

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

UPDATED OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT 2019



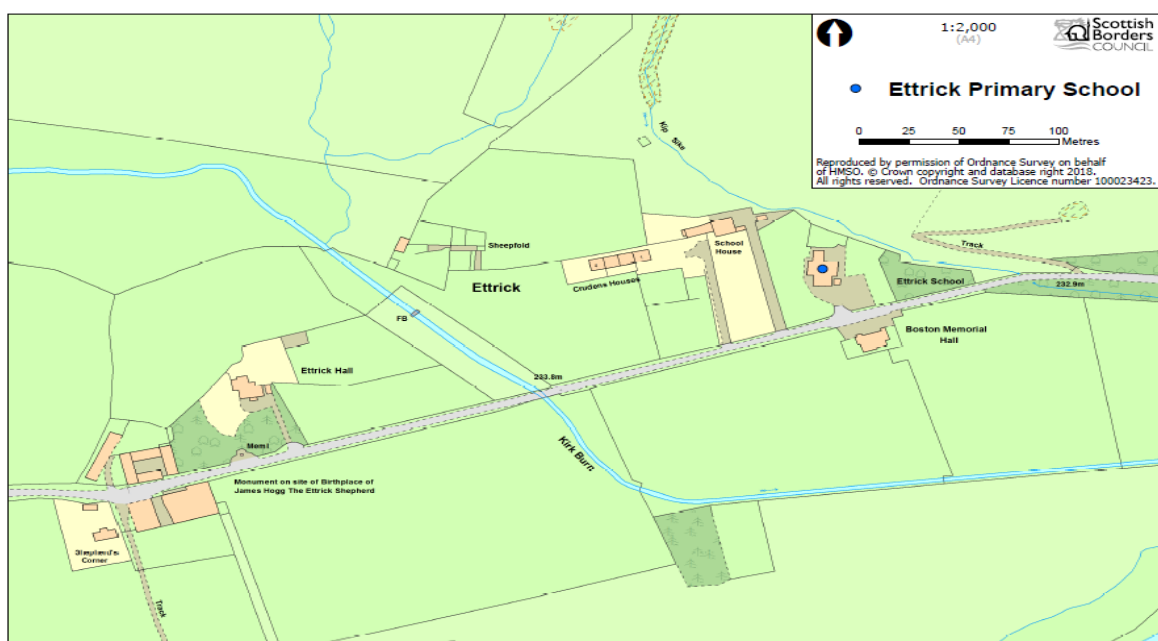
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2015 Scottish Borders Council commenced a School Estate Review of all the schools across the region, seeking to deliver the maximum educational benefits for all children and young people in the area. On 7 November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee approved amended guiding principles to the School Estate Review to ensure that a strategic approach is taken whilst delivering:
- increased education and learning opportunities for all generations within the community;
 - improved outcomes for the community;
 - sustainability;
 - a future-proofed school estate; and
 - affordability.
- 1.2 In November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee agreed to review the schools that had been previously mothballed and make a decision on their future. In order to determine what the next steps should be, Council officers have carried out detailed option analyses in respect of each school, considering all reasonable options. The analyses also consider the impact of each of the options on the wider community. This process adheres to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the **Act**) - which contains specific provisions regarding rural schools.
- 1.3 This report details the options analysis process for Ettrick Primary School, which was mothballed in 2012. This report is an updated version of the Options Analysis Report that was issued in 2017. Given changes within the valley demographics in the intervening period Council officers have revisited and reconsidered the options. This report reflects an analysis of the options based on the most up to date information available.

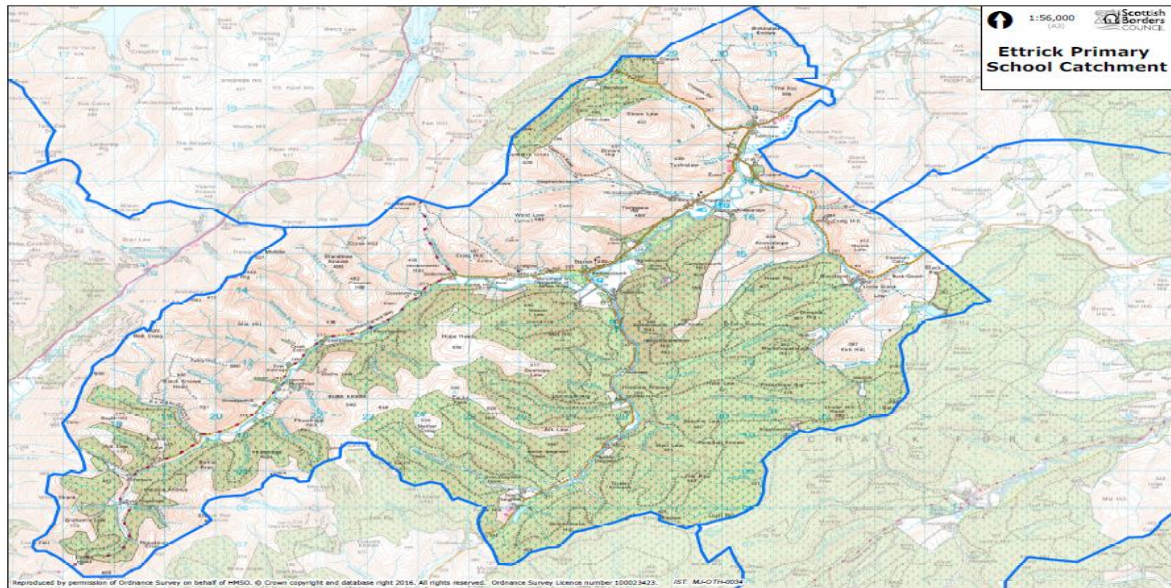
2 BACKGROUND

Ettrick Primary School

- 2.1. Ettrick Primary School is situated in the Ettrick Valley of the Scottish Borders. It opened in 1965, with capacity for 50 pupils. It is a non-denominational primary school which served the settlements of Ettrick, Hopehouse and the local area. The school was mothballed in 2012 after a sustained decline in roll numbers.
- 2.2 Ettrick Primary School is shown on the map below:



2.3 The school's catchment area is shown below:-



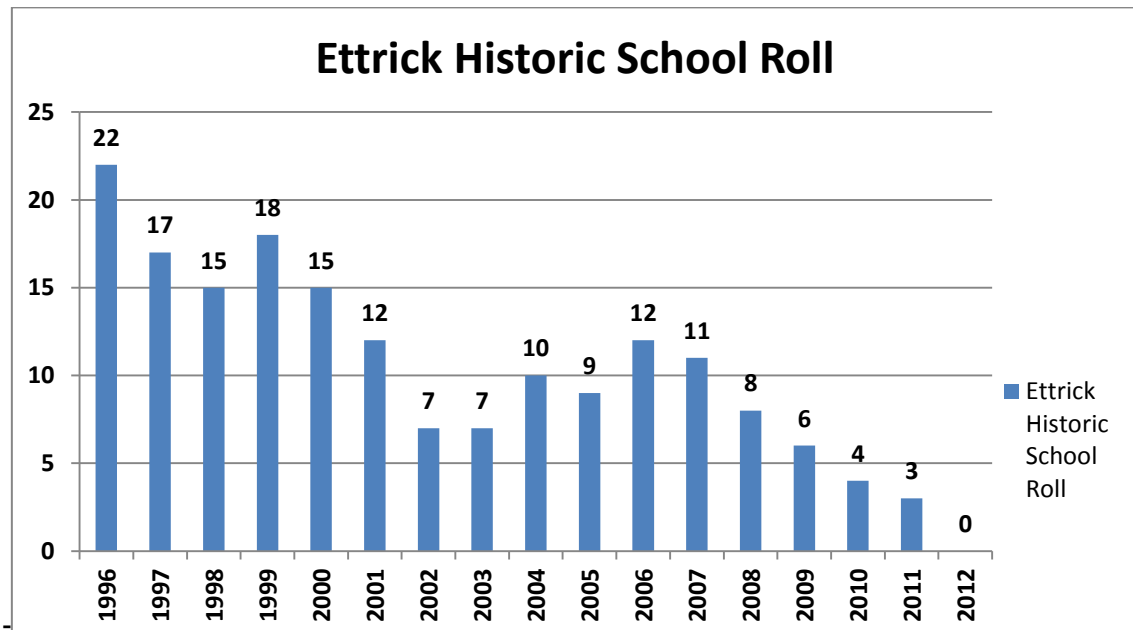
2.4 Ettrick Primary School is classified being in a “Remote Rural Area” by the Scottish Government¹. This classification is based on the school being located in an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.

2.5 The roll at Ettrick Primary School fell significantly in the years prior to mothballing. In 2007 there were eleven pupils but by 2011 this reduced to three pupils. In August 2012, two of these pupils were due to transfer to secondary school, with no new pupils applying to enrol for the 2012/13 school year. Following discussions with parents and the community, it was considered that the low pupil roll at Ettrick Primary School presented significant challenges regarding the provision of learning, social and emotional opportunities and experiences required to meet the needs of pupils. Different alternatives to closure were discussed; discussions included the suggestion to transfer pupils from one or the other partner schools up the valley to breathe life into school for part of the week. However after investigating the options the decision was taken to mothball Ettrick Primary School in June 2012, with the catchment area being rezoned to Kirkhope Primary School in Ettrickbridge. A commitment was given to undertake a statutory consultation on permanent closure if there continued to be no demand for places at the school.

2.6 The decline in the school roll from 1996 until mothballing in 2012 is illustrated here²:

¹ [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

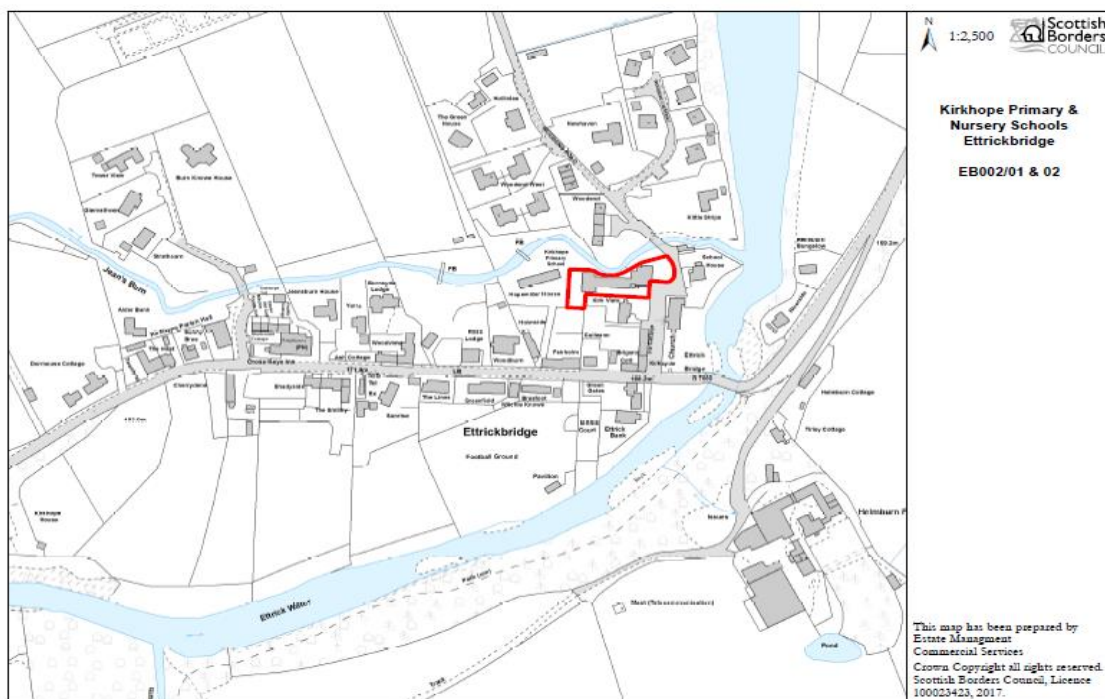
² [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)



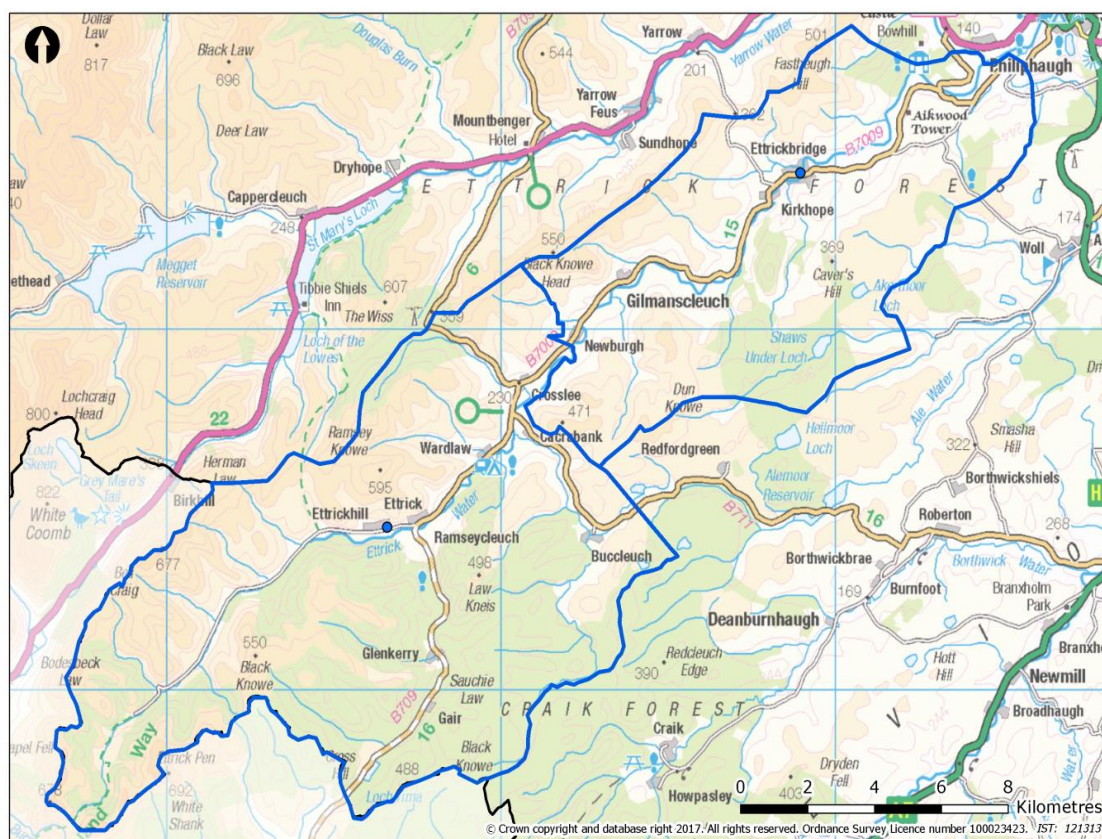
- 2.7 Since 2012 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children wishing to enrol at Ettrick Primary School and the Council is currently not aware of any children who would wish to enrol at Ettrick Primary School in the future.

3 AMALGAMATION OF CATCHMENT ZONES WITH KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 3.1 As part of the mothballing process it was agreed to temporarily amalgamate the Ettrick Primary School catchment with that of Kirkhope Primary School in Ettrickbridge. Kirkhope Primary School's location is shown on the plan below:-



- 3.2 Kirkhope's catchment area is shown here, with Ettrick Primary School's catchment also delineated:-

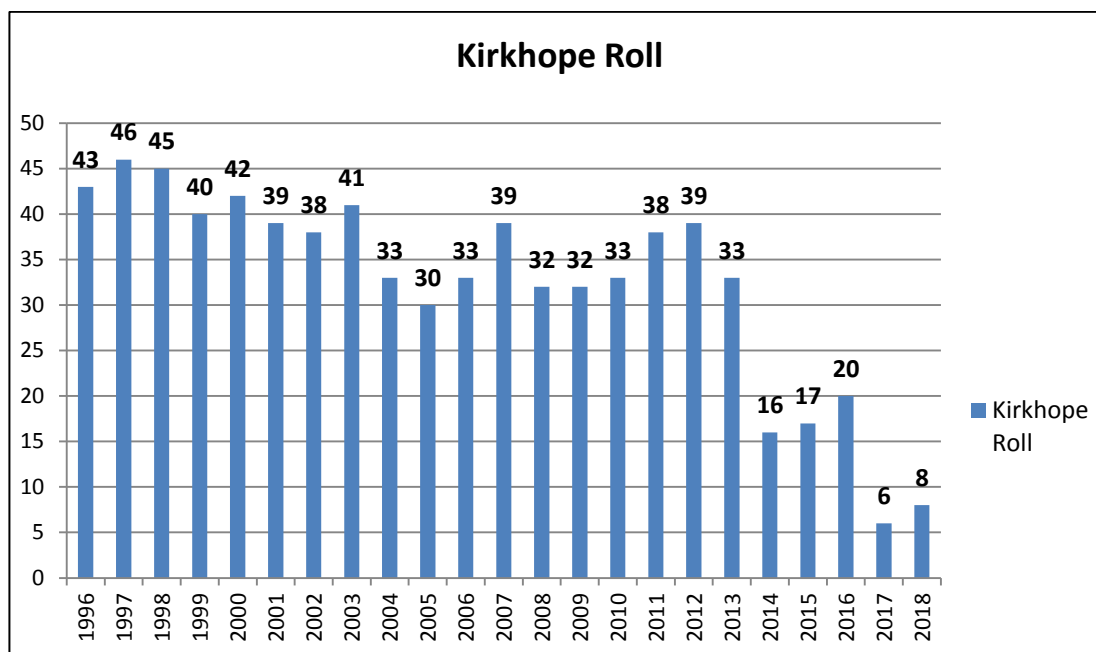


- 3.3 Kirkhope Primary School is located c7 miles from Selkirk and c11.5 miles from Ettrick Primary School. It is the closest school to Ettrick and is considered the heart of the Valley community. At the time of mothballing Kirkhope Primary School had a roll of almost 40 pupils and offered a vibrant learning environment and provided a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Kirkhope Primary School as being in "Accessible-rural" area. The classification criteria are "settlements of fewer than 3,000 people and within 30 minutes' drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more".³
- 3.4 Kirkhope has capacity for 50 pupils. The roll has been falling significantly over recent years with a particularly dramatic fall at the start of the 2017/18 school year where the roll fell by 70%.⁴ There are currently 8 children attending the school. Kirkhope Primary also provides an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting and was selected to run a pilot project to provide 30 funded hours of learning and childcare for children aged 3-5 and eligible 2 year olds⁵. There are currently 9 children enrolled at the ELC setting. The roll profile is shown below:-

³ [Rural Schools List 2017](#)

⁴ [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)

⁵ *Entitlement of funded provision is due to increase by 2020 from 600 to 1140 hours for 3-5 year olds and eligible 2 year olds*



- 3.5 The most recent inspection of Kirkhope was carried out by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) in August 2012. Unfortunately copies of the report are no longer available on Education Scotland's website, as they only make reports available for a 5 year period. Copies can however be obtained by contacting them on Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

4 BUILDING CONDITION AND SUITABILITY

- 4.1 Throughout Scotland, core facts are gathered and published on school buildings by the Scottish Government. The definition and assessment categorisations are set by the Scottish Government as follows:

Condition⁶

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

Suitability⁷

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: Poor – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities

- 4.2 Condition surveys are undertaken on a rolling programme by a Council building surveyor team led by a chartered building surveyor. The suitability assessment is undertaken by the Headteacher and validated by Senior Managers within Children and Young People's Services. These assessments are undertaken approximately every four years unless significant building or operational change has occurred within the school requiring additional assessment

⁶ [Scottish Government: School Estates: Condition Core Facts](#)

⁷ [Scottish Government: School Estates: Suitability Core Facts](#)

- 4.3 A condition survey was carried out on Ettrick Primary School in June 2012 and the overall site is rated as Condition B (performing adequately but showing minor deterioration). It is estimated that c£38,000 would require to be spent on Ettrick to remedy the current defects. The suitability of Ettrick Primary School was assessed in 2012 prior to mothballing and was categorised as B (performing well but with minor problems).
- 4.4 A condition survey was carried out on Kirkhope Primary in 2016 and the overall site is rated as Condition B - Satisfactory (Building serviceable but in need of some repair, works recommended in 3-5 years). A suitability survey was carried out in 2016 on Kirkhope Primary School and it was rated B - Satisfactory (performing well but with minor problems).

5 GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- 5.1 Ettrick Primary School sits within the Ettrick valley - an area that has seen some significant changes to the demographics of the area. The table below, derived from National Records of Scotland⁸ data, shows the age group distribution in the larger area in which both primary schools are situated, and how it has changed between 2001 and 2015. While this area covers a wider area and does not directly correspond to the catchment zones, the figures illustrate the changes in population. In 2001 there were 154 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which was 23% of the population. However by 2017 the National Records of Scotland estimate that there were 68 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which is 12% of the population. This equated to a decline over the period of 56%.

Ettrick Water and Bowhill Area (S01012378)			
Year	Age Group	Population	Percent
2001	0 to 15	154	23%
	16 to 64	431	64%
	65+	84	13%
	All people	669	100%
2011	0 to 15	76	13%
	16 to 64	371	66%
	65+	119	21%
	All people	566	100%
2017 (Estimate)	0 to 15	68	12%
	16 to 64	338	59%
	65+	170	29%
	All people	576	100%

ETTRICK AND THE LOCAL AREA

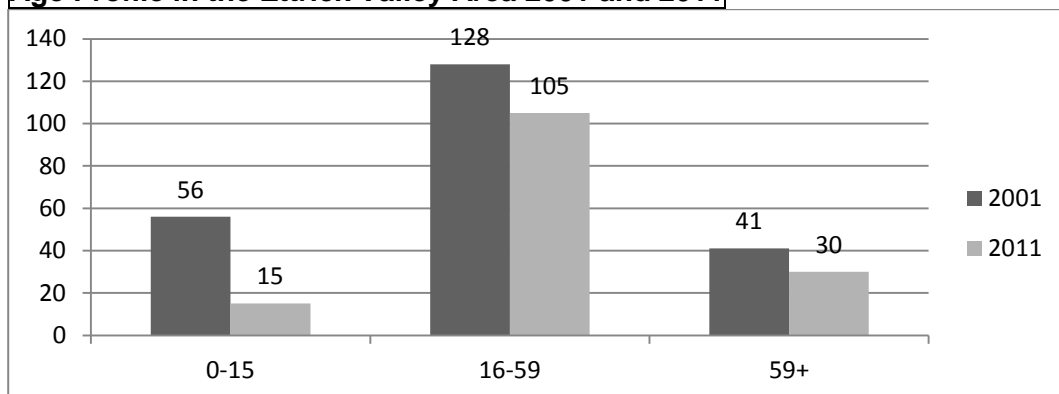
5.3 Population

The following is the Census data for the Ettrick Valley area, west of Ettrickbridge. This area does not exactly correlate to the catchment area but provides strong indicative evidence of demographic changes. This Census information indicates a drop in population in the area of 33% in the decade to 2011, with a significant drop in 0-15 age group of 73%. The information indicates that there were only 7 0-4 year olds in the area in 2011.

⁸ [Scotland's National Census Records](#)

Ettrick Valley Area Census Data			
Year	Age Group	Population	Percent
2001	0 to 15	56	25%
	16 to 59	128	57%
	60+	41	18%
	All people	225	100%
2011	0 to 15	15	10%
	16 to 59	105	70%
	60+	30	30%
	All people	150	100%

Age Profile in the Ettrick Valley Area 2001 and 2011



Development and House Building

- 5.4 The Local Development Plan 2016 allocates 3 housing sites within Ettrick, namely: Hopehouse East, Hopehouse West and Hopehouse North East. Each of the allocated housing sites has an indicative site capacity of 5 units and only 1 unit has been completed to date. There is however a more flexible approach to supporting housing in the countryside proposals, outwith allocated sites. Although in practice the number of approvals implemented in terms of these provisions is very low. Based on this information it is considered unlikely that any future development would have significant impact on the pupil numbers in the Ettrick valley that would increase school place demand beyond the capacity available at Kirkhope Primary School.

6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meetings

- 6.1 Prior to the mothballing of the school, detailed discussion and consultation took place with the parents/carers and the local community. Since mothballing, informal discussions have been held between the Children and Young People Services and key members of the Ettrick Community regarding the interim and long term use of the Ettrick Primary School building. An initial consultation process was commenced in Q1 2017; however this was put on hold. In the intervening period there have been further changes in the area's demographics and this report reflects this.

Feedback from Discussions and Meetings

- 6.2 Council officers consider that the Community in general viewed the mothballing as appropriate but that they did not wish for this to continue indefinitely and are supportive of a final decision being made. The general consensus was that the current number of children in the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys could not sustain 3 primary schools and that Ettrick was the most appropriate to

close. The Community considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The Council is working with the communities to sustain the primary education within the Selkirk valleys. The Council decided to open a new Early Learning and Childcare setting at Kirkhope; with the aim of seeking to grow the roll at the school as well as providing a pre-school setting within the valleys. Council officers also intend to undertake a consultation regarding Yarrow Primary School's catchment area to establish views regarding a proposal to extend its catchment towards Selkirk.

- 6.3 It is considered that the Community view the closure of the school as a potential opportunity and have indicated potential options for use of the building, with particular interest in utilising its connection with a community led commercial venture.

7 POSSIBLE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED

- 7.1 In accordance with the Act, the Council is required to identify any reasonable alternative to closure and that full consideration should be given to "maintain the current school". The Council cannot make a proposal to commence a statutory consultation regarding a proposal to close a rural school until it has carried out this preliminary analysis and must be satisfied that its proposal is the most appropriate response.

- 7.2 When considering the options available Council officers considered a number of issues:-

- Population and demographics of the area
- The role of the school in the community
- The current catchment areas and their profiles
- What could be done to encourage more pupils to come to the school if it was to re-open?
- Likely development and employment opportunities in the area
- The likely educational benefits
- The likely impact on the community
- The likely effect on different travelling arrangements

This led to the Council officers identifying a number of possible options regarding the future of Ettrick Primary School's namely:

Option 1

Reopen Ettrick Primary School with its existing catchment area

Option 2

Reopen Ettrick Primary School with an extending catchment area (amending other Primary School catchment areas)

Option 3

Continue mothballing Ettrick Primary School, with its catchment area continuing to be re- zoned to Kirkhope Primary School

Option 4

Permanently close Ettrick Primary School zoning any pupils to Kirkhope Primary School, permanently re-delineating the catchment area,

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

8 Option 1

Reopen Ettrick Primary School with its Existing Catchment Area:

8.1 Positive Considerations

Council officers have considered what positives could be achieved through the reopening of the school:-

- Reopening the school will provide a local primary school in the Ettrick/Hopehouse area (*however numbers of children are very low and it is hard to argue that there would be an educational benefit for the children in re-opening the schools where the roll number is projected to be so low*);
- There would most likely be a reduction in travel time for pupils currently attending other schools (*however there would be the requirement to transport children to other schools to access facilities and to follow elements of the Curriculum of Excellence*);
- The reopening of the school may have a positive impact on the sustainability of the local area, which has seen population decline as work practices change and evolve (*considered unlikely given the rural location and Kirkhope is close enough to satisfy the requirement for an accessible local school*);
- Reopening the school may attract families to live in the Ettrick valley who may wish their children to attend a local school in the heart of their community (*considered unlikely given the rural location and Kirkhope is close enough to satisfy the requirement for an accessible local school*);
- Reopening the school may attract business/jobs to locate in the area as the school can be a vital hub in the community (*considered unlikely given the rurality of the area and the low numbers at the school*);
- A school in Ettrick may attract housebuilders to develop housing in the area, including social housing (*considered unlikely given the rurality of the area and the low numbers at the school*);
- The school could strengthen the community, providing a hub for the generations to integrate and support and learn from each other.

8.2 Demand for School to reopen

Consideration has also been given to potential level of demand for the school to re-open and to that the likely numbers of children that could attend the school:-

- The number of primary school age children in the area is very low. There is currently 1 primary aged child within the catchment area and 2 pre-school aged children. It is understood that there is a very small number of younger children in the area; however the numbers are so low that it is considered unlikely that the parents/carers would seek a place at Ettrick in preference to Kirkhope. An ELC setting at Ettrick would not be considered a sustainable proposition;
- The roll at Kirkhope Primary School which is also located within the Ettrick Valley has also fallen significantly (currently 8 pupils). There are currently 12 primary school aged children living in the Ettrick valley 33% of whom are attending other schools through placement requests. Kirkhope has a capacity of 50, so will be able to accommodate the current and projected pupil numbers for both catchment areas;
- The children from the Ettrick area attending Kirkhope Primary School and the ELC setting appear satisfied with the education provided there;
- The majority of people attending previous community meetings were not in favour of reopening Ettrick Primary School. It was not considered that there was a demand to reopen a school that they did not consider sustainable. There is strong support within the community for the 2 current valley primary schools to remain open;
- There is a strong appetite to put the building into community use.

8.3 Educational Impact

Officers recognise that there can be educational benefits arising from attending rural school in the heart of a community and these are detailed in **Option 4**. However given the projected numbers for the Ettrick and Kirkhope it is considered that there would be greater educational benefits for all the children to attend one school rather than be split across 2 locations. It is not considered that there would be educational benefits attached to the reopening of Ettrick Primary School when Kirkhope Primary is relatively close and provides a small, rural school option for the Ettrick Valley community. It is also considered that:-

- It is challenging to provide the full Curriculum for Excellence in schools where numbers are very low. The Curriculum places emphasis on children working collaboratively and in

groups. Opportunities for working with others of a similar age and stage are very limited in a multi-composite setting.

- Having a very small peer group can be challenging. A small school roll can limit the children's ability to develop friendship groups and limit the experience and variety of learning and teaching experience, offered through flexibility of groupings.
- A small school roll severely restricts opportunities for sports and other active recreational activities. Whilst some of these problems can be overcome by taking pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
- Having small pupil numbers results in a small number of staff and a smaller parent body reducing the opportunity for adult led activities to support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum. Similarly the opportunities for pupils benefitting from a wide range of solo and group artistic opportunities may be reduced.
- As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding of skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age and stage. This would be very difficult to achieve with such a small school roll.
- Transition to high school can also prove more challenging from a very small school and enhanced transitional support can often be required.

8.4 Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- Staff would not have the opportunity to benefit from being part of a larger team and being able to share planning and curricular resources; while learning from each other.
- Staff would not be able to receive the same support in providing an inclusive curriculum and being able to work collaboratively with other teachers
- Ettrick as a one-teacher school would present challenges in attracting, retaining and supporting staff, given its remote location

8.5 Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements

It is likely that pupils attending a re-opened Ettrick Primary School would still require to be transported to and from school. While the pupils may have less distance to travel, reopening the school would be likely to increase the distance and travel time for staff and Council services travelling to Ettrick. Pupils would also be likely to be transported to other schools in the cluster to share facilities and participate more fully in elements of the Curriculum for Excellence which are not possible at a school with such a low roll.

8.6 Adverse Weather

Ettrick Primary School would generally be more vulnerable to closure than Kirkhope in the event of adverse weather.

8.7 Rural Factors – Community Impact

- The school was not used for external lets prior to being mothballed. While the school has been mothballed the community has utilised the building by holding the James Hogg exhibition. The school car park has also been utilised for village hall functions. The provision of these things could not continue if the school was reopened.
- The community has expressed strong opinions about using the school building for several other potential purposes. There has been engagement with the Community Empowerment Team at the Council regarding utilising the building to support their work regarding objectives contained in their Community Development Plan

8.8 Financial Impact

- The approximate cost of bringing the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is c£38,000. It should be noted that there may be potentially further costs for structural works if the building were to reopen permanently and be used into the long term.
- The costs of reopening the school could be significant and the running costs would be very high per pupil given that the projected roll would be less than 5 pupils.

8.9 Environmental Impact

The reduced travel for some of the children to Ettrick Primary would be cancelled out by the impact of reinstating services and staff having to travel further to access Ettrick Primary School.

8.10 Conclusion

- Reopening the school is not considered a reasonable option. It is challenging to argue that there would be educational benefits for the children to re-open a school when there are projected to be very few primary aged children (<5) in the catchment area. Kirkhope Primary currently offers wider opportunities for the children in terms of learning, socialisation and development. Kirkhope also offers many of the positives about attending a smaller school in the heart of the valley community. Kirkhope has close ties to Yarrow Primary School, which allows the children greater opportunity to participate and learning and increase their peer group.
- Pupil and projected numbers for the Ettrick Primary School catchment area are low (<5). The fall in numbers reflects a similar decline and change in demographic along the Ettrick valley and many rural areas in the Scottish Borders. Kirkhope is also experiencing a dramatic drop in its roll.
- At community meetings the Ettrick community have expressed their concerns regarding the sustainability to viability of Kirkhope Primary School and have indicated their support for working with the Council to try and sustain and boost that school to ensure that one school in the valley remains.
- The Ettrick community have indicated that they wish to utilise the school building for community projects. There has been no evidence of a change of mind in the community regarding the future of school provision in Ettrick. Given the potential educational dis-benefits for the children and staff in reopening Ettrick Primary School with such a small roll it would appear that the more reasonable option would be to work to stabilise the Kirkhope Primary School roll to try and maintain one school within the valley.

9 Option 2

Reopen Ettrick Primary School and Redelineate the Catchment Area

9.1 Positive Considerations:

Same as Option 1 above

9.2 Issues to Consider:

Pupil Numbers/Population Demographics

- A mapping analysis of pupil addresses has been carried out to identify whether the catchment area for Ettrick could be made more sustainable by extending it into one or more of the neighbouring catchment areas of Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools. These catchment areas are largely sparsely populated because of the terrain and options in relation to travel are also limited.
- A summary of the findings is as follows:
 - Kirkhope Primary School only has 8 pupils which equates to 16% capacity. Many of the pupils attending the school live in the village of Ettrickbridge or close to the village. Moving the catchment area significantly could result in pupils living near Ettrickbridge being transported to Ettrick to attend school. Council officers have been working with the parents at Kirkhope for over 2 years to try and boost its roll. This has seen the introduction of an Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school.
 - Yarrow Primary School only has 13 pupils which equates to 26% capacity within the school. All the pupils attending the school closer Yarrow than Ettrick. In any event the road linking the 2 valleys is not considered suitable as a safe route to school. Moving the catchment area significantly would result in pupils transported to Ettrick to attend school which would be a journey of over 30 mins over a minor road, not considered safe in winter months and generally further away than Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools. It should also be noted that the Council is proposing to undertake a statutory consultation to extend Yarrow Primary School's catchment area, to increase its roll and improve its sustainability.
 - Parents at Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools have been meeting with Council officers for over 2 years to work on initiatives to increase both school rolls and to increase their sustainability. It is considered that there is not a demand for Ettrick to

be re-opened and that there is no support to increase its catchment area as this could further threaten the sustainability of Kirkhope and Yarrow by reducing their diminished roll further.

9.4 **Educational Benefits**

As **Option 1** above. The amendment of a catchment area would require a statutory consultation which requires a statement of the educational benefits attached to the proposal. It is not considered that there would be any educational benefit attached to this proposal. It is considered that the reopening of Ettrick Primary School, coupled with a re-delineating of the 3 school catchment areas, would have a negative impact on all 3 schools as pupil numbers would be spread more thinly with no discernible educational benefit arising.

9.5 **Travel Arrangements**

The precise travel impacts would depend on exactly how the catchments were re-delineated. However as set out above given the remote location of Ettrick Primary School relative to Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary schools any re-delineation of the catchment areas would result in significantly increased and potentially impractical travel for more pupils. In addition these pupils would be more likely to be affected by school closure in the event of adverse weather.

9.6 **Financial Impact**

As **Option 1** above.

9.7 **Environmental Impact**

The reduced travel for some of the children to Ettrick Primary would be cancelled out by the increased travel requirements of the children from other catchments and the impact of reinstating services and staff having to travel further to access Ettrick Primary School.

9.8 **Conclusion**

- This is not considered a reasonable option. It is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable with the options examined; this is because most pupils in the neighbouring catchment areas live much closer to their catchment school and given the rural nature of the area, the shorter routes for travel are often unsuitable for school transportation. The whole area has seen dramatic change in demographics which has resulted in a significant drop in school rolls. It is considered that there are no educational benefits attached to this proposal. Reducing the catchment of each school could impact on the viability of all the schools.
- This option would be likely to have a negative impact on the communities of Kirkhope and Yarrow and threaten the sustainability of the schools within their area. It is not considered that there is the number of children residing in the Selkirk valleys to require 3 primary schools.
- Currently Council officers are working with the parents of both Kirkhope and Yarrow to try and increase pupil numbers and improve sustainability.
- An Early Learning and Childcare setting has been opened in Kirkhope and it was included in the Scottish Government pilot for the increase of funded hours from 600 to 1140. This allowed parents/carers to access additional funded hours at the setting and accordingly the provision was accessed by some families outwith the Kirkhope catchment. This is only the second year of the pilot but we will continue to assess if this is having an impact on the school roll.
- The Council is proposing to consult, in the next 2-3, months on a proposal to increase Yarrow's catchment area, to increase a declining roll.

10 **Option 3**

Continue Mothballing Ettrick Primary School with its Catchment Area continuing to be re-zoned to Kirkhope Primary School

10.1 **Issues to Consider**

- The school has been mothballed for over six years. The statutory guidance to the Act in relation to mothballing, states:
“the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”
- Pupil numbers are not projected to increase across the area. The population demographic has changed in the area and nothing has been identified, in terms of population number or housing or commercial development, that would be likely to significantly change these projected numbers.
- It was the view at the community meetings that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful. It was also the view at the community meetings that the school was already viewed as closed. The community has been putting the school building to good use and there were a large number of suggestions for how the building could be utilised in the future. Continuing to keep the school mothballed would achieve little other than continue to frustrate the community.

10.2 Educational Benefits

The educational benefits are largely the same as those detailed at **Option 4** in terms of closure of Ettrick Primary School.

10.3 Travel Arrangements

Travel arrangements are the same as those detailed in **Option 4** for closure of Ettrick Primary School.

10.4 Community Impacts

- The negative impacts of the closure of the school would largely be the same in respect of continued mothballing, but there would be the added uncertainty without it being able to be put the building to other uses or potentially being bought over by the community.
- The community considers that there are challenges in terms of sustaining the two open schools (Kirkhope and Yarrow) across the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys and that Ettrick is not required nor would it be a viable or sustainable option. Therefore it is considered that there is little point to continue mothballing.
- The community is already using the building for the Ettrick Shepherd display and are keen to continue discussions with the Community Empowerment Team regarding future uses of the building. Prolonging the mothballing is not in the community interests and there is an appetite to have a final answer regarding the status of the school.

10.5 Financial Impact

N/A

10.6 Environmental Impact

The environmental impacts are largely the same as stated at **Option 4** in terms of closure of Ettrick Primary School.

10.7 Conclusion

- This is not considered a reasonable option. The school has been mothballed for seven years; given the remote location of the school and the Council's wish to take time to review the demographical shift in the region and the implications of a closure on the community. However pupil numbers are not projected to rise in terms of pre-school and school children living within the catchment and there is no planned housebuilding.
- Discussions with the community have indicated that people are disappointed that the school was still mothballed and generally consider that it is already in effect closed. It is considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources are being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community have articulated concerns regarding the falling population and the challenges that face Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools and wish to work with the Council regarding the sustainability of these 2 schools.
- Members of the community have expressed a view that the long term utilisation of the building by the community of otherwise as an opportunity. On the basis that pupil numbers

are not projected to increase, mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and it is anticipated that the building could be used to benefit the community.

11. Option 4

Permanently close Ettrick Primary School and re-delineate the catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School,

11.1 Case for Closure

- Ettrick Primary School was mothballed in 2012 after a rapid decline in the school roll (75% reduction from 2005 - 2011). In 2018/19 there is only 1 primary school aged child residing in the catchment area. Based on current information, pupil number are forecast over the next 5 years to remain at a similar level to now. Council officers have identified no demand for the school to be re-opened and have been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- It is considered that there would not be educational benefits to re-open the school given the low projected number for school aged children in the area (<5).
- Kirkhope Primary School has a capacity for 50 pupils. The current roll is 8. It is projected that the Kirkhope roll will remain low. It is currently projected that the roll for 2019/20 will be 11 pupils. The Council has been working with parents to try and increase the roll e.g. creating a new Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school and including it in a pilot to allow parents/carers to access funding for increased hours (1140 rather than 600).
- Council figures indicate that in the combined catchment area for Ettrick and Kirkhope Primary schools currently comprises 12 primary school aged pupils and 6 preschool aged children, who attend either a primary school or ELC setting run by the Council.
- Current and projected pupil numbers are not sufficient to sustain 2 primary schools in the Ettrick Valley. 33% of the primary aged children in the enlarged catchment area attend a school other than Kirkhope. Enrolment applications for 2018/19 indicate that 4 preschool children will start in P1 at Kirkhope this year, with the roll at the school projected to be 11. 63% of the children currently attending Kirkhope are in P6 and above.
- Census figures confirm a significant change in the demographics of the area, with evidence of a sizeable reduction in the number of children. This is reflected in many rural areas across the Scottish Borders.
- There are no areas of housing or business or economic development currently planned or expected that would lead to any significant changes to the population relative to Ettrick Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

11.2 Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils

Officers have considered what the likely educational benefits would be if Ettrick Primary School was to permanently close and that the current arrangement re-delineating Kirkhope's catchment to include Ettrick was made permanent:-

- Pupils are and will be attending a school with a peer group within the Ettrick valley community. Being with more children will allow more opportunities for different experiences and learning opportunities.
- It can be considered that there are benefits attached to attending a small rural school in the heart of the Ettrick valley community:-
 - A smaller school can play an important role in the community and provide opportunities for members of the community to become involved in learning. Closer ties to the community can provide specific learning opportunities and experiences which can enhance the sense of community across the generations. Officers have experienced the strong level of support within the community for the school when visiting it at Christmas.
 - Students at smaller schools may be engaged in their school community, leading to a sense of personal responsibility for the community. Pupils may have greater exposure to friends across a wider age range, which can assist with social skills and development.
 - Smaller class sizes can allow a more individualised learning experience with increased exposure to 1:1 learning. When class sizes are small, it can be argued that teachers may be able to identify the academic strengths and weaknesses of each of their students and tailor their instruction accordingly.

- Students at small schools can develop strong relationships with their peers and their teachers. This can increase confidence and reduce the fear of making mistakes
- A school in the heart of a rural community can play a very important role – a focal point and a meeting place. Council officers have seen the strength of support across the community for the school and its activities.
- The nature of composite classes can encourage pupils to work together across the age ranges and abilities which can have a positive impact on all learners
- Travel time to school may be less which then allow more time for pupils for homework, hobbies and out of school activities.

11.3 Educational Benefits - Impact on staff

Staff at Kirkhope work closely with other schools in the cluster, particularly Yarrow. It is considered that obtaining and retaining staff at Kirkhope would be less challenging as the school is more accessible and less remote than Ettrick.

11.4 Educational Benefits-Impact upon the community

- The closure of Ettrick Primary school would have little impact in terms of the community's educational access to the school and its resources. The school has been mothballed since 2012 and is currently home to an exhibition on the Ettrick Shepherd.
- Kirkhope Primary School is within the heart of the community and is viewed as a natural gathering place for families within the Selkirk valleys. More children being located within Kirkhope Primary School will bring a greater sense of community to the West side of the valley and bring support to parents and remove feelings of isolation and vulnerability.
- More children attending Kirkhope Primary will help sustain a primary school within the valleys and assist in growing the community spirit in the area and bring support to parents and perhaps help remove alleviate any feelings of isolation.

11.5 Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements

- Pupils living in the Ettrick catchment area prior to mothballing had a maximum travel time of around 28 minutes. The travel distance from Ettrick Primary School to Kirkhope Primary School is 11.4 miles. The time taken to travel between the two Schools is approximately 27 minutes (google maps).
- The transport provided by the Council from the Ettrick catchment area to Kirkhope currently travels a distance of c 8 miles to Kirkhope Primary School (compared to a 3.8 mile journey to Ettrick Primary School). The travel time is approximately 20 minutes (cf to 10 minutes). This travel arrangement has been in place for almost 7 years. This travel distance it not considered an unreasonable distance to expect children to travel for primary school education in rural areas. Other catchment areas in Scottish Borders also experience such a travel distance.
- Services from key Council departments are more accessible at Kirkhope Primary School than Ettrick

11.6 Rural Factors - Community Impact

- Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and have held discussions with members of the community to discuss the proposals for the school. Previously the majority of comments from the community were supportive of the mothballing and understood the implications of closure of the school. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure.
- In addition many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There was a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a more final solution was required.
- The community has made use of Ettrick Primary School since it was mothballed in 2012. The James Hogg exhibition, which was previously housed in Aikwood Tower, was moved into the

school. The building can provide visitors with toilet access and an opportunity to purchase tourist leaflets. This use could not continue if the school was reopened.

- The school car park is directly opposite the village hall which has limited parking space and supports parking during events such as ceilidhs and visiting drama activities. The use of the school building has had a positive impact upon both sustaining visitors to the community and in supporting local community activities. The volunteer group is currently exploring new sustainability projects in the valley which could also be based within the school building.
- Any sense of loss of social connection through the mothballing of the school has so far been minimised through the additional facilities being provided at the school building. However it is recognised that the school could be put to other uses and the community will be given further opportunities at consultation to discuss this.
- The Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company has indicated that it is actively investigating options to acquire the building through opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed but the Community Council has indicated that the building should be developed into a meaningful asset for the area and beyond.

11.7 Financial Implications

- The Financial savings generated from closing the currently mothballed Ettrick Primary School amount to c £1,100 per annum - the saving is predominantly made up of insurance and facilities management costs. The costs of school transport to Kirkhope are currently absorbed in the transport contract to transport children from the top of the valley into Selkirk for the high school pupils.
- The approximate cost to bring the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is £38,000. It is projected that the operation costs of the school would be c£114,000 per annum which is not considered viable given the projected roll of 1-2 children and the lack of identifiable educational benefits attached to the re-opening of the school. The proposal to close the school is not based on finances but on the merits of the educational benefits for the children in the Ettrick catchment area.

11.8 Environmental Impact

Given the pupil numbers involved, the environmental impact is not considered to be significant. The reduction in utilities required to service the old school building can be considered a positive although Ettrick Primary School is not served by the mains water supply

11.9 Summary/Conclusions

- It is considered that closing Ettrick Primary School is the most reasonable option.
- The changes in the population demographics of the area have resulted in a dramatic fall in the pupil numbers across the valley schools. Council officers have been working with the Kirkhope and Yarrow primary school communities to boost their rolls. Both schools are operating significantly under capacity and projected numbers currently show that the rolls will continue to be very low. There are currently significant efforts underway to maintain these 2 schools in the valleys. The re-opening of Ettrick would only dilute the small number of pupils and would threaten the viability of the other schools.
- This proposal for closure has been formulated because there is no likelihood of the school educating children in the short, medium or long term, given the significant changes in the demographics of the area in the last 10-15 years. Future pupil projections have been considered for both Kirkhope Primary School and Ettrick Primary School which indicate that pupil numbers will decrease slightly over the next 4 years, with little house building planned. The Kirkhope roll is projected to grow by 38% in 2019 (to 11 pupils). However the occupancy of the school will only be 22%.
- Staffing at Kirkhope is settled and the shared headship between Kirkhope and Yarrow is working well. It would be challenging to create a leadership model for Ettrick Primary School and attract staff to the school. The roll of the Kirkhope Primary School may become more sustainable if the catchment is permanently redrawn to include the catchment for Ettrick Primary School. In turn this school is more likely to maintain effective staffing levels and staff will have better opportunity to collaborate with colleagues

- Council officers have been unable to detect any demand to re-open Ettrick and it is considered that the Educational Benefits of the children attending Kirkhope Primary School are persuasive as the school can offer a fuller curriculum and the facilities required to support the pupils' learning journey in the heart of the Ettrick Valley community.
- Kirkhope Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers in a school building that offers modern facilities to support the Curriculum for Excellence and is also more sustainable in terms of capacity and environmental impact.
- The closure of Ettrick Primary School is not considered to have been detrimental to the community as the building is being utilised and plans are being developed for its future use. The school building is seen as an opportunity for the community and several interested parties have already made enquiries to the Community Council and Scottish Borders Council. Accordingly this option is considered to be the most appropriate.
- The school has now been mothballed for almost 7 years and some in the community have expressed the view that it is 'wasteful' to continue this in the long term. The community have been clear about the challenges they face, less employment, fewer families, and fewer pupils. However, they were positive about the possibilities and opportunities which could be created, if the school building were freed up to be used by the community, developed or sold.
- Parents still retain the right to make a placing request for another school of their choice, which will be accommodated as far as possible.