

This Proposal Paper is issued in replacement of the Proposal Paper that was published on 6 February 2017. The statutory consultation that commenced in February 2017 was suspended in 2017. After taking consideration of the time that has elapsed, the decision has been taken to repeat the consultation process. An updated Options Analysis has been undertaken and an updated and revised Proposal Paper has been prepared in order to facilitate an opportunity for all stakeholders and members of the community to have their say on the proposals.

## **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

### **STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL**



#### **CONSULTATION PERIOD**

**4 March 2019 to 28 April 2019**

#### **PUBLIC MEETING:**

**Ettrick Village Hall**

**On 26 March 2019 at 7pm**

*This Proposal Paper has been issued by Scottish Borders Council's Children and Young People's Services in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.*

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## 1. THE PROPOSALS

It is proposed, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation process, that:-

- 1.1 Ettrick Primary School (currently mothballed) is permanently closed; and
- 1.2 If it is decided to permanently close Ettrick Primary School, that its catchment zone is permanently re-zoned to Kirkhope Primary School.

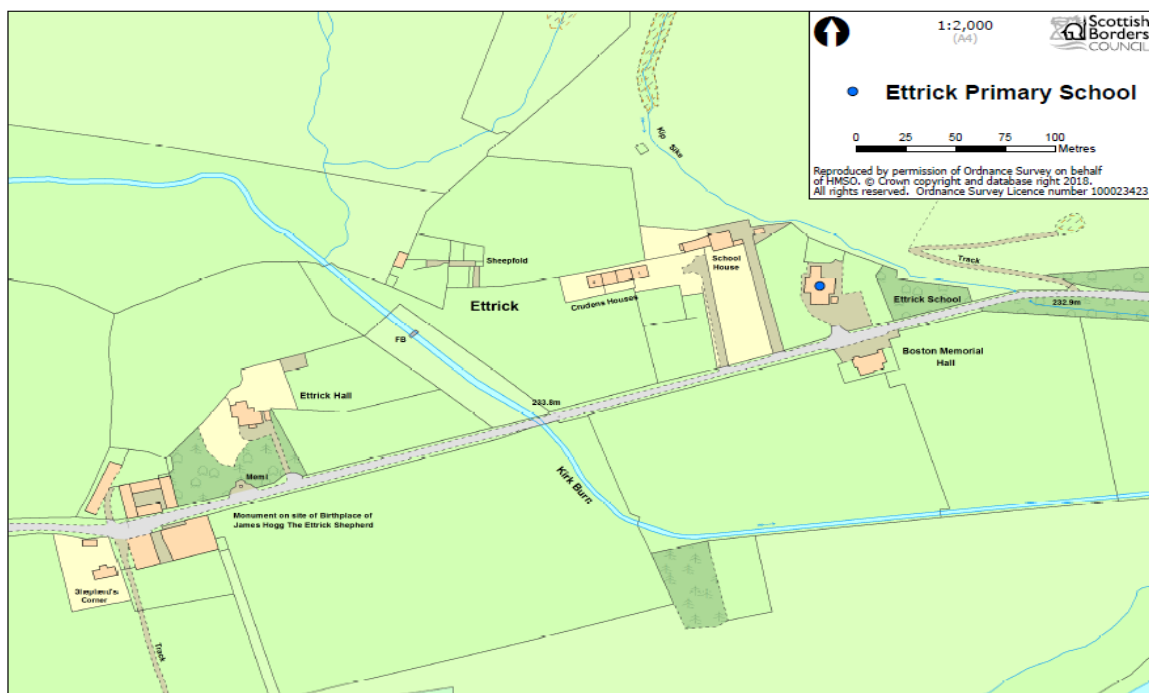
## 2 OPTION APPRAISAL REPORT

This Proposal Paper should be read in conjunction with the Council's Option Appraisal Report, which contains an assessment of the options that Council officers considered in advance of making this Proposal. A copy of the Options Appraisal Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## 3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSAL

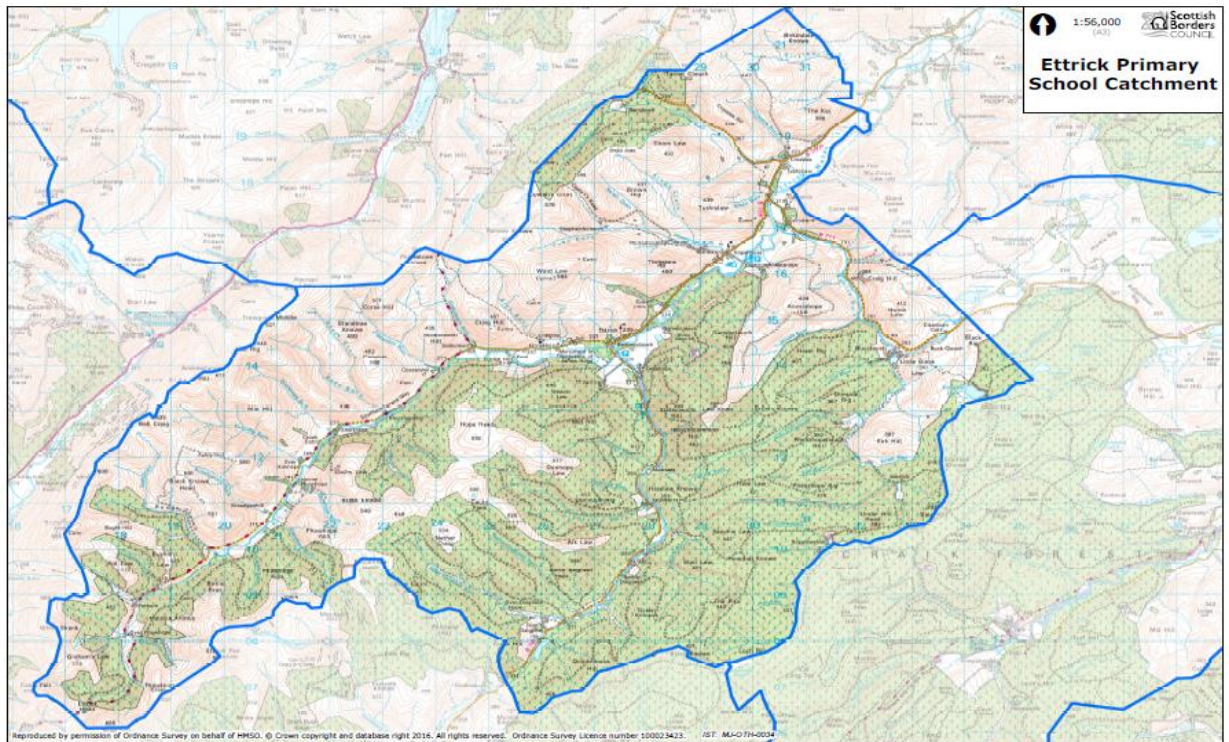
### ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MOTHBALLING

- 3.1 Ettrick Primary School is situated in the Ettrick Valley of the Scottish Borders. The school is located just over 18 miles from Selkirk (c 40 mins drive). The school opened in 1965 with capacity for 50 pupils. It is a non-denominational primary school for the catchment zone of Ettrick, Hopehouse and the local area. Following a sustained fall in the school roll, the decision was taken by the Council in 2012 to mothball Ettrick Primary School.
- 3.2 Ettrick Primary School's location is shown on the plan below:

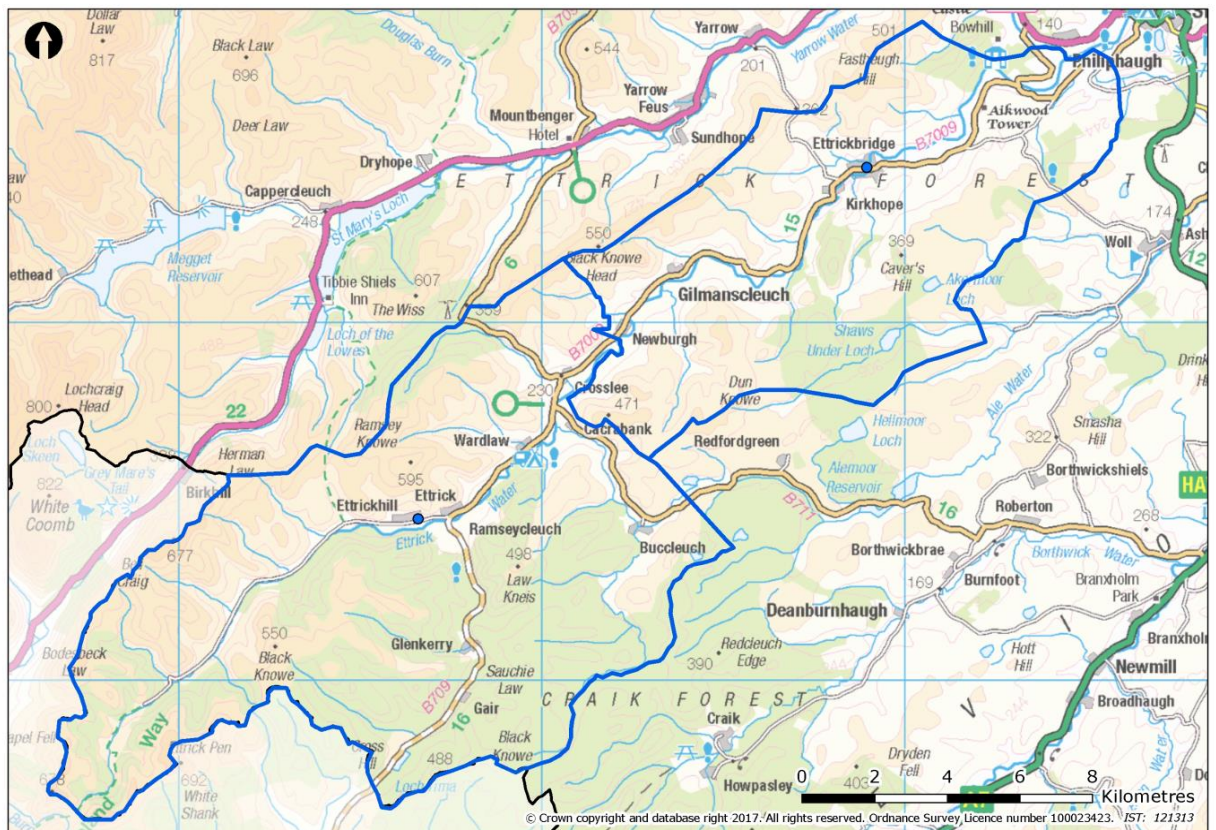




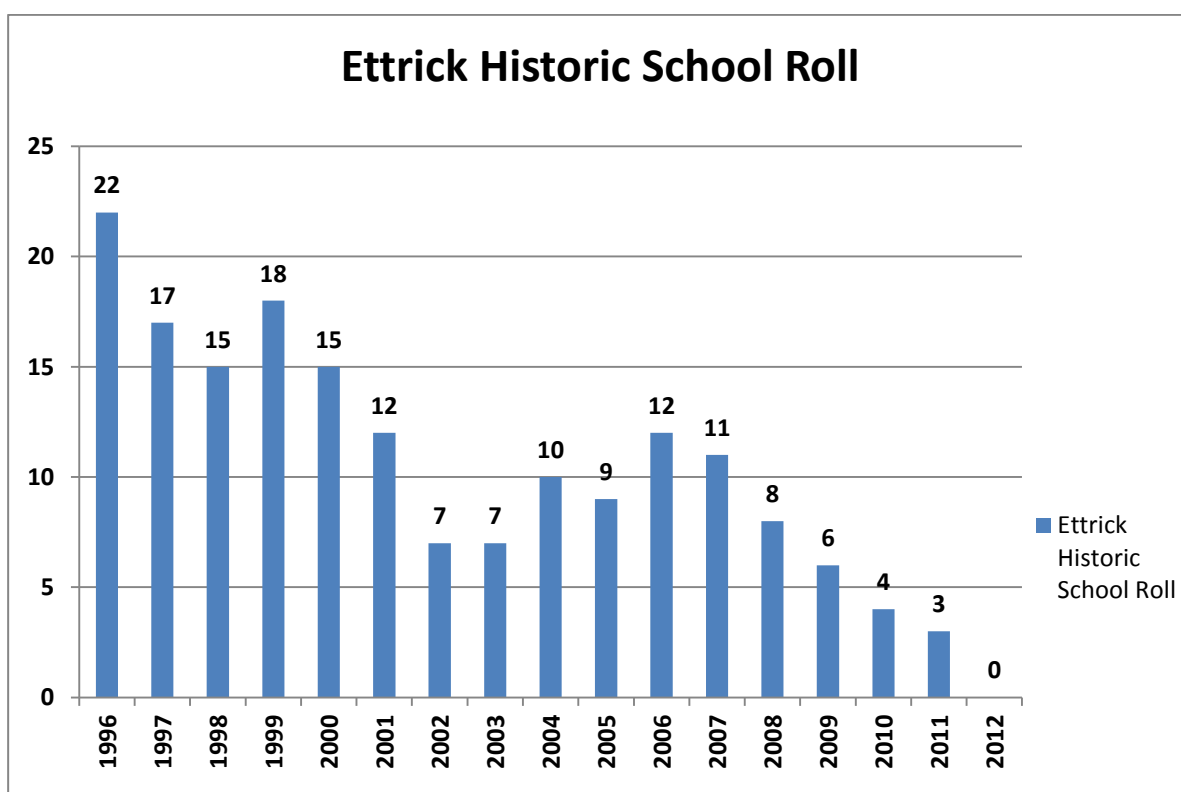
### 3.3 Ettrick Primary School's catchment area is shown below:-



### 3.4 When Ettrick Primary was mothballed, its catchment area was temporarily re-zoned to Kirkhope Primary School. The enlarged catchment is shown here:-



- 3.5 Ettrick Primary School is classified being in a “Remote Rural Area” in terms of the Scottish Governments Rural Schools List 2017<sup>1</sup>. 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.
- 3.6 The roll at Ettrick Primary School had fallen 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 enrolling in 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. The decline in the school roll from 1996 until mothballing in 2012 is illustrated here<sup>2</sup>:-



- 3.7 Prior to making the decision to mothball the school, the Council met with parents and the community to consider the alternatives; discussions included the suggestion to transfer pupils from one of the other partner schools in the valley to breathe life into school for part of the week. However after investigating the options fully, the decision was taken to mothball Ettrick Primary School and a commitment was given to undertake a statutory consultation on permanent closure if there continued to be no demand for places at the school.
- 3.8 Since 2012 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children enrolling at Ettrick Primary School and the Council officers are currently not aware of any demand in the community for the school to be re-opened.
- 3.9 If the school were to re-open in August 2019, it is projected that there may only be one pupil of primary age residing in the former Ettrick Primary School catchment area. It is not certain that this pupil would wish to attend the school were it to re-open. In addition, pupil numbers over the next 4 years are not projected to rise significantly and would remain <5.

<sup>1</sup> [Rural Schools List 2017](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Government Historic School Roll Data](#)



- 3.10 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>3</sup>**

An assessment of the physical condition of the school and its grounds. Categorisation is as follows:

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

**Suitability<sup>4</sup>**

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:

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

- 3.11 Condition surveys are undertaken on a rolling programme by a Scottish Borders 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.
- 3.12 A condition survey was carried out on the building in June 2012 and the overall site is rated as Condition B (performing adequately but showing minor deterioration). The suitability of the school was assessed in 2012 prior to mothballing and was categorised as B (performing well but with minor problems). It is estimated that c£38,000 of works would be required to remedy the immediate defects.

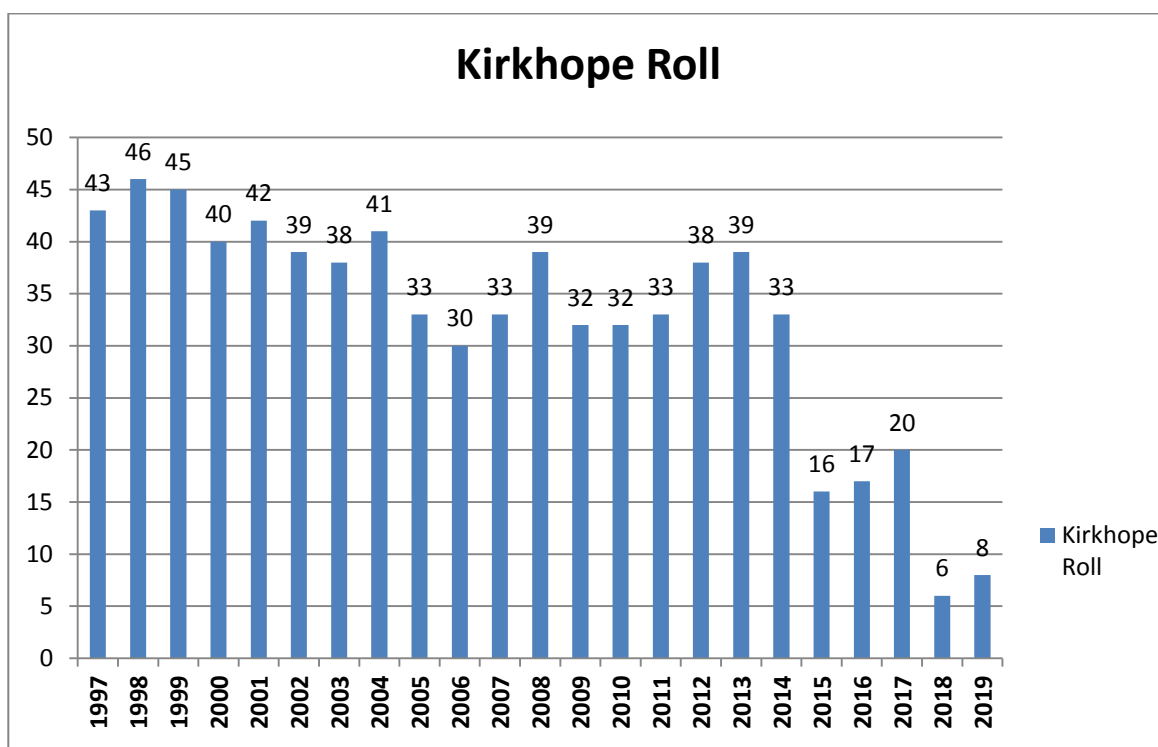
#### **4 KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REASONS BEHIND THE AMALGAMATION OF CATCHMENT ZONES**

- 4.1 Kirkhope Primary School is also located in the Ettrick Valley and is less than 7 miles from Selkirk (c15 minutes' drive). The school provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Ettrickbridge and surrounding area.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Kirkhope Primary School as "Accessible-rural" school. The classification criteria are "settlements of fewer than 3,000 people and within 30 minutes' drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more".<sup>5</sup>
- 4.3 The school has capacity for 50 pupils. There are currently 8 children attending the school and 9 children attending the Early Learning and Childcare setting. Only one child attending the school lives within the former catchment zone for Ettrick Primary School.
- 4.4 The Kirkhope 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%.

<sup>3</sup> [Core Facts Building Our Future: Scotland's School Estate 2017](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Suitability Core Fact: Scotland's School Estate 2017](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Rural Schools List 2017](#)



- 4.5 A condition survey was carried out on Kirkhope Primary in June 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).
- 4.6 The most recent inspection carried out by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) 21 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](mailto:Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk)
- 4.7 Ettrick Primary School catchment was temporarily zoned to Kirkhope Primary School when the school was mothballed as it was the closest primary and located in the valley community. Kirkhope Primary School offers a vibrant learning environment that encourages high levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It will also help promote their social and emotional development as the children will be part of a wider peer group within their own community.

## GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- 5.1 Ettrick Primary School sits within the Ettrick valley and is an area that has seen some significant changes to the demographics of the area. The table below, derived from National Records of Scotland<sup>6</sup> data, relates to a larger area in which both primary schools are situated, and shows how the population has changed between 2001 and 2015. In 2001 there were 154 children (aged 0 to 15) living in the larger 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%.

<sup>6</sup> [Scotland's National Census Records](#)

<b>Ettrick Water and Bowhill Area (S01012378)</b>			
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%

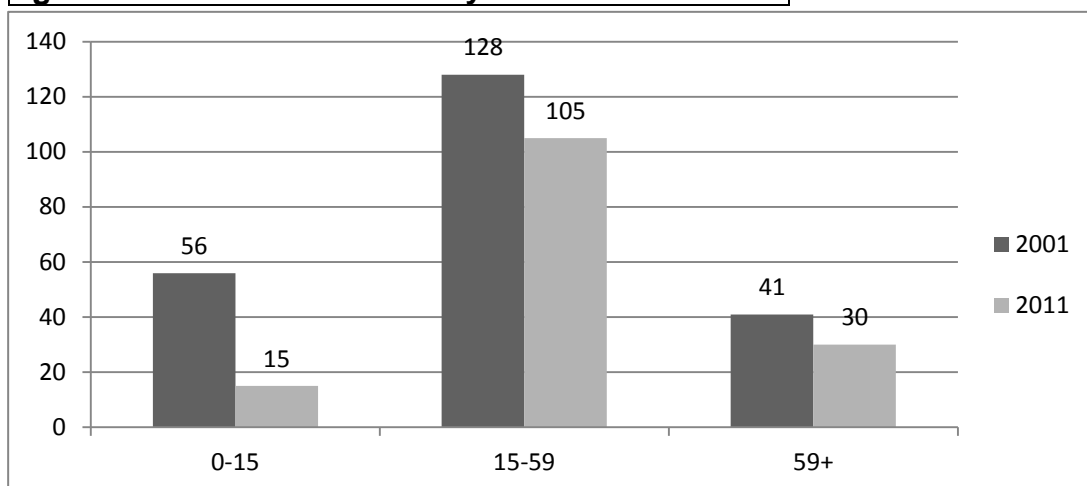
## ETTRICK AND THE LOCAL AREA

### 5.2 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 also indicates that there were only 7 0-4 year olds in the area in 2011

<b>Ettrick Valley Area Census Data</b>			
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.

## 6. STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 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. 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 meet best value requirements, it is important to achieve optimum efficiency by minimising the number of buildings 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 factors, such as altering catchment areas and the implementation of shared headships.
- 6.2 Scottish Borders Council works to enhance quality of life, make best use of public resources and ensure continuously improving services. Scottish Borders Council has 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.

## 7 REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL AND THE CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Council wishes to consult with parents and the community on the proposals to close Ettrick Primary School and to permanently re-zone its catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School. All consultations regarding changes to schools in Scotland require to adhere to the provisions of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (the **Act**). This Proposal Paper has been prepared in compliance of the Act.



7.2 There are a number of reasons why Council wishes to consult on this proposal:-

- 7.2.1 The school was mothballed in 2012 following a significant drop in the school roll. Council officers have monitored the rolls in the valley schools and have not identified any change or potential change to the demographics to indicate that this position may alter. The Ettrick valley has continued to experience a change in demographics, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of children and families residing in the area.
- 7.2.2 Kirkhope Primary School has also experienced a significant drop in pupil numbers and this is not currently projected to change significantly in the short/medium term.
- 7.2.3 There have been no enquiries about re-opening Ettrick Primary School and Council officers are not aware of any demand in the local community for the school to be reopened.
- 7.2.4 Based on the Council's current information, if the school was to re-open in August 2019 it is projected that there may only be 1 primary aged pupil in the catchment area. Council officers do not consider that there are persuasive educational reasons to re-open the school as the projected roll pupil numbers would present challenges in accessing all aspects of the Curriculum of Excellence and would limit the experiences and opportunities of the pupils at Ettrick. Children in the Ettrick catchment currently attend Kirkhope Primary School, which is located reasonably close to Ettrick and provides a vibrant learning environment in the heart of the valley community. Kirkhope is also experiencing low pupil numbers and the re-opening of Ettrick could have a negative impact on the sustainability of Kirkhope.
- 7.2.5 Council officers have carried out a detailed assessment of the potential alternatives to closure and do not consider that re-opening Ettrick Primary School would be a viable OR sustainable.
- 7.2.6 Council officers have considered the impact on education, the pupils, staff, the community, travel, financial implications and environment impact and do not consider re-opening Ettrick as a viable sustainable option. These considerations are discussed in detail below.
- 7.2.7 After discussions with the community, Council officers recognise that the school remaining mothballed is also not a solution for the community; as they wish to (1) use the school building for community use and (2) to work with the Council to sustain Kirkhope Primary School which is currently operating at 16% capacity.

## **8 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSAL**

- 8.1 The Council's Executive (Education) Committee in February 2016 had agreed to commence a review of its entire school estate. As part of this on-going review, the Council officers considered the schools that have currently been mothballed and what their future should be. Approval was given by the Committee in November 2017 to proceed with the statutory process for considering the future of Ettrick Primary School.
- 8.2 The statutory process is set out in the Act. Its 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.

8.3 Given that Ettrick Primary School is a remote rural school, special arrangements apply under the Act, which contains special provisions regarding rural schools. An Options Appraisal has been prepared by Council officers to properly consider a range of options and factors in connection with the school. The Options Appraisal Report (attached as **Appendix 1**) concluded that closure is the most appropriate option. The Options Appraisal Report is also published on the Scottish Borders Council website: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrick> and copies will be available for inspection, free of charge at the places listed in **Clause 14** below. A summary of the Options Analysis is given below.

## 9 APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

9.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing, unless the school is very remote. As Ettrick is a remote rural school, the Act requires that prior to making a proposal of closure, that all reasonable alternatives to closure are considered, with a closure proposal only being made if it is the most appropriate option. In order to determine the options available regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options and assessed these to assist in identifying the most reasonable option to make a proposal to Councillors. The analyses have taken consideration of the provisions of the Act; in particular the provisions regarding rural schools.

9.2 When considering the options available, the Council considered a number of issues:-

- Population and demographics of the area
- The catchment areas and profiles
- The role of the school in the community
- 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

9.3 The following options were identified

OPTIONS FOR ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL	
<b>Option 1</b>	Reopen Ettrick School with its original catchment area
<b>Option 2</b>	Reopen Ettrick Primary School with an expanded catchment area
<b>Option 3</b>	Continue mothballing Ettrick Primary School, with the catchment area remaining zoned to Kirkhope Primary School
<b>Option 4</b>	Close Ettrick Primary School, with the catchment area zoned permanently to Kirkhope Primary School

**10. OPTION 1**  
**REOPEN ETRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ITS ORIGINAL CATCHMENT AREA**

10.1 It is considered that re-opening Ettrick was not a reasonable alternative to closure. The area has seen a significant decline in population with only 1 primary school aged pupil and 2 pre-school aged children currently residing in the Ettrick catchment. The roll at the nearest primary school (Kirkhope) has also declined rapidly and currently has only 8 pupils (16% occupancy). Council officers have been unable to identify a demand within the community to re-open the school; the parents/carers appear satisfied with the education and experiences that their children receive at their current schools. In line with other rural areas there has been a decline in the population the 0-15s age group, as working patterns change across the country; with many rural schools witnessing a decline in pupil numbers. We have been unable to establish any planned development or business activity that would be likely to impact on the current demographics of the area.

10.2 It is considered that while Ettrick reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with the Ettrick community, there could be educational disadvantages in reopening Ettrick Primary School; with such a small school roll compared to education currently on offer at Kirkhope. It is considered that there are very few positive arguments that can be made regarding the children's education that would support the school being reopened with its original catchment. Many of the educational benefits that can be considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school in its community also apply to Kirkhope; with close bonds across year groups, opportunities to collaborate across the age range and the close ties to the community.

10.3 Ettrick is currently rated as a B for Condition and Suitability. The Council's estates team estimate that it would cost c£38,000 to remedy the current defects with the building. The facilities provided however would not be of the same standard as Kirkhope and pupils would still require to be transported to other schools for activities and for learning opportunities.

10.4 Changes to travel arrangements would be fairly neutral; while pupils might have shorter journeys to and from school they would still require to be transported to access other facilities and staff and services would have further to travel to access Ettrick.

10.5 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Ettrick Primary School with its original catchment zone.

**11. OPTION 2**  
**REOPEN ETRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REDELINEATE THE CATCHMENT AREA**

11.1 Given the questions raised in **Option 1** about levels of demand in the area for the school to be re-opened, it was deemed reasonable to consider whether expanding the catchment area would allow the school to be re-opened to provide a viable primary school for an enlarged catchment.

11.2 A mapping exercise of the postcodes of children in the neighbouring catchment areas has been carried out. This confirmed that there were no children in the neighbouring catchments living closer to Ettrick Primary School than their current catchment school. Given the rurality of the area, safe travel routes were also considered and it was concluded that the current travel plans would be preferable. Given that the 2 other schools located in the Selkirk valleys (Kirkhope and Yarrow) have both experienced significant drops in roll and are currently working with Council

officers on initiatives to boost their rolls (introduction of an ELC setting at Kirkhope and Statutory Catchment consultation and Yarrow) the impact that amending catchment areas could have on the other schools and communities is not considered a reasonable option. Particularly as any changes to catchment areas would require a Statutory Consultation with identified Educational Benefits. Officers do not consider that there would be an arguable basis for catchment amendment on the basis of demand nor Educational Benefits. No evidence of demand to attend Ettrick has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Ettrick catchment area is not considered a reasonable option as it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable on this basis.

**12     OPTION 3  
CONTINUE MOTHBALLING ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO  
KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 12.1 This option considers whether the school should continue to be mothballed as re-opening is not immediately viable but may be reasonably viable in the future. The school has been mothballed for almost 7 years. The statutory guidance to the Act 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.”*
- 12.2 Pupil numbers, both current and projected, are very low. There is currently no significant planned housebuilding or business development that would significantly reverse this decrease in population numbers.
- 12.3 Discussions with community members indicate that people were disappointed that the school was still mothballed and generally considered it was already in effect closed. They considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community viewed the long term utilisation of the building by the community, or otherwise, as an opportunity for the community.
- 12.4 On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase, mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and the building could be used to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

**13     OPTION 4 – THE PROPOSAL  
PERMANENTLY CLOSE ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND RE-DELINEATE THE CATCHMENT  
ZONE TO KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 13.1 This option would formalise the status quo; resulting in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone. This would allow Children and Young People Services to declare the school building as surplus and alternative uses for the building could then be progressed.
- 13.2 In the analysis of **Options 1, 2 and 3** it has been concluded that it would not be reasonable to re-open the school with its current or an extended catchment and that continuing to mothball would not be a reasonable conclusion

**EVIDENCE OF DEMAND FOR ETTRICK**

- 13.3 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 1 primary school aged child residing in the



catchment area and 2 pre-school aged children. Based on current information, pupil numbers 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 has been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.

- 13.4. 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.
- 13.5 Kirkhope Primary School has a capacity for 50 pupils. The current roll is 8. It is projected that the Kirkhope roll will remain low. (2019/20 - 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).
- 13.6 Council figures indicate that 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. However it should be noted that 63% of the children currently attending Kirkhope are in P6 and above
- 13.7 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.
- 13.8 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.

## **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS**

- 13.9 The Council has statutory duties relating to the provision of education in the Scottish Borders. Children and Young People's Services key priorities are to improve well-being, inclusion, experiences and opportunities for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum. As part of a multi-agency partnership, the following priorities have been identified within the Children and Young People's Services Plan:
  - 13.9.1 Keeping children and young people safe;
  - 13.9.2 Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities;
  - 13.9.3 Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people;
  - 13.9.4 Increasing participation and engagement
  - 13.9.5 Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
- 13.11 The Curriculum for Excellence is the national curriculum for Scottish schools. It aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work now and in the future. The Council has a further duty to deliver a service which meets the criteria for best value, in terms of efficiency,

effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities, and which meets the agreed priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement and Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Plan.

13.12 The purpose of the Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities to enable each child or young person to be:

- a successful learner;
- a confident individual;
- a responsible citizen; and
- an effective contributor.

13.13 The Curriculum for Excellence encourages children and young people to develop through different learning experiences. These can include:-

- 13.13.1 Collaborative learning - where children can work collectively within a group setting. This allows children to learn from each other and to share experiences and skills;
- 13.13.2 Individual learning- where children are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning. This encourages children to learn in the most effective way for them;
- 13.13.3 Peer to peer learning and assessment;
- 13.13.4 Relevance in learning, where children learn through experiences;
- 13.13.5 Outdoor learning – where learning takes place out of the classroom or school setting.

13.14 The Educational Benefits of the Proposals have been assessed taking account of the requirements under legislation and the priorities and aims of the Children and Young People's Services Plan and having regard to the terms and statutory guidance of the Act.

## **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR THE PUPILS**

### **13.15 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 the benefits attached to attending a small rural school in its community also apply to Kirkhope Primary School, given the size of the community in the Ettrick valley,
  - 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.

- 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
- 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.
- There are some other considerations to weigh up when considering a small school:-
  - Pupils will have a smaller peer group so may not have as many opportunities for collaborative working and to form friendship groups. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem can be enhanced through being part of an age-appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interaction and relationships to form and reform. Kirkhope proactively links with other schools in the cluster to provide a variety of opportunities and experiences for the pupils.
  - A small roll can result in a smaller number of staff and parent body reducing the opportunity of adults leading a range of activities to support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum. This can reduce the likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wide range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities when compared with a school with a larger roll. This is likely to be counterbalanced by the strong level of community involvement and support for Kirkhope.
  - A small roll can restrict opportunities for sports and other active recreational activities. Whilst some of these problems can be overcome by taking pupils to participate in activities in neighbouring schools, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
  - A smaller roll and a smaller peer group may result in pupils requiring more support in the transition to secondary school as it may appear more daunting. The staff at Kirkhope are very experienced in this matter and their knowledge of each child as an individual will allow them to tailor support appropriately.

#### **13.16 Educational Benefits - Impact on staff**

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

#### **13.17 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 valley and could support to parents.

#### **13.18 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 Council provided transport from the Ettrick catchment area to Kirkhope currently travels a distance of under 8 miles (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 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.

### **13.19 Rural Factors - Community Impact**

- Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and have had discussions with the community to discuss the proposals for the school. 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 by the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Some appeared to consider the school was closed and had suggestions for the building's use. However a small 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. A group of community volunteers have maintained the building and grounds. 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.
- 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.

### **13.19 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 High School.
- 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. It should be noted that 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.

### **13.20 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 a mains water supply



## 13.21 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 or even fall. 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. 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 their catchment is permanently redrawn to include the catchment for Ettrick Primary School. In turn this school may be more likely to maintain effective staffing levels and staff will have better opportunity to collaborate with colleagues
- Council officers have been unable to identify any demand to re-open the school 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## 14. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

14.1 The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- Ettrick Village Hall, Ettrick, TD7 5JA
- Kirkhope Primary School, Ettrickbridge, by Selkirk, TD7 5JJ
- Yarrow Primary School, Yarrow, by Selkirk, TD7 5NE
- Selkirk High School, Hillside Terrace, Selkirk, TD7 4EW

- Selkirk Library, Ettrick Terrace, Selkirk, TD7 4LE

And published on the Scottish Borders Council website:  
<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrick>

14.2 Paper copies of this Proposal Paper are also available. This Proposal Paper is also available in alternative formats or in translated form for readers whose first language is not English. Please apply to:

Ettrick Primary School Consultation  
 Children and Young People's Services  
 Scottish Borders Council  
 Council Headquarters  
 Newtown St Boswells  
 Melrose  
 TD6 0SA  
 Telephone: 01835 825080  
 E-mail: [schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk)

14.3 Formal notice of the Proposals and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- the parents/carers of the children who attend an affected school;
- the Parent Councils of the affected schools;
- the parent/carers of any children likely to attend an affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
- the pupils attending an affected school insofar as the Education Authority considers them to be of a suitable age and maturity;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- the Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the affected schools
- the Community Councils of Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk & District
- Community Planning Partnership named partners
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

14.4 An advertisement will be placed in the relevant local media the week beginning 4 March 2019, giving the dates for the consultation period for public meetings.

14.5 The consultation for this Proposal will run from **4 March 2019** and will end on **28 April 2019**. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

14.6 A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

**26 March at 7pm**  
**at**  
**Ettrick Village Hall**  
**Ettrick**  
**TD7 5JA**

14.7 Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council, will be addressed senior officers of the Council.

The meetings will provide an opportunity to:

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

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions and officer responses. These notes will be published on the Council website and a copy will be made available on request. These notes will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

- 14.8 Meetings will be held with pupils and staff in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

## 15. RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSAL

- 15.1 Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposal by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposal to:

Ettrick Primary School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA  
or

Web Address: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrick>

- 15.2 A response form is available from Children & Young People's Services, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA or online at <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrick> for the convenience of those wishing to respond. Its use is not compulsory.
- 15.3 If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. Responses from Parent Councils, staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome.
- 15.4 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response (but not their personal data) will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Officers of Scottish Borders Council and Officers of Education Scotland”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.
- 15.5 All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period **28 April 2019**.

## **16. INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND**

When the Proposal Paper was published, a copy was sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council 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 Council at the public meeting that 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 Council has sent them all representations and documents mentioned above. In some cases, it is possible for them to extend the 3 weeks with the agreement of the Council. However, 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 school(s) 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.

## **17. PREPARATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT**

- 17.1 The Council will review the Proposals 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.
- 17.2 This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, public libraries in the vicinity of the affected schools, as well as the affected schools, free of charge. Anyone who made written representations 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 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.
- 17.3 The Consultation Report will also contain a statement explaining how it complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the report by Education Scotland and representations (both written and oral) that it received.
- 17.4 The Consultation Report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of three weeks, before it is presented to Full Council at the Council meeting in May/June 2019.

## **18. SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL DECISION**

The Consultation Report, together with any other relevant documentation, will be considered by Full Council, who will make a decision regarding the Proposals. The Proposals concerns the closure of Ettrick Primary School and the re-delineation of the existing Ettrick catchment area to Kirkhope catchment area. It should be noted that the closure of Ettrick Primary School could be subject to ministerial call-in by Scottish Ministers.



## **19 NOTE ON CORRECTIONS**

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by Scottish Borders Council or any person, Scottish Borders Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or there has been an inaccuracy. It will then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the re-issuing of the 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.

## **20 SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN**

- 20.1 If Scottish Borders Council, as the Education Authority, makes a final decision to implement the proposal, it will notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper 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, such as this, 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.
- 20.2 The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. 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. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than eight weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- 20.3 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. Scottish Borders Council as the Education 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.
- 20.4 The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the proposal, refuse consent and remit the proposal back to Scottish Borders Council as the Education Authority or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally.
- 20.5 The 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.



4 March 2019

**STUART EASINGWOOD**

INTERIM SERVICE DIRECTOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES

## **APPENDIX 1 – UPDATED OPTIONS ANALYSIS REPORT**



**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**UPDATED OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT 2019**



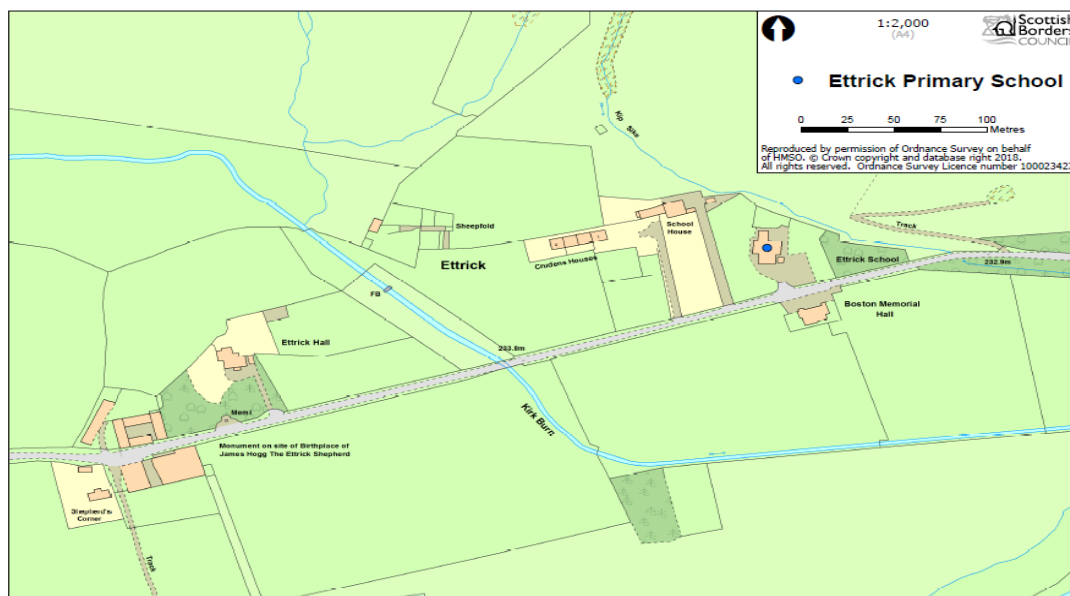
## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 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.

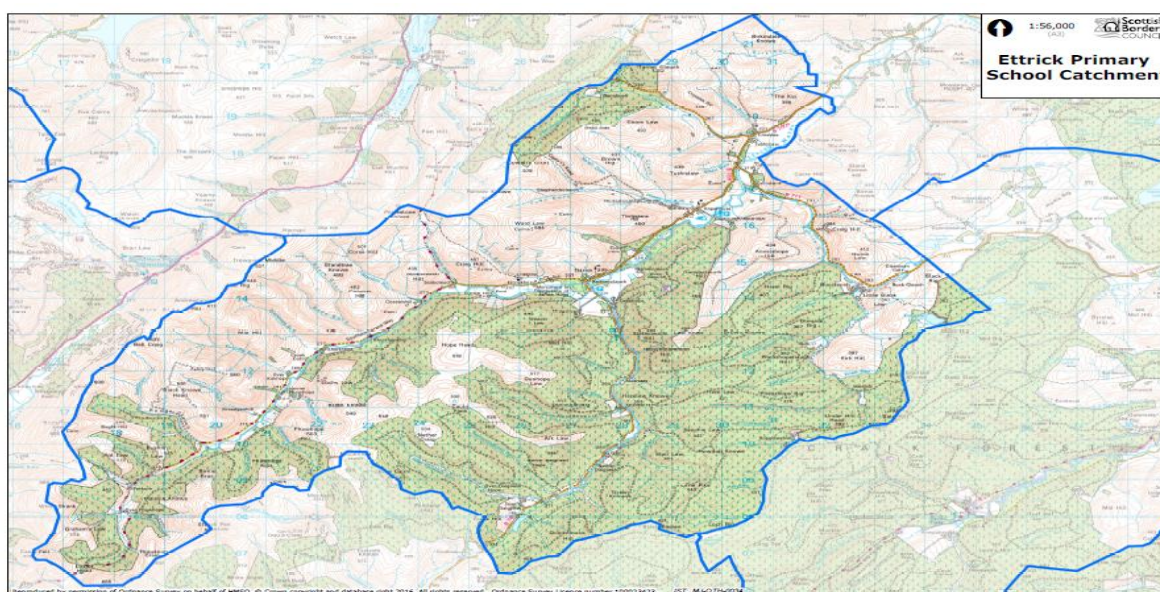
## 2 BACKGROUND

### **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 Government<sup>7</sup>. 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.

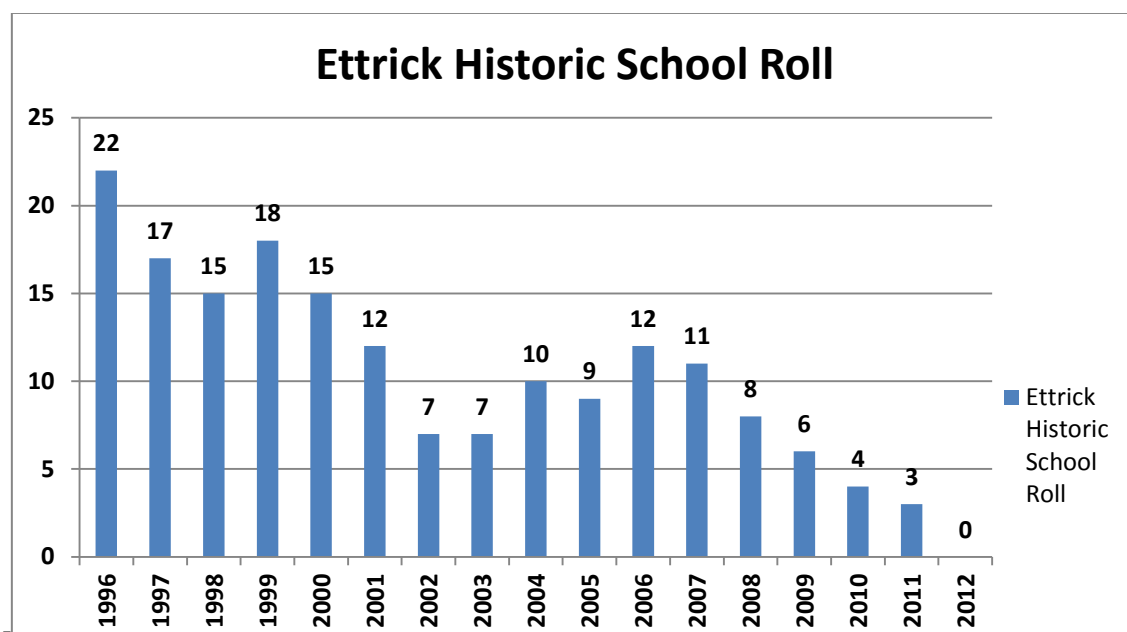
2.5 The roll at Ettrick Primary School fell significantly in the years prior to mothballing. In 2007 there were eleven pupils but by 2011 this reduced to three pupils. In August 2012, two of these pupils were due to transfer to secondary school, with no new pupils applying to enrol for the 2012/13 school 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

<sup>7</sup> [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)



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 here<sup>8</sup>:

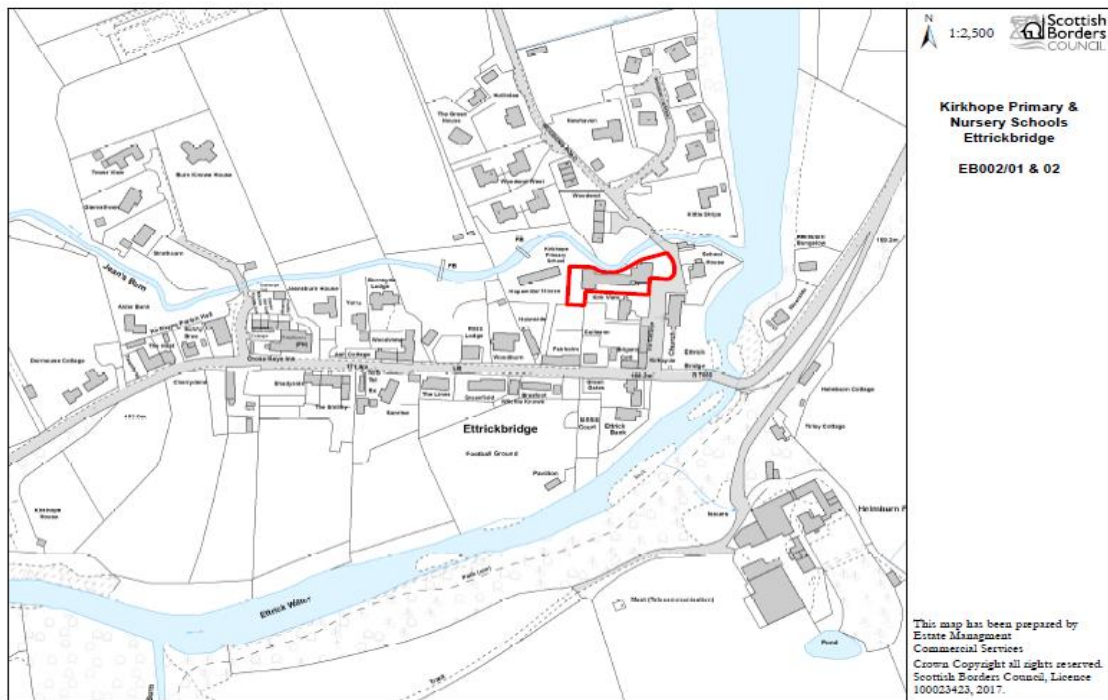


2.7 Since 2012 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children wishing to enrol at Ettrick Primary School and the Council is currently not aware of any children who would wish to enrol at Ettrick Primary School in the future.

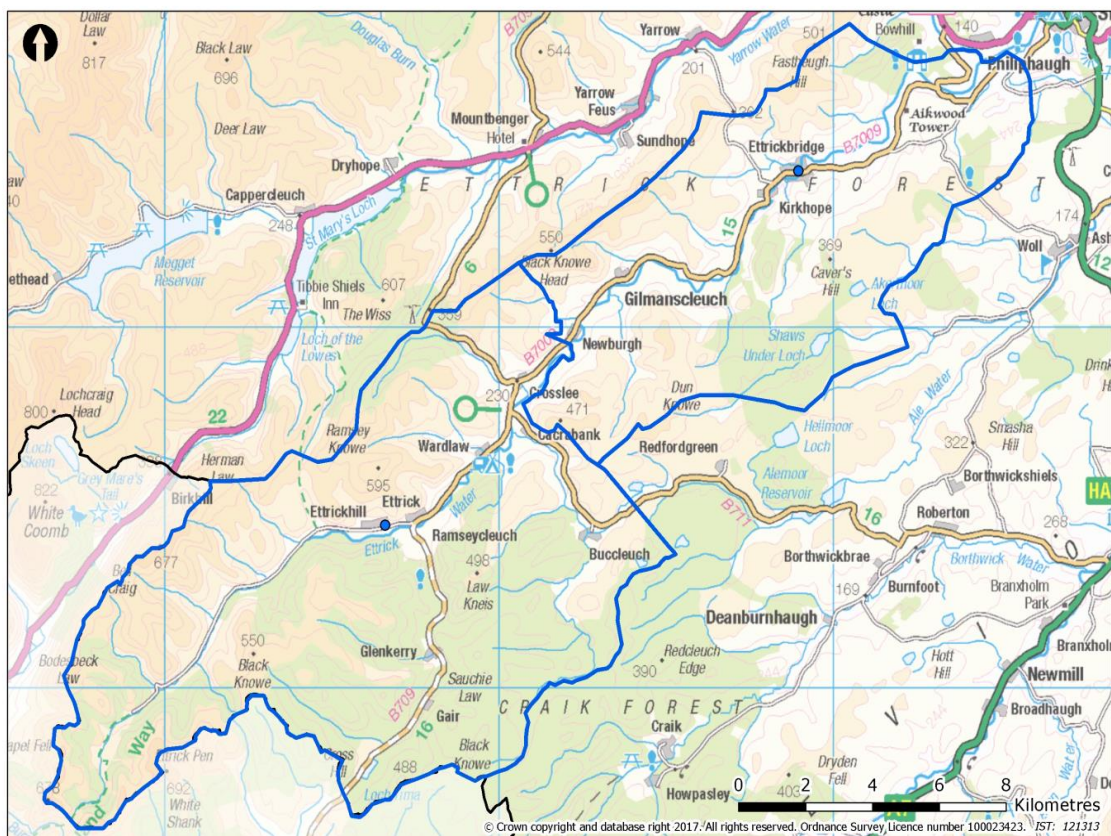
### 3 AMALGAMATION OF CATCHMENT ZONES WITH KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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:-

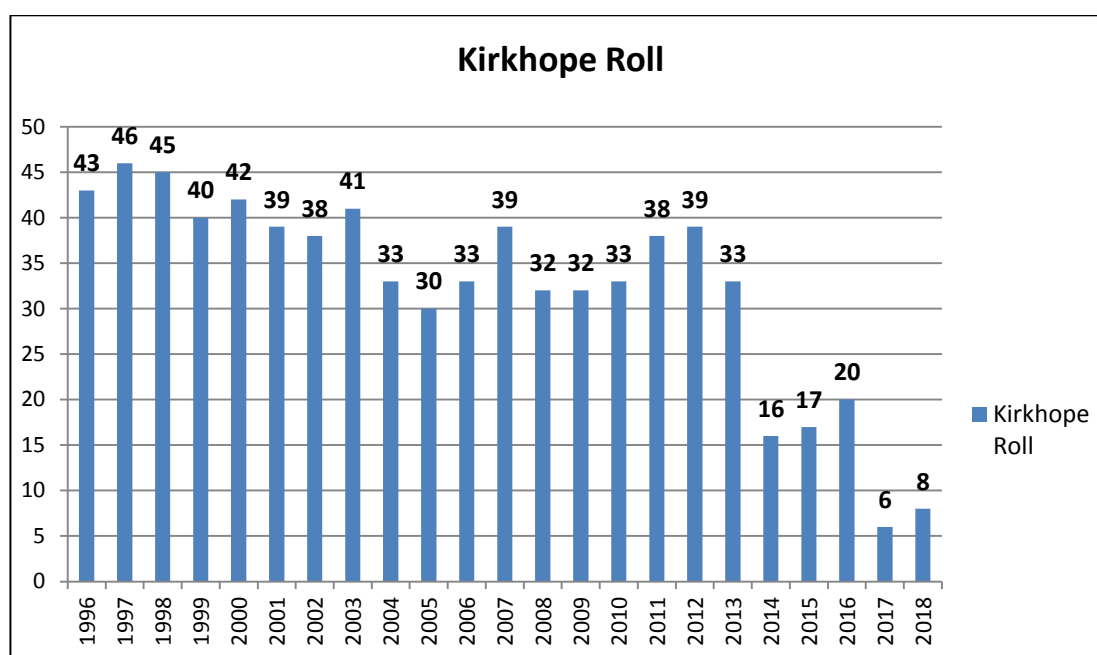
<sup>8</sup> [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)



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".<sup>9</sup>
- 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%.<sup>10</sup> 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 olds<sup>11</sup>. There are currently 9 children enrolled at the ELC setting. The roll profile is shown below:-



- 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](mailto:Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

<sup>9</sup> [Rural Schools List 2017](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)

<sup>11</sup> *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*

## 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:

### **Condition**<sup>12</sup>

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>13</sup>

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
- 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 Scotland<sup>14</sup> 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%.

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<sup>12</sup> [Scottish Government: School Estates: Condition Core Facts](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Scottish Government: School Estates: Suitability Core Facts](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Scotland's National Census Records](#)

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

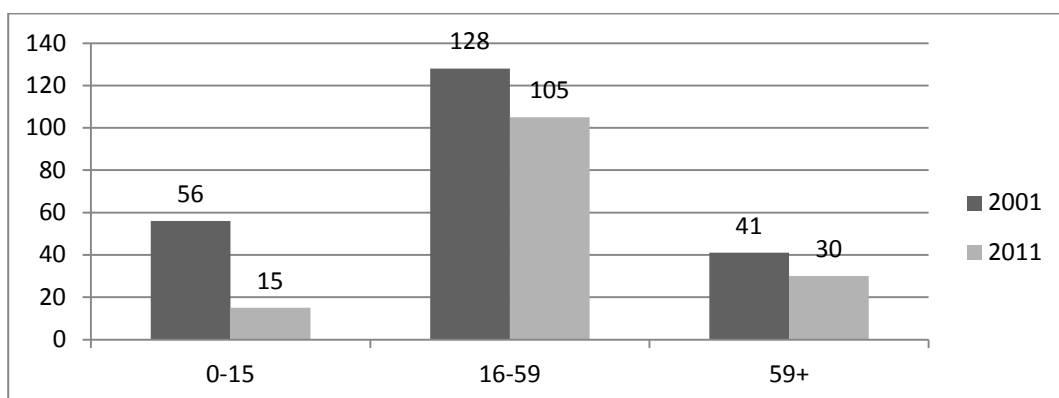
## **ETTRICK AND THE LOCAL AREA**

### **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.

<b>Ettrick Valley Area Census Data</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>2001</b>	0 to 15	56	25%
	16 to 59	128	57%
	60+	41	18%
	All people	225	100%
<b>2011</b>	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.

## 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.

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 it 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.

APPENDIX 2 - SPREADSHEET SHOWING CURRENT REVENUE COSTS FOR SCHOOL PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE

Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
		Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school [enter name of school]	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 2	Name of School [enter name of school] Ettrick			
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	Employee costs - note 1			
Row 5	teaching staff	76,594	26,255	50,339
Row 6	support staff	24,113		24,113
Row 7	Teaching staff training (CPD etc.)			
Row 8	support staff training			
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2			
Row 10				
Row 11	Building costs:			
Row 12	property insurance	419		419
Row 13	non domestic rates			
Row 14	water & sewerage charges			
Row 15	utilities costs	4,218		4,218
Row 16	cleaning (contract or in-house)	4,660		4,660
Row 17	building repair & maintenance			
Row 18	grounds maintenance			
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	691		691
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital			
Row 21	Other	1,860		1,739
Row 22				
Row 23	School operational costs:			
Row 24	learning materials			
Row 25	catering (contract or in-house)			
Row 26	SQA costs			

Column 5				Column 6	Column 7
Table 2					
Capital costs				School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7					
Third party contributions to capital costs					

Table 3
Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal
property insurance
non domestic rates
water & sewerage charges
energy costs
cleaning (contract or in-house)
security costs
building repair & maintenance
grounds maintenance
facilities management costs
other
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL



APPENDIX 2 - SPREADSHEET SHOWING CURRENT REVENUE COSTS FOR SCHOOL PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE

Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			
Row 28				
Row 29	Transport costs: note 3			
Row 30	home to school		note 4	
Row 31	other pupil transport costs			
Row 32	staff travel	1,646		1,646
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	114,201		87,825
Row 34				
Row 35	Income:			
Row 36	Sale of meals			
Row 37	Lets			
Row 38	External care provider			
Row 39	Other			
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL			
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL			
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	114,201		

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 5	
GAE IMPACT	

Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) is 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. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document that accompanies this template.
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.

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END OF PROPOSAL PAPER

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