

Proposal Paper – Permanent closure of the Wilton Centre, Hawick (currently temporarily closed)

1. PROPOSAL

This Proposal is for the permanent closure of The Wilton Centre (otherwise known as The Arches) 36 Princes Street, Hawick (currently temporarily closed).

This proposal is due to: -

1. the relocation of the Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Needs Service (SEBN) to local cluster schools following the Covid -19 Pandemic under the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service and;
2. the unsuitable condition of the building for continued use within the school estate.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This proposal paper has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council's Children and Young Peoples Services to consult with responders in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland Act 2010 (As Amended) on a proposal to permanently close The Wilton Centre (The Arches).

The Paper aims to set out the Proposal, set out clearly the Educational Benefits of the proposal and drawn attention to and discuss any drawbacks or risks in respect of the Proposal.

It follows a pre-consultation community engagement review which started an open and transparent forum to obtain wide reaching views and opinions on the proposal to close the Wilton Centre permanently. Given the level of engagement with this pre- consultation and the level and depth of responses to that informal pre consultation, Officers felt it was prudent to recommend that Scottish Borders Council proceed to undertake a full Statutory Consultation in compliance with statutory obligations to consult on significant changes to schools, and to ensure that wide engagement on the Proposal to close the building permanently was undertaken including a full in person Public Meeting and the involvement of HMIE- Education Scotland. The Pre- consultation responses and data will be shared as a summary within this Proposal Report at Page 16. The pre consultation responses in full *will* be included as part of the Statutory Consultation and responded to fully within the Consultation Report on closure of the Statutory Consultation.

3. OVERVIEW

The Wilton Centre also known colloquially as "The Arches" housed the SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Service). SEBN was an in- reach and an out-reach support service to children and young people across the Scottish Borders region.

The SEBN service now known as the Inclusion and Wellbeing service is a responsive service which continues to give support to children today. The current service provides this in children's existing school settings as the Wilton Centre (The Arches) was not reopened following door closure in the Covid 19 Pandemic. The building was closed after the summer holidays of August 2021.

Historically (pre- Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020) The SEBN service provided placements within the building in Hawick mainly on a Part time and occasionally on a Full-time placement basis. The Covid 19 Pandemic resulted in the Wilton Building's doors being closed as all educational settings were. To ensure continuation of service the SEBN service was reformatted to provide that SEBN service within the service users mainstream schools. This was to be a more inclusive service providing children with SEBN support within their existing school set up instead of requiring them to travel (sometimes excessively long distances) across the region to attend SEBN placements within the Wilton building in Hawick.

The aim of this Proposal paper is to advise and inform Scottish Borders Communities across the region, about this background and to allow an informed approach to be taken to the proposal to close the Wilton Centre building permanently following the reformatting of the services provided within to a more inclusive practice providing children with SEBN support within their existing school set up as part of Inclusion and Wellbeing Service.

The concerns regarding the fabric of the building will be discussed in this proposal paper to explain "why" the closure of the Wilton Centre on a now permanent basis is proposed, and to invite comments from communities and stakeholders accordingly.

4. DETAIL OF PROPOSAL

The proposal has implications for all Scottish Borders Council primary and secondary school pupils current and future, who may have been in the past or will in the future be referred for SEBN / Inclusion and Wellbeing placements. They may wish to have a view on the Proposal Document in so far as the closure of the Wilton Centre Building is concerned. Although the SEBN service has been redesigned, views are encouraged and welcomed to gather thoughts on the Wilton Centre building itself being disbanded.

Scottish Borders Council recognises that the closure of this building will mean that placements will not be undertaken in The Wilton Centre itself- but in their local cluster settings as is happening now. Since the building closed following covid. Historically, all children across the region may have had access to full time or part time placements by referral by their local mainstream school setting. Now the referrals happen with localised/ tailored approaches taken under the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service own local Cluster Schools.

5. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

PROPOSAL PAPER PUBLISHED

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

- A. Council Headquarters, Newton St Boswells, TD6 OSA
- B. All SBC primary and secondary schools within the Scottish Borders- upon request.
- C. Published on the Scottish Borders Council Website and advertised on SBC Social Media.
- D. Copies of the Proposal Paper are also available on request from: -

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal

Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: 01893 582 4000

E-mail:

schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Please state that you are looking for the Wilton Centre (The Arches) Closure Statutory Consultation Proposal Document.

E. This proposal Paper is available in an alternative format or can be translated form for readers whose first language is not English. Please apply to:-

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: 01893 582 4000

E-mail:

schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

F. Formal Notice of the proposal and relevant information will be given and made available, free of charge to:-

1. Parents/ Carers of *all* Primary and Secondary Schools in Scottish Borders Council (who may have had or will have children who could be referred to the IWS service- therefore *all children within SBC schools*)– upon request- notification will be by Group Call notification and on SBC social media/ SBC website as well as local media press release.
2. Young people/ Pupils of SBC as relevant Consultee. It is the intention of officers to try and consult with a large selection of SBC primary and Secondary Pupil Councils to try and obtain views from young people who may in theory have had the chance to have been referred to SEBN / IWS or their peers to be referred, to The Wilton Centre, Hawick. Due to the large number of children who therefore could have had such a referral in theory, Officers will take a pragmatic approach try to engage as many Pupil Councils/ focus groups from schools, as possible in the Scottish Borders area to ensure wide engagement from as many young persons as possible to obtain their views on the Proposal. Information obtained and a note of views as each meeting will be noted and reported within the Consultation document.
3. The Staff of the current SEBN service (now Inclusion and Wellbeing).
4. Any trade Union which is representative of the SEBN staff (Now Inclusion and Wellbeing).

5. The Community Council of Hawick (and any Community Council of any further Borders area upon request) All Community Councils will be advised by media publishing of the Consultation process.
6. Community Planning Partnership named Partners
7. The constituency member of the Scottish Parliament
8. The constituency member of Parliament
9. The List members of the Scottish Parliament
10. Councillors of Scottish Borders Council

G. Advertisement in local Media

An advert will be placed on Scottish Borders Council website and social media to advise and provide a link to the Proposal Document which will be published on 30th September 2024 inviting views and comments on the Proposal Document. A press release will be published in local media outlets to give advanced notice and to provide information about the availability of the Proposal Document online and in paper format.

H. Period for community views to be heard.

The proposal document will be published, and the Statutory consultation will begin on **30th September 2024 and close on 18th November 2024 inclusive**. This is to allow a 6-week consultation period (and therefore in excess of 30 school days) as is a statutory requirement.

6.PUBLIC MEETING

Format of Public Meeting

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. It will take place on **Wednesday 23rd October 2024 at 6pm-8pm at Hawick High School, Buccleuch Road, Hawick TD9 0EG.**

The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council will be addressed by the Director Children and Young People's Services, and/ or other Senior Officers of the Council.

The meeting will provide an opportunity to hear more about the Proposal to close the Wilton Centre. It will provide an opportunity to ask questions about the Proposal to close the building. The public meeting will let you have your views recorded so that they can be considered as part of the Proposal and Consultation process.

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions, and officer responses. These notes will be made available on request. These notes will be sent to HMIE who will be present at the meeting and will form part of Education Scotland's response (report) to the Consultation.

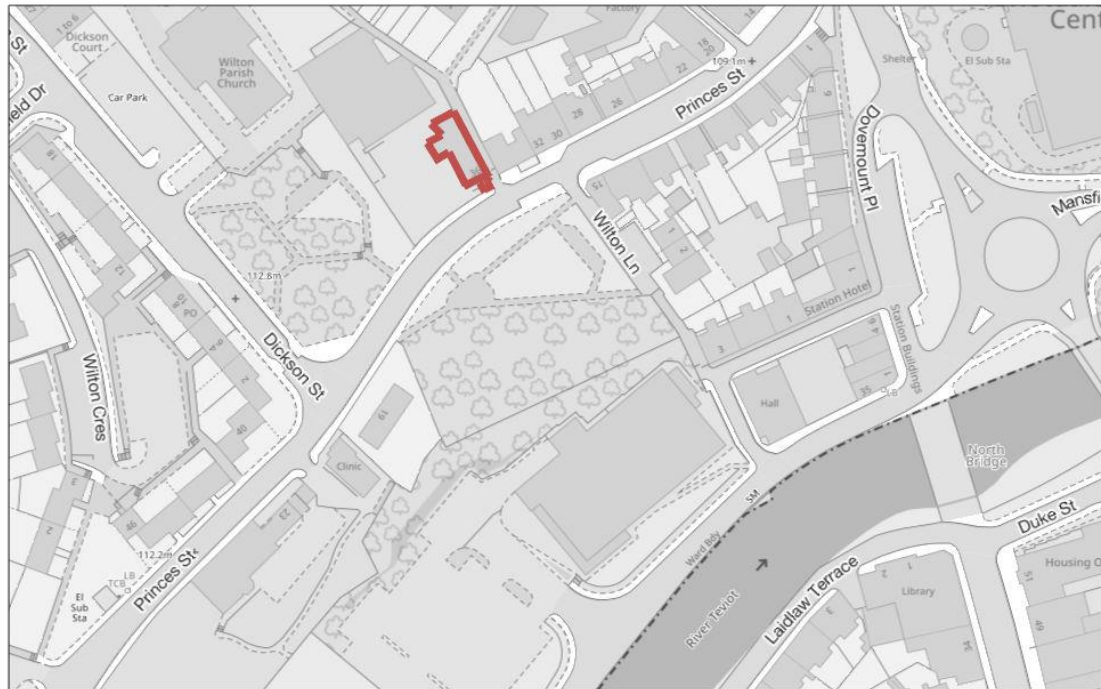
7.BACKGROUND

LOCATION and GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION



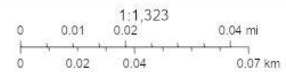
The Wilton Centre “The Arches” (pictured) is located at 36 Princes Street, Hawick.

ArcGIS Web Map



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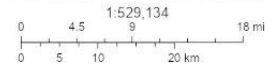
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See above map in red outlining the building's position within the town on Princes Street, Hawick and further map on page 6, detailing the position of Hawick within the southwestern aspect of the Scottish Borders Region.

ArcGIS Web Map



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8. OVERVIEW

The Wilton Centre “The Arches”, Hawick historically housed the SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Service) which is an ongoing support service to children and Young people across the length and breadth of the Scottish Borders. The service continues to be a responsive service to support children under the department which is now called “The Inclusion and Wellbeing” Service of Scottish Borders Council. The Wilton Centre historically housed part time or full-time placements within the Wilton Centre itself.

Following the pandemic when schools closed throughout Scotland, the Wilton Centre itself did not re open due to the unsuitable condition of the building, and the ability of the service to redesign itself as an inclusive service which did not need to utilise the ageing building in Hawick. The Service is still in existence today.

The building was deemed no longer fit for purpose requiring significant capital investment to bring it up to an acceptable standard in terms of the school estate. This will be discussed in the section categorised as Building Suitability.

9. WHAT WAS THE PROVISION AT THE WILTON CENTRE?

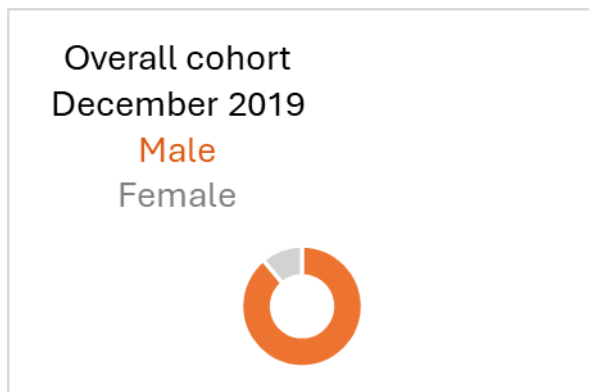
To understand the Service as was provided at the Wilton Centre “The Arches”, it is important to have an understanding of the number of pupils who were under the SEBN Service at that time, and in placements within the SEBN service.

In December 2019 the data of the authority shows that there were eighteen pupils attending the SEBN service on placements at the Wilton Centre. This does not include the number of pupils being supported on an outreach basis which were not based at the Wilton Centre.

Total	18 PUPILS
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Gender breakdown

Male	16
Female	2



The Year group break down was as below: -

Year group	Number of pupils
P3	1
P4	3
P5	1
P6	3
P7	3
S3	2
S4	4
S5	1
Total	18

The suggestion from the data available was that the pupil numbers attending The Wilton Centre for placements was reducing over the years.

Many pupils on SEBN placements were in the later stages of their school education. The SEBN staff reported an increased demand to have greater and more flexible resources to meet the needs of these young people in the young person's *own* community rather than transporting them to the Wilton Centre as an outreach centre, and that this was becoming the "norm" This was especially the case from secondary schools where pupils wished to be given support within their own community if they could.

Attendance of pupils on placement therefore was at times quite low, and the SEBN senior management team reported that they found it difficult to reallocate staff out to schools effectively at short notice often due to the geographical location of The Wilton Centre within the Borders region if and when pupils did not arrive to the Wilton Centre in their taxi transport.

Hawick is situated within the southwest of the Borders Region. It is approximately ten miles southwest of Jedburgh and just under nine miles southeast of Selkirk. It is situated in the most southerly section of the Borders region.

Many pupils were on part time placements only. Latterly two days shared placements for almost all the primary level pupils. It was the case that secondary pupils attended for up to five days.

A consultation process had begun in 2019 with SEBN referred families, along with staff and trade unions where views and opinions were sought about a remodel of the SEBN service. Post COVID it was suggested by the education authority that a return to a model of extracting pupils from their cluster schools to travel great distances across the region to attend the standalone SEBN unit at the Wilton Centre, would be a step backwards in working inclusively in and across local authority schools. Instead, it aimed to look to establish an intervention-based local model to support young people previously attending the SEBN at the Wilton Centre, within their own educational cluster schools. Optimising engagement in learning in their mainstream schools was felt to be far preferable and attractive to all consultees.

Although, the covid pandemic forced the closure of the Wilton Centre's doors, this was the catalyst to begin a process of accelerating and advancing a new redesign of the SEBN service offered. The families of SEBN service attending children were emphatic when they were asked about this possible change, and Officers were advised that they agreed with this new localised approach. They wished a more inclusive service for a myriad of reasons which will be detailed further in the section of the proposal Paper dealing with Educational Benefits below.

10. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

Officers have carefully considered what the Educational Benefits would be, if the Wilton Centre was to close permanently. To do this it is important to consider that Scottish Borders Council has clear statutory duties relating to the provision of education in the Scottish Borders.

1. Aligning with National Priorities

Relational approaches underpin the way in which teaching, and support staff work with Children and Young People in schools across Scotland.

The current national guidance on relationships and behaviour in Schools has, at its foundation, a whole school ethos of *prevention, early intervention* and *support* against a background which

promotes positive relationships, learning and behaviour. Shifting work patterns to provide local support seems to more successfully promote a positive whole school ethos. As specialist staff are more present in schools, the theory is that they gain greater insight into developing behaviours allowing for more preventative and proactive working. This directive comes from Scottish Government Guidance -Presumption to provide Education in a Mainstream setting- guidance published on 26th March 2019 and this position also sits in line with the Standards in Schools Act 2000, which recognised the rights of all children and young people to be in education alongside their peers in mainstream schools known as the presumption of mainstream.

Scottish Borders Council 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 out with the formal curriculum.

The following priorities have been identified within the Scottish Borders Children and Young People’s Services Plan: -

- 1.Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people; Increasing participation and engagement
2. Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
- 3.Keeping children and young people safe.
- 4 Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities.

In addition, 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.

Scottish Government Guidance speaks of four key features of Inclusion which can be used to set expectations and evaluate inclusive practice in schools and early learning and childcare settings. These are “**Present, participating, achieving and supported**”. The Scottish Government Guidance states that: -“Together there are four features which can support the delivery of inclusive learning environments for all children and young people that enable them to reach their full potential”

Furthermore, in 2018 Scottish Borders Council developed a strategic approach to Inclusion, which led to key messages aimed at delivering high quality inclusion services promoting “Inclusion for all”. The commitment then, which was developed within engagement sessions with Staff and Head teachers, recognised that improving practice and following priorities were identified as part of an “Inclusion for all” commitment: -

These commitments were: -

- a) Create an ethos of achievement for all pupils within a climate of high expectation.
- b) Value a broad range of talents, abilities, and achievements
- c) Promote success and self-esteem by taking action to remove barriers to learning.
- d) Counter conscious and unconscious discrimination/ bias that may prevent individuals, or pupils from any groups, from thriving in their education.
- e) Actively promote understanding and a positive appreciation of the diversity of individuals and groups within society.

To adhere to the above commitment- the key areas for consideration were:

- A) Reduction in transport time for learners.
- B) Ensure flexibility and respond directly to all learners' needs.
- C) A 3-18 approach ensuring effective transitions and progression in learning, with early intervention.
- D) Enhanced provisions which facilitate a broad range of opportunities for learners – for attainment, achievement, and skills for learning. Life and work.
- E) Staff up skilled to meet the needs of learners.
- F) A Responsive model/Holistic view of the child/ young person

The Educational Benefits and any drawbacks of the Proposal have been assessed taking account of the requirements under the Scottish Government Guidance and the priorities and aims of the Children and Young People's Services Plan and Commitments, as above, and having regard to the terms and statutory provisions of The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000.

In terms of the four key features of Inclusion being:- **Present, Participating, Achieving and Supported**- Officers assessed the proposal against those backgrounds: -

2. First Key of Inclusion -Present

The received wisdom in Education is that transporting children to outreach placements is in the main unhelpful to their educational and emotional wellbeing and outdated. Taking children out of their local area and thus community cohort, to transport them to the Wilton Centre in Hawick for placements within the centre derives little educational benefit. Officers have considered this as it seems to be an outdated method. The feeling from the families who were part of the SEBN (now Inclusion and Wellbeing) at The Wilton Centre, was that children on placements in the service were far better served educationally and emotionally by reducing often very long travel times. Long commutes of children and young people were not beneficial due to the stress of long journeys to and from the centre – with some pupils travelling up to two hours each way to attend the Wilton Centre. Teaching staff felt this was overwhelmingly negative and stressful for the children and this travel was often prohibitive to helpful learning being highly dysregulating for the children and young people. An educational benefit of the proposal is the reduction of significant transitions which can cause such dysregulation. Working with and supporting children and young people within their own community enables them to be present in a familiar context reducing significant transitions in that regard and enabled restorative processes to be implemented closer to home. It is felt that having a more localised support staff who have a better understanding of communities and the resources they offer ensures that they can capitalise on more local opportunities for learners.

3. Second key of Inclusion -Participating

Once placements came to an end at the Wilton Centre, Officers understand that there was historically the challenge of where that child or young person required to reintegrate. Questions were raised such as “where did the child identify?” and “Where was the child's community?”

The idea what you remove a child for a placement in another unit, to then be reintegrated into their mainstream school setting (even if part time) has not sat naturally with updated and modern-day principles of inclusivity and integration for quite some time. The provision in the Wilton Centre, also by its nature and set up, did not support the principle and belief that being surrounded by positive role models are beneficial to learners. Educators in this environment state that inclusivity is needed for this to be beneficial. There was also a lack of balanced peer cohort in terms of gender balance at The Wilton centre when it was used for placements, as is clear from the data of the attending

children. There was a lack of female peers for girls within the unit with the numbers suggesting an overwhelmingly male cohort.

Overall, it was felt that there was a far greater educational benefit from children and young people accessing additional local support to enable them to participate in their local community and providing them with skills linked to self-regulation using them within their community/ peer cohort. This then reduces the need for children and young people to apply skills learned in a different context to the community they will live and grow up in and thus maintaining their position within their own community.

4. Third key of Inclusion- Achieving.

It needs to be considered that due to the small ageing nature of the Wilton Centre building and the resulting limitations of staff, learning environments and resources significantly restricted the opportunities for achievement for pupils on a shared placement to participate in a curriculum offer that was well matched to their needs, interests and strengths. The older building design for example created curricular limitations particularly for the secondary aged pupils on placements, whose interest might have been gained better through a more diverse bespoke curricular offering. The building offered no access to Technology/Science subjects or quality Physical Education for example. Allocating support to work in mainstream settings provides the clear educational benefit in terms of the opportunity to open more flexible and creative curricular pathways to support improved educational and wider achievements for learners.

5. Fourth Key of Inclusion- Supported

A benefit of the proposal to permanently close the Wilton Centre and not reopen this to the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, allows the staff who were historically based within the centre and who now work in a more agile and responsive way to support children and young people, the ability to continue to do so. Staff of the SEBN service previously based within the Wilton Centre, were reallocated following door closure from covid, to work in the families' mainstream cluster schools. It was felt that their role would be to build on the success of delivering inclusive practice in local settings during lockdown, support the outreach team to work with pupils and their families who were referred to the service previously and continue to build capacity in the mainstream schools and settings so that all learners' needs were met.

The Inclusion and wellbeing service took on a leading role to support nurturing approaches across the Scottish Borders to assist with this goal, ongoing commitment, and strategic approach to inclusion for all in terms of the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service.

This approach seems to sit in line with the significant culture shift generally whereby mainstream schools working collaboratively in their clusters are the focus now and in the future for more inclusive practices. Officers understand that staff can be moved quickly and flexibly to where support needs of children and young people are identified directly to enhance the capacity of the team around the child.

11. THE BUILDING

The Wilton Centre stands in the most southwestern part of the Borders. For over 20 years it was regularly reviewed. It was deemed to require significant investment to modernise it to make it fit for the modern age. Reviewed by the education architectural lead as part of an Estates Review which began in 2017 and continued in April 2018 with a suitability review in May 2018, it was agreed that

the building required significant capital investment to be fit as an education setting meeting reasonable standards for schools in terms of Schools for the Future, or in respect of Scottish Government guidance for school estates. Since closing its doors post covid 19 pandemic, maintenance costs are now still required to facilitate it in terms of maintenance to keep it wind, watertight and secure. Those details are available in the Financials Section of the report.

12. SUITABILITY SURVEY- THE BUILDING

The building was surveyed by Turner and Townsend for Scottish Borders Council as part of a Suitability Review on 29th January 2024. The report is annexed within **Appendix 1**.

The Suitability Report detailed the overall rating of the building to be a “D”. This was the lowest rating in terms of suitability. “D” rated means that the building does not support the delivery of services to children and communities. This means that the school buildings and grounds seriously impede delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school.

Officers appreciate that accessibility was a main concern whilst the building was in use. There were two buildings with a tarmac playground to the front. The main building was accessed by several stairs and a separate annexe could be accessed from the playground. There was no accessible entrance. This led to “safety upon entry” concerns and regarding safeguarding also from staff employed by the SEBN service now the IWS.

Due to the age of the building the building did not have the right balance of traditional and /or modern flexible working spaces although attempts officers appreciate had been made over the years to create a soft play area for younger children attending placements. Safe passage through the building or the ability to define safe spaces was compromised by the older building design. As has been touched on in Educational Benefits section of the report, the older building design also placed curricular limitations on children and young people, particularly for the secondary aged pupils on placements whose interest might have been gained better through a more diverse bespoke curricular offering. The building offered no access to Technology/Science subjects or quality Physical Education for example.

13. ALTERNATIVE USE OF WILTON CENTRE

Officers understand that the building is listed. Options for its future will be considered by the Council’s Asset/ Estate management team and reported to elected members for consideration in due course. There are suggestions that community interest groups have expressed desire and interest in the Wilton Centre, and this is to be welcomed and ongoing dialogue encouraged. This could be encouraged in terms of the Community Asset transfer provisions once this proposal to permanently close has been considered and a decision made ultimately by Elected members once the statutory consultation process have been followed, and a decision on it’s future is known.

14 HOW WILL PERMANENT CLOSURE OF THE WILTON CENTRE IMPACT FUTURE LEARNERS?

If the Wilton Centre is closed permanently this will mean that future SEBN service (now Inclusion and Wellbeing Service) users, won’t have the opportunity to attend the Wilton Centre in Hawick on placements, however the proposal details the reasons why this is felt to be preferable and, on balance, more beneficial to them in terms of the educational benefits section of the report as above.

The authority deems that there are little to no drawbacks to future learners to have access to much closer Inclusion and Wellbeing Service support and resources which support their learning and emotional needs in a local cluster school, more in line with the educational benefits of inclusion and nurture approaches in their local community for the reasons outlined within the educational benefits section of the report. The Scottish Government continues to promote mainstreaming as the priority and that higher level of needs, requires prioritising the offering in universal settings rather than in standalone units and thus this approach sits firmly alongside Scottish Government directions. However, if there are concerns from communities who feel children will lose out from spending time in the Wilton Centre, then Officers do feel that it is important to pledge to work alongside those children/ families and communities who feel that way, to continue to focus on developing inclusive practice and to provide appropriate support and assistance, to try to mitigate(as much as possible) any negatives regarding the loss of the building on future learners.

15. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been recently undertaken and is attached to this Proposal as **Appendix 2**.

16 IMPACT/ DRAWBACKS OF PERMANENT CLOSURE

DISRUPTION TO LEARNING FOR CHILDREN WHO WERE PART OF THE SEBN/IWS SERVICE WHEN DOORS CLOSED ON TEMPORARY BASIS?

Officers have considered this and in the main concluded that that there was very little disruption to families. Families of children and young people attending were asked about the redesign of the SEBN service to a more localised inclusive service under the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, within the children's mainstream settings, and families agreed to this following the requirement to close the Wilton Centre's doors in the Covid 19 Pandemic. Although a transition period was required, this prompted the rethink of how the service operated from the Wilton Centre which was required due to an outdated approach this to offering.

The council will pledge to work with communities affected to identify and overcome any issues which may arise from a permanent closure of The Wilton Centre. However the authority's view is that this is likely to be minimal given the reallocation of the resources to the referred children's own cluster / catchment schools within the redesign and the fact that the families of attending children within the service when the building was closed post covid, advised that they would prefer this more localised inclusive approach to cut down on commuting and promote inclusion within the young person's own community. It is anticipated that any issues in terms of this therefore would be minimal as the overwhelming feeling was this was a far better approach to take to Inclusion and wellbeing rather than standalone placements out with communities and peer groups.

However, It does need to be appreciated that some families or communities within the Borders region may feel that some children would have benefitted from spending time in standalone placements within the Wilton Centre itself, and that view and opinion comes across in the pre consultation survey. It needs appreciated that the closure of the building on a permanent basis could be seen as a negative to those families who will no longer get that opportunity.

If this is the case then it is imperative that the council provides a pledge to work alongside those children/ families and communities who feel that they would have benefitted from spending time

within the unit in The Wilton building, to continue to focus on developing inclusive practice and to provide appropriate support to those children to try to mitigate(as much as possible) any negatives regarding the loss of the Wilton Centre for them.

17 COMMUNITY IMPACT

The building itself is currently closed and lies empty. Upkeep is required to keep it wind and watertight and to ensure it is kept locked and secure. As the building has not been occupied for several years, several areas in the building are in a state of poor disrepair and internally the building is in a poor state of repair particularly the west side of the building where upon areas of the ceiling and wall lathe plaster are badly crumbling. This information is available within the Suitability Survey in Appendix 2.

Any positive attempt to re purpose or an adaptive reuse of the building is thought will go some way to redress to some extent, the loss of the building to the local community and to lessen the effect of an empty building within the Hawick Community should the proposal proceed. SBC will also pledge to work collaboratively with the local community to mitigate the impact on the community of the loss of the building. This also needs appreciated given the Pre-Consultation engagement review and the responses to the survey within that review which are mentioned within section 22 of this report. Each response will be fully included within the Statutory Consultation and Consultation report to ensure this is fully considered.

18 STAFF IMPLICATIONS

There was no reduction in staffing when the building was closed due to covid, and the service was redesigned to come under the Inclusion and wellbeing Service. Upon any permanent closure decision, this will continue to remain the same. The redesign looked to redeploy the staff, who were based within the building, to the local cluster schools of the children attending, and where possible for expansion additional staff were recruited. This resulted in increased capacity of staff for the cluster schools. Officers understand that it was felt that this allowed for improved working environments for the staff, rationalising and providing clarity of roles across the cluster schools, reducing bureaucracy, providing staff with a sense of belonging with a local cluster team, providing quality professional learning to support staff roles which allowed in turn the allocation of local authority resources more effectively- all with the aim and purpose to develop a better outcome for staff who had historically been based only within the Wilton Centre.

All staff in post were allocated to bases in schools to work within a cluster-based model, remaining part of a centrally managed service. Staffing has been adjusted across the authority responsively according to changing need and referrals since the temporary closure of the building.

19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Transport Costs per child

Scottish Borders Council had a significant outlay in terms of the costs of transport per child attending placements within the Wilton Centre.

The table below gives the breakdown for travel costs for each child enrolled in the years 2018/19 and 2019/20 prior to the Covid and the doors closing on the building and the service re design. The redesign of the service removes the requirement for this travel.

Child No	2018-19	2019-20
1	6,001	951
2	678	0
3	9,046	564
4	3,919	617
5	18,929	7,893
6	396	0
7	442	32
8	2,060	909
9	9,207	2,918
10	2,169	1,387
11	14,618	3,777
12	141	0
13	678	0
14	1,955	1,853
15	1,600	0
16	10,834	2,853
17	3,968	2,392
18	8,325	6,811
19	932	1,529
20	571	2,121
21	0	285
22	0	1,264
23	0	1,879
24	0	0
25	0	171
Total	96,469	40,205

20 REVENUE BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The below table shows the costs associated with the Wilton Centre building from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

Sum of Amount			Account	Account(T)						
Year	Cost Centre	Cost Centre(T)	R.2001 Repairs & Maintenance of Buildings	R.2101 Electricity	R.2102 Gas	R.2301 Business Rates	R.2401 Water Services	R.2002 Vandalism Repairs	Grand Total	
2019	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		13,549	6,315	16,660	1,887		38,410	
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	1,212					63	1,275	
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	5,169					1,551	6,720	
	RY328	Additional Support Needs - SEBN Wilton Centre	47					78	125	
2019 Total			6,428	13,549	6,315	16,660	1,887	1,692	46,530	
2020	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		10,496	6,549	16,661	1,306		35,011	
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	2,467						2,467	
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	1,861						1,861	
2020 Total			4,328	10,496	6,549	16,661	1,306		38,340	
2021	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		8,143	3,507	12,552	1,668		25,869	
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	292						292	
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	1,189						1,189	
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	360						360	
2021 Total			1,840	8,143	3,507	12,552	1,668		27,710	
2022	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		6,016	4,013	205	1,161		11,395	
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	77						77	
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	432						432	
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	600						600	
2022 Total			1,109	6,016	4,013	205	1,161		12,504	
2023	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		4,998	3,380		1,694		10,072	
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	499						499	
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	(122)						(122)	
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	1,740						1,740	
2023 Total			2,116	4,998	3,380		1,694		12,188	
Grand Total			15,821	43,201	23,764	46,078	7,716	1,692	138,272	

Whilst it is temporarily closed, the building itself requires upkeep and insurance, the ongoing cost of maintaining the building is c. £12,000 per year.

21. STAFFING COSTS

The staffing costs for the educational base in 2019/20 were c. £1.33m for all pupils on the roll; this does not include janitorial and cleaning staff. This was the last year that the base was operational.

Since temporary closure, staff were redeployed to local cluster schools across Scottish Borders under the umbrella of the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service.

22. Pre-Consultation Informal Engagement Review and Survey

1. **The Pre-Consultation informal consultation engagement review** opened on Wednesday 8th May and Closed on Friday 28th June 2024 and was extended until 1st July 2024. This informal consultation was approved by the Education Sub Committee, and therefore a Proposal Paper, Suitability Survey of the Building, IIA, and survey on the Proposal asking for comments was published and distributed widely. This pre consultation review was undertaken to seek views and opinions from Borders Communities and influence the decision to seek to move to a formal Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to close the Wilton Centre, under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (As Amended).

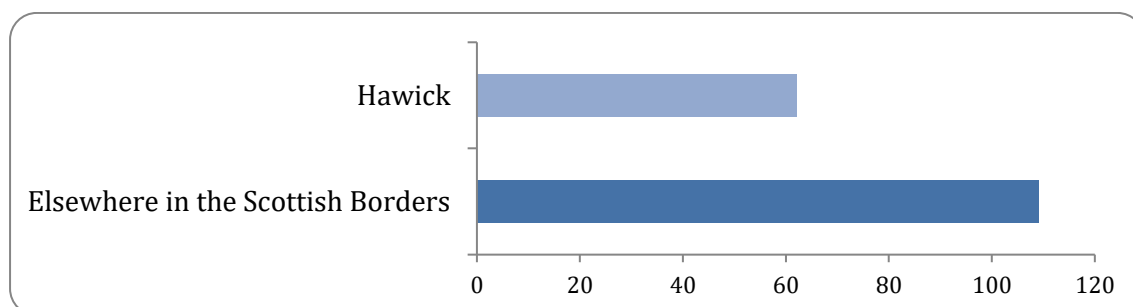
2. **Online Public meeting.** An online public meeting was conducted on Teams as part of the informal consultation– The date and time was published on social media, and reported to the local media. The meeting took place on Wednesday 19th June from 6pm- 7pm on Teams. Senior officers from SBC attended to conduct the meeting and answer questions. There were no attendees.
3. **Survey** There were 171 anonymous responses to the survey linked to the Proposal Report Published online.

The first question asked:-

1. “Where are you based?”

The results were as below:- there were 171 anonymous responses to this question. 63.74 % of responders were based out with Hawick. 36 % were based in Hawick.

Option	Total	Percent
Hawick	62	36.26%
Elsewhere in the Scottish Borders	109	63.74%
Outwith the Scottish Borders	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%



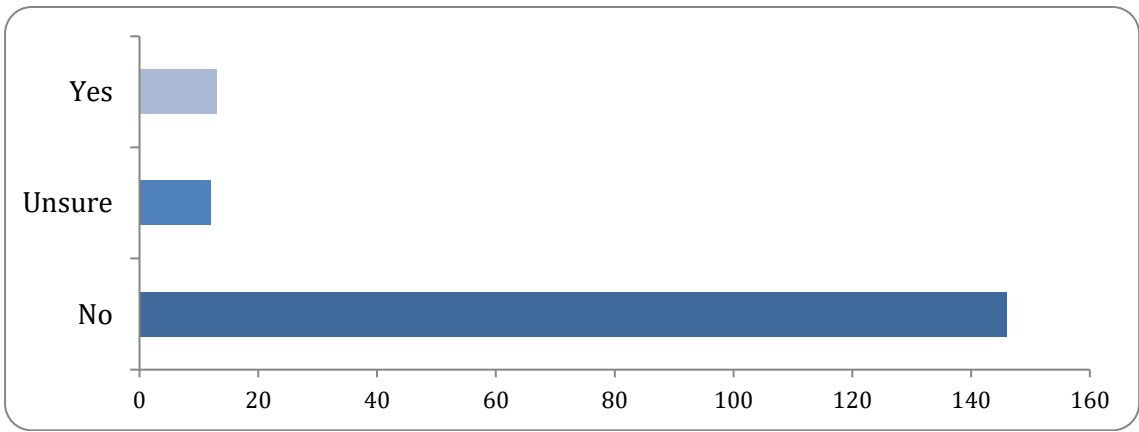
2. The second Question asked:-

“ Do you agree with the proposal to permanently close The Wilton Centre, Hawick “ the Arches”?

There were 171 anonymous responses to this part of the question. 85.38% of responders answered that they did not agree with the Proposal to Permanently close the Wilton Centre. 7.02% of responders stated that they did not know if they agreed or not and were unsure, and 7.60% stated they did agree with the proposal. Of those who did agree no further comments were left.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	13	7.60%
Unsure	12	7.02%
No	146	85.38%

Not Answered	0	0.00%
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Those wishing to respond were invited to state their relationship with The Wilton Centre and asked to provide comment.

Five examples of comments are below:-

One respondent who stated that they did not agree with the Proposal of the closure of the Arches Stated “ A few years back my son was attending the Wilton centre I was told he would be there 1 to 2 years. He did less than 10 months there the staff and the techniques they used to help him deal with his emotions and outbursts was an absolute God send to us as a family”.

One Respondent who stated they did not agree with the Proposal to close stated:-
“This is a vital service. The arches gave children who struggled to regulate their behaviour and build relationships with their peers and teachers. These young people in mainstream education have been struggling which has massive implications not only for these children but the children and staff in mainstream schools. Under the stress of being in a situation which is set up for them to fail, this is unfair”.

One respondent who stated that they did not agree with the Proposal to close stated:-
“I am a teacher in mainstream who witnessed the benefit of the centre in the past. It provided a safe place for learners whose needs could not be properly met at mainstream or enhanced provision. There remains many learners who need that provision, or something like it, to meet their educational and wellbeing needs.

One respondent who stated that they were unsure if they agreed with the proposal to close stated:-
*“This building is clearly not suitable.
 However of schools are to truly Get it Right for Every Child I feel there is a place for some places in a centre where expert staff can support children back to the classroom when they feel safe and have the skills.
 Possibly more like a nurture base.
 Alternatively appropriate nurture bases in schools should be invested in with trained staff”*

One Respondent who stated they did agree with the Proposal stated :-

The building has fallen into disrepair. The cost to maintain and refurbish is not sustainable. The building has a stigma and negative connotations associated with it. Selling off the land and building will bring in revenue for the council and reduce the estate.

Officers wish to advise that all responses to the pre consultation survey will be included as part of the formal Statutory Consultation and will be considered and responded to. This is to ensure as wide engagement on the Statutory Consultation as possible and to ensure every voice and opinion is heard and considered fully.

23. RECOMMENDATIONS- Summary and Conclusions

It is considered that seeking permanent closure of The Wilton Centre (The Arches),36 Princes Street, Hawick for the reasons above and as summarised below is the most reasonable option due to:-

1. The educational benefits of the redesign of SEBN services to children's local cluster schools (now under the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service) following the Covid -19 pandemic and the removal of the travel requirement to the Wilton Centre in Hawick. This has enabled Scottish Borders Council to provide a more inclusive and tailored service within service users' mainstream settings to sit firmly within the overriding principles of inclusion in Education.
2. The unsuitable design and state of the Wilton building for future learning which has precluded the continuation of the building as a viable sustainable part of the school estate for the modern age. Without significant capital investment and which, on balance, cannot be justified given the redesign of the SEBN service to the local cluster schools model under the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, Officers consider that there is little justification to re-open the Wilton Centre.

Options for The Wilton Centre's future to thereafter be considered by the Council's Asset/ Estate management team and reported to elected members for consideration to include any community interest groups expressing interest.

24. RESPONDING TO THE PROPOSAL

24.1 Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposal to close by making written or electronic submissions on the proposal to:

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal – Statutory Consultation
Children and Young People’s Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 0SA

Telephone: 01893 582 4000

E-mail: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Please state that you are looking to make comment on the Statutory Consultation -Proposal for permanent closure of the Wilton Centre (The Arches).

Those wishing to respond are invited to state their relationship with The Wilton Centre “The Arches” for example “Parent/ “Carer of child”/”young person “ or “Teacher”

Those sending a response, whether by letter or electronically should be aware that their response could be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. As such, if they do not wish their response to be publicly available, they should clearly make their response “confidential and for access to be restricted to elected members and council officers of Scottish Borders Council only”

Or use this QR Code to access an online survey on the Proposal.

Or use this link -[Statutory Consultation - Proposal for Permanent closure of The Wilton Centre, Hawick](#)



All responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period being 18th November 2024.

24.2. RELEVANT CONSULTEES- It is the intention of officers to ensure the greatest engagement possible. Schedule 2 to the 2010 Act identifies a core set of relevant consultees who should be consulted in connection with every type of proposal set out in Schedule 1. These are the Parent Council, parents of pupils attending an affected school/s as well as the pupils themselves, parents of pupils likely to attend an affected school, staff at an affected school, any trade union which appears to the education authority to be representative of those staff, and any other users whom the authority considers relevant. The Schedule also specifies other relevant consultees in relation to specific categories of proposal - for instance the Community Council is included where the impact is likely to affect the wider community. Officers are clear that this Consultation will be wide ranging and extensive, and officers intend to try and consult with Pupil Councils of as many Borders Primary and Secondary Schools as possible within the Consultation Period to obtain the views and opinions of young people.

25. INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND

When the Proposal Paper is published on 30th September 2024, a copy is 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. The council will also send a copy of all responses from the Pre consultation for completeness. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Council at the public meeting that will be held on 23rd October 2024, 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.

26. PREPARATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT

The Council will review the Proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, (both within the pre consultation and the Formal Statutory consultation) and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report.

This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, public libraries in the vicinity of the affected school, as well as the affected schools (all Borders Schools upon request), 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. It will also include the responses to the pre consultation survey.

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.

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 a Council meeting.

27. 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 Proposal. The Proposal concerns the closure of The Wilton Centre, Hawick. It should be noted that the closure of The Wilton Centre could be subject to ministerial call-in by Scottish Ministers.

28. 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.

29. SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

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.

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).

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. 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. 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.

30. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - SUITABILITY REVIEW TURNER AND TOWNSEND REPORT 24.1.24

APPENDIX 2- IIA