

Torridon Primary School- important update

Following the Highland Council's recent public consultation regarding Torridon Primary School, we wanted to let you know about the work the development plan action group is doing regarding the future of the school and ask for your help in making it a success.

The school closure consultation period has now ended and we expect a decision in February 2024. Regrettably, it seems likely that the school will be closed and sold.

From the Highland Council school consultation and our own community survey, we know that the future of the school is considered a priority by many people in our community. Through this process we have also gathered many suggestions for future uses of the building ranging from arts workshops and educational facilities, to accommodation, a bakery and a craft brewery/distillery. People seem very clear that whatever the building is used for it shouldn't compete with existing facilities such as the Community Centre and should not be sold off by Highland Council to become a holiday let. We recognise that there are many people in our community who feel a close connection to the school, given that many are former pupils, and are sad to see the building empty and deteriorating.

The Highland Council is prepared to consider an application to transfer the school building and play park to the community but they will require us to have a sustainable business plan for their future use, including details of how we intend to run and maintain them. We are aiming to have this business plan in place by the time a decision is made on the school's future, ie by February 2024. We therefore have a very short window and limited resources to do a lot of work to consider the feasibility of all the ideas and come up with a proposal. Naturally if Highland Council decide to reopen the school then our work on this will cease and resources be redirected to other projects.

The action plan group will apply for funding to appoint a consultant or development officer to consider the suggestions and identify 1 or 2 that can be taken forward in more detail. These proposals will be presented to a community meeting for discussion and a business plan will be prepared for the agreed option. The consultant(s) will need to work closely with members of the action group and other interested members of the community to ensure we come up with the best proposal possible.

We are very excited and believe there is a real possibility to turn the school into a valuable facility at the heart of our community. To do this, we need the engagement and commitment of as many people as possible.

This is your chance to make suggestions and your chance to be involved. If you can contribute in any way, (no matter how small it might seem), please email this form to chair@lochtorridoncentre.co.uk or leave the form (in a sealed envelope if you like) in one of the suggestion boxes we have placed at Torrison Community Centre and Torrison Stores. A paper copy of this notice will be delivered to everyone. If you have any queries or need another copy please message Mat 07905 314465 or Sally 07818 039886. It is important to remember that this is not a vote, just the chance to make suggestions. It is likely that the next stage would be a public meeting to discuss the suggestions prior to a consultant being engaged.

CLOSING DATE FOR REPONSES AND SUGGESTIONS IS 5PM SATURDAY 17TH JUNE

Thinking about the building. What do you think the school building should be used for if closure is confirmed?

You can make more than one suggestion. Or suggest different uses for different parts of the building (School / Schoolhouse).

If you can, please tell us more about your suggestion, including how it would be self sustaining.

Would you be interested in getting more involved in the school project, helping to draw up/review the business plans or in some other way. Please tell us how you think you can help. Don't be shy.

Thinking about (what is left of) the playpark, please make suggestions for alternative use of this space

If you have a great idea for the playpark land, which is perhaps linked to your idea for the school, but you think it is important for a playpark to be retained, then tell us. Perhaps we can find an alternative location for a playpark. If you think the space should simply be reinstated as a playpark please say so but remember Highland Council are highly unlikely to do this, so it would be a project for the community, with funding needing to be found for reinstatement, running and maintenance.

Again, If you can, please tell us more about your suggestion, including how it would be self sustaining.

If we want to ask you more about your suggestions can we contact you? Please provide your name and contact details (this is optional, but note it will not be published or shared)

Is there anything else you would like to say?