213 is **materially overstated** for the following reasons:

- (i) Revenue savings do not take into account the reduction in income as a result of the reduction

- in GAE, as described in 6.13;
- (ii) Revenue savings do not properly allow for the cost of educating a pupil at Inchturre Primary School.

Allowing for these factors would reduce the savings to closer to £50,000.

- 6.2.3 There would be reduced energy consumption if the school is to be mothballed. Children would travel further to school in Inchturre, however most would be provided with transport, including those who already attend Inchturre Primary School as the result of a successful placing request currently.
- 6.2.4 The roll at Abernyte Primary School is unlikely to exceed 6 pupils in the next 4 years. There is evidence that pupils from the catchment area currently choose to attend other schools in the area instead of Abernyte Primary School and this will be for a range of reasons. In addition, there is no planned house building in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years.

#### **Response:**

Please see the responses to 3.7 and 6.1.2.

- 6.2.5 It is also possible that if the school is mothballed, pending an increase in pupil numbers, children will become settled at Inchturre Primary School and would not return to Abernyte Primary School in the event of the school re-opening at a future date.
- 6.2.6 It could be considered that mothballing creates continued uncertainty for parents and the community. In addition, there are no opportunities to progress alternative uses for the building, which may include community asset transfer, lease or sale of the building, all of which may benefit the wider community. Therefore, on balance, it is considered that mothballing is more likely to be a negative than a positive, in terms of community impact.
- 6.2.7 If Abernyte Primary School was mothballed on an indefinite basis, Perth and Kinross Council would incur annual costs to maintain the building. Unoccupied buildings can deteriorate more rapidly than operational premises and can become a focus for opportunistic crimes and/or targets for vandalism whether the premises are located in urban or rural areas.
- 6.2.8 For the reasons above, mothballing the school in anticipation of increased pupil numbers where there is no house building planned is, therefore, not considered a reasonable alternative.

### **6.3 Catchment area is reviewed to determine whether this would increase the school roll sufficiently at Abernyte Primary School to ensure the future sustainability of the school**

- 6.3.1 A catchment review can, in principle, be a reasonable option in some cases to increase the sustainability of a school. An in-depth analysis in each case is required to ascertain if a sustainable increase in school roll could be achieved and a detrimental impact on neighbouring schools is not created as a result.

6.3.2 Approval was given by Lifelong Learning Committee on 21 March 2018 ([Report No. 18/86 refers](#)) to carry out further assessment of the proposed option to increase the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School. This would include the area to the north of the A90 which is currently in the Inchtute Primary School catchment area. The purpose of the assessment was to seek clarity as to whether an increased and sustainable school roll could be achieved for Abernyte Primary School through extending the catchment area.

6.3.3 In May 2018 there were 21 primary school age children, known to Education and Children's Services, living to the north of the A90 in the Inchtute Primary School catchment area. Information obtained from the NHS in March 2018 indicated that there were 10 children under the age of 5 living in this area. There are 17 children known to Education and Children's Services (11 primary and 6 under 5's) living within the Abernyte Primary School catchment area. Five of the 11 primary school age catchment children attend Abernyte Primary School.

These figures above (i.e. 16 under 5 year olds) indicate that there would potentially be sufficient pupils with an extended catchment area to increase the roll of Abernyte Primary School to 13 pupils by 2021/22. This assumes that all under 5's from the extended catchment including the under 5's from the current Abernyte Primary School catchment area, attend Abernyte Primary School from 2019/20 when they reach school age.

**Response:**

It is important to note that of the 10 children under the age of 5 referred to above, the Council were only able to contact 3 children through the pre-consultation exercise (because they had siblings at Inchtute Primary) and were not able to contact the other 7 children who were not known to Education and Children's Services.

**This information is included in the Options Appraisal document but has been omitted from this proposal paper.**

6.3.4 In order to develop a more accurate understanding of the potential for a catchment change leading to an increased roll at Abernyte, all families (parents/carers living with primary or children under 5) known to the Council living in the potential new catchment area were invited to attend individual meetings to discuss the potential catchment change. This included those families living in the current catchment for Abernyte and those included in the identified area north of the A90. Families living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area were included in the meetings to ascertain whether they would consider moving their school age children back to the school or placing their under 5's at the school in the future if the catchment was extended.

6.3.5 Based on the evidence gathered and detailed in the options appraisal, it is unlikely that an extended catchment area would increase pupil numbers at Abernyte Primary School or create a sustainable school roll for future years.

**Response:**

We do not agree with this statement.

As set out in our response to 1.7, the evidence gathered for the options appraisal exercise was limited

in a number of ways.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2019 – Statutory Guidance [5] states in paragraph 23 that:

*“A disadvantage to the pre-consultation is that the process set out in the 2010 Act does not apply to it. This and the lack of access to those requirements during pre-consultation (for example, to challenge inaccuracies) can leave communities frustrated.”*

We were not able to challenge the pre-consultation of the assessment of the catchment area review option. If the pre-consultation had been conducted to the same standards set out in the 2010 Act there would have been more transparency about the details of the consultation proposal, who had been consulted and in what way which would have improved the quality of the evidence.

The key limitations of the pre-consultation exercise are:

- the evidence was based on families who already send their children to other schools and do not want to uproot them. As the proposal document states in 6.2.5 *“It is also possible that if the school is mothballed, pending an increase in pupil numbers, children will become settled at Inchtute Primary School and would not return to Abernyte Primary School in the event of the school re-opening at a future date.”*

The assessment of the catchment review option did just this, it asked the parents of children who are already settled at Inchtute Primary School and did not manage to contact families who only have pre-school children.

- The details of the catchment area review were very limited. Only one option was considered and the Knapp was not included.

6.3.6 There would be minimal additional transport costs incurred for transporting children living within the existing Abernyte Primary School catchment area as existing arrangements could accommodate future pupils. There would be an approximate additional cost of £17,977 per annum to transport the pupils who live in the area to the north of the A90 within the existing Inchtute Primary School catchment area to Abernyte Primary School if they were to attend the school.

6.3.7 The approximate maximum travel time for these pupils from first pick up to arriving at school would be 30 minutes. The longest travel time for a pupil in this area currently travelling to Inchtute Primary School is 44 minutes. There may be an additional environmental impact with this option as it is likely additional vehicles will be required to transport pupils.

**Response:**

We do not understand why additional vehicles would be required to transport pupils. Please see our response to 6.3.8.

6.3.8 There would be a continued revenue costs of approximately £120,786 to run the school as a single teacher school. In addition £17,977 would be required for the



additional transport costs. A capital cost of £333,090 will be required to upgrade the building.

**Response:**

We do not agree with these figures.

These figures do not include the increase in GAE as a result of the higher school roll. For example, an increase in the number of pupils from 6 to 15 would increase the GAE from c. £18k to c. £47k. This would reduce the revenue costs net of GAE to c. £73k, which is c. £5k per child (in line with the average for Perth and Kinross schools).

In addition, we question what the additional £17,977 quoted in respect of transport costs represents. Children who live in the area to the north of the A90 within the existing Inchtute Primary School catchment area are presumably already transported to Inchtute Primary and transport costs are already incurred by the Council. Paragraph 6.3.7 states that the longest travel time for a pupil in this area is 44 minutes and that this would reduce to 30 minutes if the pupils were to attend Abernyte school.

We have asked for clarification on the transport-related points, but the response that we have received does not answer the question.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that:

- (i) The 17,977 quoted above does not represent an increase in the overall cost to the Council of pupil transport; and
- (ii) The overall cost of pupil transport would be lower if pupils who live in the area to the north of the A90 within the existing Inchtute Primary School catchment area were to attend Abernyte school.

Please see the response to 6.1.3 regarding capital costs.

6.3.9 There is no evidence that increasing the catchment area into the area north of the A90 would significantly increase pupil numbers and create a sustainable pupil roll for Abernyte Primary School. This is due to children from the Abernyte Primary School catchment area already choosing not to attend their catchment school and parents living within the proposed extended area indicating that they would not send their children to Abernyte Primary School if the catchment area was changed. It is, therefore, not considered reasonable to proceed with a change to the catchment area as an alternative.

**Response:**

We do not agree with this. Please see the response to 6.3.5.

**6.4 Consider closing Abernyte Primary School and move pupils to a neighbouring catchment school**

6.4.1 If Abernyte Primary School was closed, pupils would be accommodated at Inchtute Primary School which is approximately 3.4 miles away and is the nearest school in



Perth and Kinross. Children would have to travel between approximately 3.3 miles and approximately 5.8 miles to attend Inchtute Primary School. The maximum time spent travelling on the bus would be 20 minutes for the child who has to travel furthest. In some other more rural areas within Perth and Kinross, pupils are travelling greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles away from their designated school.

**Response:**

How has the travelling time been assessed? Some pupils live close to Longforgan than to Inchtute and it would be unreasonable to expect them to travel to Inchtute.

6.4.2 Inchtute Primary School currently accommodates a number of pupils from Abernyte Primary as a result of placing requests. Inchtute Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers should Abernyte Primary School be closed. This option is considered to be reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact in Sections 10 -14.

**Response:**

We are concerned about the reliability of the capacity projections, given the history of additional building work being required to increase the capacity of Inchtute Primary.

We have provided further commentary in our response to 8.5.

6.4.3 There will be environmental benefits from a reduction in energy consumption if the school is to be closed. There is little negative environmental impact in relation to the transport of pupils or the travel arrangements of staff due to the relatively short distances and small numbers involved. There would be environmental benefits to Abernyte Primary School pupils being transferred to Inchtute Primary School in that they would be transported by the Council rather than travelling individually.

**Response:**

We do not consider that “There would be environmental benefits to Abernyte Primary School pupils being transferred to Inchtute Primary School in that they would be transported by the Council rather than travelling individually” is a valid argument.

We expect that the environment benefits are maximized by having the shortest maximum transportation distance, which, as set out in 6.3.7, would be achieved if the catchment area were changed.

6.4.4 The revenue savings generated from closing Abernyte Primary School amount to approximately £108,213 including mothball costs annually. This is predominately made up of staff and building costs. The capital cost of upgrading the building of £333,090 would not be required. A capital receipt would be forthcoming if the building was sold or income would be generated through a lease.

**Response:**

As stated in our responses to 4.12 and 14.1, the savings quoted of £108,213 and 333,090 are **materially overstated** for the following reasons:

- Revenue savings do not take into account the reduction in income as a result of the reduction in GAE, as described in 6.13;
- Revenue savings do not properly allow for the cost of educating a pupil at Inchtute Primary School; and
- Capital costs appear to have been based on a desktop exercise and no evidence has been provided that the costs are specific to Abernyte Primary School.

The first two areas are described in more detail in our response to 14.1.

**We estimate the saving to be much lower, at around £55k based on 8 pupils.**

Small schools with full class complements can operate at a similar cost per pupil to larger schools.

**We note that with a pupil roll at Abernyte of only 15 pupils, the cost to Perth and Kinross Council per pupil would be in line with the average across Perth and Kinross schools.**

6.4.5 Pupil numbers at Abernyte Primary School have been reducing year on year since 2010 when the school had 21 pupils. In the past 8 years, the projected number of P1 pupils to attend the school was 16; however, only 5 pupils were registered at Abernyte Primary School over that period.

The P1 intake figures over the next 4 years are also small, with a maximum of 5 pre- school pupils living in the catchment area. There were no pupils with an Abernyte catchment area address registered to start at Abernyte Primary School in August 2018.

6.4.6 It is not considered that the closure of the school would have a negative impact on the sustainability of the community. Abernyte is located approximately 3.4 miles from Inchtute and approximately 4.4 miles from Longforgan. The community currently travel to access health, retail and leisure facilities.

**Response:**

What evidence is there for this assertion?

If the school were to close there would be no public buildings left. A proportion of Abernyte residents are elderly, do not drive and depend on local groups and events for social inclusion.

6.4.7 It is considered that the closure of the school would not have a significant impact on the community as evidence suggests that there are other facilities available for use with ACIC providing a catalyst to an active community. In addition, amenities including post offices, shops, GP surgeries, churches, hotels and schools are easily accessible in nearby villages.

**Response:**

What evidence is there for this assertion?

There are no other facilities available in Abernyte to host the events that are in place already. Local amenities are not easily accessible if you do not drive. It would be extremely difficult for parents and the wider local community from Abernyte to attend school events in Inchtute without having access to a car. In particular, elderly grandparents and other members of the community who currently support school events in Abernyte would find it difficult to continue to support school events, which increases social exclusion.

Inchtute Primary has very limited parking available (particularly parking with disabled access), which would make it difficult for members of the Abernyte community to attend school events in Inchtute.

6.4.8 Analysis of recent pupil information shows that the school roll is low primarily due to low pupil numbers within the catchment area and parents requesting placements at other local schools. Currently only 5 out of 11 children living in the catchment area attend Abernyte Primary School. In addition, there is no planned house building in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years.

**Response:**

We disagree with these statements and have responded to them in a number of other places such as 1.4 and 3.7.

6.4.9 It is considered that closure of the school is the most appropriate response to the issue of decreasing numbers of young children living in the catchment area. This, coupled with parents choosing to place their children at other primary schools, has led to the very small school roll. There is no indication that the roll will increase in future years as pre-school children numbers are very low and are likely to remain so. There is no evidence to support extending the catchment area as the evidence gathered outlines that it is unlikely that the school roll would increase sufficiently to create a sustainable roll. There is no evidence to indicate that this option would have an adverse impact on the community, travelling arrangements or the environment.

**Response:**

We disagree that there is no evidence to indicate that this option would have an adverse impact on the community, travelling arrangements or the environment.

Children would have to travel further than they have to at the moment, therefore there would be an adverse impact on both them and the environment.

Members of the community would lose the only public building that is available to host inclusive community events, which would have an adverse impact. The church is not equipped to host large community activities due to the lack of toilet and kitchen facilities, the seating arrangements and lack of outdoor space. In addition, although the church is a welcoming place, not all members of the community are comfortable in religious establishments.

The social exclusion of members of the community who cannot drive would increase.

The Options Appraisal [1b] sets out the views of the community. A number of people clearly said that they consider that closing the school would have an adverse impact on them.

6.4.10 This option, if implemented, brings educational benefits for the Abernyte Primary School pupils moving to Inchtute Primary School as they would benefit from peer support and learning groups across stages and between classes and early years provision.

#### **Response:**

We do not believe that, in aggregate, there are educational benefits from moving to Inchtute Primary School. We set out in more detail our reasons for this in section 9 below.

Pupils in Abernyte benefit from being part of a supporting and engaged community. None of the negative aspects of moving rural children to a large school like Inchtute Primary have been considered in this report.

## **7. THE OPTION FOR CONSULTATION FROM OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

7.1 The Options Appraisal has demonstrated that the option for the permanent closure of Abernyte Primary School, with the pupils instead attending Inchtute Primary School, is the only reasonable alternative in response to the unsustainable school roll and represents the best value for education purposes. The following sections now consider that option in more depth.

#### **Response:**

We do not agree that the Options Appraisal demonstrated that this option is the only reasonable alternative.

As stated above in our responses to 1.7 and 6.3.5 the option to extend the catchment area has not been properly assessed. In addition, although Perth and Kinross Council have been aware of the decline in the school roll over a number of years, they have not taken any steps to address the decrease in the school roll or provided support to any suggestions provided by the Parent Council.

We would like the Council to clarify what they mean by “best value for education purposes”.

In our response to 2.4 we referred to the finding of the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education [2] that *“Under-used capacity compared to urban norms is almost inevitable in serving a sparse population. Where ‘real’ spare capacity exists, in the form of surplus classrooms or other space, it would be better to consider it as an opportunity to base additional services at the school, such as health, childcare, adult learning or employment services. This would allow local authorities to*

*work with partners to co-fund the building or facility, making it more economical to maintain.”*

The Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education also stated that *“it is important to avoid an argument that any cost saving from a closure would leave more funds for other educational purposes and have an educational benefit for the majority of children in the area, as this could be an argument against many aspects of rural service provision.”* This guidance has also been included in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance.

We consider that “best value” could be delivered in a number of ways and that the Council has not tried to progress any options other than closure.

## **8. INCHTURE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

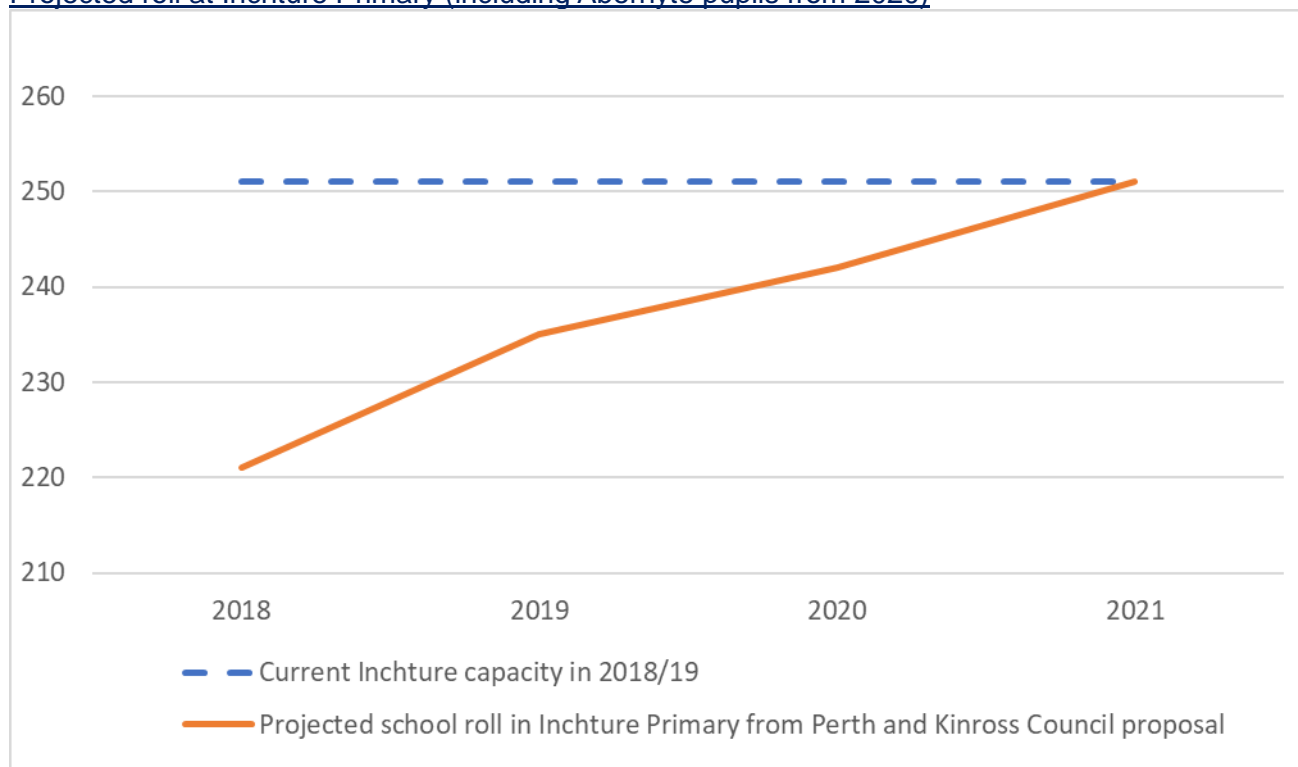
- 8.1 Inchtire Primary School is located in the village of Inchtire situated in the Carse of Gowrie, approximately 13 miles from Perth and approximately 9 miles from Dundee.
- 8.2 Inchtire Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to P1 – P7 pupils from the village of Inchtire and surrounding areas of Rait, Kilspindie, Kinnaird, Craigdallie, Knapp and Ballindean. There is also nursery provision at Inchtire Primary School which has provision for a maximum of 35 children at any one time, offering up to 70 part-time nursery places. Nursery provision at Inchtire Primary School will be increased by August 2020 to provide for the extension of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). A plan of the school site for Inchtire Primary School is attached as Appendix 4.
- 8.3 The catchment area for Inchtire Primary School adjoins the catchment areas for Abernyste Primary School, Errol Primary School, St Madoes Primary School, RDM Primary School, Balbeggie Primary School and Longforgan Primary School. Appendix 2 shows the present school catchment area for Inchtire Primary School.
- 8.4 Inchtire Primary School has capacity for 264 primary pupils. The pupil roll was 220 pupils (Census 2017) at Inchtire Primary School. The occupancy based on the Census 2017 is 83.3%. The pupil roll of the nursery was 39 pupils (Census 2017). The pupil roll at October 2018 is 216 pupils.
- 8.5 Historical and projected pupil roll data for Inchtire Primary School is attached as Appendix 6.

### **Response:**

The data set out in Appendix 6 is shown in the graph below. We note the following:

- The roll at Inchtire Primary School is projected to increase over the next 3 years.
- A capacity 264 pupils is quoted in the proposal document. This is the “planning” capacity, which is unachievable given the current and future age profile of pupils in the school. The actual current capacity (the “working” capacity) is lower at only 251.
- The future working capacity is unlikely to be higher than the current capacity, therefore based on the projection figures additional classes would be required by 2021, only one year after the closure of Abernyste Primary.

### Projected roll at Inchtute Primary (including Abernyste pupils from 2020)



### “Planning” vs “Working” Capacity

The guidance set out in [4] provides information on when particular capacity measures should be used.

Paragraph 1.1 states:

*“**Planning Capacity** is a physical, theoretical measure of the total number of pupils which could be accommodated in a school, based on the total number of teaching spaces, the size of those spaces and the class size maxima.*

*“It is important to note here that **in reality, Planning Capacity is rarely achieved** due to the size of a school and how many classes it can offer, differences in class sizes for different age groups, etc. Some pupil distributions are more efficient, allowing some schools to operate more closely to Planning Capacity than others.*

*“Planning Capacity should be used for broad strategic issues relating to school provision, e.g. for forward planning for the school estate, to assess the impact of new government policies, etc.”*

Paragraph 2.1 states:

*“Working Capacity is a dynamic and more realistic measure of the total number of pupils which can be accommodated in a school in a particular school session. The Planning Capacity is adjusted based on the organisational needs of the school that session e.g. taking into account pupil roll, composite classes, staffing etc. to calculate Working Capacity.*

*“The **Working Capacity** should be used to determine the number of places available in a particular school session and therefore, when considering placing requests and other issues relating to a specific school session.”*

We believe that the planning capacity has been included in the proposal document as it relates to forward planning of the school estate. However, in this situation, where the projected capacity in 2020 and 2021 is so close to the maximum, it is more appropriate to use the working capacity. As

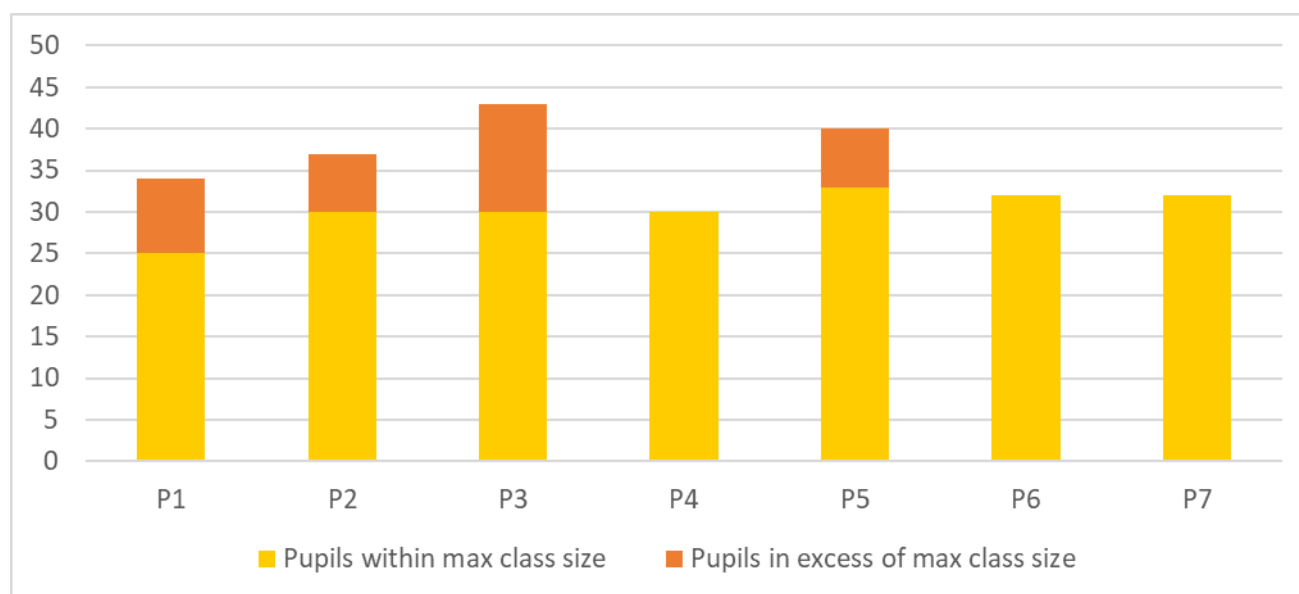
noted in [4] planning capacity is rarely achieved. If the planning capacity is used, there is a high risk that due to the distribution of pupils within the school in 2020 means that the optimal class split cannot be achieved and there are insufficient spaces in the school to accommodate children from Abernyte.

### Why the Planning Capacity quoted is unachievable in practice

The quoted capacity in the proposal of 264 is a notional “planning” capacity based on a particular profile of classes. Inchtire Primary has nine classes. The maximum number of pupils in a class is regulated at 25 for P1, 30 for P2-3, 33 for P4-7 and 25 for any composite class. The capacity quoted in the proposal of 264 is based on a P1 class of 25, 2 classes of 30, 4 classes of 33, and two additional spaces accommodating 22 and 25 pupils respectively ( $25 + 2 \times 30 + 3 \times 33 + 22 + 25 = 264$ ).

The current capacity is **lower**, at 251, because there are currently **four** composite classes due to the profile of the pupils across the different years ( $1 \times 25 + 2 \times 30 + 2 \times 33 + 4 \times 25 = 251$ ). Composite classes must have a lower maximum number of pupils. More composite classes means that the planning capacity of 264 cannot ever be achieved.

The need for composite classes in 2021 looks likely to be at least as great as it is now. Based on the profile of current and future pupil numbers it is impossible to have a distribution of classes with only two composite classes across Inchtire school. The chart below shows the projected number of children attending Inchtire in 2021, including children from Abernyte, for each year group. The maximum class size for each year group is shown in yellow, with the pupils that would have to be accommodated in a composite class shown in red. For example, for the P1 class, the total number of pupils is projected to be 34 but the maximum class size is 25.



The numbers of pupils in P1, P2, P3 and P5 are above the maximum and would require composite classes. The only way in which this could be done with only two composite classes (in line with the quoted capacity of 264) is to have composite classes that cover a wide range of ages, e.g. a combined P1-3 class and a combined P3-5 class. This is not in keeping with the way composite classes currently work at Inchtire and would not be a popular solution with parents. It is also clear from the graph there would be very limited spaces in the P4, P6 and P7 (maximum permitted 33). This would mean any children moving to the school are likely to end up in the composite classes.

Any other combination of classes allowing composites to only include children from two adjacent school years would require at least four composite classes, with a total capacity similar to the current capacity of the school today. If more than four composite classes were required the capacity would reduce further.



- 8.6 Inchtire Primary School has been graded 'B' for suitability (Satisfactory – Performing well but with minor problems - the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities). Inchtire Primary School was surveyed on 27 April 2016 and was graded condition 'B' (Satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).

**Response:**

We would like the Council to explain the reasons for Inchtire Primary School being graded 'B' for suitability. Since Abernyte Primary School is graded 'A' for suitability we conclude that pupils will be disadvantaged by moving to Inchtire.

- 8.7 The impact on the school roll of new housing in the Inchtire Primary School catchment area has been examined and future pupil projections have been considered using aggregated GP registration data.

The highest projected occupancy level, including house building, for future years at Inchtire Primary School is 97% by 2021/22. The capacity of Inchtire Primary School can be increased beyond 264 pupils without the school being extended.

**Response:**

We would like to understand how the projected school roll has been calculated, for example, what assumptions have been made, how sensitive the occupancy figures are to key assumptions, how accurate projected occupancy levels have been in the past.

As noted in our response to 8.5, we consider the appropriate capacity figure to use in this case is the working capacity as the projected school roll is so close to the total capacity.

Extending the capacity beyond 264 pupils without extending the school would have a detrimental impact on the available space per pupil within the school and outside in the school grounds. We note that the most recent edition of the Inchtire and Area Newsletter there is a comment about a classroom at Inchtire Primary that does not have any windows. We do not understand how an additional classroom can be added within the existing building without a negative impact on the staff and pupils.

## **9. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT**

- 9.1 This Educational Benefits Statement is written from the perspective of benefits, should the preferred option outlined in the options appraisal subsequently be implemented. This statement is focused on the educational benefits for pupils attending Inchtire Primary School.

**Response:**

We do not consider that the educational benefits statement has been produced in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 or in line with the self-evaluation toolkit that has been



prepared by Education Scotland to assist councils in the preparation of education benefits statements. We believe that the presentation in the proposal document gives a misleading impression of the “educational benefits”.

We were told at the public meeting on 12 November that the educational benefit statement is produced in line with a framework that is set out by the legal team at the Council. We have been given no explanation on what the framework is or how it meets the needs of Education Scotland only that *“Perth and Kinross Council is content that we have followed both the legislation and guidance issued by both Scottish Government and Education Scotland and that the legal advice given to the Council reflects the position stated in the legislation”*.

The educational benefit statement was described to us on 12 November as being simply a description of the education provision at Inchtute Primary School. That is, there is no comparison of the education provision at Inchtute against the provision at Abernyte.

We do not consider that this is in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance [5] which states in section 2.3 that in the educational benefits statements the authority must:

- Explain how the authority intends to **minimize or avoid any adverse effects** of the proposal
- Include its **reasons** for reaching the views which it sets out regarding the educational benefits
- Support its reasons with **evidence**, including, for example, HM Inspector reports or condition or suitability ratings of the schools involved

It also states that:

- The closure of a school is proposed for positive educational reasons
- The benefits that would accrue to the pupils must be clearly set out
- Any proposal is likely to give rise to pros and cons and the balance of these should be explored in the educational benefits statement

Without replicating in full the wording of the Statutory Guidance here, the frequent use of words such as “improve”, “better”, “more effective”, “enhance”, appears very strongly to suggest that the use of the word “benefit” in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is in line with what the common understanding of the word, i.e. an advantage or profit gained from something.

The educational benefits statement in this proposal does not set out the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal, does not describe how the education available in Inchtute represents an improvement on the education available in Abernyte. None of the statements have been supported by evidence.

The “mitigation of adverse effects” set out in section 16 considers only the impact of having longer journey to school and makes no mention at all of the disadvantages from an educational point of view.

The proposal paper therefore presents a biased view that is very misleading to people reading the proposal who do not have information about Abernyte Primary School..

## **Learning and Teaching**

- 9.2 Children attending Inchtute Primary School have access to a wide range of teaching and support staff from early years and primary. Inchtute has a nursery and nine primary classes. This allows children to transition throughout the school as they get older and be taught by different practitioners in different settings.

**Response:**

- Children at Abernyte Primary School benefit from being taught primarily by a headteacher (teaching 4 days a week), who is a very experienced leader of learning.
- Children at Abernyte benefit from a consistent approach and a seamless transition between school years, unlike larger schools where there can be gaps in the school year as children move from one year to the next and teachers require time to get to know their new class.
- Children attending Abernyte also have access to a wide range of teaching and support staff.
  - Headteacher support teacher 1 day a week.
  - Classroom support is provided 2.5 days a week and there is administrative support every day.
  - A range of specialist teachers provide teaching in art, music, drama, instrumental tuition and PE.
  - There are opportunities to work together with other schools.

- 9.3 Pupils have access to early years provision within the setting of the school, allowing for seamless transition to P1, with pupils already familiar with the physical setting as well as the opportunity for regular work with primary peers.

**Response:**

Transition to P1 at Abernyte would be the same as at any school where there is no nursery provision. Children have a wide range of transition activities available such as going to school for lunch with their parents and attending for half days to settle in.

In practice, however, such transition activities are not as necessary at Abernyte as they would be at a larger school because children already know the school very well and feel part of the school community before they start school. This is achieved through school events to which the community are invited such as the Eco Groundforce day, Community Cafes, Parent Council events (such as Bingo and Beetle Drives) and also organized community events such as the harvest festival.

- 9.4 At Inchtute Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review, which comes of having a Headteacher and Depute Headteacher who are not class committed, and teaching staff across nine classes. Staff collaborate across the school for planning, learning and teaching to ensure children receive experiences that are relevant and present clear challenge and enjoyment. Staff work together to moderate standards of learning and achievement in the school to ensure that children make appropriate progress in a structured and progressive way through Curriculum for Excellence levels.

**Response:**

- Staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous and professional development and review which comes from having a permanent Headteacher who works closely with colleagues from across the Local Management Group and other rural schools.
- As described in our response to 9.2, there are variety of teaching staff throughout the week and also area support teachers and supply teachers who are well known to the children.
- As at any other school, staff at Abernyte work together to moderate standards of learning and achievement. The way in which they do this is shared with the Parent Council at our regular meetings and is also included in the school Standards and Quality Report.

- 9.5 At Inchtute Primary School, there are large classes, and all age groups within the school. The size of the classes affords all pupils the opportunity to build relationships at peer level and across all stages in the school and in mixed sex groups. This allows the sharing of ideas, peer support, informal mentoring and relationship building, all which contribute to the whole school experience for all pupils.

**Response:**

The small class sizes in Abernyte allow more attention to be given to children and means that the learning experience can be tailored to each child.

We believe that moving to larger class sizes would have an adverse effect on the pupils. The benefits

of having a smaller school are:

- Children have more opportunities to lead activities than they would at a larger school. This improves their communication skills, confidence and resilience which helps the transition to high school.
- Teachers in rural schools know their children's strengths and weaknesses in more detail than in larger schools and can target their teaching better.
- Children build strong, trusting relationships with peers and with teachers.
- Children feel more safe and included in the class, whatever their differences. The safe environment makes them much more comfortable taking risks and they are therefore more likely to challenge themselves to learn new things.
- We believe that the benefits of smaller schools lead to better educational outcomes.

9.6 Inchtur Primary School has provision for two days consultancy led support from a Pupil Support Teacher, allowing group work to take place, as well as 57 hours of PSA support, which not only benefits pupils with ASN, but all other pupils, who can work in these groups, and benefit from short term support.

**Response:**

Abernyte Primary School also has access to a Pupil Support Teacher on a consultancy basis and 2.5 days per week of support from a Pupil Support Assistant. The provision for Pupil Support is set out in the school handbook.

We note that, based on the figure provided in the proposal document, the level of pupil support per pupil is higher at Abernyte than at Inchtur, therefore there would be disadvantages for children moving from Abernyte to Inchtur.

9.7 Work is differentiated to adapt to pupils' needs and pupils benefit from being able to work on co-operative learning tasks with others. Flexibility in staffing allows staff to be creative in planning for children with additional support needs both universally and for targeted need, thus addressing potential barriers to learning.

**Response:**

All of these statements apply equally well to Abernyte as to Inchtur Primary School.

The Headteacher knows the children very well and is able to differentiate work for pupils. Pupils have many, many opportunities to work on co-operative learning tasks.

9.8 Teachers work collaboratively, at Inchtur Primary School, creating links in learning across stages on a termly basis. There are wide opportunities for collaborative/cooperative learning.

**Response:**

All of these statements apply equally well to Abernyte as to Inchtute Primary School.

Staff at Abernyte Primary School work collaboratively with each other and with other schools in the Local Management Group and the Single Teacher Network. Information on this is shared regularly with the Parent Council.

- 9.9 There are opportunities to improve arrangements for planning and taking forward improvements through effective self-evaluation for all staff. The support of a Headteacher and Depute Headteacher can be effective in these improvements.

**Response:**

Exactly the same opportunities for improvement are available at Abernyte. The School Improvement Plan sets out the output of the self-evaluation process. This is discussed with the Parent Council and shared with all parents.

- 9.10 A collegiate approach to professional engagement amongst all staff is evident within the school. Staff come together regularly to review and improve practice as a school, with partner services and other schools in the Local Management Group. There is a strong commitment across all staff to lead improvements in learning and teaching from evidence based research. This enhances the quality of learning and teaching through shared opportunities to develop effective approaches and to share and moderate standards.

**Response:**

As discussed in previous responses in this section, these statements apply equally to staff at Abernyte Primary School, as demonstrated by the School Improvement Plan and the Standards and Quality Report.

### **Environment for Learning**

- 9.11 In 2014 considerable resources were allocated to the school, which saw an extension which added three classroom areas, a General Purpose (GP) room, library, meeting and group rooms and a multi-purpose games hall.

**Response:**

Pupils at Abernyte have access to a General Purpose room and a library.

9.12 In 2016 an outdoor Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) was opened, which can be used by children and the community.

**Response:**

We believe that the activities in the MUGA are restricted during play time.

9.13 The school grounds at Inchtute provide facilities for football, cricket, netball and athletics, with range of surfaces where physical activities can take place at all times of the year.

**Response:**

Abernyte Primary School has a large playground with a hard surface which can be used for games and a very large playing field which the pupils can use every day, all year round. We note that the playing field has not been shown in the map shown in appendix 3.

The playground has bike racks so that pupils can store their bikes at school, a trim track and a traversing wall. There is also covered shelter so that pupils can play outside in rainy weather.

Unlike Inchtute, pupils can play any kind of sport in the playing field during their breaks.

Unlike Inchtute, pupils of all ages can play together.

The debate at the Scottish Parliament on 1 November 2018, "Outdoor classroom day", highlights the importance of outdoor play for both mental and physical health. Abernyte Primary School **has ideal facilities to support outdoor play and learning.**

9.14 Inchtute has attractive, bright, well designed classrooms, naturally lit with modern teaching equipment and resources.

**Response:**

Abernyte has attractive, bright and well designed classrooms in a lovely traditional building. It is naturally lit with modern teaching equipment and resources.

9.15 Classrooms are semi open plan, allowing the opportunity for children to work alongside each other in other classes and break out areas. These break out spaces allow for flexibility in teaching methods and afford a range of learning opportunities, from working in small groups, to vertical learning with children from other stages and classes.

**Response:**

Abernyte also has flexible teaching spaces and also makes good use of a range of learning opportunities including working in small groups and vertical learning.

We note that break out spaces are not required for dealing with challenging behavior as there are no behavior issues at the school.

9.16 All classrooms have teaching walls, with interactive whiteboards, providing the opportunity for all children to access the curriculum in modern and innovative ways, through the use of smartboards and interactive technology.

**Response:**

Abernyte makes extensive use of technology. The development of digital learning has been one of the school improvement priorities which has been achieved successfully. The technology used includes:

- interactive whiteboards
- 6 laptops
- an iPad for each child
- animation software
- the 2017 Christmas show was produced on video.

9.17 Inchtore Primary is accessible for children and adults with Additional Support Needs. It is on one level and has DDA compliant toilet facilities for children and adults.

**Response:**

Abernyte is accessible for children and adults with Additional Support Needs. It is on one level and has DDA compliant toilet facilities for children and adults.

The school run regular community café events which are well attended and accessible for disabled people, promoting social inclusion.

Inchtore Primary is not easily accessible for disabled people. There is very limited disabled parking and it is difficult to access and move around because it is so busy.

9.18 Inchtore is an Eco school, benefitting from an outdoor area which facilitates eco learning and promotes health and wellbeing through play and team games, with features such as a willow tunnel, trim trail, wooded area, grass area and large hard standing playground for team games.

**Response:**

Abernyte has been an Eco school with Green Flag status since 2010. Inchtore achieved Green Flag status in 2016.

Abernyte has a willow tunnel, trim trail, wooded area, grass area and large hard standing playground for team games. In addition, it has a greenhouse, space to grow fruit, herbs and vegetables and access to a large 2 acre playing field with mature fruit trees.

Abernyte has strong connections with members of the local community who support eco activities at the school ranging from litter pick and plant party to juicing apples and pears from the orchard. Children experience how the Eco activities connect them to the land round about them and the

importance of their role in the community.

## Experiences and Opportunities

- 9.19 The school has pupils of both sexes at each stage, allowing all pupils to interact and socialise with groups of children their own age and sex, at appropriate levels.

### Response:

Increasing the school roll at Abernyte would enable more interaction with larger groups of children of their own age and sex.

The small size of the school at Abernyte means that pupils are very good at mixing across different year groups.

- 9.20 There are numerous opportunities for social interaction in terms of both peer activities in class and at break times and accessibility to school clubs and extra-curricular activities, team activities, sports, such as football and netball, music and drama. In addition, there are eight pupils councils, facilitated by a teacher, but pupil led. These are the Eco council, the School Improvement council, the Health and Citizenship council and the Friendship and Community council. These give pupils opportunities to lead and make decisions.

### Response:

- Pupils in P5-7 at Abernyte have access to woodwind instrumental tuition provided by the Instrumental Music Service (IMS). Having access to instrumental tuition is a huge plus for pupils at the school and the benefits of musical education are well documented. Children also take part in the IMS Central Groups and attend IMS music camps, performing in Perth Concert Hall.
- After school clubs provided in the last year include a games club, a craft club and a cycling club.
- There is an Eco council and a Pupil Council and all children get the opportunity to take on leadership roles.
- All children are involved in performing at community café events and Christmas and end-of-term performances. They have also performed at the Perform in Perth music festival.

- 9.21 Health & Wellbeing is promoted at Inchture, with a tuckshop run by pupils and health and enterprise group run activities for all pupils one afternoon a week. Inchture also has a Bike crew who heighten awareness of bike/cycling safety through organising events for the school community. As well as promoting health & wellbeing, these also provide the pupils with life and social skills.

### Response:



Health and wellbeing is also promoted in Abernyte Primary School. Recent activities include gymnastics coaching at the Dick McTaggart Centre, an annual 3-day skiing trip and a day camp at Dalguise.

9.22 Inchtute has an active Parent Council, fully supportive of the school community.

**Response:**

Abernyte has an active Parent Council, which is fully supportive of the school and also includes representation from the local community.

9.23 There is provision at Inchtute of out of school care, which offers structured play for the children, and also provides a useful service to working parents and carers, allowing access to the workforce for parents who might otherwise be limited by school hours.

**Response:**

Out of school care is a useful service. We have discussed this with the Council in the past and again ask the Council to consider innovative ways in which they can support the parents of children at Abernyte School to access the out of school care in Inchtute, as recommended by the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education that we describe in our response to 6.1.6.

- 9.24 There are opportunities available to pupils through twinning links with Fleac in France, widening opportunities to experience new cultures and language, building on the work done in school.

**Response:**

Abernyte is also twinned with Fleac in France. In the last two school exchange trips from Fleac (in 2009 and 2015) a high percentage of families from Abernyte Primary School hosted children from Fleac.

In May 2018 Abernyte Primary School provided an innovative online French course for families interested in family learning. The children also benefit from expert tuition in French from their regular headteacher support teacher.

### **Summary of Educational Benefits**

**Response:**

The statements in this section simply describe Inchtore Primary School. They do not evidence benefits to pupils. Similar statements could equally be made about Abernyte Primary school, such as:

- Abernyte is a lovely traditional school set in a beautiful landscape with excellent outdoor facilities for outdoor play, which is so important for both mental and physical health.
- Children benefit from small numbers of pupils in the class. The Headteacher knows each child well and can tailor learning appropriately. Standards of behavior in the school are high.
- Children benefit from more leadership and performance opportunities, which build independence and confidence, than they would experience in a larger school.
- Children joining Abernyte School have a smooth transition into Primary One. The school is very welcoming and pre-school children already feel at home there due to the many school events that involve members of the community.
- Modern teaching methods are employed at Abernyte, with excellent IT facilities and use of IT in teaching.
- There are flexible spaces both inside and outside the school.
- Children benefit from being taught by a head teacher, who is a leader of learning. They also have access to a wide range of specialist teaching and support staff.

- 9.25 Inchtore is a bright, modern school, with mixed sex classes at all stages in the school, including nursery.

- 9.26 The school roll allows all children to participate in peer support, classroom learning, and vertical learning groups, with the benefit of allowing children to have a wide and varied range of learning experiences.

- 9.27 Learning and teaching at Inchtute starts with the early years provision, supporting a seamless transition to Primary One.
- 9.28 The building lends itself to modern teaching methods, with good use of break out space, accessible and flexible teaching and outdoor areas and good facilities for sport and leisure.
- 9.29 Staffing levels at Inchtute are good, with ASN support, and non-class committed senior management.

## **10. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSAL**

- 10.1 This section provides a more detailed assessment of the proposal which is considered to be the only reasonable response to the unsustainable school roll. It considers the “rural school factors” of community impact and impact on travel arrangements, as well as the Educational Benefits Statement above, all of which were considered during the options appraisal process.

### **LIKELY EFFECT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

#### **Community Impact – Loss of the school**

- 10.2 The number of primary pupils attending the school has fallen. However, it seems to be the case that families who do live within the catchment area are more mobile and exercising their right to choose other schools for their children.
- 10.3 The data on pupil numbers would suggest that there are families living in the area but that they are not attending the local school. It is clear that families living in the catchment area are travelling to access education as well as other services and so it appears to be an accepted part of life within the community.

#### **Response:**

It is unreasonable to conclude that travelling to access education and services is “an accepted part of life” for the community on the basis that a small number of families (fewer than 5 homes, all of whom are in the younger part of the population) choose to send their children to other schools.

Not everyone in the community has access to private transport and public transport is very limited. There is no public transport that would allow the parents of a child who lives in Abernyte and attends school in Inchtute to attend school events.

- 10.4 The community has easy access to amenities. The village of Abernyte is close to good road links to both Perth and Dundee and a number of relatively large villages including Errol, Inchtute, Longforan and St Madoes. These villages have amenities including post offices, shops, GP surgeries, churches, hotels and schools. The closest village is Inchtute which is approximately 3.4 miles away.

#### **Response:**

The ease of access to amenities depends on whether you have access to a car. The available bus services are infrequent (3 times a week) and only suitable for those people who can access a bus.



10.5 The Abernyte community is described by members of the community as ‘strong, vibrant, active and dynamic’. The Abernyte Community Interest Company provides support and continues to develop the community by hosting community events throughout the year as well as continuing their heating collective.

**Response:**

The community is strong, vibrant, active and dynamic. It also uses the school building and grounds for community events. If the school building and grounds are unavailable for community use there are **no alternative community spaces**. If there is no community space in the village the level of strength, vibrancy, activity and dynamism will undoubtedly reduce and the level of social exclusion will increase.

10.6 In 2017, the Council closed schools in Calvine (Struan Primary School) and Enochdhu (Straloch Primary School) after they had been mothballed for 5 years. The evidence from both areas was that families were not deterred from moving into the area by having to travel to a neighbouring village. There are clear parallels with Abernyte in that the communities already travelled to other local communities to access services. Neither school/community was as accessible as Abernyte.

**Response:**

No evidence has been provided in relation to how the communities of Calvine and Enochdhu compare to Abernyte nor whether there are “clear parallels”.

In addition, no information has been provided on the impact of closure of the school on the less mobile members of the community. It may be that younger people within the community are able to drive to access services while older members are not.

10.7 The evidence indicates that there will be little effect on the sustainability of the community if the school were to close.

**Response:**

We are unclear what “evidence” is referred to above. The discussion above seems to have focused on younger, more mobile members of the community and ignored the impact on older people and people who do not have access to a car.

One of the considerations that the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance states in paragraph 79 on community impact is whether public events would cease or be diminished by being required to move elsewhere. As discussed in the response to 10.5, the number of local events would inevitably reduce as there would be nowhere to hold them. For example, Abernyte School run community café events which are well attended, inclusive and accessible to local people. They give a real benefit in terms of social inclusion, making links between the different generations of people who live in our community thereby increasing well being of both pupils and members of the community. Losing these events would increase social exclusion and loneliness within the community.

It is well known that the challenges of dealing with an ageing population will continue to grow. The ability of a community to work together so that all generations support each other will become ever

more important. A local school that creates a welcoming environment where all members of the community feel valued and included, as Abernyte does so well, can have a hugely positive impact on the community.

Keeping older people in the community included and supported reduces loneliness, thereby increasing quality of life for longer, which can lead to a reduction in social care costs (see the publication "Investing to tackle loneliness" on [www.socialfinance.org.uk](http://www.socialfinance.org.uk) for further information on how loneliness can lead to higher costs).

### **Community Impact - Use of the Building**

- 10.8 Abernyte Primary School is described by the community as a wider valuable resource to the community.
- 10.9 The Wine Club and Heritage Group both use the school throughout the year. There was concern from the wider community that if the school was to close there would be nowhere for the community to meet.
- 10.10 Within Abernyte itself, the church building is available for use by the community. If the school was to close, community events could continue in the church building. Alternatively, there are village halls and church buildings in nearby villages as well as the other Carse schools.

#### **Response:**

The church is a very welcoming building. However, it is not a truly inclusive public building for a number of reasons:

- It has no disabled toilet facilities.
- It is a religious establishment, which some members of the community may not be comfortable with.
- It does not have a kitchen.
- It has very limited circulation space. There is space for 8-10 people to sit, with the remaining space taken up by pews.
- There is no outdoor space that is suitable for community events.

- 10.11 Closure of the school would provide opportunities for the building to be used for the benefit of the community, either for business or residential use, or for community use if a suitable plan was identified.

#### **Response:**

We consider that:

1. the Council should be promoting community use of the school at present. There is no need for the school to close for the building to be of use to the community therefore this cannot be classed as a benefit of the closure proposal.

2. The Council have not set out clearly in the proposal paper what their plans would be if the school were to close. This is a requirement of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

### Promoting Community Use

The Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education [2] recommended that schools and local authorities should promote use of school buildings by community groups (recommendation 14). The Scottish Government accepted this recommendation.

The Commission noted that it had *“heard of many community groups who were unable to access the school for lets due to either the costs associated with the let or the need for a key holder to be present on site at all times (due to health and safety guidelines or council policy). These groups requested that arrangements be more flexible to allow them to make use of the school as a community building. It was noted that enhanced rights of access must be exercised responsibly by communities and occasional problems were likely but should not restrict reasonable use of an asset.”*

The costs associated with renting the school building make it prohibitive for many smaller groups to use and the dates on which the building is available are restrictive. We ask the Council to make it easier for community groups to access the school.

### Addressing clearly the future use of the school building

The Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education [2] recommended that local authorities should address clearly the future use of a school building in any consultation document proposing school closure (recommendation 17). This has been included in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance in paragraph 52:

*“The proposal paper should also be clear on the authority’s plans for the future use of any school building and associated facilities that will be released by the proposal. It is reasonable for communities to be concerned whether a school building would have another public purpose, be available for the community, sold or might remain vacant for a significant period, and authorities should provide as much certainty and transparency as possible.”*

The proposal paper does not clearly set out what the plans for the school building would be if it were to close.

- 10.12 The Abernyte community requires to travel to access most services due to a lack of amenities within the village. This is facilitated by the fact that the village is close to good road links to both Perth and Dundee and a number of relatively large villages nearby. Many other communities in rural Perth and Kinross travel significantly further distances on more minor roads to access services.

### **Response:**

It is true that people from Abernyte have to travel to access most services. By moving the school out of the village they would have to travel to access **all** services.

At present, people within the community who do not have access to a car are forced to rely on lifts from other people or taxis if they are unable to take the bus that serves the village 3 times a week.

Support from the community for school activities would inevitably reduce as people may be forced to choose between taking a taxi to attend an event at the school or attending a health appointment. This would increase social exclusion for some members of the community.

10.13 The closure of the school would provide the community with an opportunity to use the building as a facility solely for community use. If the community does not use the school building upon closure, the church building is available for use by the community. Closure of the school would therefore have little impact on the existing arrangements of the community.

**Response:**

We disagree with this conclusion as set out in our responses to 10.10, 10.11 and 10.12.

**11. LIKELY EFFECT CAUSED BY DIFFERENT TRAVELLING ARRANGEMENTS**

11.1 As Abernyte Primary School is a rural school, special regard was paid to the rural school factors. These were considered fully in the Options Appraisal stage and were a focus of the pre-consultation with the community.



- 11.2 The travel distance between Abernyte Primary School and Inchtute Primary School is approximately 3.4<sup>2</sup> miles. To attend Inchtute Primary School, current Abernyte Primary School pupils would have to travel between approximately 3.3 and 5.8 miles each way. The journey times would be approximately between 9 and 20 minutes by school transport. This is an increase of between approximately 3 and 3.2 miles each way for pupils. Travel time is increased from a 1 minute journey to a 9 minute journey for some pupils and up to 7 minutes extra travel for pupils living further from the school.

**Response:**

We note that transporting pupils to Inchtute increases costs in terms of money, time and the environment:

- Children from Abernyte have a longer journey
- Children who live in the area to the north of the A90 within the existing Inchtute Primary School catchment area could have a shorter journey to school if they came to Abernyte. Paragraph 3.7 states that the longest travel time to Inchtute school is 44 minutes but would reduce to 30 if pupils attended Abernyte.

- 11.3 The effect on pupils of travelling to Inchtute Primary School from the Abernyte Primary School catchment is limited due to the relatively short distances involved and the small number of pupils requiring transport. Future transport would be provided by the Council for those pupils who live beyond the statutory travel distance to school, including those who currently attend Inchtute Primary School from Abernyte Primary School catchment as a placing request.
- 11.4 If Abernyte Primary School was permanently closed, all children would be transported by the Council to Inchtute Primary School. The travel distance between Abernyte and Inchtute is not far and in other more rural parts of Perth and Kinross it is not uncommon for pupils to travel greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Taking this option forward would not adversely affect the travel arrangements for current pupils and future pupils are unlikely to have hugely different travel arrangements.
- 11.5 Travelling for primary school education is common across Perth & Kinross because of the geography of the area. A number of pupils from Abernyte already travel to Inchtute Primary School by choice as the result of successful placing requests.
- 11.6 Staff in Perth and Kinross tend to travel throughout the area to work in schools. Many staff do not live within the catchment area of the school they work in. A distance of 3.4 miles is a relatively short distance to travel in rural Perth and Kinross. It is therefore considered that there is very limited impact on staff travelling arrangements.
- 11.7 The community currently requires to travel to access other services and there should be no other additional impact on travel arrangements should the school close as there are other buildings nearby which can be accessed by the community for social use.

**Response:**

We disagree with this conclusion as set out in our responses to 10.10, 10.11 and 10.12

## 12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 12.1 There are 6 pupils who already travel from the Abernyte Primary School catchment area to other schools in Perth and Kinross as the result of successful placing requests, for which there is an environmental impact. This would be offset by the requirement to run Abernyte Primary School as an operational building.
- 12.2 Pupils from Abernyte catchment area would be transported by the Council to Inchtute Primary School which reduces environmental impact as they would travel together rather than separately with parents.

### Response:

We consider that it is a poor argument to use the environmental impact of transport associated with the placing requests, which the Council granted, as a reason to close Abernyte Primary School.

- 12.3 The community already requires to travel to access other services such as GP and dental surgeries, shops, post offices and leisure facilities. Therefore there will be little environmental impact if Abernyte Primary School were to close.

<sup>2</sup> Approximate distance sourced from Google Maps

### 13. EFFECTS ON STAFF AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 Where necessary, any aspect of the implementation of these proposals that impacts on staff will result in consultation with the relevant trade unions and the individuals concerned.

### 14. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The annual recurring net savings of the preferred option is made up of staff costs and building running costs. The financial implications of this proposal is that there is a saving of approximately £108,213 to be made if the proposal is to be implemented.

#### Response:

The saving quoted of £108,213 is **materially overstated** for the following reasons:

- It does not take into account the reduction in income as a result of the reduction in GAE, as described in 6.13;
- It does not properly allow for the cost of educating a pupil at Inchtute Primary School.

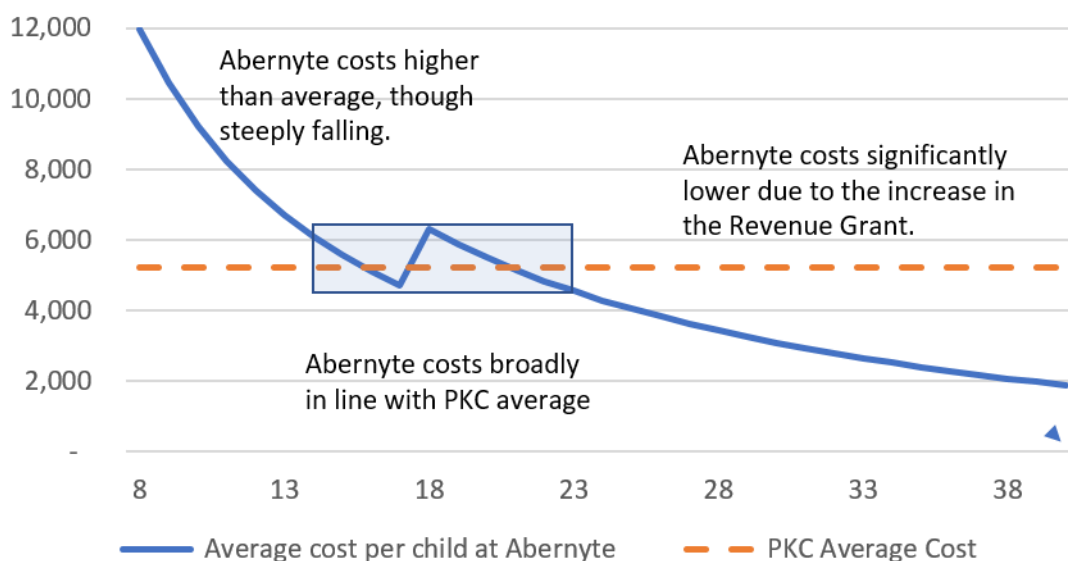
These two areas are described in more detail below.

We estimate the saving to be much lower, at around £55,000 based on 8 pupils.

Small schools with full class complements can operate at a similar cost per pupil to larger schools. The graph below shows the cost per child on the vertical axis and the number of children in Abernyte Primary on the horizontal axis. The average cost for Perth and Kinross schools (provided to us by the Council) is also shown for comparison.

**We note that with a pupil roll at Abernyte of only 15 pupils, the cost to Perth and Kinross Council per pupil would be in line with the average across Perth and Kinross schools.**

**Abernyte cost per child per annum compared to average across Perth and Kinross schools**



### Reduction in Grant Aided Expenditure

As described in our response to 6.13, Perth and Kinross Council currently receive £18,840 (or £3,140 per pupil) in respect of Abernyte Primary School due to additional funding provided for those pupils who attend schools with less than 70 pupils.

Based on current figures, the Council would **lose** £18,840 of income as a result of closing Abernyte School. The school roll will increase to 8 pupils in January 2019, which would increase the loss of income to c. £25k.

In addition, increasing the school roll would increase Council income by c. £3k per pupil.

### Allowing for full cost of educating pupils

The “additional financial impact on the receiving school” does not capture the true cost of educating children in Inchtute school. The only items that have been captured are a small amount for learning materials and the cost of transporting pupils from Abernyte to Inchtute.

This means that it is assumed that Inchtute school can teach the children from Abernyte for free, i.e. there are no additional staff or building costs associated with them.

This assumption of negligible marginal costs (excluding transport) is not correct as the school roll in Inchtute is growing, as shown in appendix 6 and our response to 8.5. Adding the pupils from Abernyte to the school roll at Inchtute may possibly, in the very short term, not lead to additional staff or building costs. However, as the roll at Inchtute grows, it means that additional staff costs would be incurred more quickly than if the pupils remained at Abernyte.

We conclude that in a school with a **growing roll** (such as Inchtute) the “additional financial impact on the receiving school” should allow for the average cost of educating a pupil at the receiving school, rather than assuming zero marginal cost.

Perth and Kinross Council have advised us that the most recent value of the average cost per pupil at Inchtute school is £3,144 per annum, which would give an overall cost per Abernyte pupil of around £5,000 per annum after allowing for transport.

### Overall cost saving

The cost saving quoted of £108,963 is given by the running costs of Abernyte Primary School of £120,786 less the additional financial impact on Inchtute Primary School in respect of learning materials of £248 and transport costs £11,575.

Allowing for the reduction in the GAE of c. £25k and the marginal cost of educating 8 children at Inchtute Primary School of c. £41k (including transport) reduces the cost saving to around £55k, which is very substantially lower than the cost saving quoted.

As shown in the graph above, a small increase in the school roll at Abernyte, from 8 to around 14-15, reduces the saving to zero.

14.2 The annual cost of retaining Abernyte Primary School until disposal is £750 which is made up of costs for energy and rates.

14.3 The capital cost of upgrading the building of £333,090 would not be required.

See Appendix 8 for detailed financial information.

**Response:**

We have not seen any evidence for the capital cost of upgrading, as set out in our response to 4.12. Appendix 8 does not provide “detailed financial information” on the capital cost.

- 14.4 Any savings arising from the proposed option to close Abernyte Primary School will be allocated against Education and Children’s Services budget savings targets which have currently been set for the period 2018/19 – 2020/21. This will mitigate against making alternative budget reductions within other areas of Education and Children’s Services, with a corresponding reduction in service delivery in that area.

**Response:**

We consider that the savings arising from the proposed option and the impact on other schools have not been clearly set out, which is not in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance also states (paragraph 39) that:

*“Finally, the authority is required to set out its assessment of the likely effects of the proposal – its potential implications and consequences – on some or all of the pupils in other schools across the authority’s area. Care should be taken to ensure that any such benefits are appropriately specific and can be clearly understood by consultees. For example, sometimes a relatively small saving is projected and it is indicated that it would benefit other pupils in the area. It is important, if that type of saving is included, to be clear that the likely impact on those other pupils would be minor compared to the impact on the pupils directly affected. In such a case, it would be important that the Educational Benefits Statement focused on the educational benefits to the pupils directly affected.”*

We note again from our response to 7.1 that the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education stated that:

*“it is important to avoid an argument that any cost saving from a closure would leave more funds for other educational purposes and have an educational benefit for the majority of children in the area, as this could be an argument against many aspects of rural service provision.”*

The proposal document does not set out what the specific benefits of the cost savings would be. In addition, the educational benefits statement does not include any assessment of the disadvantages to the pupils directly affected by the closure proposal. The “mitigation of adverse effects” in section 16 covers only the impact of transport and does not consider any educational aspects.

- 14.5 The annual budget is built reflecting cost drivers such as the number of schools, buildings, staff and pupils. Therefore, if Abernyte Primary School were to be closed, then future years’ budgets would not contain any allowance for staffing Abernyte Primary School and there would be reduced property costs (and possibly no costs, should the building be declared surplus to the Council’s requirements). Any per capita budgets relating to individual pupils would continue to be budgeted against the school that these pupils would attend following the closure of Abernyte Primary School.
- 14.6 It is envisaged that the existing Abernyte Primary School will be declared surplus to the requirements of Perth and Kinross Council. This will minimise the financial risks associated with vacant buildings.

**Response:**

The council should make clear what their plan for the future use of the school building would be, as set out in our response to 10.11.

- 14.7 A capital receipt would be forthcoming if the building was sold or income could be generated through a lease.

**Response:**

The council should make clear what their plan for the future use of the school building would be, as set out in our response to 10.11.

- 14.8 Combining pupils from both catchment areas into one school maximises use of the school estate and represents good asset management.

**Response:**

We consider that this proposal does not represent optimal asset management. It does not take into account:

- The level of occupancy at which the income from the GAE would be sufficient for the costs to be in line with other, larger schools;
- Income could be maximized by increasing the roll at Abernyte through an increase in the catchment area rather than creating additional classes in Inchtire; or
- Whether more innovative use of the school for delivery of other services could improve asset management.

As we discuss in our response to 6.1.6, the Council has not investigated other options that could represent better asset management.

**15. OTHER ISSUES****Management of Proposals**

- 15.1 It is intended that pupils from Abernyte Primary School will be permanently integrated within Inchtire Primary School from 2 July 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

This will allow the Council to conduct the necessary consultation in accordance with the relevant statutory frameworks.

**16. MITIGATION OF ADVERSE EFFECTS**

- 16.1 The main adverse effect for some children from Abernyte is the length of journey from Abernyte to Inchtire. However a number of pupils are already making this journey as the result of a successful placing request.

16.2 Funded school transport would be provided by Perth and Kinross Council to primary pupils from Abernyte catchment area attending Inchtute Primary School.

**Response:**

This section does not adequately consider the adverse effects of the proposal as required by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Paragraph 33 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance states that:

*“The 2010 Act reflects the Scottish Ministers’ view that **educational benefits should be at the heart** of any proposal to make a significant change to schools. Consequently, the 2010 Act specifies that the local authority must, for all consultations, prepare an Educational Benefits Statement and publish it within the proposal paper. The 2010 Act requires authorities to consider current and future pupils of any affected school, current users of its facilities, and the pupils of other schools in the authority’s area; and also to explain how the authority intends to minimise or avoid any **adverse effects** of the proposal. The authority must also **include its reasons for reaching the views** which it sets out regarding the educational benefits. Reasons should be **supported by evidence**, including, for example, HM Inspector reports or condition or **suitability ratings** of the schools involved, to assist consultees in their understanding of the projected educational benefits.”*

We consider there to be significant adverse effects of the proposal in addition to the increase in the length of journey to school, none of which are addressed in the proposal document. These are:

- Comparison of the suitability ratings of Inchtute and Abernyte Primary Schools shows that Abernyte is more suitable (rated ‘A’) than Inchtute (rated ‘B’) therefore moving pupils from Abernyte to Inchtute would not be beneficial.
- Class sizes in Inchtute are much bigger than Abernyte.
- There is less outside space per child to play at Inchtute and fewer opportunities to play freely during play time.
- The proposal takes pupils out of their community thereby weakening cross-generational links between pupils and the wider community of Abernyte.
- There are fewer leadership opportunities in a larger school.

## 17. CONCLUSION

17.1 In November 2016, it was agreed as part of the School Estate Transformation project that an options appraisal should be carried out on Abernyte Primary School due to under-occupancy. At that time, the school had a pupil roll of 8 (School Census 2015) and an approved capacity of 44 giving an occupancy level of 18%. The school roll has since fallen to 6 pupils giving an occupancy level of 13.6%.

17.2 Data on children under 5 registered with GP practices living in the Abernyte catchment tends to support the comments made by the community in relation to the number of families living in the catchment area which has remained low over a number of years.



- 17.3 Although the school is described as important to the community, a number of pupils attend alternative primary schools.
- 17.4 Data from the NHS shows a small number of children living in the catchment area who are due to start in P1 over the next 4 years.
- 17.5 The projected pupil roll for Abernyte Primary School is likely to be a maximum of 6 pupils in the next 4 years. This is insufficient to create a sustainable roll. It is also likely, given past patterns, that parents of new P1s may choose to send their child to Inchtute Primary School, which is approximately 3.4 miles away, or an alternative primary school and that the roll may not be 6 pupils.
- 17.6 As part of the review, a pre-consultation exercise was carried out with the local community. As a result of the pre-consultation exercise, an assessment was also carried out in relation to a potential catchment area change, including meeting parents/carers of children living in the areas who would be affected by this. The outcome of this assessment was that if the catchment was extended, the parents/carers of Inchtute Primary School children living in the catchment area, who engaged with Council Officers would not choose to send their children to Abernyte Primary School. There would, therefore, be insufficient pupil numbers to increase the roll and make it sustainable in future years.
- 17.7 It is likely that house building in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years will continue to be limited with few, if any, additional pupils for the school as a result.
- 17.8 Future pupil projections have been considered and Inchtute Primary School can accommodate all projected and potential pupils from the combined catchment areas. A higher occupancy level maximises use of the school estate and represents good asset management.
- 17.9 Travel distance to the neighbouring school is not excessive and pupils attending Inchtute Primary School already make this journey. However, it is recognised that adverse weather in the winter can impact on travel arrangements in this area.
- 17.10 Members of the community are travelling to access other services such as GP and dental surgeries, shops and post offices and so it appears to be an accepted part of life within the community.
- 17.11 Environmental impacts have been summarised and detailed work will be done as part of the environmental assessment for this proposal.
- 17.12 The only option which is considered to be a reasonable response to address the issue of an unsustainable school roll is to consider closing Abernyte Primary School, with the pupils transferring to Inchtute Primary School. Special regard has been given to the rural school factors and the assessment of these is set out in the options appraisal and in this Proposal Paper. The anticipated educational benefits which are likely to occur, should that option be progressed and implemented, are also considered.
- 17.13 It is, therefore, recommended that the most appropriate response to the issues identified in relation to the very low pupil roll at Abernyte Primary School is that a statutory consultation exercise takes place on a proposal to close the school. If the proposal was to be implemented, pupils would be transferred to Inchtute Primary



School. The delineated area of Inchtute Primary School would be extended to subsume the whole catchment of Abernyte Primary School.

## **18. RESPONDING TO THE PROPOSAL**

- 18.1 Interested parties are invited to respond by making online, electronic or written submissions on the proposal or any alternative proposals.

Online: [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)

By e-mail: [ECSStatutoryConsultations@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:ECSStatutoryConsultations@pkc.gov.uk)

In writing: Abernyte Primary School Consultation, Education and Children's Services, 2 High Street, Perth, PH1 5PH

**no later than close of business on Friday 14 December 2018.**

- 18.2 A form is provided at Appendix 7 for the convenience of those wishing to respond.

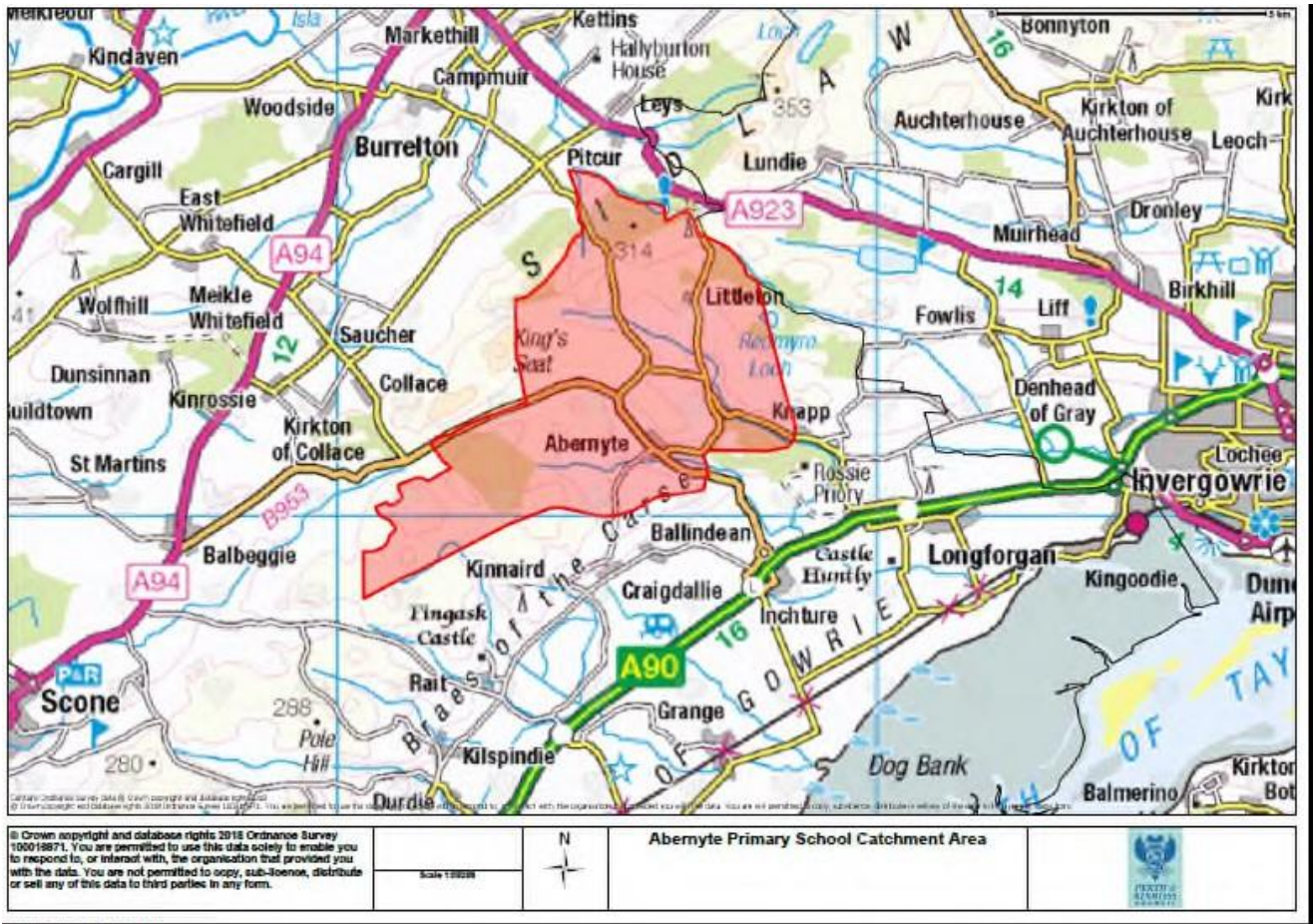
Its use is not compulsory. However, those wishing to respond are invited to state their relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “grandparent”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. Responses from the Parent Councils, staff, and Pupil Council are particularly welcome.

- 18.3 Those sending in a response, whether electronically or by letter, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it.

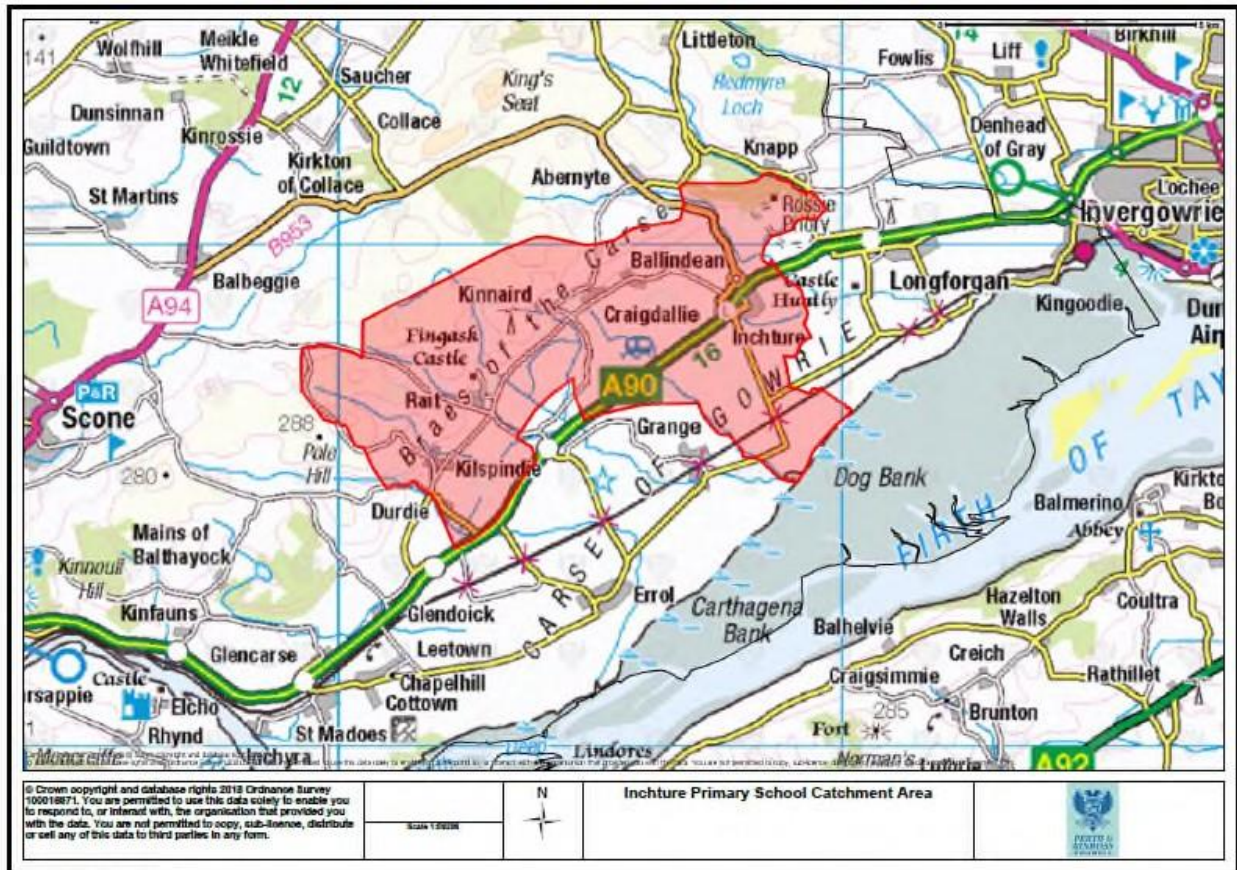
- 18.4 If they do not wish their response to be publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to elected members and council officers of Perth and Kinross Council.” Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.

24 October 2018

CATCHMENT AREA OF ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL



CATCHMENT AREA OF INCHTURE PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Scale 1:50000



Inchtured Primary School Catchment Area



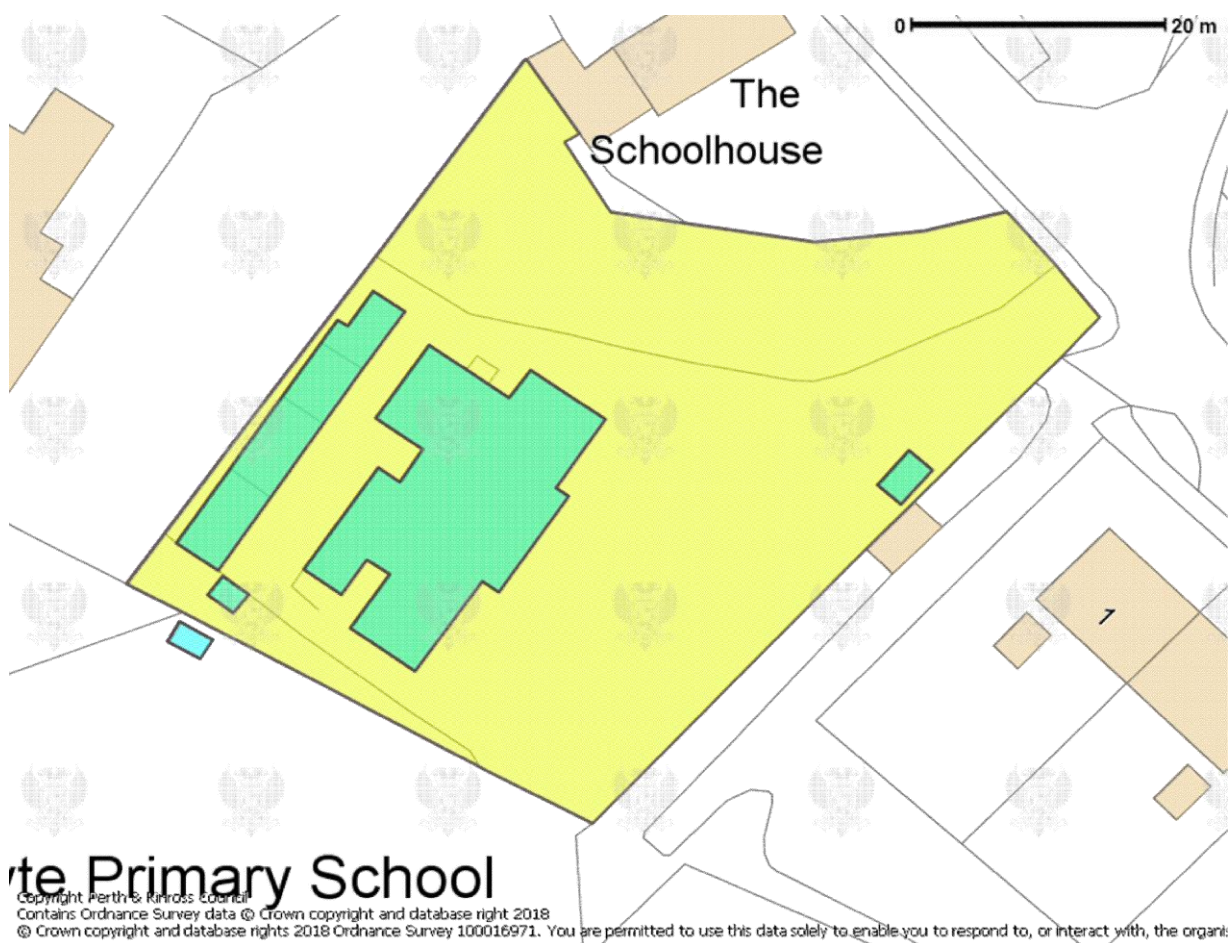
Checked by Julie Webb on 14 October 2018



OUTLINE OF ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING AND THE SCHOOL

**Response:**

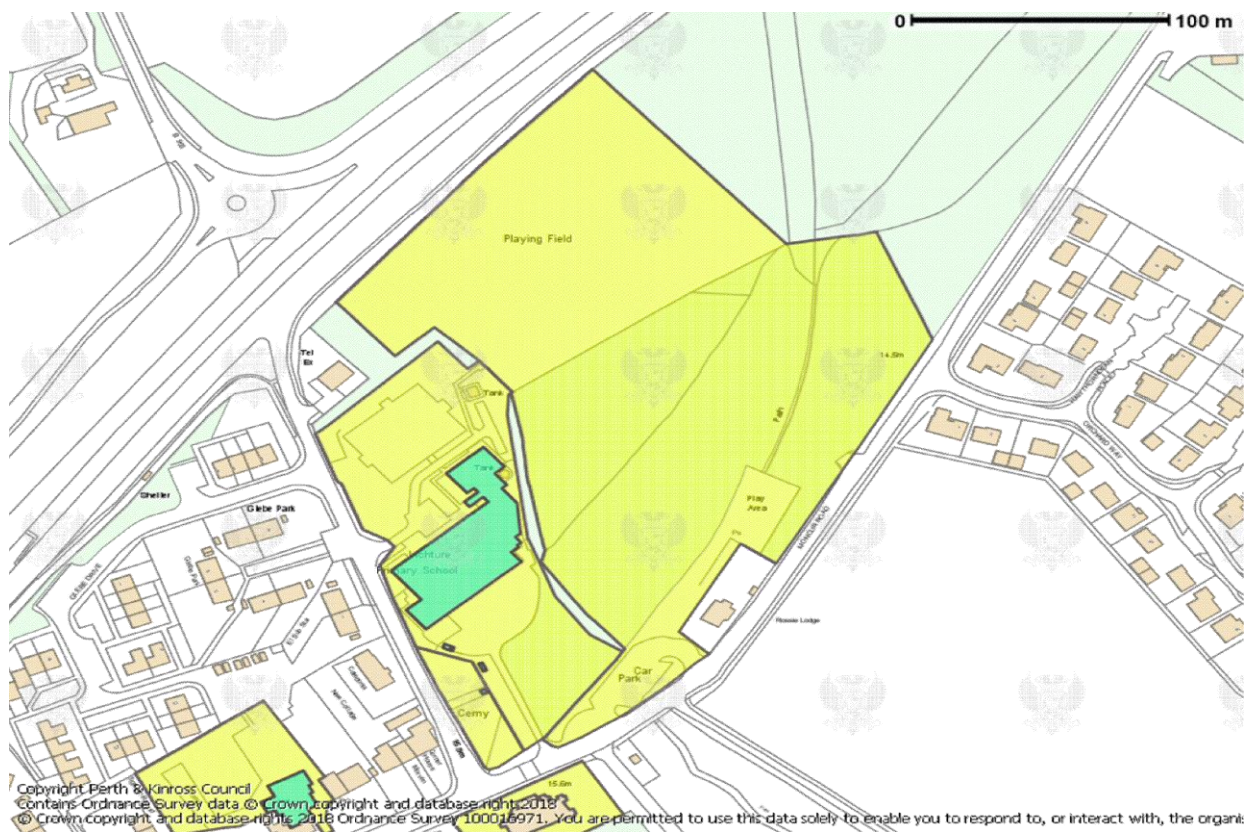
We would like it to be noted that the pupils of Abernyte Primary School also have access to the large playing field to the south west of the building which is secure and accessed directly from the school grounds.



OUTLINE OF INCHTURE PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING AND THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

**Response:**

There appears to be a large area that is shaded yellow and it is not clear which part of this area is available for children to use during breaks and lunchtime. Our understanding is that only a small part of this area directly around the school is available to pupils, therefore this map could be mis-leading.



## HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED PUPIL ROLL DATA FOR ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Capacity	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
Pupils in school	21	15	15	14	11	8	7	5

Source: [Scottish Government – School Education - Datasets](#)

## PROJECTED PUPIL NUMBERS

	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022
<b>Abernyte Primary School Capacity</b>	44	44	44	44
<b>Abernyte Primary School Roll</b>	6	6	3	5

**Response:**

This information is not accurate.

It is based on a single data source, which is not in line with best practice, as described in our response to 1.4.

The pre-consultation exercise did not reach out sufficiently widely and some families were unaware that the exercise was taking place. The Parent Council have reached out to the local community and a number of other families have expressed their desire to send their children to school in Abernyte. The table below adds the information gathered by the Parent Council to the Council projection from the proposal document.

The increase in the roll of 140% compared to the Council figure highlights the difficulty in projecting the school roll for small schools. This is a conservative estimate as it does not include a number of other families who have contacted the Parent Council but who are still undecided as a result of the uncertainty surrounding the school.

	<b>Projected 2021</b>
Perth and Kinross Council projection (appendix 6) based on GP data	5
Two families who are moving to Abernyte in December 2018/January 2019	5
Families who are intending to make placement requests	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

## ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL INFORMATION

<b>School</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Condition Rating</b>	<b>Suitability Rating</b>
Abernyte	44	B	A

## APPENDIX 6

### HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED PUPIL ROLL DATA FOR INCHTURE PRIMARY SCHOOL

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Capacity	125	125	146	146	264	264	264	264
Pupils in school	118	129	148	163	166	181	210	220

Source: [Scottish Government – School Education - Datasets](#)

### PROJECTED PUPIL NUMBERS

	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022
<b>Inchture Primary School Capacity</b>	264	264	264	264
<b>Abernyte Primary School Pupils</b>	6	6	3	5
<b>Inchture Primary School Pupils</b>	221	235	239	246
<b>Inchture Primary School Roll with Abernyte Primary School Pupils</b>	227	241	242	251

### ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL/PUPIL INFORMATION

<b>School</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Condition Rating</b>	<b>Suitability Rating</b>
Inchture	264	B	B





**Education and Children's Services  
Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation Proposal:**

- Provision of a school at Abernyte Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 1 July 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- That the pupils of Abernyte Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Inchtute Primary School from 2 July 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- That the delineated catchment area of Inchtute Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Abernyte Primary School from 2 July 2020.

Please tick the response which applies to you/your organisation

I agree with the proposals as outlined in this consultation.....

I disagree with the proposals as outlined in this consultation .....

I would like to make the following representation for consideration:  
(if required, please continue on the other side of this sheet)

Are there any other alternatives which you consider should have been included?

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Interest: (please tick)**

Parent                      Child / Young Person                      Staff                      Other \*

\*Other: (please specify)

Elected Member / MSP / MP

Member of Community Council

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Perth & Kinross Council

**APPENDIX 8**

**Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure**

Name of School: Abernyte Primary School (Column 1)	Costs for full financial year (2017-18) (Column 2)	Additional financial impact on receiving school (Inchture) (Column 3)	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3) (Column 4)
School costs			
Employee costs -			
teaching staff	£ 76,098.00	£ -	£ 76,098.00
support staff	£ 17,907.00	£ -	£ 17,907.00
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	£ 238.00	£ -	£ 238.00
support staff training	£ -	£ -	£ -
Supply costs	£ 1,335.00	£ -	£ 1,335.00
Slippage Target	-£ 2,495.00	£ -	-£ 2,495.00
Building costs:			
property insurance	£ -	£ -	£ -
non domestic rates	£ -	£ -	£ -
water & sewerage charges	£ 191.00	£ -	£ 191.00
energy costs	£ 3,698.00	£ -	£ 3,698.00
cleaning (contract or in- house)	£ 7,623.00	£ -	£ 7,623.00
building repair & mainten ance	£ 5,589.00	£ -	£ 5,589.00
grounds maintenance	£ 437.00	£ -	£ 437.00
facilities management costs - note 6	£ -	£ -	£ -
revenue costs arising from	£ -	£ -	£ -

capital			
Other	£ 684.00	£ -	£ 684.00

School operational costs:						
learning materials	£	552.00	£	248.40	£	303.60
catering (contract or in-house)	£	-	£	-	£	-
SQA costs	£	-	£	-	£	-
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	£	-	£	-	£	-
Transport costs: note 3						
home to school	£	8,458.80	£	11,574.80	-£	3,116.00
other pupil transport costs	£	-	£	-	£	-
staff travel	£	470.00	£	-	£	470.00
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	£	120,785.80	£	11,823.20	£	108,962.60
Income:						
Sale of meals	£	-	£	-		
Lets	£	-	£	-		
External care provider	£	-	£	-		
Other	£	-	£	-		
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	£	-	£	-		
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	£	120,785.80	£	11,823.20	£	108,962.60

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (6 pupils)	£ 20,130.97	£ 1,970.53	£ 18,160.43
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**Response:**

The “additional financial impact on the receiving school” does not capture the true cost of educating children in Inchtore school. It should be c. £40k rather than the figure quoted above.

The only items that have been captured are a small amount for learning materials and the cost of transporting pupils from Abernyte to Inchtore.

This means that it is assumed that Inchtore school can teach the children from Abernyte for free, i.e. there are no additional staff or building costs associated with them.

This assumption of negligible marginal costs (excluding transport) is not correct as the school roll in Inchtore is growing. Adding the pupils from Abernyte to the school roll at Inchtore may possibly, in the very short term, not lead to additional staff or building costs. However, as the roll at Inchtore grows, it means that additional staff costs would be incurred more quickly than if the pupils remained at Abernyte.

We conclude that in a school with a growing roll (such as Inchtore) the “additional financial impact on the receiving school” should allow for the average cost of educating a pupil at the receiving school, rather than assuming zero marginal cost.

Perth and Kinross Council have advised us that the average cost per pupil at [Inchtore] school is £3,144 per annum. The estimated additional financial impact on Inchtore Primary School basis on 8 pupils from Abernyte would be closer to £40k (i.e. c. £25k plus travel costs of c. £15k).

Please see our response to 14.1 for further commentary.

<b>Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal</b>	
property insurance	£ -
non domestic rates	£ -
water & sewerage charges	£ 150.00
energy costs	£ 600.00
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£ -

security costs	£ -
building repair & maintenance	£ -
grounds maintenance	£ -
Other	£ -
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>	£ 750.00

**Table 4**

	<b>N o n - r e c u r r i n g  r e v e n u e  c o s t s</b>
	£ -
<b>TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS</b>	£ -



**Table 5**

**Response:**

It is a requirement of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Paragraph 58 of the Statutory Guidance [5] states that “Authorities should indicate clearly whether GAE is likely to be affected by the proposal, the reasons for their view, and the level of this impact, providing a narrative explanation where appropriate.

We assume that table 5 is factually correct and conclude that:

- Perth and Kinross Council would lose £18,840 of income as a result of closing Abernyte School.
- For each additional pupil who attends Abernyte School, the Council would receive an additional amount of funding of around £3,000.

However, no commentary has been provided other than the notes to the table. This may make sense to those who are familiar with local authority funding mechanisms but is unlikely to be clear to the consultees affected by this proposal.

**With a school roll of 8 in Abernyte Primary, the loss of GAE as a result of moving pupils to Inchtute would be c. £25k.**

<b>Impact on GAE</b>	
based on pupils going to Inchtute PS	£ 18,840.00
<b>GAE IMPACT</b>	£ 18,840.00

## Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the *additional* cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring.

For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff. Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services.

For support staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.

3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc

4. Row 30 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.

5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE

6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.

7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.
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5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE
6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.
7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.