

ANGUS COUNCIL

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2018
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**CLOSURE OF LETHNOT PRIMARY SCHOOL AND AMENDMENT OF THE CATCHMENT AREA
OF EDZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval to close Lethnot Primary School, and amend the catchment of Edzell Primary School to take in the current catchment of Lethnot Primary School.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) approve the closure of Lethnot Primary School, Bridge End, Glen Lethnot, Brechin DD9 7UQ; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Lethnot Primary School;
- (ii) refer this decision to Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

It is recommended that Angus Council:

- (i) notes the consideration of the Children and Learning Committee on 18 September 2018;
- (ii) approve the closure of Lethnot Primary School, Bridge End, Glen Lethnot, Brechin DD9 7UQ; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Lethnot Primary School.
- (iii) refer this decision to Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

PEOPLE

- 4. The best start in life for children
- 5. More opportunities for people to achieve success
- 6. Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well-being

PLACE

- 7. Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities
- 8. A reduced carbon footprint

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In June 2017 Angus Council set out the vision to develop and maintain a learning estate that provides the best quality learning environments for all of our children and young people, and makes the best use of the resources available, reference is made to Paragraph 11 of the minute of meeting of the Children and Learning Committee of 13 June 2017. This is underpinned by our statement of ambition and our guiding principles of:
- equity of access, nurture and inclusion - all children and young people have opportunities to experience different types of learning and teaching in an environment that feels safe and welcoming
 - sustainability and value for money - we have a learning estate that we can afford and which makes the most effective use of natural resources
 - community - where possible, and as relevant, schools are an integral part of the community they serve. This will depend upon the needs and circumstances of the individual community and the school
 - well-maintained, flexible spaces - we will make the best of the buildings we have, including natural light, green spaces, flexible and responsive
 - transparency and fairness in decision-making - our decisions will be made taking a long-term strategic view and supported by good quality information.
- 3.2 The Children and Learning Committee and Angus Council approved the approach taken to ranking and prioritising in accordance with the School Investment Strategy; the consultation programme for 2018; and requested that consultation proposals for Lethnot, Tarfside, Edzell and Stracathro Primary Schools were presented for consideration on 20 February 2018. Reference is made to paragraph 4 of the minute of the meeting of the Children and Learning Committee on 30 January 2018 and paragraph 3 of the minute of the special meeting of Angus Council on 30 January 2018.
- 3.3 Reference is also made to paragraph 6 of the minute of the Children and Learning Committee on 20 February 2018 which approved the consultation proposal for the closure of Lethnot Primary School and adjustment to catchment area for Edzell Primary School.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Lethnot Primary School was mothballed in 2016. Mothballing, according to Scottish Government guidance, refers to a temporary decision to close a school where the roll has fallen to zero. Mothballing, rather than closing a school, gives the opportunity for it to reopen should circumstances change. The statutory guidance that accompanies the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 suggests that the maximum length of mothballing is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote. The condition of the school building and cost of maintaining the mothballed provision will also be relevant.
- 4.2 In January 2017 an information schedule was submitted to Children and Learning Committee providing an update on demand for places at Lethnot Primary School. The school roll had naturally fallen to zero by the end of school session 2015/16. At the time of mothballing there were no other younger children living in the school catchment area. There were no current enrolments or placing requests for children to attend Lethnot School from session 2016/17. Since Lethnot was mothballed, one family has moved into the catchment area and enrolled their child at Edzell Primary School. There have been no placing requests for Lethnot Primary School.
- 4.3 The consultation period closed on 11 May 2018. Education Scotland undertook a review of the consultation to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Angus Council's proposal to close Lethnot Primary School and to amend the Edzell Primary School catchment area. Their report forms part of the [Lethnot Primary School Consultation](#) report which is included at **Appendix 1**.

4.4 The following is an extract from the Education Scotland Report

“Angus Council’s proposal to close Lethnot Primary School and to amend the Edzell Primary School catchment area has clear educational benefits. Lethnot children will have access to greater learning opportunities, wider experiences and increased socialisation through being part of a larger school at Edzell. Lethnot Primary School has not been in use since 2016. There are currently no children from the Lethnot catchment area attending Edzell Primary School or Stracathro Primary School. The current number of children within the catchment who are under three years of age is insufficient to make the school viable. The proposal will assist the council to deliver ‘Best Value’ through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. In taking forward the proposal, the council should clarify the actual savings in staff costs and consider how the vacant school might be used to the benefit of the local Lethnot community.”

4.5 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Lethnot Primary School Consultation report was issued on 1 August 2018 and comments were invited from consultees by 22 August 2018.

4.6 No comments or representations were received.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 Our proposal, which has been subject to the statutory consultation process, is to close Lethnot Primary School, Bridge End, Glen Lethnot, Brechin DD9 7UQ; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Lethnot Primary School.

5.2 If this proposal is approved, the council will enter into discussions with the Gannochy Estate and the local community regarding future use of the school building.

5.3 Angus Council must refer the decision to close the school to the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of making the decision, and at the same time publish the fact that the decision has been taken and referred to the Scottish Ministers and advising interested parties of the opportunity to make representations to the Scottish Ministers during the three week period from the date that the decision is taken. The Scottish Ministers can call in the decision to close the school within a period of 8 weeks from the date of the decision. The proposal cannot be implemented in full or in part until the call in period has expired or the Scottish Ministers have confirmed that they do not intend to call in the proposal. If the proposal is called in by Ministers, consent must be granted by a School Closure Review Panel.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As the school has been mothballed since 2016, the last time the budget was prepared was in 2015/16. This budget remains within the overall schools and learning budget and is made up as follows: -

There follows a table with two columns and 9 rows. First row is header.

Budget Heading	£
Staff Costs	94,603
Property Costs	14,189
Supplies & Services	5,590
Transport Costs	13,212
Central Support Services Costs	2,771
Gross Budget	130,665
Less Income	(592)
Net Budget	130,073

6.2 The annual recurring revenue savings are estimated to be £130,073.

6.3 The government grant provision to Angus Council is determined by a number of Grant Aided Expenditure assessments and two of these are relevant to school closures:-

- Primary School Teaching assessment: includes a secondary indicator based upon the number of pupils in small schools on an average of the last 2 census. Lethnot is a small school for the purposes of this secondary indicator. As the school has had zero pupils for some time the grant benefit has already made its way out of the assessment mechanism and there will be no grant impact from closure.
- School Security assessment: is based upon the total number of establishments in Angus. The closure of Lethnot will result in a loss of government grant for 2019/20 of £2,000.

6.4 Note that any grant reduction arising from the school closure will be addressed through the council's overall 2019/20 budget setting arrangements and not have any specific impact onto the Schools and Learning budget.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The consultation for the proposed closure of Lethnot Primary School was carried out in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, including the special provisions which apply to rural schools. The formal consultation initially ran from 26 February 2018 until 20 April 2018. Due to severe weather conditions in March the consultation period was extended to 27 April 2018. On 13 April 2018 an omission from the consultation document was identified. The omission related to narrative explaining our financial information. As a result the consultation period was further extended until 11 May 2018.

7.2 During the consultation period responses in relation to the proposal to close Lethnot Primary School were received as follows:

- 2 parents of a child who would attend the school in the next 5 years
- 1 member of the community
- 1 other response was received
- 2 on-line surveys were completed

7.3 Staff from Edzell Primary School who met with HM Inspectors, whilst sad about the potential loss to the Lethnot community as a whole, were positive about the prospect of formalising the current arrangement whereby Lethnot children attend Edzell Primary School. They were able to clearly articulate the benefits of Lethnot children attending Edzell Primary School. Benefits included: improved interaction, better socialisation, more effective transition and increased opportunities to participate in peer group activities at the appropriate level. Staff saw no negative impact on Edzell Primary School arising from the proposal.

7.4 Of the on-line surveys submitted, one supported the closure and one was against the proposal. Details of all responses are included in the [Lethnot Primary School Consultation](#) report which is included **at Appendix 1**.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- Committee Report No.189/17, School Investment Strategy
- Committee Report No. 36/18, School Investment strategy 2017 – 2047
- Committee Report No. 68/18, Angus Schools for the Future: Consultation Proposals for Rural Schools in Brechin Cluster

REPORT AUTHOR: Elaine Hughes
EMAIL DETAILS: PEOPLE@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 [Lethnot Primary School Consultation](#) report (please follow this link for Appendix 1)