

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

CONSULTATION REPORT

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ETRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Please share your views or comments on the proposals before 12 July 2019 at:-

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

Email Address: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk; or

On line: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrickconsultation>

This Consultation Report 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.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Introduction

- 1.1 This Consultation Report has been issued as part of a statutory consultation process required in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (**2010 Act**). The 2010 Act sets out the consultation process that local authorities must follow when proposing a permanent change to any of their schools – such as a closure, relocation or change of catchment area.
- 1.2 The 2010 Act also sets out the process, duties and considerations that a Council must comply with when considering the closure of a rural school. Ettrick Primary School is defined as a Remote Rural School in accordance with the Scottish Government's Rural School List May 2017¹.
- 1.3 The consultation has been undertaken following a decision by Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee on 7 November 2017 to progress the consultation process in respect of a proposal to close Ettrick Primary School and the subsequent rezoning of its catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School.
- 1.4 This Consultation Report, in conjunction with the Proposal Paper and Options Appraisal (both attached as **Appendix 1**), details the Council's compliance with the terms of the 2010 Act.

Proposal Paper

- 1.5 A Proposal Paper detailing the proposals and the Council's reasons for making the proposals was published on 4 March 2019. A copy of the Options Appraisal that had been undertaken by Council officers prior to making the closure proposal was included as an appendix to Proposal Paper. The Options Appraisal considers, in detail, all reasonable alternatives to closure.
- 1.6 This Proposal Paper was issued in replacement of the proposal paper that was published on 6 February 2017. The statutory consultation process 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 proposal stage of the consultation process. Accordingly an updated Options Appraisal process was undertaken and a revised Proposal Paper was prepared to facilitate an opportunity for all stakeholders and members of the community to have their say on the Proposals, based on the most up to date information and data.
- 1.7 A copy of the Proposal Paper was made available free of charge in these locations: –
 - Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
 - Boston Memorial Village Hall, Ettrick, TD7 5JA
 - Kirkhope Primary School, Ettrickbridge, by Selkirk, TD7 5JJ
 - 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>.

A copy of the Proposal Paper was also sent to members of the community that had responded to the Proposal Paper issued in 2017.

¹ [Scottish Government Rural School List](#)

Advertising of the Consultation Process

- 1.8 The publication of the Proposal Paper was advertised in Southern Reporter, on the week commencing 4 March 2019, providing the dates for the consultation period and the public meeting. There were also press releases made and social media postings at the start of the consultation process, before the public meeting and before the end of the consultation period.
- 1.9 Formal notice of the proposal was sent by Letter or email to:
- the parents/carers of the children within the Ettrick catchment area and all children who attend Kirkhope Primary School and Selkirk High School;
 - the Parent Councils of the affected schools;
 - the parent/carers of any children likely to attend Ettrick Primary School and Kirkhope Primary School or any affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
 - 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.

Length of Consultation period

- 1.10 The consultation period for the proposal ran from 4 March 2019 and ended on 28 April 2019 (both dates inclusive). This period allowed for the statutory minimum of 30 school days. There were 11 responses received in respect of this statutory consultation both on line and in writing. The responses are summarized and responded to in **Section 4** below.

Public meetings

- 1.11 A public meeting was held on:

26 March 2019 at 7pm at Boston Memorial Hall, Ettrick (10 members of the community attended)

Minutes were taken at the meeting and views were sought following a presentation. Copies of the meeting minutes are included as **Appendix 2** (which includes a copy of the presentation).

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

- 1.12 Discussions were held with pupils (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) and staff in the affected schools. Details of these discussions can be found in **Section 3**.

Involvement of Education Scotland

- 1.13 Education Scotland was notified in advance of this Statutory Consultation process being approved. On completion of the Statutory Consultation period, a copy of the Proposal Paper was sent by Scottish Borders Council to Education Scotland. Education Scotland also received a copy of all relevant additional materials, minutes of public meeting, a summary of the written representations and replies received by the Council during the consultation period.

- 1.14 Education Scotland has prepared a report on the educational aspects of the Proposal, based on the representations and documents mentioned above as well as their interviews with pupils, parents, staff, and associated schools. In preparing their report, Education Scotland visited the affected schools and made reasonable enquiries as they considered appropriate. Their report can be found at **Appendix 3** and also on the Education Scotland Website [Education Scotland Consultation Reports](#). Education Scotland state in their report that the proposal to close Ettrick Primary School is of potential educational benefit. The report also states that the Council have reasonably concluded that re-opening Ettrick Primary School is not a viable alternative.
- 1.15 The comments made by Education Scotland Report with regards to Ettrick Primary School being permanently closed and the catchment being rezoned to Kirkhope Primary School and the Council's responses are set out in **Section 5** of this Consultation Report.

Preparation of Public Consultation Report

- 1.16 Council officers have reviewed the proposals having regard to the Education Scotland Report, the discussions from the public meeting, comments from pupils and staff and all the responses received during the consultation period. This Consultation Report has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services team as a result. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats. It will be available on the Council web-site and from Council Headquarters, public libraries in the vicinity of the affected schools, as well as the affected schools and the Boston Memorial Hall in Ettrick, free of charge. Anyone who made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report.

BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Ettrick Primary School was mothballed by Scottish Borders Council in July 2012, following a sustained and dramatic fall in the school roll, with the catchment area being temporarily rezoned to Kirkhope Primary School.
- 2.2 In February 2016 the Council's Executive (Education) Committee agreed to commence a School Estate Review process regarding the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like. As part of the Review, the Council was required to consider schools that had been mothballed and what should happen with them. In November 2017 the decision was made by the Executive Committee to progress to the next stage of the consultation process in respect of the mothballed schools.
- 2.3 As Ettrick Primary School is deemed a Remote Rural School in terms of the 2010 Act, the Council is required to have special regard to a number of factors before formulating a proposal for closure. Accordingly the Council considered all reasonable alternative options to closure of the school and a copy of the Options Appraisal report detailing this analysis is attached in the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.4 The Options Appraisal considerations included:-
- the educational benefits of all the options;
 - pupil projections;
 - demographics of the area;
 - the level of proposed development in the area;
 - opportunities for catchment area amendments;
 - impact on the rural community and the role of the school in the community;
 - Safe Routes to School and travel arrangements;
 - impact on pupils in the catchment area;
 - impact on staff;
 - impact on pupils in other schools in the area;

- rural impact of proposals;
- financial impact of proposals; and
- impact on the environment.

2.5 The Options Appraisal concluded that closure of the school was the most reasonable option and accordingly a Proposal Paper was prepared detailing the closure proposal, with the catchment area being permanently rezoned to Kirkhope Primary School. The statutory consultation process commenced on 4 March 2019.

2.6 The detailed reasoning for this proposal is set out in the attached Proposal Paper. The Proposal Paper states that there are positive Educational Benefits for current and future pupils within the Ettrick Primary School catchment area and for the staff of the schools within the area. The Proposal Paper also considers the impact of the proposed closure on the Community.

PUPILS AND STAFF – ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

3.1 Discussions were held with pupils from the Ettrick catchment area (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) and staff who had worked at Ettrick.

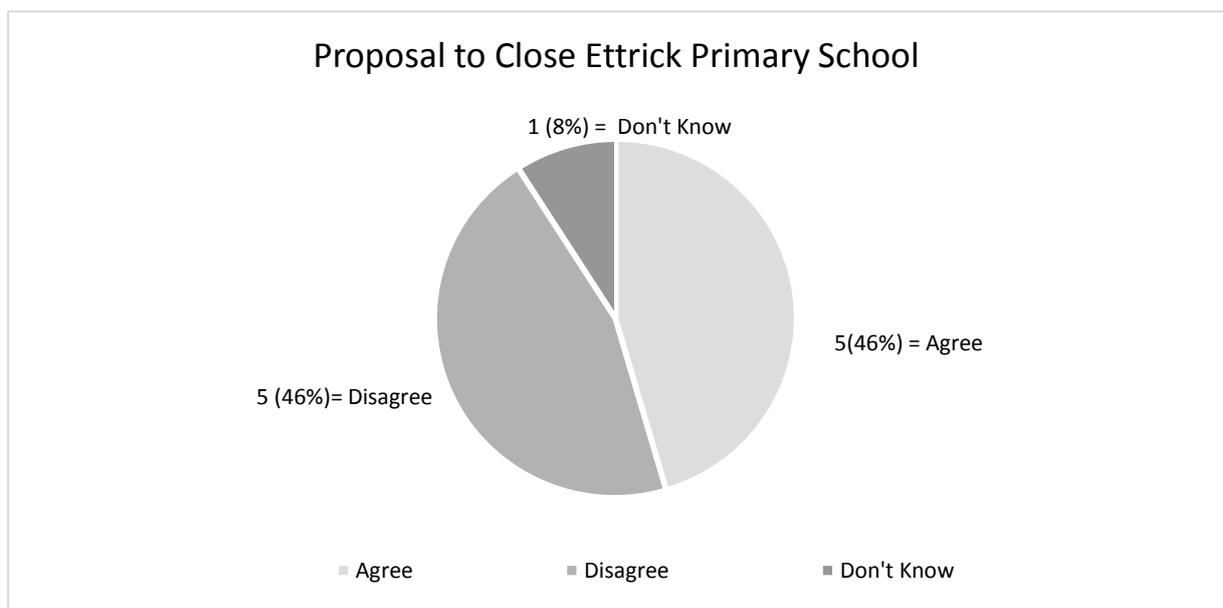
3.2 Key points raised at these discussions were:

- There were fond memories of the school and what had been achieved there;
- It was recognised that the roll had fallen so low that the opportunities and experiences offered to the children were limited when the roll fell prior to mothballing;
- The children enjoy their learning experiences and opportunities at Kirkhope and enjoy the interaction with the other small schools, particularly Yarrow Primary School;

RESPONSES

4.1 There were 11 responses made during the consultation period in respect of the proposals. The key points raised within the written representations regarding the closure of Ettrick Primary School were:-

Do you agree with the proposal to permanently close Ettrick Primary School?



Questionnaire Comments	Council Responses
<i>There has been a decline in the number of children in the area and the children are better served by attending Kirkhope.</i>	Noted and agreed
<i>The Council should work with the community to ensure that the building can be effectively utilised by the community to support their visions for the local economy</i>	Noted. Council officers have been liaising closely with the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company (EYCDC) regarding their Community Asset Transfer Request for the school. At present the school remains part of the School Estate and cannot be declared surplus and handed over to the Council's Estates team until the consultation process has been completed in full, a decision for closure is made by SBC <u>and</u> the Scottish Ministers have advised whether they wish to call the proposal in or not. The Council will continue to work with the community regarding the school and its grounds.
<i>Why has the proposed development of houses not happened?</i>	The Council's Local Development Plan 2016 allocated 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. The Council's Housing Land Audit in 2018 projected that any development of these sites is unlikely to take place before 2021 and it is not anticipated that there would be likely to be more than 2-3 units built a year. While these sites have been designated as such in the Local Development Plan these sites will only be developed if there is a developer willing to build. There have been enquiries but only 1 unit has been built so far. The Plan and Audit indicate a potential programme but it is likely that any development would be demand led. There is a more flexible approach to supporting housing in rural areas, with proposals considered outwith allocated sites.
<i>Closing the school will not attract families to the area</i>	Noted. A decision to propose a school closure is never taken lightly. Council officers have been advised that one family has moved to the area, while the school is currently mothballed and have been advised that another family will be moving to the area shortly. The demographics of many of the rural areas across the Borders have changed

	<p>considerably over recent years. Census data for the Ettrick Valley indicates a fall in the 0-15 age range in the decade to 2011 of 73%. Scottish Government data estimates that the Ettrick Water and Bowhill area will have experienced a further decline in the under 16 population of c11%.</p>
<p><i>The children of Ettrick were better served by attending Kirkhope.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Council officers consider that there are strong educational benefits for children from the Ettrick area attending Kirkhope Primary School.</p>
<p><i>Closing the school is no recommendation for living and working the valley.</i></p>	<p>Noted. As stated above the demographics of the area have changed. Kirkhope Primary School has also experienced a significant drop in roll over the last 5 years. The roll is currently only 8 pupils. Officers have been working with Kirkhope and its parents to increase its roll and improve its sustainability. An Early Learning and Childcare setting has been introduced at Kirkhope and the Council took the decision for it to be part of the pilot for increased funded hours from 600 to 1140 hours. This allowed all parents using the setting the opportunity to receive a funded nursery place equivalent to 30 hours per week (term time). This was done with a view to try and boost the roll for the school and to improve its sustainability. Council officers do not consider that there are or will be enough children in the area to sustain 2 primary schools in the short or longer term but will continue to work with Kirkhope Primary School to improve its sustainability.</p>
<p><i>Is the Council aware of the proposals of the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company to generate business growth within the area which may attract families to the area?</i></p>	<p>Yes. Council officers have been liaising with member of EYCDC for a number of months. The Council has provided or will be providing grants to EYCDC for a number of projects under the LEADER funding programme. LEADER is a European funding programme which supports rural community and business projects. In Scotland it is delivered as part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme in partnership with Local Action Groups.</p> <p>These grants have been for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fundraising and fixing the 'missing link' on the Captain's Road walking and cycling route which links the two valleys from Honey Cottage in Ettrick to St Mary's Loch in Yarrow;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project managing the upgrade of the Ettrick School building following the proposed asset transfer and fund raising for the creation of a digital resource and exhibition celebrating the history and heritage of the Ettrick valley; • mapping circular cycle routes using forest roads between the two valleys and setting up a pilot electric-bike hire point with guided rides; • fund raising and project managing the creation of affordable housing and workspaces from a redundant steading currently owned by Buccleuch Estates using both the Scottish Land Fund and the Rural Housing Fund; • managing the feasibility studies and fund raising for a James Hogg Creative Writing Centre using his former home at Altrive Lake. • preparing a feasibility study for the establishment of a community owned, environmentally friendly, commercial laundry within the valleys servicing the accommodation providers and tourism businesses. <p>Other LEADER projects like Golden Eagles also cover the valleys and other SBC projects like Ride Scotland's Horse Country also benefit individual businesses in the area</p>
<p><i>Agree wholeheartedly that while Ettrick School is closed that all primary pupils are schooled at Kirkhope as it's the only reasonable alternative. Taking young children over hill roads in dodgy weather is risky.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>
<p><i>It is short-sighted to close the school. The numbers at Kirkhope and Yarrow have fluctuated over the last few years. Families could move here and given the geography there could be lengthy journeys for young children. What is the legal position regarding length of commute?</i></p>	<p>Council officers have analysed at the pupil numbers for Ettrick, Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools over the last 23 years (In line with available on-line Scottish Government data). Each of the 3 schools has capacity for 50 pupils. The highest number of pupils at all 3 schools was 91 in 1996. While Kirkhope had an occupancy of over 75% for 11 of these 23 years, over the last decade numbers have dropped significantly to currently 16%. Since 2002 the combined number of pupils between Kirkhope and Ettrick have been less than 50. This is reflected in the Census information for the valley obtained from the National Records of Scotland which indicates a drop in the 0-15</p>

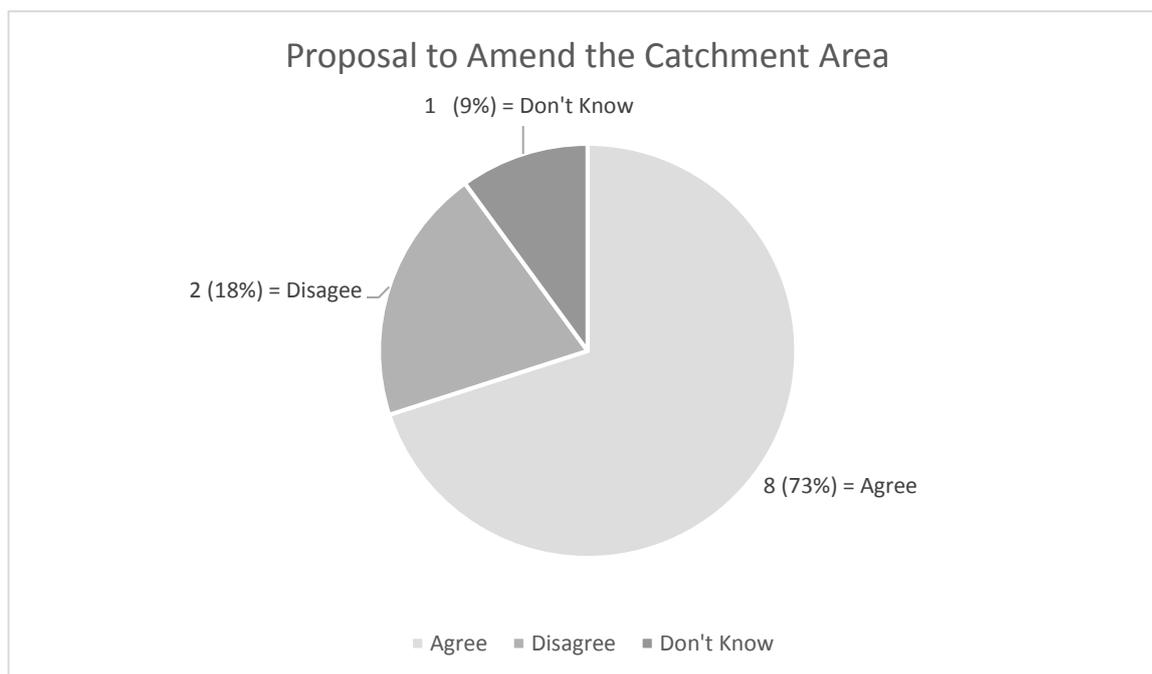
	<p>age group in the Ettrick Valley of 73% in the decade to 2011. The occupancy of Yarrow has been less than 50% since 1996.</p> <p>As the rolls for Kirkhope and Yarrow are both projected to be 11 (22% occupancy) in 2019/2020 officers are satisfied that additional children moving to the area could be accommodated in either school.</p> <p>The Council recognises that children that reside further up the valley from Ettrick would have a longer journey to Kirkhope than Ettrick, however this is not considered unreasonable given the geography of the area.</p> <p>There is no specific legal requirements regarding travel time to and from school. The Council's policy is to ensure that there is a safe journey, that is reasonable for that child. Some children in the region do have journeys to school equating to c45 minutes each way. While it is recognised that this does add additional time to a young child's day it is also acknowledged that the geography of some of the more rural areas across the Borders often results in similar journeys.</p>
<p><i>SBC should aspire to make Ettrick an appealing, family friendly place to live. This would be good for the whole community as the valleys way of life is special and worthy of protection. The single biggest factor affecting the valley is the lack of public transport. If SBC could support the reintroduction of a bus service, population levels would slowly recover putting Kirkhope Primary on a more stable footing</i></p>	<p>Noted. Council officers are aware of the role that a school plays in a community. That is why officers have been working with Kirkhope and its parents to try and improve its sustainability.</p> <p>The comments regarding the bus service are noted. Unfortunately SBC is operating under very tight budgetary constraints and funding for public transport has reduced.</p> <p>In the past, officer are aware that the school bus was available to be used by members of the public, if the community wished to utilise this service again discussions could be held between the community, the transport provider and the Education to establish whether this initiative could be re-introduced.</p> <p>SBC is holding a Rural Transport Conference at Council Headquarters on 28 June 2019 which is open to community groups and individuals to attend. This may be of interest to community groups and residents within the valley who have an interest in improving the transport links in the valleys.</p> <p>If the valley community would be willing to start their own transport initiatives, Council officers could provide advice and there are options for bidding for SBC funding for community projects Elected Members and the Community Council</p>

	<p>may be able to provide support and advice regarding this.</p>
<p><i>It's time SBC came up with a sustainability plan for the valleys. Permanently shutting schools, whilst tempting in the short term, will do nothing in the longer term to help communities survive and thrive.</i></p>	<p>SBC is aware of the issues the valleys face and it is for that reason it has been actively supporting the creation of a South of Scotland Enterprise Agency and been so active with Borderlands and such other initiatives. Due to limited resources the Council is not in a position to develop a detailed sustainability for every area of the Borders. However the Council seeks to support the principles of sustainable development, based on the notion of creating local community resilience and developing appropriate place-based solutions. The Council seeks to support local efforts to address a local deficit e.g. transport and build on local aspirations and activity.</p> <p>The decision to close a school is never taken lightly and it is clear that Kirkhope Primary School is also facing issues regarding its sustainability. That is why SBC took the decision to introduce an Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school. Currently there are only 12 primary aged pupils living in the Ettrick Valley - 8 of these children attend Kirkhope and the remainder attend schools outwith the catchment. Records also indicate that there are 6 pre-school aged children. It is not considered that re-opening Ettrick is a sustainable option as there is currently only 1 primary aged child and 2 pre-school child in the catchment. SBC will continue to concentrate its efforts working with Kirkhope and its parents to make the school more sustainable.</p>
<p><i>I disagree with the word 'permanently'. SBC has been short-sighted in not allowing affordable housing to be built and is therefore to blame for the lack of children here.</i></p>	<p>Noted. SBC has identified three sites in Ettrick for housing development – each site has an indicative capacity for 5 units. All 3 sites have been in the Local Plan since 2010 but to date only 1 house has been completed. SBC's planning team have received some enquiries and applications to build single units however these have not been progressed by the developers. SBC has not refused an application to build in the Hopehouse area since 2004 (date of commencement of on-line records). None of the applications received have been for affordable housing. Housing, including affordable housing, is often demand led.</p>

Kirkhope Primary School's roll is also low in numbers and this will at least, hopefully, keep one of the 3 valley schools going on the Ettrick side. An open school still brings pupils; a mothballed school does not look very attractive to potential house buyers.

Noted and agreed. SBC is currently working with all schools with a roll under 50, seeking to improve their sustainability.

Do you agree with the proposal to permanently re-zone Ettrick Primary School's catchment area (if the school is to close) to Kirkhope Primary School?



Response Comments	Council Response
<i>Encourage new industries and homes and allow Ettrick School to re-open</i>	Noted. Unfortunately the demographics do not support 2 schools in the Ettrick Valley. Council officers have been working with EYCDC with their plans regarding the area in terms of the Community Empowerment Act. Housing has been identified in 3 areas in the valley in the Local Plan totalling a possible 15 units, to date only 1 unit has been completed. SBC planners have received enquiries from other parties but no further planning applications have been received to date.
<i>The children in Ettrick must have a school in the Ettrick valley (i.e. Kirkhope). For health & safety reasons children must not be</i>	Noted. Officers have been working with Kirkhope regarding its sustainability. All decisions made regarding school transport are taken to ensure

<i>transported over either of the 2 hill roads to the Yarrow valley in snowy conditions.</i>	that there are Safe Routes to School and the children's safety is always the priority.
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One of the alternative proposals that Council officers considered was the re-opening of Ettrick Primary School. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.

Response Comments	Council Response
<i>I do not believe that this would be economically or educationally viable</i>	Noted and agreed
<i>Would need more young people in the area and reduce home schooling</i>	Noted. Council officers have been unable to identify demand from parents in the area to re-open the school.
<i>I think that this is the best option</i>	Noted. Unfortunately there has been a significant and sustained decline in pre-school and primary aged children in the area. Our current records indicate that there is 1 primary aged child and 2 pre-school aged children in the catchment. For educational reasons Council officers do not consider that a school of with such a low roll would offer the opportunities and experiences that could be obtained at Kirkhope.
<i>This should only happen once there are sufficient pupils to make the school sustainable</i>	Noted. Our current projections do not indicate that there is likely to be an increase in pupil number over the next 5 years. Kirkhope Primary School currently has 8 pupils and this is projected to grow to 11 for the 2019/20 school year. There is capacity for 50 pupils at Kirkhope.
<i>Even with an increased catchment area there wouldn't be enough children to make this a viable option.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>This does not seem a reasonable option as there is no indication of reasonable viability over the next few years</i>	Noted and agreed.

One of the options that Council officers considered was to reopen Ettrick Primary School with an extended catchment area. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.

Response Comments	Council Response
<i>It is better to ensure the survival of the existing valley schools at Kirkhope and Yarrow rather than spread resources too thin.</i>	Noted and agreed. Council officers have been working with both Yarrow and Kirkhope Primaries, and the parents of the children attending those schools, on initiatives to make those schools more sustainable. This has included introducing an Early Learning and Childcare setting and carrying out a consultation to extend the catchment area. The demographics of the area have changed significantly over recent years and it is not considered that there are enough children in the 2 valleys to sustain 3 primary schools.
<i>The catchment area was made along with the bus routes. It was easier to transport those from Buccleuch to Ettrickbridge than to organize more transport for a second run to Ettrick.</i>	Noted. All proposals regarding catchment always take into account Safe Routes to School and the logistics, timings and distances of school transport.
<i>This also seems like a good idea</i>	Noted. Unfortunately following an extensive mapping exercise of all pre-school and primary aged children's postcodes Council officers have been unable to identify any way of extending the catchment area of Ettrick Primary School without impacting on the other rural schools in the area (which have low rolls) or requiring children to take longer journeys on rural roads. Amending the catchment area would most likely threaten the sustainability of the other rural schools in the area.
<i>This could work but should not go ahead if it jeopardises the sustainability of other low roll schools in the area.</i>	Noted. As detailed in the response above, any changes to the Ettrick catchment area would most likely threaten the sustainability of the 2 rural schools in the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys.
<i>This option might have no effect on the viability of Ettrick School. It might have a negative effect on other schools having their catchment area changed.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>It would be stupid to transport Ettrickbridge children up the valley through snow and it would also be stupid to transport children</i>	Noted. The safety of all children is the primary concern of any proposal to amend catchment areas and also regarding school transport.

<i>through high levels of flood water at Thirlestane Gardens.</i>	
<i>Even with an increased catchment area there would not be enough children to make this a viable option.</i>	Noted and agreed.

One of the options that Council officers considered was to continue mothballing Ettrick Primary School. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.

Response Comments	Council Response
<i>I believe that the building should be allowed into effective use – the main concern is that the future is decided with appropriate engagement and consultation with the residents of Ettrick</i>	<p>Noted. Council officers have been discussing the school building with EYCDC, who currently have a lease of the building. If the decision is made to close the school and the Scottish Minister do not call the decision in, SBC Estates team will engage with the community regarding the future of the building and its grounds which are well used for community events. Council officers will also provide support and advice for any bids under the Community Empowerment Act.</p> <p>The community has also indicated a strong desire to continue to have access to the school car park for community events. This was also form part of the consideration for the future of the school.</p>
<i>Let the Hogg exhibit continue to use the school until there are pupils in the area. Someone could even open a café as all the facilities are on site.</i>	Noted. Council officers will continue to work with the community regarding the future of the school. The current arrangement will remain in place until a final decision is made regarding the school.
<i>Whilst I think re-opening the school is the best idea, continuing mothballing the school is preferable to closing the school</i>	Noted. Unfortunately due to change of demographics in the area it is not considered likely that the school will reopen. Given the current projections for pupil number in the Ettrick Valley it is not considered likely that there will be a primary aged population of a size to support 2 primary schools in the area. Accordingly continuing to mothball the school does not appear to be a reasonable option.
<i>I think that this is the best option currently if SBC is willing to commit to developing a sustainability plan for the valley with public transport at its heart. This would also have the very significant benefit of reducing</i>	Noted. Due to limited resources the Council is not in a position to develop a detailed sustainability for every area of the Borders. However the Council seeks to support the principles of sustainable development, based on the notion of creating local

<i>environmental harm by cutting the number of journeys made in private vehicles</i>	community resilience and developing appropriate place-based solutions. The Council seeks to support local efforts to address a local deficit e.g. transport and build on local aspirations and activity. SBC is holding a Rural Transport Conference at Council Headquarters on 28 June 2019 which is open to community groups and individuals to attend. This may of interest to community groups and residents within the valley who are have an interest in improving the transport links in the valleys.
<i>In view of Ettrick Primary School already having been mothballed for a lengthy period to no good effect, this does not seem a good option. The building itself would continue to deteriorate without maintenance.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>This would be too costly. The Council would have to keep the building in good repair. With no timescale this would be a daunting task</i>	Noted and agreed that this is not a reasonable option.
<i>SBC should return the building and the dykes to a reasonable state and then allow the EYCDC to use it and pay all necessary bills and upkeep it. Now that we are coming out of Europe, the EYCDC should not be burdened by any water testing bills. This is totally unnecessary red tape that was started by European legislation.</i>	Noted. If the decision is made to close the school. SBC's Estates team will work with the community and EYCDC regarding the building. It is the current understanding that upon Brexit all current EU legislation will be adopted into UK law.

Please tell us if you have any further comments or alternative suggestions regarding the proposals

Response Comments	Council Response
<i>Sell it for cheap rental flats for the younger community</i>	Noted. If the school is closed, SBC's Estates team will consider a range of options for the school. Council officers have been advised that grounds of the school often flood, which could limit the redevelopment opportunities.

5 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

- 5.1 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was provided by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal. Education Scotland's report is attached as **Appendix 3**

5.2 Issues raised and comments made in the Education Scotland Report with regards to the proposed closure of Ettrick Primary School are set out below:

Education Scotland Comments	Council Responses
<i>Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors were in agreement with the Council's proposal.</i>	Noted and agreed – this reflects the opinions shared with Council officers before and during the consultation process.
<i>Stakeholders reported that they had no expectations that the school would reopen since it was mothballed almost 7 years ago.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>Children valued their learning experiences and opportunities at Kirkhope.</i>	Noted and agreed
<i>Parents and staff had wider concerns about sustaining Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools as viable small rural schools. They felt that it would not be in the interest of the wider community to re-open Ettrick Primary School. Parents felt that the additional school time travel involved in journey times from more distant parts of Ettrick Valley to Kirkhope was not unreasonable but that the journey times to school could become unreasonable if Kirkhope Primary School were to close in the future. They hoped to receive reassurance that SBC would continue to support the provision of small rural schools within its review of the school estate. The Council will need to address this in its final report.</i>	<p>Noted and agreed that the re-opening of Ettrick Primary school would not be in the interest of the wider community.</p> <p>Noted and agreed about the travel times to Kirkhope Primary School.</p> <p>Comments about Kirkhope, Yarrow and small rural school are noted. SBC commenced a School Estates Review in 2016, which included a review of all schools with a roll under 50 pupils. This included a review of both Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools. SBC officers have met with staff and parents at both schools several times during the Review and have been working with them to try and improve both schools sustainability. As part of this Review an Early Learning & Childcare setting was introduced at Kirkhope; with a decision to include Kirkhope in a Scottish Government pilot for increased funded hours from 600 to 1140. This was done to increase the school roll and try and improve its sustainability. Currently a statutory consultation is being undertaken to increase the size of Yarrow's catchment area, with a view to increasing the school's roll. As part of the School Estate Review, Council officers will continue to work with the schools and parents in attempts to improve their sustainability.</p>

<p><i>Stakeholders who responded to the consultation by completing the paper questionnaire pointed out a typographical error and a repeat of one question. The Council will need to address this in its final report</i></p>	<p>Noted. A very small number of copies of the paper questionnaire were issued prior to being checked. These errors will be addressed in more detail in Section 6 below</p>
<p><i>The Council considered an option to reopen Ettrick Primary School with its existing catchment, on the basis of lack of community demand and projected pupil number and reasonably concluded that this was not a viable alternative.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>
<p><i>The Council considered the likely effect of its proposal on the local community. Whilst there is regret at the loss of the school in the community, there is limited demand to continue the mothballing arrangement.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>
<p><i>Members of the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company are in discussions with the council about the future of the school building involving a potential asset transfer arrangement within the terms of the Community Empowerment Act 2015. The building is currently used as exhibition space for a James Hogg museum. The Community Development Company has plans which could result in additional job opportunities in the local area and wishes to make long term use of the building in connection with these plans. Members of the group have expressed concern about a lack of maintenance of the existing school building and fear that its condition could deteriorate further, impacting on their future plans. The council will need to address this concern in its final report.</i></p>	<p>Noted. As the school building is currently mothballed only basic maintenance has been undertaken on behalf of the Education Department to keep the building wind and watertight. If the school is closed, following completion of the consultation process, SBC Estates team will take over the building and will continue their discussions with EYCDC.</p>
<p><i>The council considered school travel arrangements. There is a distance of 11.4 miles between Ettrick Primary School and Kirkhope Primary School requiring a journey time of approximately 27 minutes. The school journey time could be considerably greater for</i></p>	<p>Noted. It is agreed that current travel times and distances are acceptable. Safe travel to school is a priority for SBC and decisions regarding school travel in winter will be taken at a local level by the school in conjunction with the transport provider.</p>

<p><i>any children in future who live further into the Ettrick Valley past Ettrick Primary School but not unusual within the context of other existing school travel times within the Scottish Borders Council. Parents and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors expressed some concern about winter travel conditions in the Ettrick Valley and the need for school transport arrangements to be appropriate to adverse weather conditions. The council will need to consider this in its final report.</i></p>	
<p><i>The Scottish Borders Council's proposal to permanently close Ettrick Primary School and rezone its catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School is of potential educational benefit. It will formalise an arrangement that has been in place since Ettrick Primary School was mothballed in 2012. Children would benefit from a potentially broader range of learning experiences including better opportunities to learn and socialise with their peers. The council will need to provide reassurance to parents of its long term commitment to small rural schools and that it will continue to work with the Kirkhope Primary School and Yarrow Primary School communities to secure a viable future for those schools. It will also need to reassure parents and staff on school transport arrangements during winter conditions.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed. As stated above SBC's current School Estate Review comprises working with all schools with a roll under 50 to identify and implement strategies to increase the school roll and the sustainability of the school. This work will continue following the decision regarding Ettrick Primary School. A statutory consultation for a catchment review for Yarrow Primary School is currently underway and Council officers will continue to work with both parent bodies regarding sustainability.</p> <p>Safe travel to school is a priority for SBC and decisions regarding school travel in winter will be taken at a local level by the school, with support from HQ, in conjunction with the transport provider</p>
<p><i>The council will need to provide reassurance in its final report that it will continue to engage with the local community on their plans for asset transfer of the Ettrick Primary School building and that the maintenance issues identified will be addressed.</i></p>	<p>Noted. If the school is to be closed, following completion of the consultation process, SBC Estates team will assume responsibility for the building. There have already been several discussions regarding the building and support is being provided regarding the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act. Maintenance issues will form part of these discussions.</p>

INACCURACY IN THE PROPOSAL PAPER

- 6.1 Errors have been identified with paper questionnaires that were issued to a very small number of individuals as part of the consultation process. These errors were not contained in the on-line response forms.
- 6.2 The errors were contained in paper questionnaires that were accidentally issued to certain responders from the 2017 consultation. Following a technical issue with the printing copies of the online response form, a paper copy form was prepared utilising a previous SBC questionnaire as a template. Unfortunately a couple of errors were made when this form was prepared - accidentally a reference to Hawick was not removed from question 6 and one question was duplicated. Regrettably the form was sent out with the Proposal Paper before it had been checked. The errors were detected and corrected with fresh copies of the form being made available but unfortunately there were still some forms with the errors in circulation. This issue was raised at the public meeting and apologies were made at that time. The Council would like to repeat the apologies for this oversight, which arose through human error in an attempt to issue the documentation at the start of the consultation period to ensure previous responders were given as much time as possible to consider their response.

CONSULTATION REPORT NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 This Consultation Report will be published at on 19 June 2019 and is available for further consideration until 12 July 2019. **The intention is that interested parties should have time to consider the Consultation Report and if they so wish, to raise concerns and pose alternative solutions by making written or electronic submissions to:**

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

Email Address: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Consultation Site:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrickconsultation>

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.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. 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 Council Officers of Scottish Borders Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.

For any written or electronic response to be considered it must be received by the Council no later than the last day of the consultation period, 12 July 2019.

Decision

- 7.2 This report together with all other relevant documentation will be considered by Scottish Borders Council who will be asked to make a decision at the full Council meeting on 29 August 2019.

Distribution

- 7.3 A copy of the Consultation Report will be made available free of charge for public consultation from **19 June 2019 to 12 July 2019** in these locations –

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- Boston Memorial Hall, Ettrick, TD7 5JA
- Kirkhope Primary School, Ettrickbridge, by Selkirk, TD7 5JJ
- 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/ettrickconsultation>

SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

- 8.1 If Scottish Borders Council, as the Education Authority, makes a final decision to implement the proposals, 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.
- 8.2 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).
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 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.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- 9.1 Scottish Borders Council would like to thank all the members of the Ettrick Community that have participated in this consultation process and also invite them to make any further comments, observations or suggestions regarding the proposals prior to the final decision is made by the Councillors on 29 August.
- 9.2 Please take this opportunity to have your say and share your comments at:-

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

Email Address: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Consultation Site:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrickconsultation>



Stuart Easingwood

Interim Service Director, Children & Young People's Services

19 June 2019

Appendix 1 – Proposal Paper



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 Appraisal 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 ETRICK 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.

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 Appraisal 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.

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

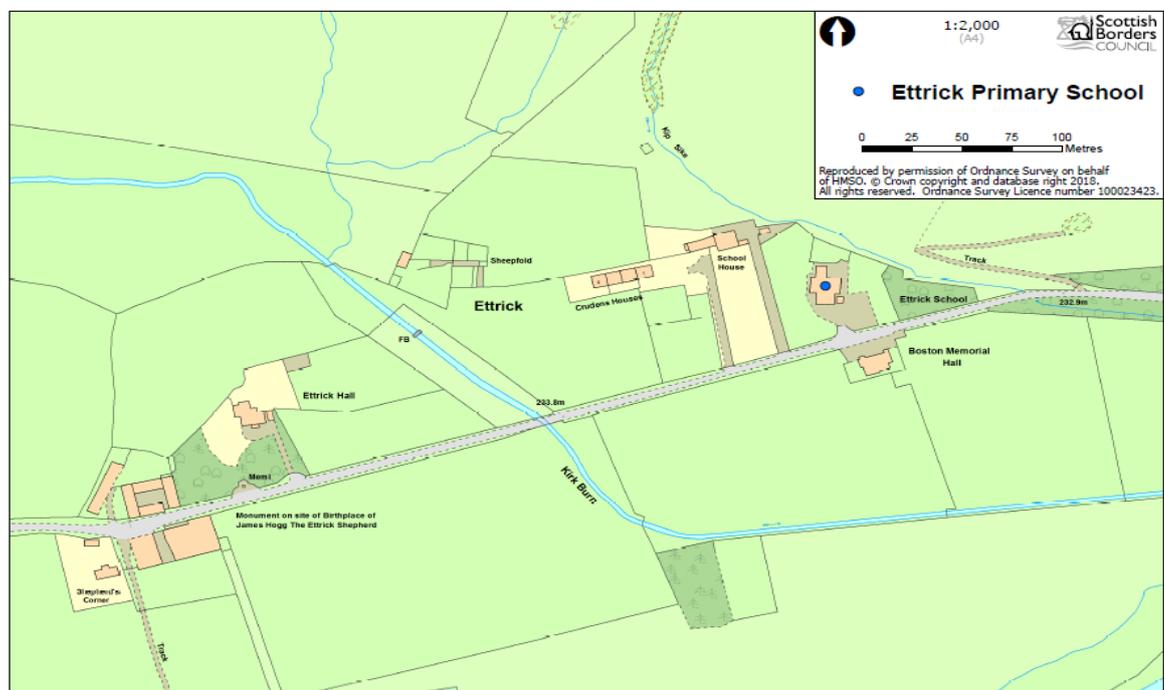
This Proposal Paper should be read in conjunction with the Council's Option Appraisal Report, which contains an assessment of the options that Council officers considered in advance of making this Proposal. A copy of the Options Appraisal Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSAL

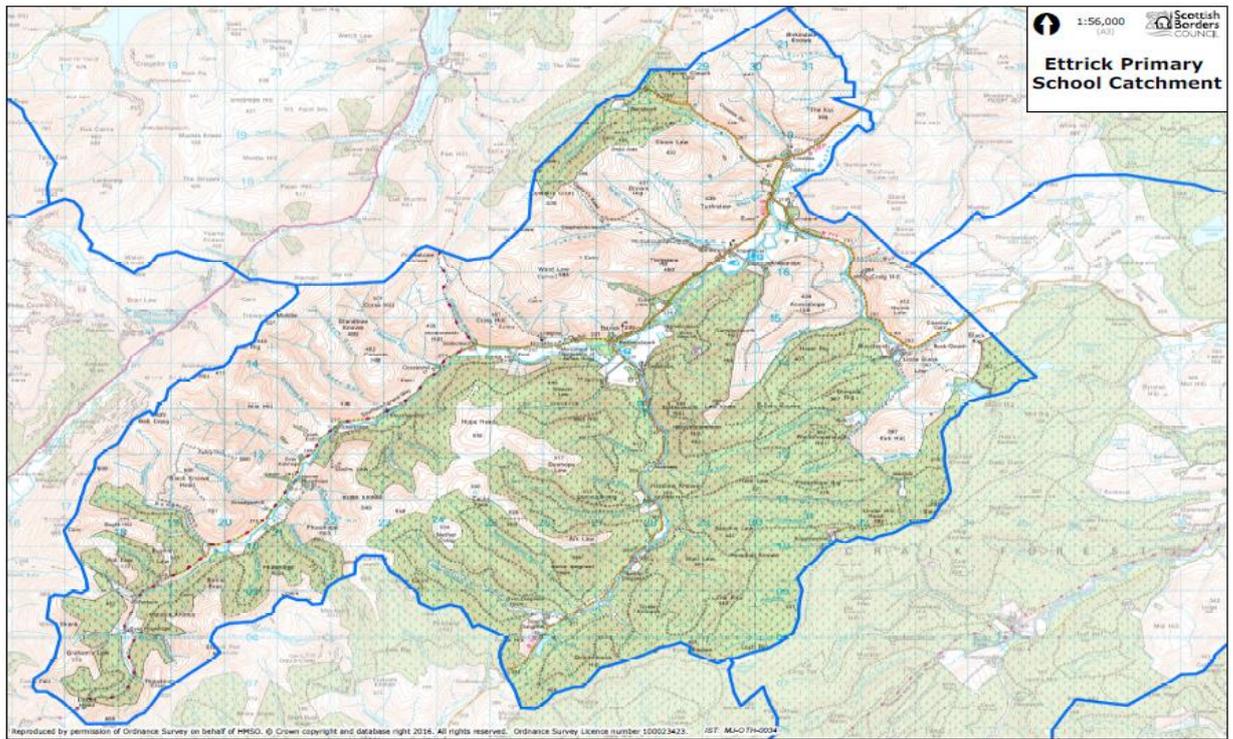
ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MOTHBALLING

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.

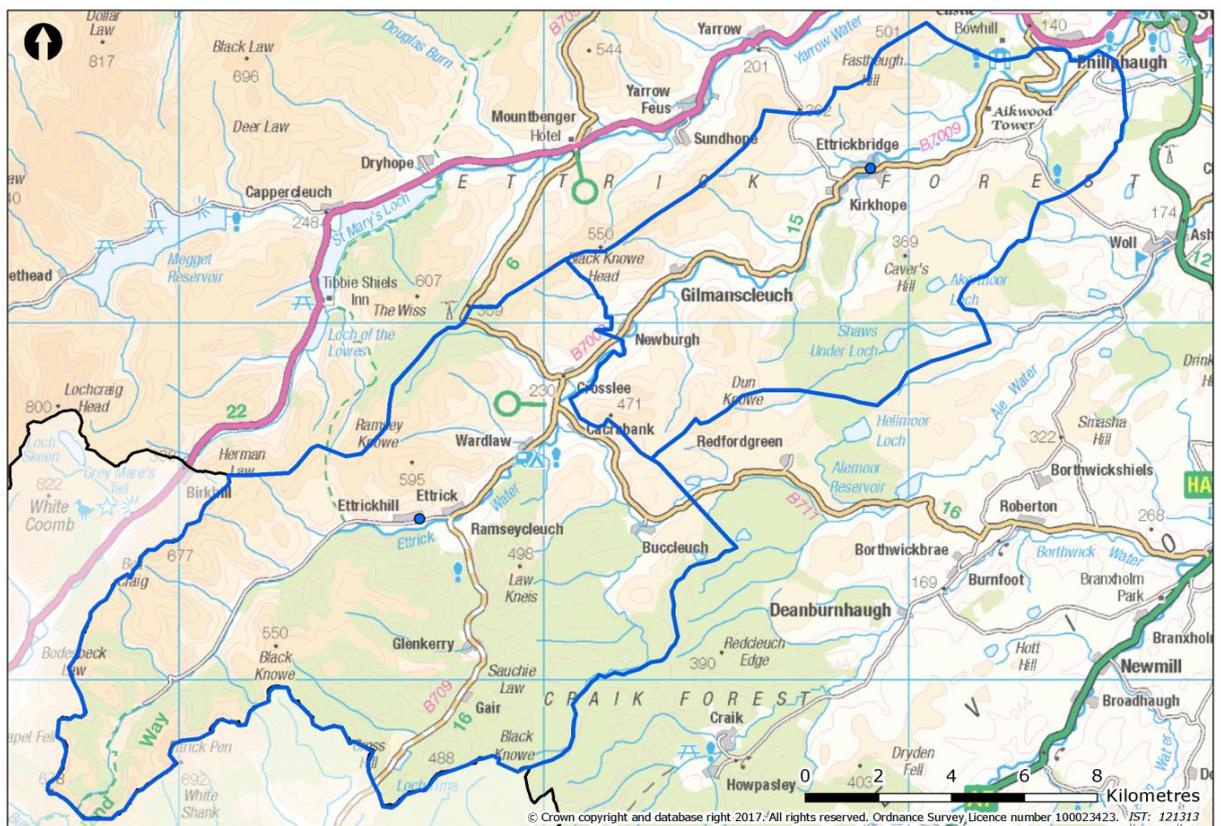
3.2 Ettrick Primary School's location is shown on the plan below:



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



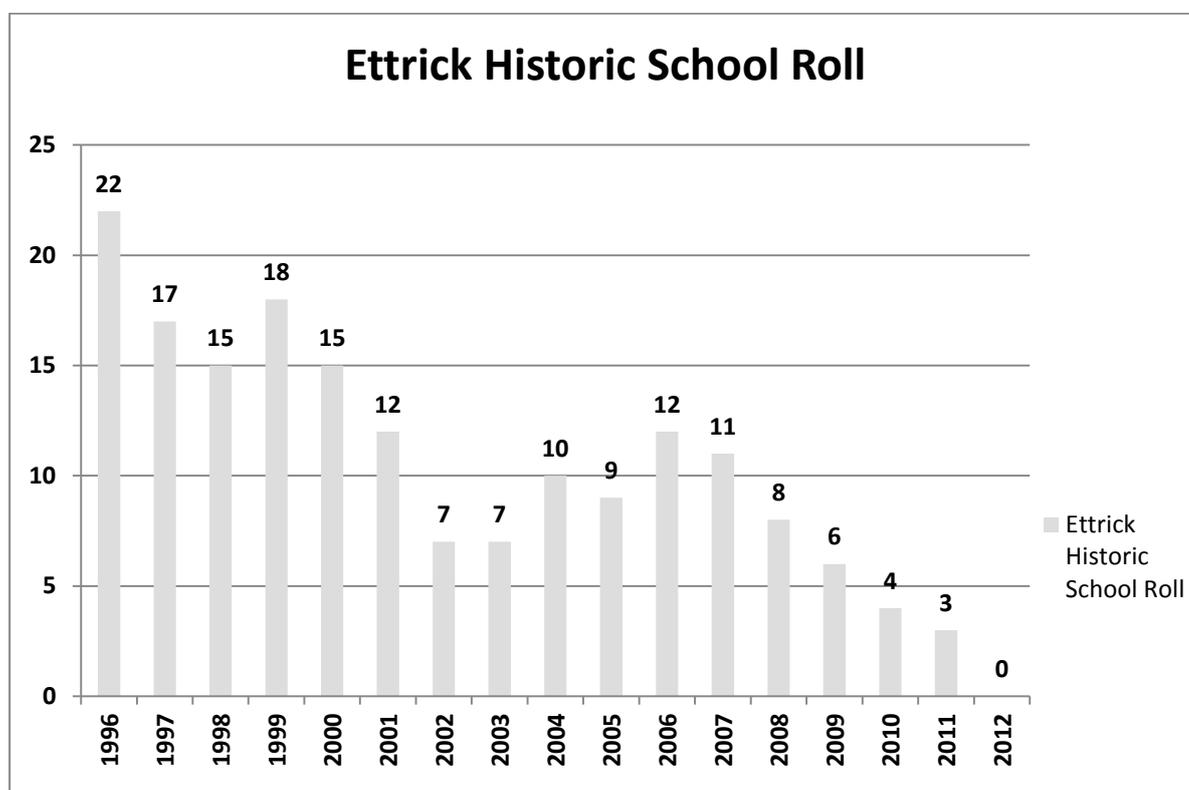
3.4 When Ettrick Primary was mothballed, its catchment area was temporarily re-zoned to Kirkhope Primary School. The enlarged catchment is shown here:-



3.5 Ettrick Primary School is classified being in a “Remote Rural Area” in terms of the Scottish Governments Rural Schools List 2017². 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 Rural Schools List 2017

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 here³:-



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.

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:

³ [Government Historic School Roll Data](#)

Condition⁴

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

Suitability⁵

An assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings and its grounds and of the impact these have on learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and the health and well-being of all users. Categorisation is as follows:

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

- 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.

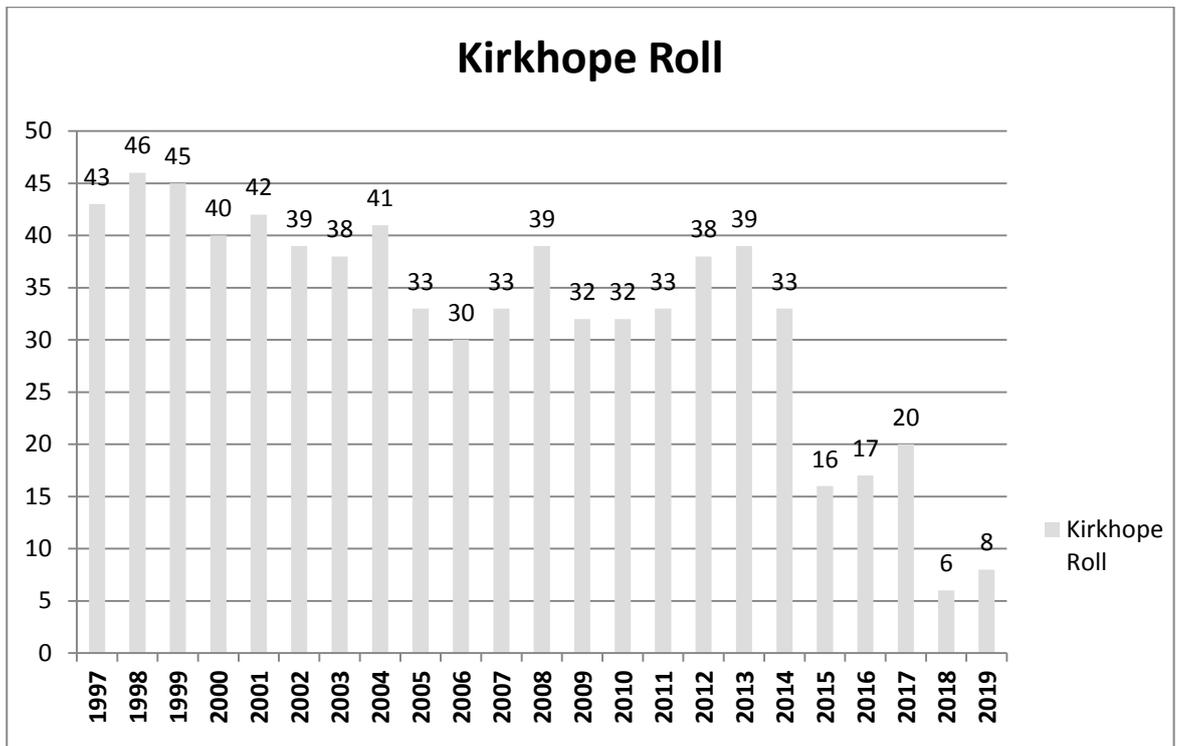
4 KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REASONS BEHIND THE AMALGAMATION OF CATCHMENT ZONES

- 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".⁶
- 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%.

⁴ *Core Facts Building Our Future: Scotland's School Estate 2017*

⁵ *The Suitability Core Fact: Scotland's School Estate 2017*

⁶ [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
- 4.7 Etrick 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 Etrick Primary School sits within the Etrick 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 Scotland⁷ 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%.

⁷ [Scotland's National Census Records](#)

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

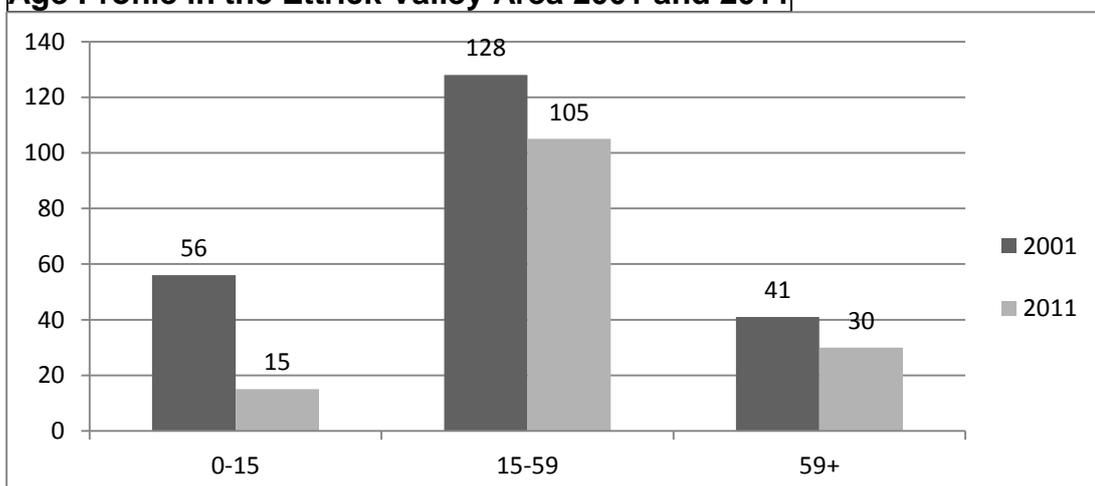
ETTRICK AND THE LOCAL AREA

5.2 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

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

Age Profile in the Ettrick Valley Area 2001 and 2011



Development and House Building

- 5.4 The Local Development Plan 2016 allocates 3 housing sites within Ettrick, namely: Hopehouse East, Hopehouse West and Hopehouse North East. Each of the allocated housing sites has an indicative site capacity of 5 units and only 1 unit has been completed to date. There is however a more flexible approach to supporting housing in the countryside proposals, outwith allocated sites. Although in practice the number of approvals implemented in terms of these provisions is very low.

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 Appraisal is given below.

9 APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF ETRICK 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 ETRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL	
Option 1	Reopen Ettrick School with its original catchment area
Option 2	Reopen Ettrick Primary School with an expanded catchment area
Option 3	Continue mothballing Ettrick Primary School, with the catchment area remaining zoned to Kirkhope Primary School
Option 4	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 ETRICK 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.

OPTION 4 – THE PROPOSAL**PERMANENTLY CLOSE ETRICK 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 ETRICK

- 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.
- 13.10 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.
- 13.11 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.
- 13.12 The Curriculum for Excellence encourages children and young people to develop through different learning experiences. These can include:-
- 13.12.1 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;
 - 13.12.2 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;
 - 13.12.3 Peer to peer learning and assessment;
 - 13.12.4 Relevance in learning, where children learn through experiences;
 - 13.12.5 Outdoor learning – where learning takes place out of the classroom or school setting.
- 13.13 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

13.14 Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils

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

- Pupils are and will be attending a school with a peer group within the Etrick 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 Etrick 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:

Etrick 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

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 Etrick & 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
Etrick Village Hall
Etrick
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:

Etrick 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Easingwood', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

4 March 2019

STUART EASINGWOOD

INTERIM SERVICE DIRECTOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
ETTRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL
UPDATED OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT 2019



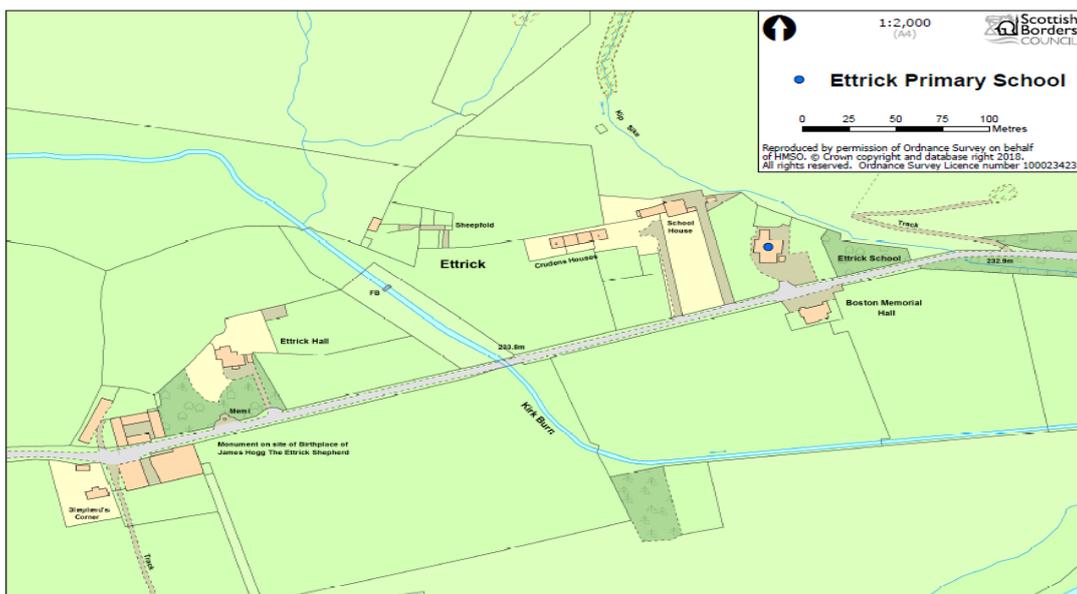
1. INTRODUCTION

- 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.

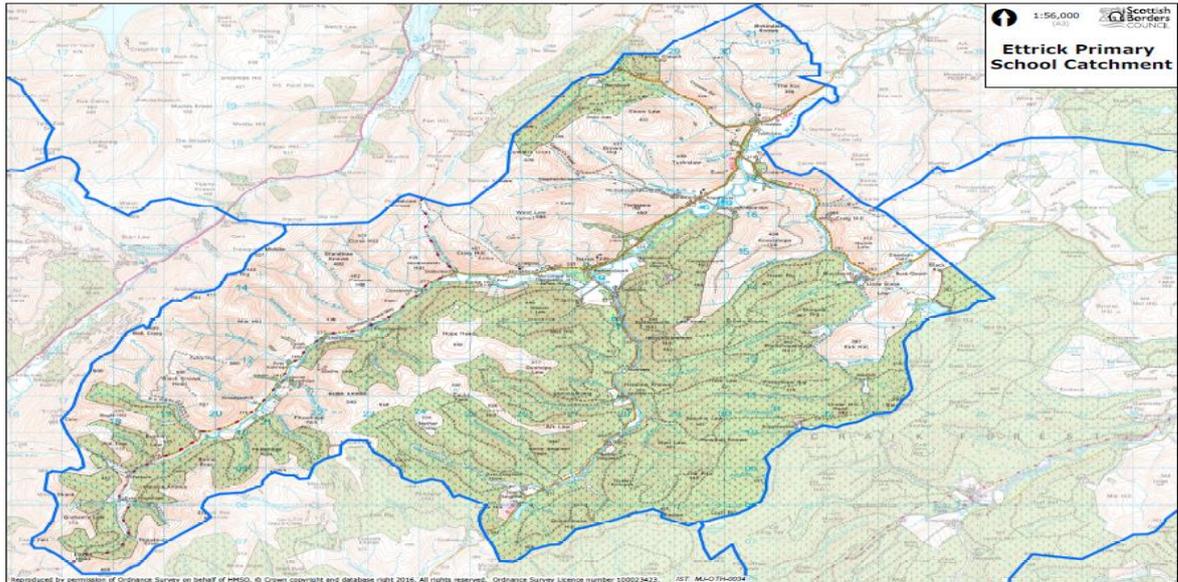
2 BACKGROUND

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:



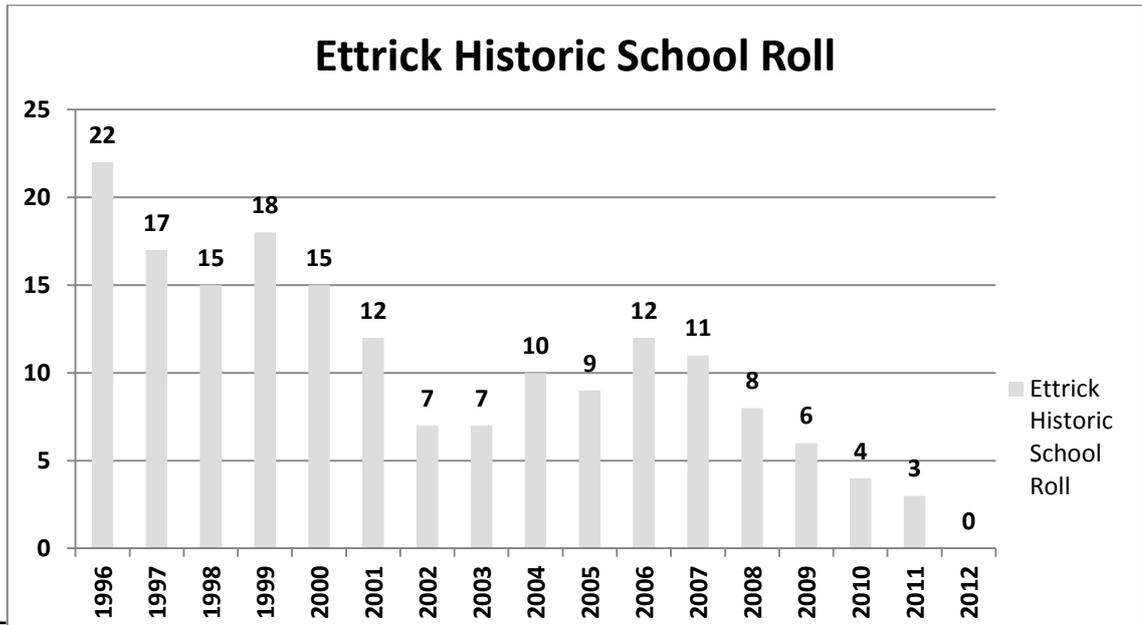
- 2.3 The school's catchment area is shown below:-



- 2.4 Ettrick Primary School is classified being in a “Remote Rural Area” by the Scottish Government⁸. This classification is based on the school being located in an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.
- 2.5 The roll at Ettrick Primary School fell significantly in the years prior to mothballing. In 2007 there were eleven pupils but by 2011 this reduced to three pupils. In August 2012, two of these pupils were due to transfer to secondary school, with no new pupils applying to enrol for the 2012/13 school year. Following discussions with parents and the community, it was considered that the low pupil roll at Ettrick Primary School presented significant challenges regarding the provision of learning, social and emotional opportunities and experiences required to meet the needs of pupils. Different alternatives to closure were discussed; discussions included the suggestion to transfer pupils from one or the other partner schools up the valley to breathe life into school for part of the week. However after investigating the options the decision was taken to mothball Ettrick Primary School in June 2012, with the catchment area being rezoned to Kirkhope Primary School in Ettrickbridge. A commitment was given to undertake a statutory consultation on permanent closure if there continued to be no demand for places at the school.
- 2.6 The decline in the school roll from 1996 until mothballing in 2012 is illustrated here⁹:

⁸ [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

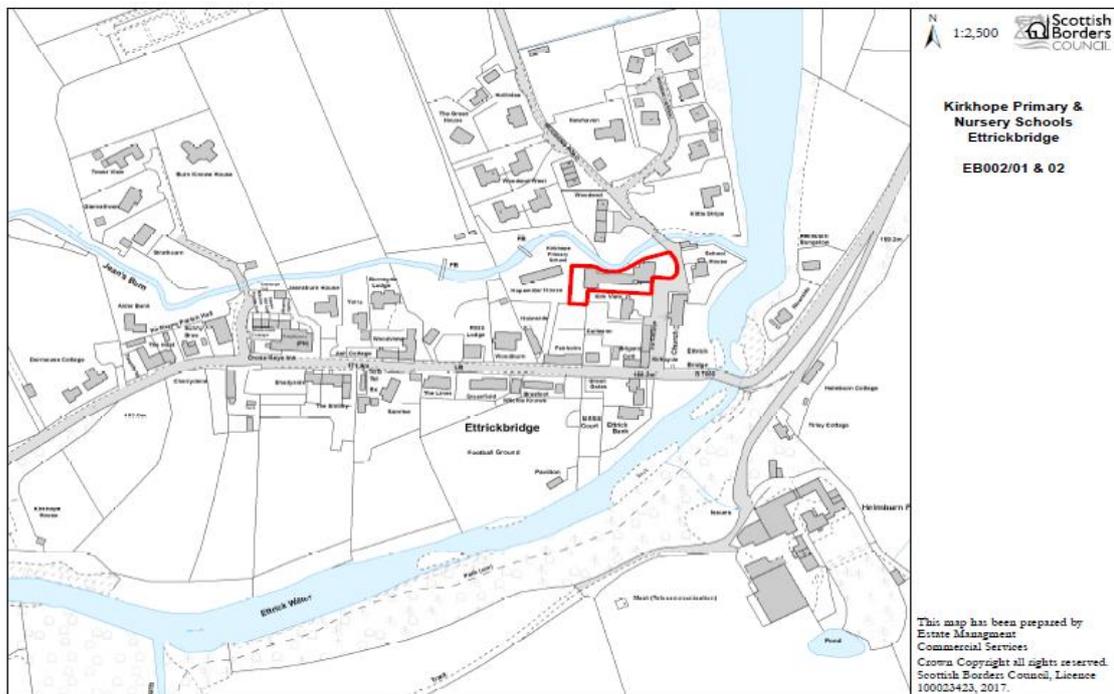
⁹ [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)



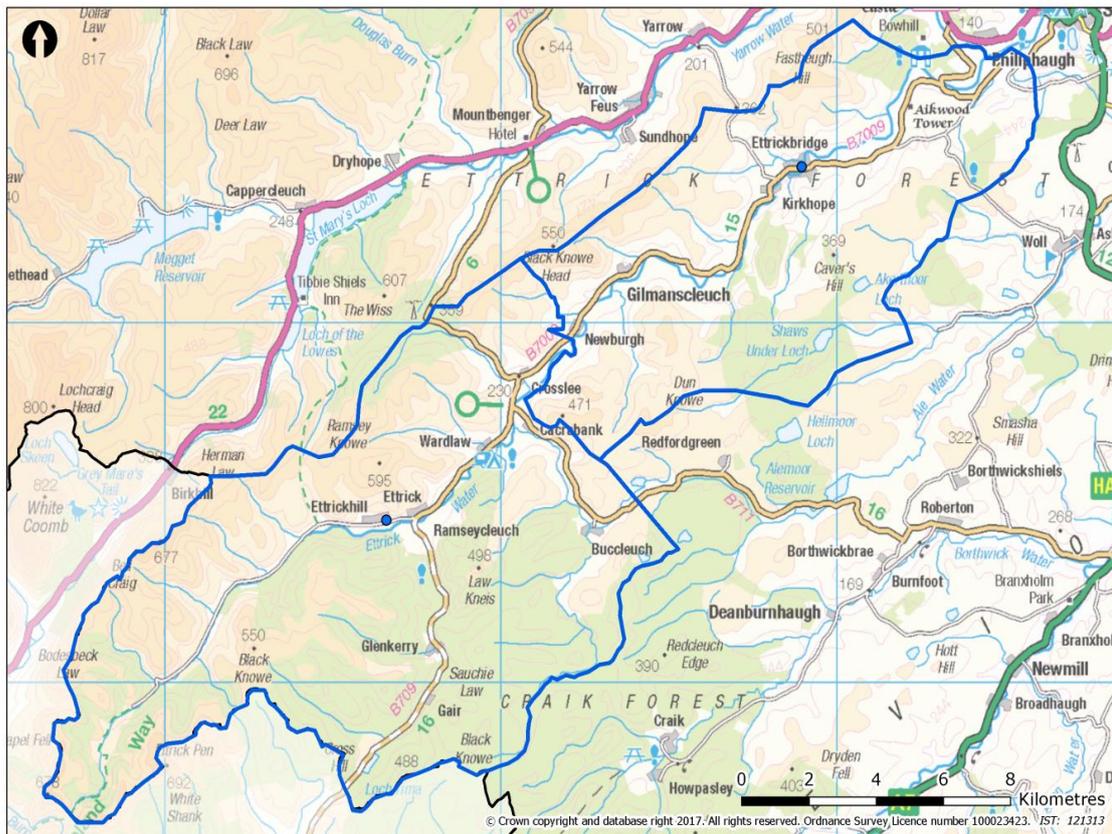
2.7 Since 2012 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children wishing to enrol at Ettrick Primary School and the Council is currently not aware of any children who would wish to enrol at Ettrick Primary School in the future.

3 AMALGAMATION OF CATCHMENT ZONES WITH KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



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



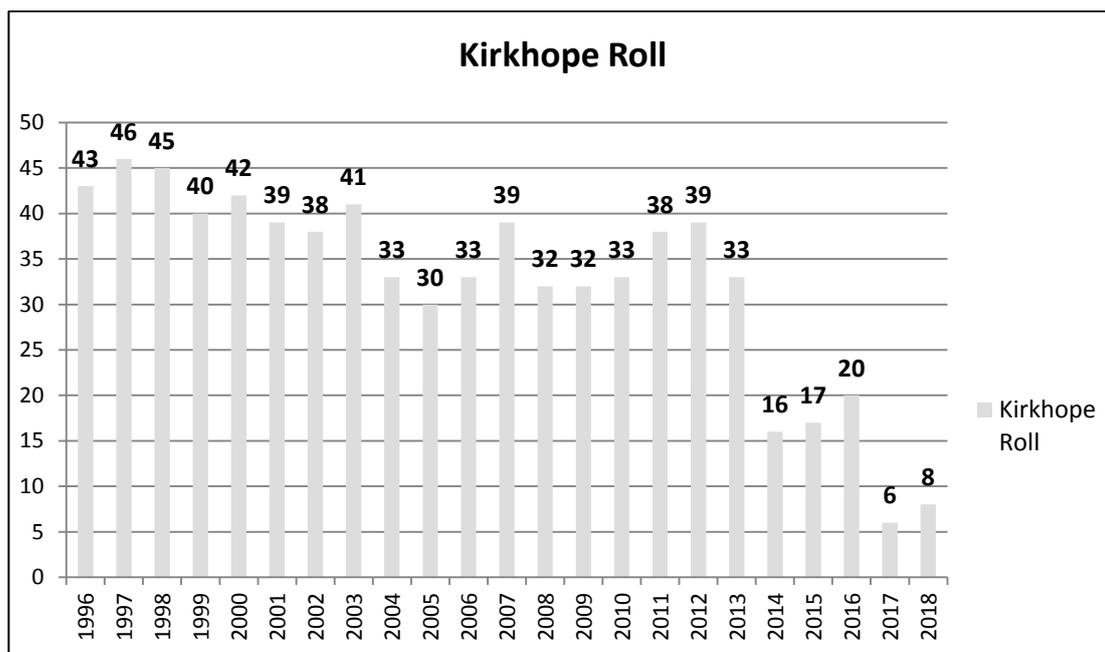
3.3 Kirkhope Primary School is located c7 miles from Selkirk and c11.5 miles from Ettrick Primary School. It is the closest school to Ettrick and is considered the heart of the Valley community. At the time of mothballing Kirkhope Primary School had a roll of almost 40 pupils and offered a vibrant learning environment and provided a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Kirkhope Primary School as being in "Accessible-rural" area. The classification criteria are "settlements of fewer than 3,000 people and within 30 minutes' drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more".¹⁰

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%.¹¹ 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 olds¹². There are currently 9 children enrolled at the ELC setting. The roll profile is shown below:-

¹⁰ [Rural Schools List 2017](#)

¹¹ [Scottish Government Historic School Roll Data](#)

¹² [Entitlement of funded provision is due to increase by 2020 from 600 to 1140 hours for 3-5 year olds and eligible 2 year olds](#)



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

4 BUILDING CONDITION AND SUITABILITY

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

Condition¹³

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

Suitability¹⁴

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.

¹³ [Scottish Government: School Estates: Condition Core Facts](#)

¹⁴ [Scottish Government: School Estates: Suitability Core Facts](#)

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 Scotland¹⁵ data, shows the age group distribution in the larger area in which both primary schools are situated, and how it has changed between 2001 and 2015. While this area covers a wider area and does not directly correspond to the catchment zones, the figures illustrate the changes in population. In 2001 there were 154 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which was 23% of the population. However by 2017 the National Records of Scotland estimate that there were 68 children (aged 0 to 15) living in this area, which is 12% of the population. This equated to a decline over the period of 56%.

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

ETTRICK AND THE LOCAL AREA

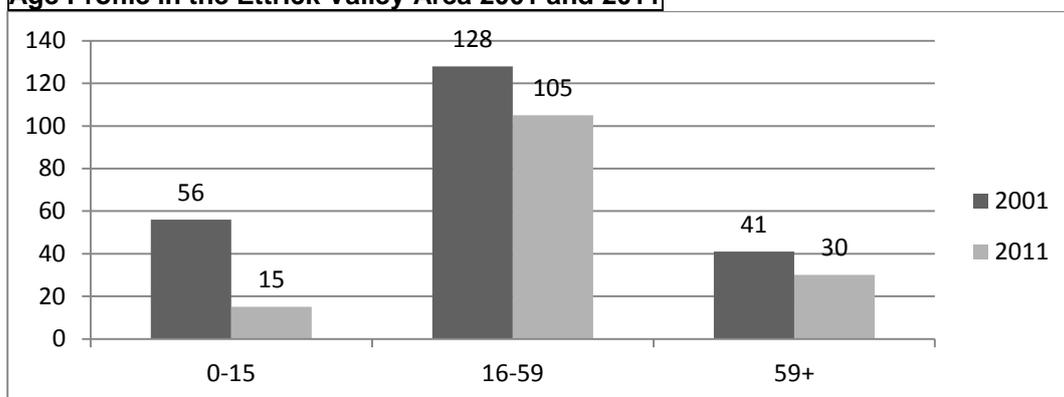
5.3 Population

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

¹⁵ [Scotland's National Census Records](#)

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

Age Profile in the Etrick Valley Area 2001 and 2011



Development and House Building

- 5.4 The Local Development Plan 2016 allocates 3 housing sites within Etrick, 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 Etrick 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 Etrick Community regarding the interim and long term use of the Etrick 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.

6 POSSIBLE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED

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

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

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

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

Option 1

Reopen Ettrick Primary School with its existing catchment area

Option 2

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

Option 3

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

Option 4

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

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

8 Option 1

Reopen Ettrick Primary School with its Existing Catchment Area

8.1 Positive Considerations

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

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

8.2 Demand for School to reopen

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

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

8.3 Educational Impact

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

- It is challenging to provide the full Curriculum for Excellence in schools where numbers are very low. The Curriculum places emphasis on children working collaboratively and in groups. Opportunities for working with others of a similar age and stage are very limited in a multi-composite setting.

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

8.4 **Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff**

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

8.5 **Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements**

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

8.6 **Adverse Weather**

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

8.7 **Rural Factors – Community Impact**

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

8.8 **Financial Impact**

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

8.9 Environmental Impact

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

8.10 Conclusion

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

9 Option 2

Reopen Ettrick Primary School and Redelineate the Catchment Area

9.1 Positive Considerations:

Same as Option 1 above

9.2 Issues to Consider:

Pupil Numbers/Population Demographics

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

increase their sustainability. It is considered that there is not a demand for Ettrick to be re-opened and that there is no support to increase its catchment area as this could further threaten the sustainability of Kirkhope and Yarrow by reducing their diminished roll further.

9.4 **Educational Benefits**

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

9.5 **Travel Arrangements**

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

9.6 **Financial Impact**

As **Option 1** above.

9.7 **Environmental Impact**

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

9.8 **Conclusion**

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

10 **Option 3**

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

10.1 **Issues to Consider**

- The school has been mothballed for over six years. The statutory guidance to the Act in relation to mothballing, states:

“the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”

- Pupil numbers are not projected to increase across the area. The population demographic has changed in the area and nothing has been identified, in terms of population number or housing or commercial development, that would be likely to significantly change these projected numbers.
- It was the view at the community meetings that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful. It was also the view at the community meetings that the school was already viewed as closed. The community has been putting the school building to good use and there were a large number of suggestions for how the building could be utilised in the future. Continuing to keep the school mothballed would achieve little other than continue to frustrate the community.

10.2 Educational Benefits

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

10.3 Travel Arrangements

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

10.4 Community Impacts

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

10.5 Financial Impact

N/A

10.6 Environmental Impact

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

10.7 Conclusion

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

11. **Option 4**

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

11.1 **Case for Closure**

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

11.2 **Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils**

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

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

- A school in the heart of a rural community can play a very important role – a focal point and a meeting place. Council officers have seen the strength of support across the community for the school and its activities.
- The nature of composite classes can encourage pupils to work together across the age ranges and abilities which can have a positive impact on all learners
- Travel time to school may be less which then allow more time for pupils for homework, hobbies and out of school activities.

11.3 Educational Benefits - Impact on staff

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

11.4 Educational Benefits-Impact upon the community

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

11.5 Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements

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

11.6 Rural Factors - Community Impact

- Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and have held discussions with members of the community to discuss the proposals for the school. Previously the majority of comments from the community were supportive of the mothballing and understood the implications of closure of the school. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure.
- In addition many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There was a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a more final solution was required.
- The community has made use of Ettrick Primary School since it was mothballed in 2012. The James Hogg exhibition, which was previously housed in Aikwood Tower, was moved into the school. The building can provide visitors with toilet access and an opportunity to purchase tourist leaflets. This use could not continue if the school was reopened.
- The school car park is directly opposite the village hall which has limited parking space and supports parking during events such as ceilidhs and visiting drama activities. The use of the

school building has had a positive impact upon both sustaining visitors to the community and in supporting local community activities. The volunteer group is currently exploring new sustainability projects in the valley which could also be based within the school building.

- Any sense of loss of social connection through the mothballing of the school has so far been minimised through the additional facilities being provided at the school building. However it is recognised that the school could be put to other uses and the community will be given further opportunities at consultation to discuss this.
- The Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company has indicated that it is actively investigating options to acquire the building through opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed but the Community Council has indicated that the building should be developed into a meaningful asset for the area and beyond.

11.7 Financial Implications

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

11.8 Environmental Impact

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

11.9 Summary/Conclusions

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

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

Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
	Name of School [enter name of school] Ettrick	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				
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
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	<i>Building costs:</i>			
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	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials			
Row 25	catering (contract or in-house)			
Row 26	SQA costs			
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			
Row 28				
Row 29	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>			
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 2	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
Capital costs		School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7			
Third party contributions to capital costs			

Table 3	Column 5	Column 6
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		

Table 4	Column 5	Column 6
Non-recurring revenue costs		
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS		

Table 5	Column 5	Column 6
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.

Appendix 2 – Minutes of Public Meeting 26 March 2019

Statutory Consultation to Close Ettrick Primary School Minute of Public Meeting at Boston Memorial Hall, Ettrick 26 March 2019 at 7pm

Present from Scottish Borders Council (SBC)

Michelle Strong (**MS**) – Chief Officer Education
Lesley Munro (**LM**) – Lead Education Officer, School Estates
Gillian Sellar (**GS**) – Solicitor, School Estates

There were 10 members of the community present

Introduction

MS welcomed everyone to the meeting and SBC officers introduced themselves

Presentation

MS presented an overview of SBC's proposals to permanently close Ettrick Primary School and to re-zone the catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School (copy of presentation attached).

Re-issue of Proposal Paper and Community Empowerment

- There was discussion regarding why the Proposal Paper had been re-issued and why the public meeting was being held again after the 2017 consultation process had been suspended. MS advised that the consultation had been paused by Donna Manson (SBC's former Service Director of Children & Young People) as Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company (**EYCDC**) progressed their bid to acquire forestry as it was understood that the EYCDC wished to utilise the school building as their base.
- Vicky Davidson from EYCDC was unaware of any discussions to halt the process but advised that EYCDC still wished to acquire the building under the Community Empowerment Act 2015. An Asset Transfer Request had been submitted in September 2018. EYCDC currently lease the building from the Council on a year long lease, with 1 months' notice. They have detailed plans for the building which are not dependent on their appeal regarding the Forestry Commission's decision about the proposed forestry acquisition. Vicky Davidson enquired about the timing of the consultation process and advised that the Asset Transfer Request would require to be extended.
- MS explained that the building would remain part of the school estate until the consultation process had been completed in full. If the decision is made to close the school, and if that decision is not then called in by the Scottish Government, then the school would be declared surplus by Education and transferred to SBC's Estates department. The Estates team's preference is always to market the building but it was acknowledged that there had been considerable discussion with EYCDC regarding options under the Community Empowerment Act.

Proposal to Close the School

- It was discussed about how sad the community was that the school had been mothballed for 7 years and that the number of children in the area had declined over recent years. There was also some discussion regarding families moving to the area and that it was believed that there may be 2-3 pre-school aged children moving to the valley soon.
- A community member mentioned the challenges of small school for the children and for the staff and praised the staff at the school prior to mothballing for providing such a high standard of education and making the school so enjoyable when the pupil numbers were so low.
- One community member mentioned that the school building continues to deteriorate (issues with the ceiling following a burst pipe) and that future development is unlikely as the school is built on a flood

plain; while school building does not flood the car park does. It was suggested that the site had very little value for development. The car park at the school currently is used for any events at the village hall and the church and it was stressed that the community do not want to lose this space.

- The travelling distances were discussed as a family lives about 6 miles passed Ettrick, which would make the travel time to Kirkhope quite long for a young child. It was estimated this would be about 45 minutes.
- The declining rolls in the valleys were discussed and it was mentioned that a bus used to bring children from Selkirk to Kirkhope every day. This service was provided by one of the teachers at the school several years ago. While there is currently a very small number of children from other catchment areas attending the valley schools (Kirkhope and Yarrow), LM advised that it was considered that there would be little appetite from the parents in Selkirk to bring their children daily to and from one of the valley schools. A community member advised that there was a weekly playgroup in Ettrickbridge that was well attended by Selkirk children with c 12 children attending.
- Mrs Carroll advised that there was a typo in the hard copy response form that had been posted to her along with a hard copy the Proposal Paper. GS apologised for this and advised that this had been picked up and amended. Fresh hard copies were available at the meeting.
- A community member was concerned that proposals made by SBC in November 2018 involved considering whether a 3-18 campus in Selkirk could jeopardise the valley schools. MS advised that the concept was on the table but no decisions will be made for some time. LM advised that there was an ambitious 10 year programme for the secondary school estate. MS advised that the 3-18 campus in Jedburgh would not result in a closure of Ancrum and that this was being retained as a smaller rural school option in the cluster. LM then discussed the model of P1-P5 at Ancrum, which works well for that community, with the older children transferring to Parkside in Jedburgh. The community in Ettrick were not sure about the model as they felt it could be detrimental to both the younger pupils and the school, as some parents may choose to send their younger children to the bigger school at the same time.
- One community member advised that she currently works at Yarrow Primary School which is almost the same distance as Kirkhope and that the journey was fine. There was discussion amongst the community members about road quality and snow ploughs. It was advised that the forestry companies ploughed the Ettrick road. LM encouraged the community member to suggest this in their Response Form and that it would all be considered in the Consultation Report.
- The decline of population was discussed and attributed to the change in work patterns in the area. The school roll had fluctuated but it was agreed that life had changed. Mr Harrison advised that superfast broadband was coming to the top of the valley and he was confident that this may result in more people moving to the area as this would encourage homeworkers etc.
- Mrs Carroll asked what would happen if more children moved to the valley. LM advised that the school rolls are constantly kept under review and that school estate is managed to deal with this. A community member stated that people moving to the valley now know that there is no school open at Ettrick.
- Schooling in the future was discussed and how things may evolve with technological developments. LM mentioned educational models used in Australia of teaching by skype/online and it was suggested that maybe, in the future, there would not be school buildings in some places as so much could be done remotely.
- Mrs Carroll queried the projected numbers in the paper. LM advised that these are prepared based on a number of factors including house building rates, birth rates etc. She advised that SBC are currently reviewing their last 10 years of projections against actual figures and advised that, while the exercise has not been completed, it so far appears that the projections have been more accurate for larger schools than smaller schools.
- One community member said that the projections are like a self- fulfilling prophecy for rural communities.

- Mrs Carroll queried the data sources in the proposal paper and whether they are truly accurate. LM explained that the data is sourced from Council records regarding enrolment into schools and early learning and childcare settings. Councils can also access NHS data regarding patients registered with GPs. Mrs Carroll was not satisfied that this was robust enough and had concerns about home-schooled children. In particular whether it is their choice to home school or whether education services have failed them. MS advised that home education is increasing nationally and that all local authorities are witnessing an increase in requests. MS explained that there are many reasons for home educating; medical issues, anxiety issues, experiences of parent or guardian. Once an authority receives a formal request for home educating, the authority can only contact the family once a year. It was asked if it's an offence to home educate without approval. MS advised if a child appears on our records or a GPs then there is a welfare duty to follow this up.
- Mrs Carroll asked if previous responses would be included in the Consultation Report. She said people should be advised if this is not the case. GS confirmed that they wouldn't be as there were now more questions but responders would be advised in so far as we have details as not all responders provided names or details.

The meeting was concluded and MS thanked everyone for their attendance.

SBC PRESENTATION



Ettrick Primary School Public Meeting



Tuesday 26 March 2019

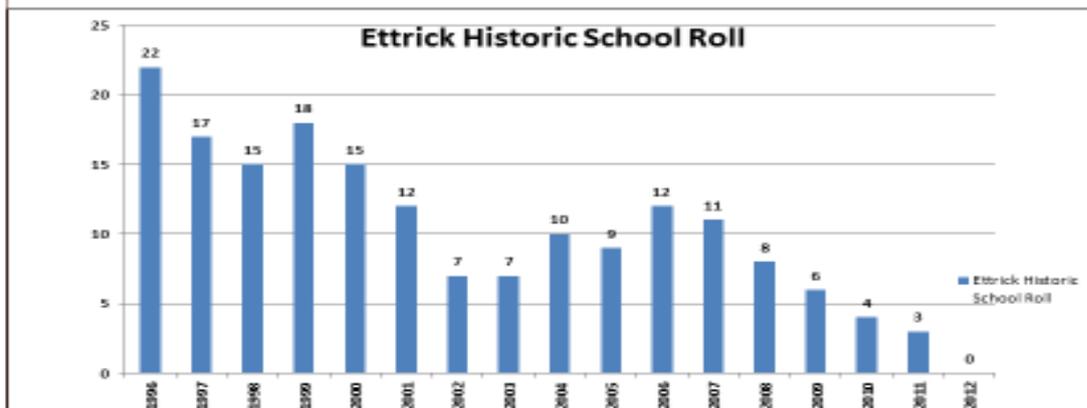
School Estate Consultation in relation to the proposal to close Ettrick Primary School

The Proposals that

- Ettrick Primary School is permanently closed
- If the school is to be closed, the catchment area is permanently re-zoned to Kirkhope Primary School

REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

- Sustained and continued reduction in school roll



REASON FOR THE PROPOSAL

- Significant change in population demographics
- Curriculum for Excellence – constraints to opportunities for full range of curricular and learning opportunities
- Constraints to team and group work
- Seeking to strengthen social and emotional development
- Kirkhope provides a rural school option in the heart of the Ettrick Valley
- Better facilities at Kirkhope

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the consultation process that local authorities must follow when proposing a permanent change to any school
- This includes:
 - Publishing a proposal paper including an Educational Benefits Statement
 - 6 week consultation period (minimum of 30 school days)
 - Holding a public meeting
 - Education Scotland meeting with parents, pupils and staff and report on Educational Benefits
 - Publishing a consultation report responding to issues raised during the consultation

STATUTORY CONSULTATION (cont'd)

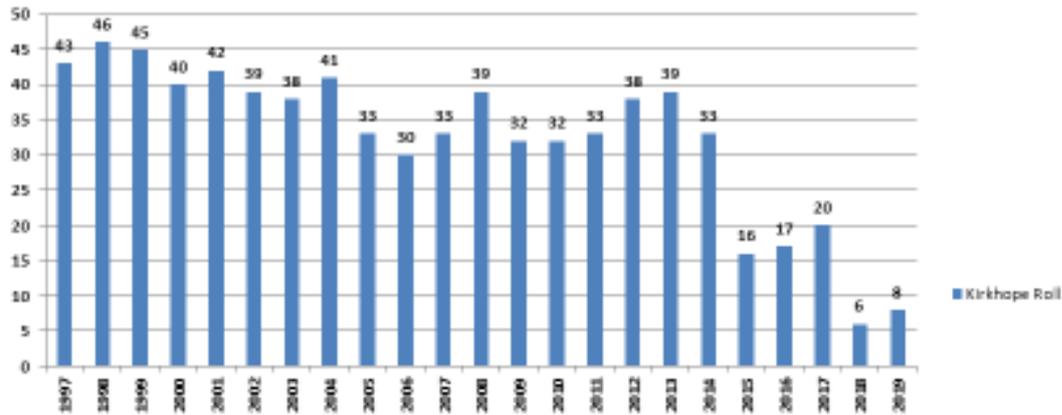
- Council make a decision after a 3 week consultation period following the publication of the consultation report
- Scottish Ministers have 8 weeks to call in a proposal regarding closure for referral to Schools Closure Panel
- If Schools Closure Panel do not support closure a future closure proposal cannot be consulted on for a minimum of 5 years

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO PROPOSAL

- Opportunities for children to develop a peer group within the community
- Opportunities for increased team and collaborative working
- Exposure to a wider learning experiences
- Improved transitions to High School
- Help to improve social and emotional development
- Increased opportunities to participate in activities, including sports and the arts
- Continue works with parents and the community to sustain Kirkhope and Yarrow Primary Schools

KIRKHOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kirkhope Roll



- Projected to be 11 pupils at the school in 2019/20

Proposed Catchment Area



NEXT STEPS

- This is a chance for you to have your say . Proposal Papers and Response Forms available here today and at <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ettrick>
- Consultation Period open until 28 April 2019
- Education Scotland will visit the Ettrick and Kirkhope and meet with pupils, parents and staff
- A Consultation Report will be published for further comments in May/June 2019
- Report on Consultation Process will go to Council in June 2019
- Scottish Government then review the decision and the consultation process

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS



Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to close Etrick Primary School.

May 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Scottish Borders Council's proposal to close Ettrick Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

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

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Kirkhope Primary School and Ettrick Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Ettrick Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Scottish Borders Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council proposes to permanently close Ettrick Primary School and rezone its catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School. The council undertook the consultation between 4 March 2019 and 28 April 2019. Copies of the proposal document were made available to consultees and an

advertisement was placed in the local press. A public meeting held at Ettrick Village Hall on 26 March 2019 was attended by ten people. The council received a total of 11 online and paper questionnaire responses to the consultation of which five agreed and five disagreed with its proposal to permanently close Ettrick Primary School. One 'don't know' response was returned.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Scottish Borders Council's proposal has the potential to be of educational benefit. Ettrick Primary School has been mothballed since 2012 when its roll fell to zero. Since then, pupils have been zoned to Kirkhope Primary School. Projected pupil numbers for Ettrick Primary School are not expected to rise significantly. Kirkhope Primary School has a current roll of eight children with an additional nine children attending early learning and childcare provision. One child attending Kirkhope Primary School lives within the catchment area of Ettrick Primary School. Kirkhope Primary School in Ettrickbridge is the geographically closest school to Ettrick Primary School. Children attending Kirkhope Primary School would continue to experience the features of learning in a small rural school within the Ettrick Valley community but would benefit from a potentially broader range of opportunities to learn with their peers and engage in collaborative learning. Children would have potentially more opportunities to develop social skills through working with others across a wider range of ages. Children would be able to learn from each other and share experiences and skills.

3.2 Kirkhope Primary School's roll has also declined. The school has capacity for 50 pupils and a current roll of eight. The council has concluded that the current and projected pupil roll numbers are not sufficient to sustain two primary schools in the Ettrick Valley area. Kirkhope Primary School is paired with Yarrow Primary School under shared headship arrangements. Scottish Borders Council states that it is working with both school communities to sustain those schools. Reopening Ettrick Primary School could cause a further decline in Kirkhope Primary School's roll.

3.3 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors were in agreement with the council's proposal. Whilst they regretted the loss of a small rural school, they could see no reasonable alternative to its permanent closure. Stakeholders reported that they had no expectations that the school would reopen since it was mothballed almost seven years ago. Children valued their learning experience and other opportunities at Kirkhope Primary School. They enjoyed working with their peers and spoke enthusiastically about the many trips the school offers to broaden children's experiences. Parents and staff had wider concerns about sustaining Kirkhope Primary School and Yarrow Primary School as viable small rural schools. They felt that it would not be in the interest of the wider community to reopen Ettrick Primary School. Parents felt that the additional school travel time involved in journeys from more distant parts of Ettrick Valley to Kirkhope Primary School was not unreasonable but that the journey times to school would become unreasonable if Kirkhope Primary School were to close in future. They hoped to receive reassurance that Scottish Borders Council would continue to support the provision of small rural schools within its review of the school estate. The council will need to address this in its final report.

3.4 Stakeholders who responded to the consultation by completing the paper questionnaire pointed to a typographical error resulting in an erroneous reference to Hawick and a repeat of one question. The council will need to address this in its final report.

3.5 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard.

3.6 The council conducted an options appraisal to assess any reasonable alternatives to the permanent closure of Ettrick Primary School. It identified three other options. The council

considered an option to reopen Ettrick Primary School with its existing catchment and, on the basis of lack of community demand and projected pupil numbers, reasonably concluded that this was not a viable alternative. A second option to reopen Ettrick Primary School and re-delineate its catchment area was not considered reasonable since this would impact negatively on the viability of other small rural schools and would involve longer school travel journeys for more children. The third option to continue mothballing was not considered to be viable or an appropriate use of resources.

3.7 The council considered the likely effect of its proposal on the local community. Whilst there is regret at the loss of the school within the community, there is limited demand to continue the mothballing arrangement. Members of the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company are in discussions with the council about the future of the school building involving a potential asset transfer arrangement within the terms of the Community Empowerment Act 2015. The building is currently used as exhibition space for a James Hogg museum. The Community Development Company has plans which could result in additional job opportunities in the local area and wishes to make long term use of the building in connection with these plans. Members of the group have expressed concern about a lack of maintenance of the existing school building and fear that its condition could deteriorate further, impacting on their future plans. The council will need to address this concern in its final report.

3.8 The council considered school travel arrangements. There is a distance of 11.4 miles between Ettrick Primary School and Kirkhope Primary School requiring a journey time of approximately 27 minutes. The school journey time could be considerably greater for any children in future who live further into the Ettrick Valley past Ettrick Primary School but not unusual within the context of other existing school travel times within the Scottish Borders Council. Parents and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors expressed some concern about winter travel conditions in the Ettrick Valley and the need for school transport arrangements to be appropriate to adverse weather conditions. The council will need to consider this in its final report.

4. Summary

4.1 The Scottish Borders Council's proposal to permanently close Ettrick Primary School and rezone its catchment area to Kirkhope Primary School is of potential educational benefit. It will formalise an arrangement that has been in place since Ettrick Primary School was mothballed in 2012. Children would benefit from a potentially broader range of learning experiences including better opportunities to learn and socialise with their peers. The council will need to provide reassurance to parents of its long term commitment to small rural schools and that it will continue to work with the Kirkhope Primary School and Yarrow Primary School communities to secure a viable future for those schools. It will also need to reassure parents and staff on school transport arrangements during winter conditions.

4.2 The council will need to provide reassurance in its final report that it will continue to engage with the local community on their plans for asset transfer of the Ettrick Primary School building and that the maintenance issues identified will be addressed.

4.3 The council will need to address the inaccuracies identified by stakeholders who completed their questionnaire.

**HM Inspectors
May 2019**