Plockton & District Community Council Response to Highland Council Proposal for the Permanent Transfer of Primary Education to Plockton High School Campus

Plockton & District Community Council (CC) have been included by Highland Council (HC) as a consultee on the proposal to permanently relocate the provision of primary education from the current Plockton Primary School site to the Plockton High School Campus.

In replying to this request, it should be noted that the CC represent Plockton and District including Duirinish, Drumbuie, Achnandarach and Craig.

Less than fifty percent of the pupils at Plockton Primary School are drawn from our area and travel from other locations around the Lochalsh area. In our response we have attempted to express the views and concerns raised by members of the community we represent.

We would suggest that Highland Council (HC) should consult with the other community councils in the area where pupils have their homes.

In compiling our response to the HC proposal, we have discussed the subject as an agenda item at our public meetings in August and September. Two representatives of the Plockton Primary School Parent Council joined the debate at our September meeting. In addition, members of the CC attended the two HC public meetings on the 24th of August and the 28th of September. We have also received questions and concerns from our day-to-day relationships in the village.

The CC wish to articulate the overwhelming support from the community for the outstanding standard of primary education provided by the teachers and support staff at the Plockton Primary School regardless of location.

In our response we have attempted to collate the views and concerns of members of our community. Where appropriate we have included extracts from the HC proposal in italics. The views expressed are not necessarily the views of individual members of the CC. In this response, the term “we” refers to members of the community. Community concerns and questions are highlighted in **bold.**

Community Views, Questions and Concerns

The community note that within the HC's "Learning Estates Strategy" (LES). In 2023,24 and 2025 Plockton Primary School original building is in Category B for Buildings Condition – Satisfactory, and Category B for Suitability - Satisfactory

Reason for the temporary move.

In 2023 the HC informed parents that the building known as the Canteen had failed a structural survey and had to be closed for safety reasons. As a result, the provision of primary education was temporarily transferred to Plockton High School

Why was the condition of the canteen not identified before it became terminal?

What research and costings have been conducted into the repair or replacement of the building?

If this work has not been conducted, why?

If the unsound building was removed, the remaining location would provide a site with power, water, and waste treatment. Was a temporary building considered?

The statement made at para 2.1 of the HC proposal implies that other buildings had significant defects not just one.

HC para 2.1 "Plockton Primary School was subject to an emergency closure due to concerns regarding the condition of the building. ***Independent structural inspections undertaken in 2023 identified significant defects, including one building where structural stability was considered compromised and continued use was not possible".***

Parents at the time were not informed of any additional defects despite repeated requests from the School Parent Council?

What were the "significant defects" identified, did they impact all the school buildings or just the Canteen?

Were they significant enough on their own to consider the removal of the Primary children to another location on safety grounds?

The statement in para 2.1 implies that more than one building was considered compromised and not suitable for continued use. Can you please clarify?

The statement is at best misleading.

Concerns are further raised where the HC state in para 4.4 of the HC proposal.

4.4 The condition of the building that is available for the Primary School does not provide a safe environment for pupils and staff.

Which building are the HC referring to?

If this statement in the HC proposal is true, why then are the HC using the building for the ELC and housing our children in an unsafe environment?

As far as our children are still in the Primary School Building can we please have access to the "Independent structural Inspection"?

Communication and Consultation

In discussion with parents and members of the community they have outlined their dismay at the total lack of communication or contact made by HC between March 24 and the issue of the proposal to make the move permanent in August 2026.

It is noted that under PAR 3.1 of the HC proposal there has been no consultation with parents or the community.

In PARA 2.3 of the proposal referring to the Education Scotland inspection in January 25.

HC para 2.3 "A recent Education Scotland inspection in January 2025 identified a number of strengths in the school, including positive relationships, a nurturing ethos and effective support for learners, ***confirming that the quality of education has been maintained despite the challenges associated with the condition of the former building".***

Did Education Scotland inspect the provision and quality of education in the former building? If not, how could they comment on "challenges associated with the condition of the former building"?

Suitability of the Original Building

HC Para 4.2 The former Plockton Primary School site comprises a number of buildings of varying age and construction, which historically accommodated both primary and nursery provision. ***The layout of the accommodation, across multiple structures, presents challenges in delivering modern approaches to learning and teaching.***

Considering the Primary School is graded by HC as B, Satisfactory for suitability.

Apart from the layout of multiple buildings What are the challenges and deficiencies that make the original building unsuitable?

Has a GAP analysis been conducted?

Are the existing buildings capable of upgrading?

Has a costing been conducted?

We cannot find any changes in National or Scottish Office Guidance in the last six years affecting primary education delivery. What has changed to make the school buildings unsuitable over recent times?

HC 4.4 The condition of the building that is available for the Primary School does not provide a safe environment for pupils and staff.

Our previous comments apply.

If this statement in the HC proposal is true, why then are the HC using the building for the ELC and housing our children in an unsafe environment?

HC 4.5 Taken together, these factors mean that the former accommodation does not fully meet current standards or expectations for school and early learning environments.

If the HC answers the concerns raised, it will assist in understanding why HC has made this assertion.

At present we feel that this proposal has not provided sufficiently detailed justification or options in support of this.

In support of our concerns, it should be noted that provision of primary education at the original site has provided a very high level of attainment over many years with a school roll double the current number.

The High School Campus

Several parents have stated that some facilities and social aspects for the children are highly unacceptable at the High school. For Primary children village walks rarely take place, the small muddy playground becomes unusable when it rains often keeping the children indoors with no large space to run or play. The pupils have no breakout space, no gym hall or Canteen of their own and have no sense of a village School.

Do the facilities at the high school meet all the current standards for primary provision?

If not, what is required?

Are there any plans to develop and improve the facilities?

Effect on the local Community

There are mixed views within the village of Plockton and the surrounding area.

People feel that it is a great shame that primary education may not continue to be delivered in the old school building. They are however pleased that regardless of the outcome it will still be delivered in the village.

In discussion with the Parent Council there are clearly parents who are satisfied with the new location.

There is great concern that, as the current High School is one of the oldest in Highland Council area that a permanent move of the Primary school to the High school would result in a total move of 3 to 18 olds out of the village if the replacement High school were moved from its current location.

Bearing in mind the Scottish government policy which highlights the potential for rural schools to operate as community hubs “it strengthens community connections across generations. A school in a village allows children to grow up visible and active members of the community, building relationships with neighbours and older generations”. This policy did work very well with the old Primary school in the village.

There are number of residents who have expressed good memories of receiving their primary education when it was provided at the High School Campus between 1964 and 1974.

The overriding view is that the best outcome for the children is what matters.

Summary

The community are disappointed in the level and involvement of parents and communities associated with the future provision of primary education at Plockton.

The HC state in Appendix 2 of the proposal under the “Public meeting” section, that notes will be taken of the public meetings and the note will be published on the Council website. To date we have been unable to get copies. This is despite verbal request from attendees at both HC public meetings.

There is a strong feeling that the HC have not provided enough information and access to relevant reports.

There has been no obvious effort by the HC to source and cost potential alternatives.

The CC, having taken views from our community would strongly urge the HC to respond to the questions and concerns raised and allow suitable time for consideration before making a final decision.

Thank you for your attention.

David McGhie

Chairman Plockton and District Community Council