

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

DECEMBER 2021

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

CLOSURE OF LONGHAVEN SCHOOL

**Consultation open between
07 December 2021 and 24 February 2022**

**If you have difficulty reading this document please contact
the Learning Estates Team on 01771 676600 or
LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk**

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL IS PROPOSING, SUBJECT TO THE OUTCOME OF THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION PROCESS:

- **To discontinue education at Longhaven School, which is currently mothballed and re-assigning its catchment area to either Boddam School and/or Port Erroll School.**
- **The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in Longhaven**
- **The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.**

This document has been issued by Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. The Act requires that changes to the school estate, including the proposed closure of a school, are subject to rigorous statutory consultation.

The schools affected by this proposal are:

Longhaven School
Boddam School
Port Erroll School

DISTRIBUTION

A copy of this document is available on the Aberdeenshire Council website: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/> or by emailing learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

This document will be provided to:

- Parent Councils of Boddam School and Port Erroll School
- Parents of the pupils at Boddam School and Port Erroll School
- Pupils at Boddam School and Port Erroll School
- Parents of pre-school age children living within the Longhaven School catchment area
- Staff at Boddam School and Port Erroll School
- Trade union representatives of Boddam School and Port Erroll School staff
- Cruden Community Council
- Boddam Community Council
- Local Early Years Partner Providers
- Longhaven School catchment residents
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Boddam School and Port Erroll School
- Learning Estates Team (call 01771 676600 or email LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to arrange for a paper copy to be posted)

1. Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (Section 1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (Section 3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Under the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification Longhaven School is an "accessible rural" (settlement with a population of less than 3,000 people and within a 30-minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 people or more). The Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the heightened consideration to be given to rural school closures.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all pupils within its schools.
- 2.2 This proposal document is focussed upon Longhaven School, located within the Buchan area of Aberdeenshire.
- 2.3 This proposal document contains several maps. Pdf copies of all maps will be available on the Aberdeenshire Council website at the address given on page 2 of this document. Printed copies of the maps will also be available on request at Boddam School and Port Erroll School.
- 2.4 The consultation will run from Tuesday 7 December 2021 until Thursday 24 February 2022. A public meeting will be held to discuss the proposal at 6.30pm on Monday 24 January 2022 at Longhaven Community Hall, Longhaven, AB42 0NU. There will also be an opportunity to join an online meeting which will be held at 11am on Tuesday 25 January 2022. The meeting will be held using Microsoft Teams and it can be accessed via the link <https://tinyurl.com/Longhaven-PublicMeeting>. The Microsoft Teams app can be downloaded to a mobile device ahead of the meeting. The web version is recommended for a laptop/desktop.
- 2.5 The consultation process for this proposal is set out in detail in Section 17.

3. Reason for Proposal

- 3.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - No children have attended Longhaven School since April 2018, and the school was officially mothballed in October 2018;
 - Despite engagement with the wider community, no parents have chosen to enrol their children at Longhaven School for the 2019/20 sessions and following years;
 - Five children living in the Longhaven catchment could potentially start Primary 1

in August 2022 or August 2023, once they reach school age. A school roll of this size provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence;

- A school roll of fewer than five pupils provides a challenge to social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age;
- The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below;
- All alternative uses of the school building require the official closure of the school in the first instance.

3.2 The current proposal follows informal engagement between Aberdeenshire Council officers, local elected members, the community council and community members. Informal engagement with the community was as follows:

- Community engagement session at Longhaven Community Hall (9 October 2019)
- Online survey (12 April - 14 May 2021)
- Meeting with Cruden Community Council (19 October 2021)

3.3 Letters were sent to every property within the catchment area to inform residents of the engagement session on 9 October 2019, the online survey available in April/May 2021 and alternative contact details for the Learning Estates Team.

3.4 Despite a small uptake in numbers, these sessions proved very useful and a number of suggestions were made for uses of the school building. These are detailed in the Options Appraisal document at Appendix B.

4. Examination of Alternatives

4.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure. The alternatives to closure would be:

- to re-open Longhaven School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or
- to continue with the current mothballing arrangement.

4.2 During the community engagement sessions, officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure. These were assessed during the options appraisal process. The suggestions included:

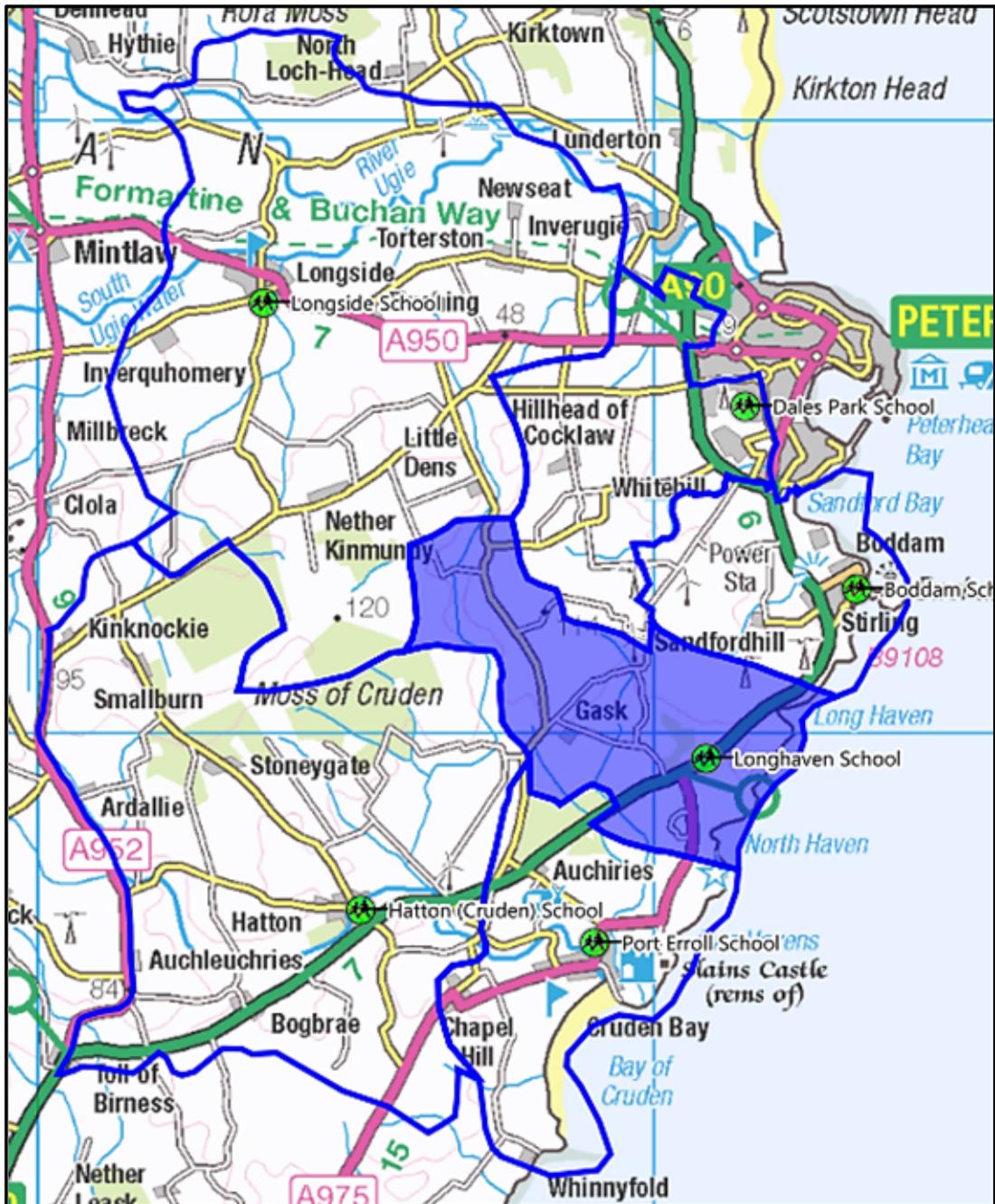
- extra-curricular activities for children, such as forest school, gymnastics, football, dance, cycling, guides or brownies,
- out of school or early years provision,
- further education facilities,
- facilities for children with additional support needs,
- activities for adults, like adult classes, gym,
- business centre,
- residential property.

- 4.3 As none of them involve the building operating as a primary school for local pupils, they would not be a viable alternative to closure.
- 4.4 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required to the most appropriate way to re-zone the school catchment area. Further discussion of this is included within the options in Section 7 of this report.
- 4.5 The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and the Options Appraisal document.

5. Longhaven School

- 5.1 In April 2018, due to recruitment challenges, the Director of Education made the decision to temporarily reaccommodate the five remaining pupils at other schools, whilst still pursuing recruitment of staff. Officers supported the families in choosing schools.
- 5.2 On 12 October 2018 the Education Service took a decision to temporarily mothball the school and this status has been extended since then.
- 5.3 Current Details
 - 5.3.1 Peterhead Cluster consists of 10 primary schools, Boddam, Buchanhaven, Burnhaven, Clerkhill, Dales Park, Longhaven, Meethill, Peterhead Central, Port Erroll and St Fergus Schools. Each of these schools are within the catchment area for Peterhead Academy.
 - 5.3.2 Longhaven School was built in mid-1920's. The school is non-denominational and serves the village of Longhaven and the surrounding rural area. It is located in Longhaven, 5.2 miles from the town centre of Peterhead on the A90.
 - 5.3.3 The catchment area for the school stretches from Bullers O' Buchan on the east to Meikle Den on the west and from south of Longhaven House to north of Hillhead of Coldwells.
 - 5.3.4 The Scottish Government guidelines classifies Longhaven School as "accessible rural".
 - 5.3.5 The school borders with Port Erroll, Hatton (Cruden), Longside, Dales Park and Boddam Schools. Hatton (Cruden) School is located within the Ellon Cluster and Longside School is within the Mintlaw Cluster. Map 1 below shows the catchment area and neighbouring schools.

Map 1 – Catchment area for Longhaven School and surrounding schools



- 5.3.6 The school has a capacity of 50 pupils. It is a two-storey building with two classrooms, dining room, resources room, staff room and office located on the ground floor and other management offices on the first floor. Although the school has access to the public hall for PE and to the playing field adjacent to the school, neither of these facilities are within the school building. The school has a servery which served meals prepared at Meethill School and delivered to Longhaven School on a daily basis. The outside areas are a concrete playground around the school with a grassed area and some trees to the rear of the building.
- 5.3.7 Longhaven School delivered primary education from P1-P7. There is no nursery on site and local children often attended nursery at other nearby schools. The

school did not operate a breakfast club or after school club out with school hours.

5.3.8 When the school was last in operation, it was managed with a dual head teacher arrangement with Burnhaven School. If the school was to re-open with one class, the staffing entitlements (FTE) could be as follows:

- Head Teacher – 1.00
- Teacher (Head Teacher relief) – 0.53
- Administrator – 0.66
- Admin Support Assistant – 0.29
- Pupil Support Assistant – 1.00
- Senior Catering Assistant – 0.34
- Cleaner – 0.34

This would be dependent upon actual school roll and in line with the Aberdeenshire Teacher Staffing Standard.

5.3.9 In addition, ASN teaching and pupil support staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the Peterhead Cluster.

5.3.10 Every local authority in Scotland is required to grade their schools for condition and suitability. The gradings range from A to D for each category with the following values:

- A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently (85-100%)
- B: Satisfactory – Performing adequately but with minor problems (60-85%)
- C: Poor – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (40- 60%)
- D: Bad – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (0-40%)

Longhaven School is rated as B (68.92%) for educational suitability and B for building condition. The school had previously been graded as C for suitability, but the criteria have been updated nationally and all schools in Aberdeenshire were reassessed in Spring 2019.

5.3.11 There is no current Education Scotland Inspection report available for Longhaven School.

6. Details of Proposal

6.1 The council proposes that Longhaven School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be with immediate effect from the completion of the consultation process. The council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils should continue their education at the schools they are currently attending. If the proposals are implemented any siblings of these current pupils would be able to join their brother/sister(s) at the same school.

6.2 The school catchment area would be reassigned to one of the neighbouring primary schools. Discussion of these options is set out in Section 7.

Option 1 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Boddam School

Option 2 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Port Erroll School

Option 3 - Close Longhaven School and create a dual zone between Boddam School and Port Erroll School

Discounted options and alternatives to closure

Option 4 - Close Longhaven School and split catchment between Boddam School and Port Erroll School

Option 5 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Dales Park School

Option 6 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Hatton (Cruden) School

Option 7 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Longside School

Option 8 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Burnhaven School

Alternative 1 – Re-open Longhaven School

Alternative 2 - Continuation of mothballing Longhaven School

Details of the Council’s consideration of the alternatives is set out in Section 8 and the discounted options in Section 9.

6.3 Alternative uses for the building will be further explored with the community during the consultation period and beyond. Several potential uses have been suggested by the community and officers will support individuals or groups who wish to take them forward.

6.4 It is important that this proposal does not have a negative impact upon any children currently attending schools affected by this proposal and that they have continuity in their education.

6.5 The options identified above would have some impact upon the school rolls of Boddam and Port Erroll. Table 1 below details the current roll and capacity of schools affected by his proposal and Aberdeenshire Council 2020 based School Roll Forecasts over the next 4 years. The published forecasts can be viewed at the below link:

<https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/admissions/school-roll-forecasts/>

Table 1 – School Roll Forecast

School	Suitability Rating	Condition Rating	Capacity	Current Roll (Sept 21)	2020 SRF 2022/ 2023	2020 SRF 2023/ 2024	2020 SRF 2024/ 2025	2020 SRF 2025/ 2026
Longhaven School	B	B	50	0	0	0	0	0
Boddam School	B	B	217	110	109	117	115	116
Port Erroll School	A	A	242	106	138	149	153	152

7. Options Assessment

7.1 Officers have applied an approved methodology to assess the identified options. The SWOT analysis used is attached as Appendix A1.

7.2 Together with each school's baseline score and outcome of the options appraisal matrix, other aspects taken into account for the overall recommendations are:

- Early Years
- Transport
- Views of parents and public expressed during engagement session
- Outcome of a survey representing the views of the Longhaven School parents and the Longhaven catchment residents

7.3 Table 2 below shows all the options including the final ranking. Option 2, close Longhaven School and merge with Port Erroll School has the highest ranking.

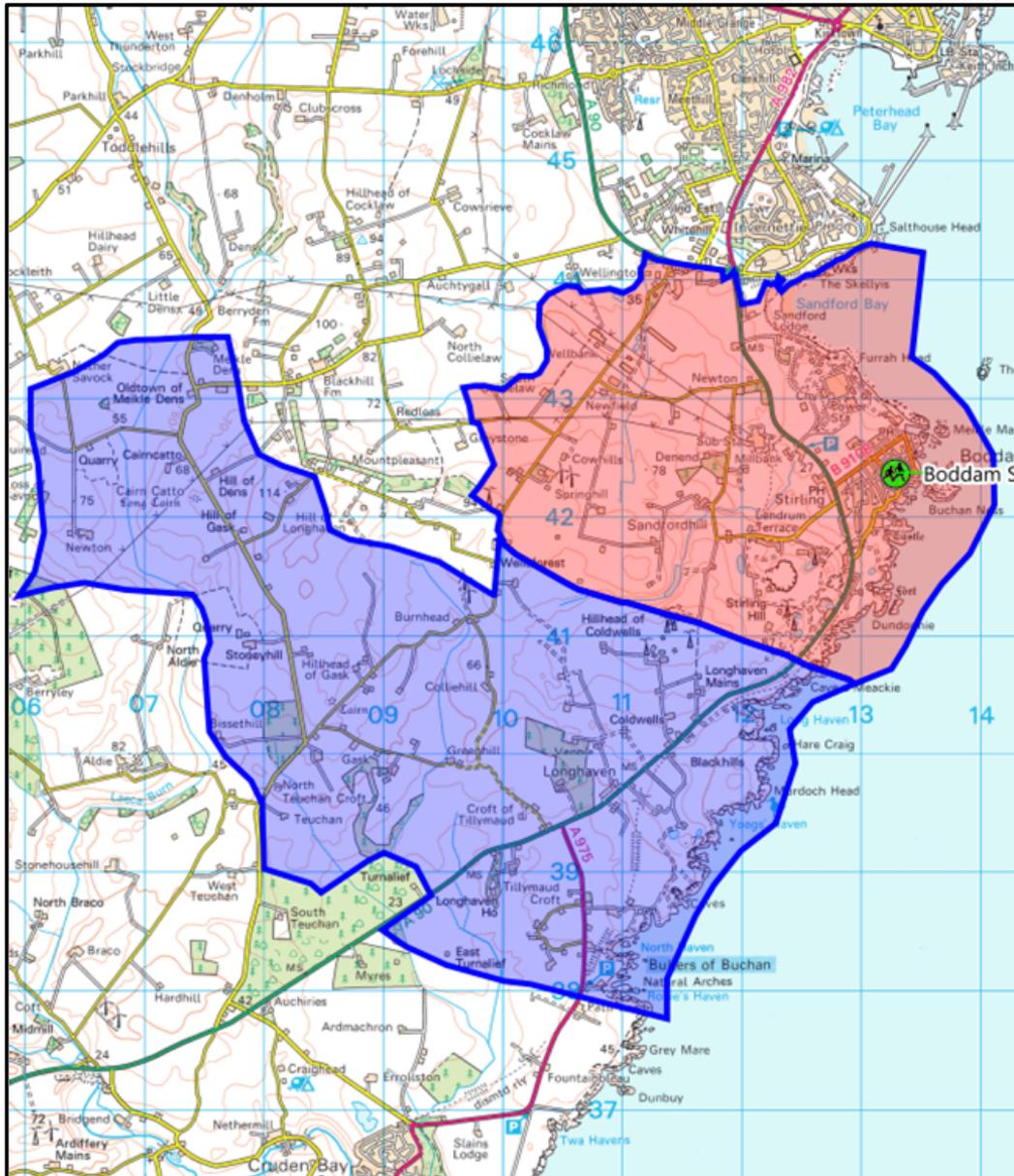
Table 2 – Outcome of options appraisal

Options	Final ranking
Option 1 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Boddam School	3
Option 2 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Port Erroll School	1
Option 3 - Close Longhaven School and create a dual zone between Boddam School and Port Erroll School	2

7.4 Option 1 – Close Longhaven School and merge with Boddam School

7.4.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown below in Map 2.

Map 2 – Longhaven School merged with Boddam School



- 7.4.2 Boddam School was built in mid-1900's and is located in the village of Boddam. It is situated three miles south of Peterhead and 2.3 miles north of Longhaven School. During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Longhaven catchment area. The school is non-denominational and is classed as "accessible rural" according to Scottish Government classification.
- 7.4.3 The school offers both primary education from P1-P7 and Early Years education. The accommodation consists of seven classrooms for school age children and one for nursery, school hall used for PE and school lunches, multiple general-purpose rooms, library, Head Teacher office, school office and staff room. The school has a servery which is designed to provide meals prepared at nearby Meethill School and delivered to the school on a daily basis. The outside areas are a concrete area with a small tarmac playground.

- 7.4.4 Before Covid pandemic, Boddam School had a morning club run by the school and afterschool club run by Aberdeenshire Council. Due to Covid restrictions, there are currently no breakfast or afterschool clubs at the school. The clubs are to resume in the future.
- 7.4.5 The school has a capacity of 217 pupils and a current roll of 110 P1-P7 pupils (September 2021). These are distributed across six classes. The school roll forecast to 2025 suggests pupil numbers will be steady with a small increase in 2023 to 117 pupils. This represents a 54% use of capacity.
- 7.4.6 The class structure for the 2021/22 session is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Boddam School Class Structure

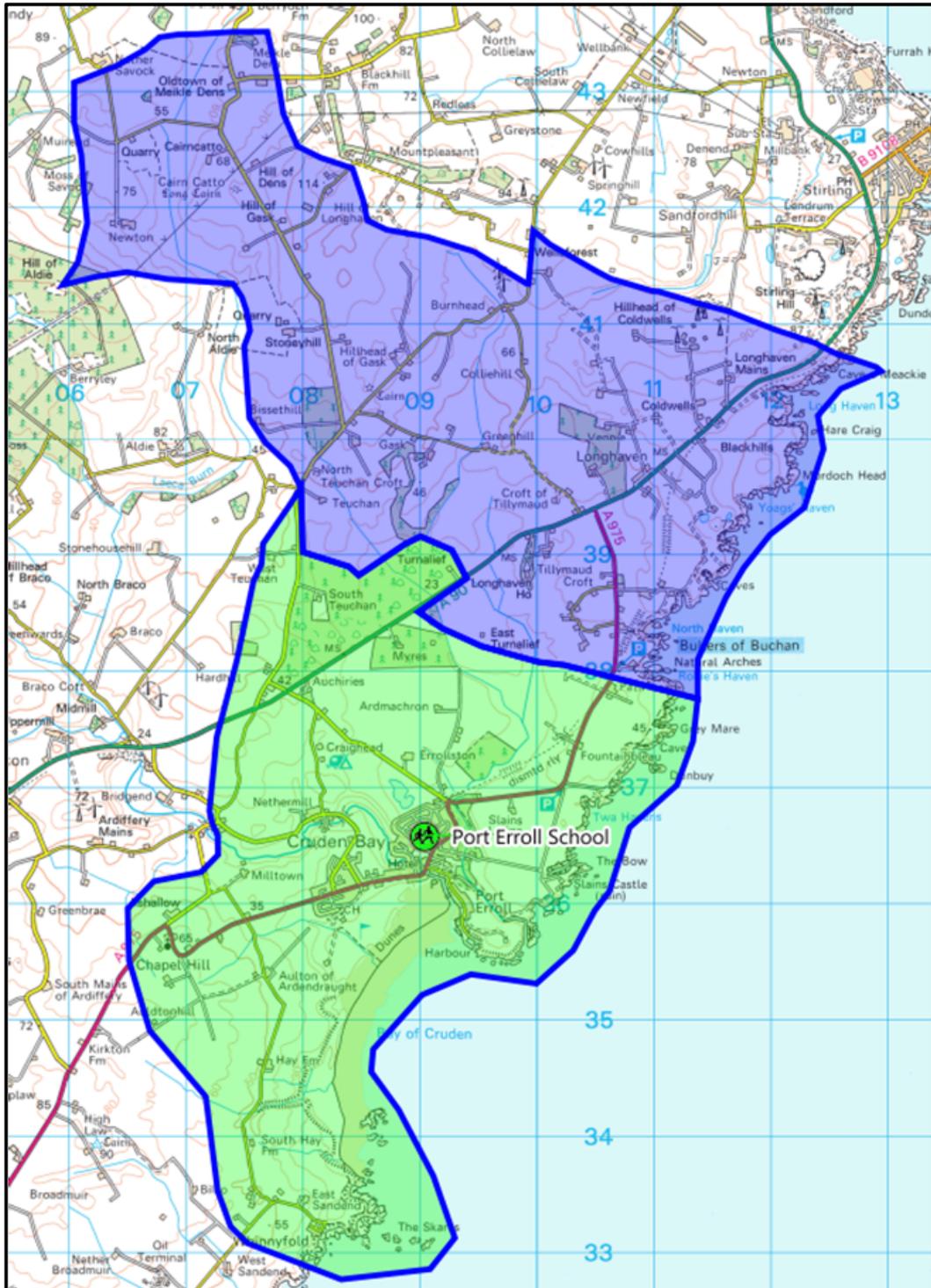
Stage	Class structure
P1	18
P2/3	17
P3/4	17
P4/5	17
P5/6	18
P7	23

- 7.4.7 Boddam School Nursery has a capacity of 20 and there are currently 16 children attending the setting, a small number of whom are zoned for Longhaven School. Children are entitled to 1140 hours across the year. The setting is open term-time from 9am to 3pm daily.
- 7.4.8 In recent years, on average there have been two placing requests for pupils wishing to attend Boddam School, and four placing requests from pupils residing within the Boddam School catchment area to attend an out of zone school.
- 7.4.9 Boddam School is currently assessed as B (74.27%) for Suitability (satisfactory – performing well but with minor problems) and B for Condition (satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).
- 7.4.10 There are pupils from the Longhaven catchment area attending Boddam School and are transported to the school via one school transport route. With the permanent closure of Longhaven School this number could increase in the future, although with a small number of children living in the area the number of transport contracts would not be expected to rise significantly.
- 7.4.11 As all pupils from the Longhaven catchment area currently attend either Boddam School, Port Erroll School or Longside School, no adverse effects for Boddam School are expected to arise with the permanent closure of Longhaven School.

7.5 **Option 2 – Close Longhaven School and merge with Port Erroll School**

- 7.5.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown in Map 3 below.

Map 3 – Longhaven School merged with Port Erroll School



- 7.5.2 Port Erroll School was built in 2003 and is non-denominational. The school is situated eight miles south of Peterhead in Cruden Bay and three miles south of Longhaven School. It is considered an “accessible rural” school according to Scottish Government classification. During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Longhaven catchment area.
- 7.5.3 The school offers both primary education from P1-P7 and Early Years education. The school has four open plan teaching areas which are each split

into two classrooms. The school also has a PE hall used for PE and school lunches, general purpose rooms, library, ICT suite, production kitchen where meals are prepared on a daily basis, Head Teacher office, staffroom, meeting room and medical room. The outside areas consist of a very good-sized concrete playground, grassed playing fields with picnic benches, bike storage, school garden, sensory garden and carpark.

7.5.4 Port Erroll School offers morning and afterschool clubs outwith school hours run by Aberdeenshire Council.

7.5.5 The school has a capacity of 242 pupils and a current roll of 106 P1-P7 pupils (September 2021). These are distributed across five classes. The school roll forecast to 2025 predicts a significant increase to 152 pupils. This is currently a 44% use of capacity, rising to 63% in 2025.

7.5.6 The class structure for the 2021/22 session is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Port Erroll School Class Structure

Stage	Class structure
P1/2	19
P2/3	22
P4/5	23
P5/6	20
P6/7	22

7.5.7 Port Erroll School Nursery has a capacity of 25 and there are currently 26 children attending the setting, a small number of whom are zoned for Longhaven School. Children are entitled to 1140 hours across the year. The setting is open all year round from 8am to 6pm daily.

7.5.8 In recent years, on average there have been five placing requests for pupils wishing to attend Port Erroll School, and one placing request from pupils residing within the Port Erroll School catchment area to attend an out of zone school.

7.5.9 Port Erroll School is currently assessed as A (99.294%) for Suitability and A for Condition (good – performing well and operating efficiently).

7.5.10 There are pupils from the Longhaven catchment area attending Port Erroll School and are transported to the school via one school transport route. With the permanent closure of Longhaven School this number could increase in the future, although with a small number of children living in the area the number of transport contracts would not be expected to rise significantly.

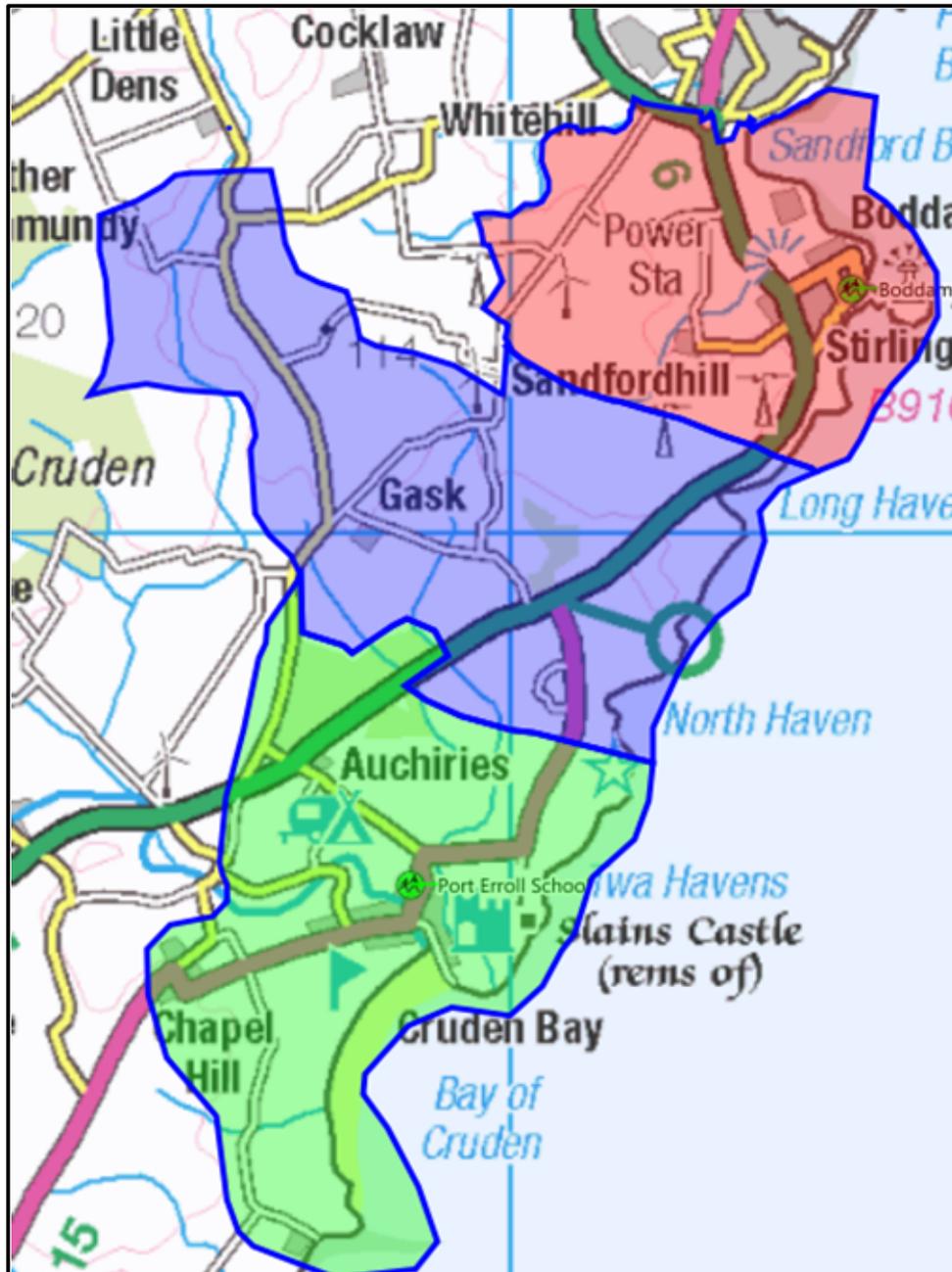
7.5.11 As all pupils from the Longhaven catchment area currently attend either Boddam School, Port Erroll School or Longside School, no adverse effects for Port Erroll School are expected to arise with the permanent closure of Longhaven School.

7.6 **Option 3 – Close Longhaven School and create a dual zone between Boddam School and Port Erroll School**

7.6.1 Consideration must be given to creating a dual zone between Boddam School and Port Erroll School.

7.6.2 The catchment area for these schools is shown in Map 4 below.

Map 4 – Longhaven School, Boddam School and Port Erroll School catchment areas



7.6.3 This option would allow any families living in the current Longhaven School catchment area to choose either Boddam School or Port Erroll School.

7.6.4 Pupils would be entitled to school transport if they attend either of these schools, which gives greater flexibility for families. However, this could result in an increase in transport costs and CO₂ emissions over time, as neighbouring

families could choose to attend different schools and both would be entitled to transport.

8. Alternatives to the Proposal

8.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure.

8.2 During the community engagement session officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure. The online survey gave participants the opportunity to present alternatives to the closure with a deadline of 14 May 2021.

8.3 The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out below.

8.4 Re-Opening of Longhaven School with Current Catchment Area

8.4.1 As of 15 September 2021 (school census date) there were 12 pupils of P1-P7 age living within the catchment area of the school. These children all attend other schools in the Peterhead Cluster and Mintlaw Cluster, some through placement when Longhaven School was mothballed, and others through parental choice. The majority attend Boddam School and Port Erroll School.

8.4.2 A housing site for 30 units within the Longhaven catchment area has been allocated in the Local Development Plan since 2012. The site remains constrained due to marketability and physical constraints and there is no public waste-water treatment available. The site is currently included in the draft Local Development Plan for 2022. As the site has been planned for a number of years without any development taking place, there is no guarantee that the site would be delivered in a timeframe that could generate pupils to reinstate the school.

8.4.3 During the period that the school was operational, the school roll fluctuated slightly due to parents submitting placing requests both in and out of the school.

8.4.4 As previously stated in Section 3, the school has not been operational since April 2018. Aberdeenshire Council sought enrolments for the school from both in zone and out of zone pupils for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 sessions. No applications were received. Two families indicated a potential interest in enrolling their children at the school in future years; however, they were concerned about the sustainability of the school with such a small school roll. It therefore appears unlikely at present that the school would reach a roll that would support learning and teaching.

8.4.5 Aberdeenshire Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching and make the re-opening of Longhaven School unviable.

8.5 Re-Opening of Longhaven School with Expanded Catchment Area

8.5.1 Consideration has also been given to extending the Longhaven catchment area. As shown above in Map 1 within Section 5, the school borders with Port Erroll, Hatton (Cruden), Longside, Dales Park, and Boddam Schools. Hatton (Cruden) School is within the Ellon Cluster and Longside School within the Mintlaw

Cluster.

- 8.5.2 When rezoning existing catchment areas, Aberdeenshire Council does not require pupils to move schools. The impact of any change in boundary line is likely to have minimal impact upon the number of pupils available to attend Longhaven School.
- 8.5.3 Extending the catchment area to the south-west and/or north-west to incorporate part of the Hatton (Cruden) and/or Longside zones would require pupils to travel further to get to school, and once they reach secondary school age they would need to travel to Ellon Academy or Mintlaw Academy. This would be a distance of 13 miles, as opposed to the current journey to Peterhead Academy which is around five miles, depending on the pupils' address within the catchment. Rezoning to these schools would also require a change in the existing clusters boundaries.
- 8.5.4 Extending the Longhaven catchment to the north into Dales Park School catchment would not be a feasible option. A statutory consultation regarding the merger of Dales Park School and Meethill School to a new school at the new Peterhead Community Campus in 2025 has recently concluded. It would be inappropriate to carry out a further consultation to rezone part of the Dales Park School catchment area to Longhaven School.
- 8.5.5 Any proposals to incorporate part of the Boddam School catchment or Port Erroll School catchment area need to take account of the fact that rezoning would have a negative impact on these schools, as they already operate on the occupancy levels around 50%.

8.6 **Continuation of Mothballing**

- 8.6.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current mothballing arrangement, Aberdeenshire Council does not consider that this would be the best option for the community. Mothballing would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school. The Council would also be responsible for the costs of maintaining a mothballed building.
- 8.6.2 Scottish Government guidance relating to mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation.
- 8.6.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing. New pupils either reaching school age or moving into the catchment, who attend the designated school would be entitled to school transport.
- 8.6.4 Those pupils who chose out of zone placements to other schools whilst Longhaven School was still operational are not entitled to school transport.
- 8.6.5 As the Longhaven school building is not currently in use, a continuation of mothballing would have no further impact on the community.

9. Discounted Options

9.1 The detail of the Council's consideration of the discounted options is set out below:

9.2 **Option 4** - Close Longhaven School and split catchment between Boddam School and Port Erroll School – due to the topographical area of the Longhaven catchment there is no logical way to split the catchment between Boddam Schools and Port Erroll School. All solutions considered would have properties on different sides of the roads going to different schools.

Option 5 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Dales Park School – Dales Park School has recently gone through a rigorous consultation period to relocate to the new Peterhead Community Campus in 2025. The distance to Dales Park School would be greater than the other options considered.

Option 6 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Hatton (Cruden) School - rezoning the Longhaven catchment area to the Hatton (Cruden) School catchment would require pupils to travel further to get to school, and once they reach secondary school age they would need to travel to Ellon Academy. This would require a change in the existing clusters boundaries.

Option 7 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Longside School – rezoning Longhaven School to Longside School would require pupils to travel further to get to school, and once they reach secondary school age they would need to travel to Mintlaw Academy. This option would also require a change in the existing clusters boundaries.

Option 8 - Close Longhaven School and merge with Burnhaven School – the Burnhaven School catchment is not adjacent to the Longhaven catchment area. Rezoning Longhaven to Burnhaven would require pupils to travel further and to pass through other Peterhead school catchment areas to get to the school.

10. Educational Benefit Statement

10.1 In September 2019, Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting People, Places and Learning' was launched. This was developed by Scottish Government and COSLA. This contains ten guiding principles. Local Authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate, namely:

- Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
- Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners;
- The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
- The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function;

- Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle;
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling and be digitally enabled;
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised;
- Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all;
- Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential;
- Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

10.2 At the Education and Children's Services Committee on 18 March 2021, the revised Learning Estates Strategy, which sets the minimum standards for the various elements of educational buildings to achieve optimal educational benefit, was approved. The strategy for Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estate sets out three values, Equity, Excellence and Inclusion. They are core to all decision making.

10.3 If Longhaven School were to re-open, with a reduced number of pupils over a greater age range, there would be increased challenges in ensuring that all children develop the four capacities of Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors.

10.4 Educational benefits are considered below for pupils if either of the options mentioned in Section 7 are adopted.

10.5 Pupils at both Boddam and Port Erroll Schools regularly work in co-operative learning groups. Cooperative learning strategy normally involves four pupils of roughly the same age group working together collaboratively. If Longhaven School re-opened with a low roll that would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static and there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. The pupils may not be of a similar age and could be spread across P1-P7. A low roll would further limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.

10.6 The proposal would provide improved opportunities for children to develop skills for learning, life and work e.g., increasing opportunities for working with others of a similar age and stage which are very limited in schools of less than eight children in a multi-composite setting.

10.7 A larger roll enhances the sustainability and viability of a school and offers greater opportunities to learners.

- 10.8 While it may seem that having fewer pupils in a class would allow a teacher to provide more one-on-one attention, fewer is not always better, when it comes to pupils learning experiences. Classes low in pupil numbers, have disadvantages. These disadvantages are further compounded when a school has a single class, potentially with only one or two children at each year stage.
- 10.9 While one or two pupils absent from a large class isn't a major issue, a small number of absent pupils can make a big difference in a small class. If there are only eight pupils in a class, two missing pupils represent a much larger percentage of the class population, making it more difficult for the teacher to continue with planned lessons.
- 10.10 A larger class is more likely to represent a diverse cross section of society. Pupils benefit from being members of diverse classes because they have the opportunity to hear viewpoints that differ greatly from their own. While some small classes do have a diverse array of members, many are relatively homogeneous in nature and, as such, do not offer pupils the opportunity to learn in a diverse setting.
- 10.11 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the modern school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Both Boddam and Port Erroll Schools have sufficient pupils to allow the children to work collaboratively on various topics and activities. The class teachers will work with both individuals and groups at each stage of the curriculum, and group working allows pupils to develop different skills from those that are developed during individual work.
- 10.12 Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 10.13 Some pupils enjoy the anonymity associated with being a member of a large class. These pupils are uncomfortable in the spotlight and prefer to blend in with the crowd as they move through the process of learning. For pupils of this nature, small classes are far from desirable because in educational settings with reduced pupil numbers they do not have the same opportunity to mix with their peer group. The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age-appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form.
- 10.14 A larger school roll offers children from the Longhaven School catchment area an increased possibility of participating in teams in a range of games. These educational, cultural and sporting activities provide a number of benefits for children in terms of both academic and social development and support the process of transition towards the larger and more varied educational setting of a secondary school.
- 10.15 Port Erroll School has a Stem Cafe which gives pupils the opportunity to explore and develop a deeper understanding as well as a wider skillset in technology,

coding, engineering, science and literacy. The school also has a Skills Hub which aims at developing skills for life while supporting ongoing learning. There are opportunities to participate in woodwork, cooking, sewing, photography, film, music and art.

- 10.16 Port Erroll School also offers pupils the opportunity to be on the Junior Leadership Team, Pupil Council, Digital Leaders, Eco Committee and Sustainability Champions. Boddam School offers pupils the opportunity to participate as House Captains and Playleaders.
- 10.17 Pupils at Boddam School and Port Erroll School can participate in the annual Christmas Concert and sports day held at the end of each session.
- 10.18 During the year both Boddam School and Port Erroll School participate in raising funds for various charities.
- 10.19 Some of the educational benefits arise not from larger pupil number (e.g. to form teams of similar age and size), but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of interested adults leading a range of activities.
- 10.20 Both Boddam School and Port Erroll School have Parent Councils who support the school and nursery with school improvements and fundraising. All parents are welcome to attend Parent Council Meetings. If Longhaven School were to re-open there would be an opportunity for a Parent Council to operate, however with a small pupil cohort there would be a smaller number of families to participate results on a greater reliance on individuals to support the school.
- 10.21 It is Aberdeenshire Council's view that the pupils from the Longhaven School catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at the larger neighbouring schools. Formalising the current arrangements would provide several such benefits, judged against both the Aberdeenshire and National criteria set out above.
- 10.22 All pupils from the Longhaven catchment area currently attend other schools in the Peterhead and Mintlaw clusters. No adverse effects for those pupils are expected to arise from the permanent closure of Longhaven School.

11. Effect on the Local Community

- 11.1 Aberdeenshire Council recognise that the uncertainty surrounding the future opening of the school has impacted on the community and it is hoped that this statutory consultation to close Longhaven School will give clarity to the community and a sense of certainty regarding their children's education.
- 11.2 There is an existing village hall in Longhaven, adjacent to the school, which provides a public space for the local community. It is a fully accessible building with kitchen facilities and a dedicated parking.
- 11.3 The school building in Longhaven has not operated as a community facility during time it was operational as a school, or during the periods of mothballing.
- 11.4 The options appraisal process has identified a number of alternative uses for

the school, Aberdeenshire Council would be happy to work with the local community to see whether the school building could be suitable for community use.

- 11.5 Aberdeenshire Council has an Asset Disposal Policy which must be followed when buildings or land are no longer required for their original purpose. There could be opportunities for the site to be developed as green space and/or playing space. This would have to be fully assessed through the asset disposal procedure. Thereafter any surplus council sites can be subject to a Community Asset Transfer Application.

12. School Transport

- 12.1 During the session 2021/22 of the 12 pupils currently living within the Longhaven catchment area, school transport is provided for five of them to schools in the Peterhead Cluster. The other pupils are either transported by their parents/carers, enrolled at other local school as out of zone pupils prior to mothballing, or have enrolled at another out of zone school.
- 12.2 The closure of Longhaven School would not impact upon the journey times for pupils, as they are currently being transported to other schools. However, the additional travel time compared to travelling to/from Longhaven School to either Boddam School or Port Erroll School for pupils currently attending these schools and pre-school pupils residing in the Longhaven School catchment area is on average an increase of 3 minutes in normal conditions.
- 12.3 There are two contracts providing transport to Boddam School and Port Erroll School at a cost of £104 per day. These contracts provide transport for seven pupils, of which four are Longhaven School pupils. This cost could increase in the future depending on the number of families with school age children living in the Longhaven catchment.
- 12.4 It is recognised that the larger merged school implies an increase in the number of pupils entitled to school transport, and the occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to or from school should they require to do so.
- 12.5 In the event of closure, all pupils within the Longhaven catchment area would be entitled to school transport should they choose to attend the designed school, there would be no cost implications to families affected by the closure. A permanent closure would continue to have very little impact in this respect on costs to the Council or distance covered by vehicles.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 As mentioned in Section 12 above the proposed changes could result in an increase in costs for school transport provision, which would need to be met by Aberdeenshire Council. However, the increase will not be significant.
- 13.2 Further details of the financial impact of this proposal are included in the financial template provided at Appendix A2. The costs provided in the template are from the 2017/18 when the school was last operational for a full session.

14. Sustainability

- 14.1 The Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions for all schools considered in this proposal document are detailed in the table below. The permanent closure of Longhaven School would result in a reduction of around 50 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually and would not increase the emissions at any of the other schools.

Table 5 – 2016/17 Annual CO₂ Emissions

School	Annual CO ₂ Emissions (tonnes)	Impacted by permanent closure of Longhaven School?
Longhaven School	50	Yes
Boddam School	66	No
Port Erroll School	142	No

- 14.2 Solar Energy panels were fitted at Port Erroll School during 2017/18 and have resulted in a CO₂ emissions reduction, with 109 tonnes of CO₂ emissions being recorded in 2018/19. More recent data is not comparable due to the periods of national school closures as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 14.3 There is little negative environmental impact in relation to the transport of pupils due to the relatively short distances and small numbers involved. Longhaven School pupils will be transported to Boddam School or Port Erroll School by the Council rather than travelling individually.
- 14.4 The requirement to transport pupils to Boddam School or Port Erroll School and its negative impact on the environment will be outweighed by the closure of Longhaven School, as the school would still require heating, electricity and maintenance to remain open for a very small roll of pupils.
- 14.5 Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced by many rural authorities in Scotland. Rural schools with small numbers of pupils on roll changes the teaching dynamic, requiring teachers to be highly adept in managing the curriculum, differentiation and assessment for pupils from P1-P7 in one or just two classes to ensure an educational benefit is maintained. Due to the staffing complement within these establishments the opportunities for collegiate and stage partner working requires carefully planning with local schools and increased use of digital resources to allow online communities, however some rural settings also have connectivity difficulties.

15. Implications for Staff

- 15.1 As Longhaven School is already mothballed there will be no impact on staffing arrangements at either Boddam School or Port Erroll School from the permanent closure of Longhaven School. All staff previously based at Longhaven School are either employed at other establishments or have resigned from their posts within Aberdeenshire Council. A continuation of mothballing would also not have an impact upon staffing.
- 15.2 The staffing implications of re-opening Longhaven School are set out in Section 5 above, whilst the financial implications are set out in Appendix A2.

- 15.3 The current staffing allocation with Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for each school is set out in the Table 6 below.

Table 6 – Staffing Levels for each school

Position	Longhaven School (if re-opened)	Boddam School	Port Erroll School
Head Teacher	1.00	1.00	1.00
Teacher (Head Teacher relief)	0.53		
Teacher	-	5.00	5.00
Administrator	0.66	0.60	0.61
Admin Support Assistant	0.29	0.42	0.40
Early Years Lead Practitioner	-	1.00	1.00
Early Years Senior Practitioner	-	1.00	1.00
Early Years Practitioner	-	1.38	1.00
Assistant Early Years Practitioner	-	-	1.00
Pupil Support Assistant	1.00	2.09	2.06
Catering Unit Supervisor	-	0.48	-
Senior Catering Assistant	0.34	0.34	1.55
Unit Cook / Supervisor	-	-	0.90
Cleaner	0.34	0.89	1.52

- 15.4 Additional Support Needs (ASN) teaching and pupil support staff are allocated to each school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the cluster.
- 15.5 Trade Unions are included in the consultation process. Any impacts for staff will be addressed under existing HR policies.

16. Equal Opportunities

- 16.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a statutory requirement on the Council to assess the policies and practices necessary to meet the requirements of anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. It also affords an opportunity for the Council to consider the impact on the education service. An IIA has been carried out as part of the options appraisal process.
- 16.2 The purpose of an IIA is to examine policies and practice in a structured way to make sure that adverse effect on groups with protected characteristics are avoided. It is also a tool to enable the Council to assess what positive steps it can take to promote equality of opportunity and measure the results of the actions that have been taken.
- 16.3 The main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from Longhaven to Boddam School or Port Erroll School, however as the school has been mothballed since October 2018, all the current pupils are already making this journey to either school.
- 16.4 Funded school transport would be provided for all P1-7 pupils attending either Boddam School or Port Erroll School from the current Longhaven catchment area, if one of those options is approved.

- 16.5 Although funded transport is not provided for nursery age children, these children have already been attending pre-school settings in either Boddam School, Port Erroll School or Longside School. The journey times involved are not lengthy in comparison to those faced by many other primary and nursery age children in Aberdeenshire.
- 16.6 As part of the consultation process the Council will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers and young people, and will address comments about equality during this consultation.
- 16.7 Under The Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Existing arrangements in place for pupils within the schools affected with additional support needs will continue.

17. Consultation Arrangements

- 17.1 At its meeting on 2 December 2021, Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee were asked to agree that a proposal document should be issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in the paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.
- 17.2 A copy of this document will be issued to all of the consultees listed on the first page of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/>
- 17.3 The period for consultation will run from 7 December 2021 until 24 February 2022 which adequately which covers a period of 30 school days.
- 17.4 A face-to-face public meeting will be held at 6.30pm on Monday 24 January 2022 at Longhaven Community Hall, Longhaven, AB42 0NU. An online meeting will also be held at 11.00am on Tuesday 25 January 2022 and it can be accessed via the link <https://tinyurl.com/Longhaven-PublicMeeting>. Anyone wishing to attend the meetings are welcome. The meetings will be convened by the Council and the Council will present the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments at both meetings. A minute will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.
- 17.5 Opportunities will be provided for the staff working in Boddam School and Port Erroll School to discuss the proposals. Opportunities will also be arranged for all primary pupils within Boddam and Port Erroll to engage in the consultation in a manner appropriate to their age.
- 17.6 An online survey will be available as part of the consultation. This can be completed at the following address or by scanning the QR code below: <https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/longhaven-school-statutory-consultation>



- 17.7 The Council will also consider any written comments which should be emailed to LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. Alternatively, any comments can be sent to Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA. Comments should be received no later than 4pm on 24 February 2022.
- 17.8 A copy of this document will also be sent to Education Scotland. They will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council during the consultation period. They will also receive a copy of any oral representations made at the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, they may visit the school and make such reasonable enquiries as they consider appropriate.

18. Consideration of Consultation Responses

- 18.1 The Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, survey results, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a report on the consultation. This report will be published in electronic format and will be available on the Council website. Anyone making written representations during the consultation period will be informed about the report.
- 18.2 The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations and a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting. The report will also include the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report, a response to issues raised through 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. The report will also contain a statement explaining how the Council has complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the Education Scotland Report and representations (both written and oral) that it received.
- 18.3 The last section of the report will include an officer recommendation as to whether the proposals should be adopted and implemented. The Consultation Report will be published at least three weeks prior to the Council making a decision.
- 18.4 A final decision is likely to be made by the Council on the proposed changes in late 2022.

19. Decision Making

- 19.1 The consultation report will be considered firstly by Buchan Area Committee who will be asked to make a comment on the officer recommendation.
- 19.2 Following Buchan Area Committee, Education and Children's Services Committee will be asked to make a recommendation as to whether the proposed changes are implemented. This is expected to be in August 2022.
- 19.3 Following discussion and recommendation at both Buchan Area Committee and Education and Children's Services Committee, Full Council will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report. This is expected to be by late 2022.
- 19.4 At the end of the consultation process, Section 15 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 enables ministers to call-in a decision to implement the proposed closure of Longhaven School.
- 19.5 Beginning on the day that the final decision is taken, the Council has a period of six working days to notify Scottish Ministers of the decision. Scottish Ministers then have a period of eight weeks from and including the date of decision to decide if they will call in the proposal. The Council must publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified and that representations can be made to the Scottish Ministers within the first three weeks of the eight-week period. The Scottish Ministers will take into account any relevant representations that were made to them by any person within the first three weeks. The Council may not proceed with the implementation of the proposal until this eight-week period has passed.
- 19.6 If the Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, it is then referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels who has a period of seven days after a call-in notice is issued to constitute a School Closure Review Panel. The Panel may decide to refuse consent to the proposal, refuse consent and remit it to the education authority for a fresh decision or grant consent to the proposal, either subject to conditions, or unconditionally. The Panel must notify the education authority of its decision within eight weeks from when the Panel was constituted or within 16 weeks if the Panel has issued a notice to the education authority that a decision has been delayed. The Council may not proceed with the implementation of the proposal until the outcome of the call-in has been notified to the Council.

20. Conclusion

- 20.1 Taking the above into account Aberdeenshire Council recommends that Longhaven School, currently mothballed, is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to either Boddam School, Port Erroll School or a combination of the two, as outlined in Options 1-3 above.
- 20.2 Whichever decision is taken with respect to catchment areas, existing pupils will not be required to change schools. This will also apply to any younger siblings of such pupils, provided they remain at the same primary school.
- 20.3 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements.