Outcome of the Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to discontinue Stablestone Primary School and rezone existing catchment area to Douglas Primary School

February 2014

This report has been issued by South Lanarkshire Council in response to the consultation undertaken in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This report includes recommendations of the outcome of the consultation which will be presented to the Executive Committee of South Lanarkshire Council.

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 01698 454545 Email: education@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
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1. Distribution of consultation proposals document

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1. Purpose of the report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise all stakeholders on the outcome of the statutory consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the proposal to discontinue Stablestone Primary School and rezone the catchment area to Douglas Primary School with effect from August 2014. This includes a report from Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal and Education Resources’ responses to all questions and issues raised during the consultation period.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is intended that the consultation report, along with any relevant documentation will be considered by the Executive Committee of South Lanarkshire Council on 26 March 2014.

2.2 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:
   • Note the contents of the report
   • Agree the proposal to discontinue Stablestone Primary School and rezone the catchment area to Douglas Primary School

3. Background

3.1 A consultation proposal document was issued as a result of a decision by the Executive Committee of South Lanarkshire Council on 28 August 2013 to consult on the proposal below:
   • Stablestone Primary School be discontinued, and;
   • The current catchment area served by Stablestone Primary School be rezoned to Douglas Primary School.

3.2 The statutory consultation, in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 was carried out over the period 9th September 2013 to 1 November 2013 which included a public meeting held on 1 October 2013 in the Glespin Hall.

3.3 A consultation notice was placed in the Carluke and Lanark Gazette on 5 September 2013. The notice included a summary of the proposal, information on availability of the proposal document, how written representations could be made and also details of the public meeting.

3.4 A copy of the proposal document was issued on 6th September 2013 to the consultees listed in Appendix 1 plus local residents in the village of Glespin. It was published on the Council website and a copy made available from all libraries and Q and As.

3.5 A public meeting was held on 1 October 2013 in the Glespin Hall. A summary of the oral representations made at this meeting is included as Appendix 2 of this report.

3.6 South Lanarkshire Council sent a copy of the proposal document to Education Scotland (formerly HMIe) on 6 September 2013 in their role as a statutory consultee. In addition, on 26th November 2013, Education Scotland was provided with a summary of all relevant written responses and oral representations made during the consultation period.

3.7 South Lanarkshire Council received a copy of Education Scotland’s report on 27 January 2014. A summary of this report and Education Resources’ response to the key points is included in Section 7 of this consultation report and a copy of the whole document is included as Appendix 3.
3.8 **Ministerial call-in**
Should the Executive Committee approve the closure proposal, South Lanarkshire Council would notify Scottish Ministers of the decision on the proposal by 3 April 2014, that is, 6 working days from the date of the decision of the Executive Committee. A copy of the Proposal Document and the Consultation Report would be provided to Scottish Ministers.

3.9 Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Scottish Ministers have a 6 week period from the date of such a decision by the Executive Committee to decide if they would call in the proposal. Within the first 3 weeks of that 6 week period, any person may make representations to the Scottish Ministers which the Ministers would require to take into account.

3.10 No action would be taken to proceed with the implementation of the proposal until the outcome of the decision of the Ministers on whether to call-in has been notified to the Council. If Scottish Ministers call in the proposal they may refuse consent to the proposal or grant their consent with conditions or unconditionally.
4. Distribution of proposal document and summary of responses

Consultation proposal documents totalling 264 were sent to statutory consultees and other stakeholders (1 document per household) with the document also being available on the council website, within libraries and Council Q and As.

Total number of consultation response forms received 24
Number of individual names these response forms represented 27

The 24 returns represented 27 named individuals or groups as 3 responses were from more than one individual on a single consultation response form.

Analysis of physical responses received (total 24)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Breakdown of responses</th>
<th>Parent / carer of child at affected schools</th>
<th>Parent / carer of potential future pupil at affected schools</th>
<th>Parent Council</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Resident in Stablestone catchment area</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In favour of proposal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in favour of proposal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of physical responses taking into account those returns where there was more than one named individual on the one consultation proposal document (total 27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Breakdown of responses</th>
<th>Parent / carer of child at affected schools</th>
<th>Parent / carer of potential future pupil at affected schools</th>
<th>Parent Council</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Resident in Stablestone catchment area</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In favour of proposal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in favour of proposal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of statutory consultees’ returns

From these 27 responses, the number of responses from statutory consultees totalled 20 and these were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Breakdown of responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In favour of proposal</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in favour of proposal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant statutory consultees are

- the Parent Councils of affected schools
- parents of pupils attending each affected school as well as the pupils themselves
- parents of pupils likely to attend an affected school
- staff at each affected school
- any trade union representative of those staff
- any other users whom the authority considers relevant
5. Summary of written responses and Education Resources' responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation (Parent, Resident etc.)</th>
<th>In favour</th>
<th>Not in favour</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Comments on how great Stablestone School is, the children settled well there and got great attention from the staff. Children are happy and settled now in Rigside decant - would not like to uproot them again. It was noted that it would be pointless to build the new school for a few children and wouldn't be good from a social point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Stablestone Primary School on 21 Sept and inside school gates <strong>danger asbestos removal in progress</strong>. Too late you are doing it. The Council are killing the place. Too late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>My daughter goes to Douglas School as we did not want her to go to Stablestone for lots of reasons, one being no-one her age when she would have started a year ago. Although a bus passes my house picking other school children up e.g. Glespin and Rigside, I am not entitled to transport to Douglas, but I will still take my daughter and son when he starts in two yrs. They will not be going to Stablestone even if it did open!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council response / comment

Comment noted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation (Parent, Resident etc.)</th>
<th>In favour</th>
<th>Not in favour</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Council response / comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As a member of the general public and a council tax payer it makes to me sound economic sense to amalgamate the two schools if as predicated the roll call of 2 at Stablestone by 2014/15. It makes sense not only for these 2 children to be in a larger school environment but also much more cost effective. More so with Douglas PS being less than 2.5 miles away. Anyone who objects to those proposals must be very short sighted. What are the proposals for the defunct building?</td>
<td>This comment is supportive of the proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>After a recent approach by local residents, the plans for demolition of the building have been halted to allow the conclusion of the statutory consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Church</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sadly, closure seems inevitable with the shrinking roll at the school.</td>
<td>Comment noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The needs of our children should be paramount but these must be accommodated within a sound financial framework.</td>
<td>This comment is supportive of the proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is with a heavy heart that we agree with this proposal. However, feel strongly that it is sensible and appropriate thing to do. Having been involved with Stablestone for 7 years, we have nothing but praise for the standard of education, the staff and the overall benefits a small school has. However, over the past year or so, as the numbers have been dropping, we have noticed it becoming more of a 'struggle' for pupils + teachers alike. This was highlighted in many ways, but the fact that the trips to Rigside School became more frequent probably is a good example. We have already moved our youngest son to Douglas because we did not want to disrupt him twice, should this proposal be passed. However if the new build does go ahead, we still feel we have made the correct decision for our son, and he is now settled at Douglas.</td>
<td>This comment is supportive of the proposal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Pupil comments

- Pupil views gathered 29 October 2013

- Given the number, age and stage of the 3 pupils, the Council’s Quality Link Officer, who has worked closely with the pupils, had an informal discussion with the children to elicit their feelings and comments on the proposal. They are listed below with Pupil 1, Pupil 2 and Pupil 3 being used in place of individual pupil names.

- Pupil 1 felt that he did not want to be in Stablestone if it was just him and Pupil 2. Pupil 3 will go to Lanark Grammar in August 2014.

- Pupil 1 and Pupil 2 do not want to go to Douglas but stay in Rigside Primary (current decant accommodation).

- All 3 children expressed their love for Stablestone Primary and how happy they had been. They said that it is the best school they have ever attended. The children have attended quite a few schools.

- Pupil 2, who has cerebral palsy, worries sometimes about people bumping into her.

- They all enjoy the outdoor area and having friend to play with [at the decant school].

- Pupil 3 said that a smaller school is better for Pupil 1 because he finds it hard to make friends.

- Pupil 3 would like Stablestone to stay open as Stablestone but if it did close then she would have liked to stay at Rigside. [Pupil 3 will transfer to High School in August 2014].

- Pupil 2 would like to stay in Rigside Primary but will be sad if Stablestone closes.
7. Summary of issues raised by Education Scotland (formerly HMIe) and Education Resources responses

7.1 As part of the statutory consultation process, Education Scotland prepared a report on the consultation proposal by South Lanarkshire Council, addressing educational aspects of the proposal. This report is attached as appendix 3.

7.2 Education Scotland reported that staff, pupils and parents of Stablestone Primary School and Douglas Primary School, along with the Senior Management Team of Lanark Grammar, welcome the proposal and the possibilities of augmenting the Universal Connections community centre ‘vibrant hub’ and increasing links between the communities of Douglas and Glespin.

7.3 There is recognition of the opportunities for enhanced pupil experiences and increased confidence as a result of learning and socialising in a larger peer group.

7.4 It was also highlighted that if the proposal was to go ahead, transporting pupils from the existing Stablestone Primary School catchment area to Douglas Primary School would pose no problems or have any significant environmental impact.

7.5 Effective communication with key stakeholders throughout the process, especially staff at Stablestone Primary, should be ensured.

7.6 Response

South Lanarkshire Council welcomes the very positive report and the recognition of the sound educational benefits for children arising from the proposal.

The Council accepts that the community of Glespin has concerns over the future of the school site if the proposal was to go ahead. As a result of an approach by the Community, a hold has been put on the demolition of the former school building to allow expressions of interest/considerations for alternative use in the event of the proposal being implemented.

The Council also recognises that the pupils currently decanted in Rigsde Primary School are settled and having a positive educational experience in their current location and will discuss further with parents their options for the future in the event of the proposal being implemented.
8. **Review of proposals by South Lanarkshire Council**

8.1 The Council has reviewed the proposals having regard (in particular) to any relevant written representations received by the Council during the consultation, and representations made at the public meeting, and Education Scotland’s report.

8.2 Feedback indicates that there is support for the proposal amongst parents and the community.

8.3 A positive report from Education Scotland corroborates the educational and social benefits of the proposal. It also highlights the issues surrounding diminishing pupil numbers, the viability of the rebuild of a new school serving the Glespin village and the securing best value in the education budget.

8.4 After the closing date of the formal consultation period, representations were made by some members of the Glespin community to request further consideration over the future of the Stablestone Primary School building in the event of the proposal to close the school going ahead. Options will be considered followed by further discussion and consultation with relevant stakeholders.

8.5 After review, the proposal to discontinue Stablestone Primary School and rezone the catchment area to Douglas Primary School is recommended.
9. Resource, risk and policy implications

9.1 Resource implications

The closure of Stablestone Primary School and rezoning of the catchment area to Douglas Primary School would result in better use being made of existing school capacity. Capital efficiencies would be retained within the Primary Schools Modernisation Programme.

9.2 Risk implications

The Council has a duty to conduct risk assessments under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulation 1999. Any current risk assessments at the schools would be reviewed if the proposal is implemented.

9.3 Policy implications

9.3.1 Strategy

This report supports Education Resources’ priorities for raising educational achievement and attainment and achieving efficient and effective use of resources.

9.3.2 Consultation

This report describes the outcome of the statutory consultation process with the community. Any school closure proposals or changes to school catchment areas are subject to the statutory consultation process. South Lanarkshire Council has undertaken this consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Further consultation with pupils, staff, parents, Trade Unions and other stakeholders would continue if the proposals are approved.
Appendix 1  Distribution of consultation proposals document

Distribution list and how to access a copy of the proposal document

A copy of this proposal document was provided to the following consultees:

• The Parent Council of the affected schools
• The parents of the pupils at the affected schools
• Parents who have children who are expected to attend the affected schools within 2 years of the publication of this proposal document. To achieve this, a copy of the proposal was provided to Early Years Establishments in the local area.
• The pupils at the affected schools and their pupil committees and councils
• All South Lanarkshire Council employees at the affected schools
• Trade union representatives
• Community Councils within the affected locality
• Local churches
• All relevant users of the affected schools
• South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partners

A copy of this proposal document was also made available to:

• All Elected Members of South Lanarkshire Council
• South Lanarkshire Youth Council
• Education Scotland (formerly Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education, HMIe)
• The Constituency MSP of the affected schools
• List MSP for the area of the affected schools
• The MP of the affected schools
• Police Commander for Lanarkshire Division of Police Scotland
• Chief Executive, NHS Lanarkshire
• Chief Executive, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
• Area Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services
• Care Inspectorate

The steps listed below were also taken to ensure that the proposal document was widely available.

• Notice of the proposals and of publication of the proposal document was placed within the Carluke and Lanark Gazette.
• The proposal document was also been published on the South Lanarkshire Council website: www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk.
• This document could made available in alternative forms or translated by contacting Education Resources on 01698 454102 or at: education@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
• The proposal document was also available at the following locations:
  a. Council Offices, Education Resources, Almada Street, Hamilton, ML3 0AA. Phone 01698 454102
  b. All libraries in South Lanarkshire
  c. All South Lanarkshire Council Q&A Offices
  d. The schools affected by the proposals
Appendix 2  Oral questions and responses at Public Meeting, held at Glespin Hall on Tuesday 1 October 2013

In attendance: 3 local residents, 1 parent (accompanied by 3 children who attend Stablestone), 1 MSP (part meeting).

Jim Gilhooly (JG), Executive Director of Education, introduced the representatives from Education Resources.

- George Wynne (GW) - Head of Education (Resources) who is responsible for Schools Modernisation.
- David Hinshelwood (DH) – Support Services Manager here to provide advice on any questions relating to placing requests, transport or other aspects.
- Janey Mauchline (JM) – Quality Improvement Officer for the Lanark Learning Community who works closely with all schools (staff and pupils) affected by the proposal.
- Rae McNally (RM) – Support Services Coordinator. Line manager of support staff in Stablestone and Douglas Primary Schools and provides support to Head Teachers in the wider Lanark Learning Community. Also scribe for this evening.
- Jean Hamilton (JH) – Support Services Coordinator for Biggar Learning Community. Scribe.
- Lisa Kirkwood (LK) – Primary Schools Modernisation Coordinator here to explain the consultation process, significance of tonight’s meeting, the next steps and indicative timescales for key milestones.

The length and complexity of the consultation document was commented upon as a possible reason for poor uptake and attendance at tonight’s meeting.

LK – Much of the content of this document is legislative but the comment is noted for any such future correspondence to encourage participation whilst still being suitably informative.

JG – It is important to follow the correct procedure as defined by the Scottish Government. This is a formal consultation proposal to discontinue education at Stablestone Primary School and rezone to Douglas Primary School. We are here to listen to your views and give you the opportunity to ask any questions. A note of the meeting will be taken which will broadly cover the main points. This is not the only opportunity to express your view – you can put any views in writing using the form at the end of the Consultation Proposal Document. The reason we are where we are now is a falling pupil roll. Views have been expressed informally that pupils are not likely to move back if the school was rebuilt. We are now in a formal process and the reason for this is the information we are getting back that rebuilding the school may not be the right thing to do.

We think there is more educational benefit in children learning within a larger peer group. Learning not only takes place from books but also from working, communicating and interacting with others. We have to consider what, educationally, is the right thing to do.

I am going to hand over to LK to discuss the process and timelines.

LK – The consultation period will run from 9 September until 1 November 2013. At the end of this period, a summary of all responses received, together with the comments from tonight’s Public Meeting, will be provided to Education Scotland (formerly HMIe) to allow them to further consider the Council’s proposal document that was issued to all consultees (parents and local residents amongst others). Education Scotland then has three weeks to consider the information provided and will in turn produce a report to the Council. The Council will then review all the feedback received from all consultees and Education Scotland’s feedback and produce a final Consultation Report. This will be published for a period of at least three weeks before being presented to the Executive Committee of the Council who will then make a decision. We are anticipating that this will take place in February 2014.
If the decision is to discontinue Stablestone Primary School, this would require to be notified to the Scottish Government. Scottish Ministers then have a period of 6 weeks to decide whether to ‘call-in’ the Council’s decision and during the first three weeks of this period, anyone can make representations to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government can agree to consent to the proposal, provide consent with conditions or refuse consent.

Resident 1 - Why can’t the building just be mothballed. The worry is if it’s demolished there will be no going back. People think it’s a done deal.

Resident 2 – People have said that to me too.

GW - The old building would not meet the demands that a new, modern school environment would.

Resident 1 – The teachers already knew that it wasn’t getting rebuilt.

JG - People may have speculated and we can’t stop that. However, no decision has been taken by anyone who has the power to make that decision.

Resident 1 – A lot of them have decided that a decision has been made already.

GW – That's unjustified. I’ve been in post for a year and there was no mention of contemplating closure a year ago. It’s only in the last 6 or 7 months that some people were saying ‘I think that you are wasting your time’ and that ‘there are not enough kids to make it viable’. There is no agenda here - we have only become involved as people have made comments as kids moved out. It’s only in the last 6 months that it has become an issue.

Resident 1 - People have left the village. They don't believe the council.

Resident 3 – Housing has had a lot to do with it. They haven’t brought in any families.

GW – We will note your comment but we are here regarding education and not representing housing.

Resident 1 – I know - South Lanarkshire don’t do joined up. We’re always on the receiving end. We don’t trust South Lanarkshire. The council can threaten to sue me if they don’t like what I’m saying about them. I’ll not be on their Christmas card list.

Resident 3 – The village has not been helped.

Resident 2 – Housing keep putting obstacles in the way to stop keeping families here.

JG – We’re not in a position to comment on that. You may want to put this more formally in a written response. No decision has been made. We are reacting to the views of parents.

Resident 1 – I’m fed up putting things in writing.

Resident 2 – How many views have you had?

GW – We have had representations from parents over the last 6-7 months saying ‘Why are you building the school – nae kids’. A number of parents submitted placing requests.

Resident 1 – They left after the arrangements were known for the decant to Rigside. You lost four kids. They thought ‘why would you build a school for 3 kids so we would need to move now’.

Resident 3 – There was an offer of a local solution to the decant – the old nursery that had room and offices, to avoid the pupils coming out of the village. Parents didn’t want their kids to go Rigside.
GW – we are not aware of this other decant suggestion and I’ve been involved over the last 6 months.

Resident 3 – If suggestion now is for children to go to Douglas Primary, why was the decant not there?

GW - Rigside was identified as it has the same Head Teacher as Stablestone (shared headship).

Parent – I wanted my kids to go there too.

Resident 3 – People are leaving the village because there will be no school. This impacts on the whole village.

Resident 2 – The council’s housing policy doesn’t help. If this picked up, we would need a school.

Resident 1 – And a local land developer went bust - no more new houses so no more children. Once you get rid of the school, we won’t get it back. Douglas has a lot of developments. Douglas isn’t going to be big enough.

DH - The Council’s Planning department provides information to Education on any proposed developments in order for us to calculate potential increases in pupil numbers.

The calculation used is 30 pupils per year group (P1-P7) per 1000 new houses built with a 75% / 25% split between non-denominational and denominational places require. However, in rural areas, there can be a higher take-up for non-denominational school places. Douglas Primary School could accommodate roughly 210 children depending on class sizes and configuration. Current projections until 2015 is a pupil roll of 137 based on known information.

Resident – We will never get a nursery going again. You’re condemning the village if you close the school. No younger people will want to move to the village. Children from Glespin have had a good grounding and education. People comment when they go to the Grammar. There could be village rivalry – there would be difficulties if something happened during the day and parent doesn’t have their own transport. What about doctor’s appointments?

JG - If bullying was to occur, we would need to deal with this.

GW – Transportation is a bigger issue.

Resident – But it’s a real issue. They’re not going to be able to go to Parents’ night or go to shows - they won’t be able to get there. Grans and Aunts won’t get there either.

JG – I hear what you’re saying. We have lots of schools where pupils live 2½ miles or more from their local school. It is not unique to this area. That’s not to say it may change the relationship between parents and the school. Parents tend to make arrangements – that’s what parents do.

Resident – Young mothers can’t do this – they won’t take a bus to Douglas so won’t support the school the same.

GW – I would accept relationships will change but not sure if it as negative as you are describing.

Parent – I want to keep my children at Rigside Primary as the teachers are great and have helped my children and built up relationships. They would have been in three schools in a year if they were to move to Douglas.

Resident – When will the school be knocked down? Are there bats in the building?
GW – All necessary surveys, including a bat survey, have been carried out and as soon as necessary utility disconnections and other strip out has been carried out, the building will be demolished.

MSP – Apologies as I may have missed this, but what are the next steps in the process?

LK – The consultation period will run between 9 September until 1 November 2013. A summary of all responses received, together with the comments from tonight’s Public Meeting, will be provided to Education Scotland (formerly HMIe) to allow them to further consider the Council’s proposal document. Education Scotland has three weeks to consider the information provided and will respond through a report to the Council. The Council will then review all the feedback received from all consultees and Education Scotland’s feedback and produce a final Consultation Report. This will be published for a period of at least three weeks before being presented to the Executive Committee, aiming for February 2014, who will then make a decision.

If the decision is to discontinue Stablestone Primary School, notification will be given to Scottish Ministers who would then have a period of 6 weeks to decide whether to ‘call-in’ the Council’s decision. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone can make representations to the Scottish Government. The Council cannot proceed with the proposal until the Scottish Government have responded with their decision.

JG – Are there any further questions? Can I thank you for your views. These will be reflected in the report to Education Scotland and also the final Consultation Report. Can I restate for the record that this is a consultation and not a "done deal" – no decision has been made.
Appendix 3  Report by Education Scotland

Consultation proposal by South Lanarkshire Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to discontinue education at Stablestone Primary School, because of the falling roll and re-zone to Douglas Primary School.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council’s consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors’ consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors’ overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council’s final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council’s response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

As the council is proposing to close a school, it will need to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining the opportunity for representations to be made to Ministers.

1. Introduction

1.1 South Lanarkshire Council proposes to discontinue education at Stablestone Primary School because of the falling school roll and to re-zone children to Douglas Primary School.

1.2 This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;

- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and

- visits to the sites of Stablestone Primary School, Douglas Primary School, Rigside Primary School and Lanark Grammar School including discussion with relevant consultees.
1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school, children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper, other children and young people in the council area and any other users;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.5 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school as defined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of:

- viable alternatives to the closure of Stablestone Primary School,
- the likely effect on the local community with regard to sustainability and on the community's access to the buildings, grounds and facilities if the school were to close; and
- the likely effect of different travelling arrangements on the environment and on children and young people and other school users occasioned by the closure.

2. Consultation process

2.1 South Lanarkshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 South Lanarkshire Council consulted with stakeholders from 9 September 2013 to the 1 November 2013. A statutory consultation public meeting was held on Tuesday 1 October 2013 at 19:10 in Glespin Hall. Interested parties were also encouraged to submit their views in writing.

2.3 Almost all parents of children at Stablestone Primary School who have made their views known are in favour of the proposal to discontinue education at Stablestone Primary School and re-zone to Douglas Primary School. A very small number of children, who were decanted by the council to Rigside Primary School, would, however, prefer to continue their education there as they are well settled. For the few children from Stablestone Primary School with additional support needs, remaining at Rigside Primary School would provide them with continuity in their learning and further their personal development by continuing the friendships they have already established.

2.4 Almost all parents from Glespin village, whose children attend Stablestone Primary School, feel that their children will gain a lot socially by attending Douglas Primary School. These children have already attended the nursery in Douglas Primary School as there is no nursery provision in Glespin village. Parents see advantages for their children attending a new primary school with an increased peer group. They are confident that staff would know their children well from their initial experience in nursery.

2.5 Parents felt their children would have increased opportunities to work with more children of the same age in groups and in pairs. They would also have more opportunities to participate in the large number of extra-curricular clubs available in Douglas Primary School.
2.6 Children who made a successful placing request to Douglas Primary School when the decision was made to decant Stablestone Primary School are strongly in favour of the proposal. They are very happy at Douglas Primary School and enjoy their learning there very much.

2.7 Children commented that whilst they loved their teachers and the learning offered at Stablestone Primary School, they recognised that their confidence and their social skills would benefit by being around many more children at the same stage at Douglas Primary School. They also enjoy the increased availability of technology in the bigger school.

2.8 Staff at Stablestone Primary School are clear that there are advantages in favour of the proposal to change the catchment area to Douglas Primary School. They recognise it is the closest school to the village of Glespin and offers much improved facilities from those previously available in Stablestone Primary School. They feel that learners can be involved in a wide variety of after-school clubs. The Stablestone management team would prefer to see continued travel funding in the short term for the very small number of children electing to remain at Rigside Primary School as this was the school that children were originally decanted to by the council before the decision was made to consider closing Stablestone Primary School. Senior managers at Rigside Primary School say that these children from Stablestone Primary School are very settled now at Rigside Primary School and would gain from continuing their learning there rather than experiencing another transition.

2.9 Of the five children who were left at Stablestone Primary School when the decant happened, three children moved to the decant school of Rigside Primary School and two put in successful placing requests and now attend Douglas Primary School.

2.10 Senior managers, staff and young people at the associated secondary school, Lanark Grammar School, agree with the proposal made by the council and recognise its potential benefits. They commented that they can see no negative impact on Lanark Grammar School. Children felt that there would be a positive social impact which would help them be better prepared for the move to the local secondary. They commented that the Universal Connections community facility in Douglas is a vibrant hub for all the nearby villages including Glespin.

2.11 The proposal from South Lanarkshire Council to close Stablestone Primary School and re-zone to Douglas Primary School sets out the case for securing best value in the education budget through efficient use of the councils resources in an open and transparent way.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Until recently Stablestone Primary School and Douglas Primary School offered a broadly similar range of educational experiences for their children. As the numbers in Stablestone Primary School diminished to five this became increasingly more difficult to achieve. Douglas Primary School is a spacious new building which was opened in 2012. One other new classroom has recently been added to facilitate its increased roll.

3.2 Travel time from the Glespin village catchment area to Douglas Primary School is around four minutes by bus. If the proposal is adopted, all current and future pupils from the Stablestone Primary School catchment area attending Douglas Primary School, would become eligible for funded school transport. It would be helpful if the council continues to pay for the transport for the very small numbers of children choosing to continue their education at the decanted school of Rigside Primary School. This would allow these children to continue to attend the school. This would help ensure their needs were met effectively by providing appropriate support for their learning while deepening the friendships that they have already made in the school. No funded transport would be provided to Rigside Primary School thereafter for any other pupils in the Glespin village area electing to make a placing request to this school.
3.3 Based on projections made by the council, adoption of the proposal would have a very small negative impact on the roll at the present decanted school of Rigside Primary School. The council considers that Douglas Primary School could comfortably accommodate the very small annual enrolment from Stablestone Primary School catchment because it has an operational capacity of 225 and the projected roll for August 2014 is 159.

3.4 South Lanarkshire Council does not envisage any negative effects on the local community as a result of the proposal.

3.5 The Douglas Primary School Headteacher commented that re-zoning the children from Stablestone Primary School would lead to a broader range of opportunities to develop further their skills for life and learning. When Stablestone Primary School closed down it offered one teacher and one classroom for all levels. The new Douglas Primary School offers seven classrooms, a nursery class, open study areas and an information and communications technology (ICT) suite.

3.6 There could also be increased links between the local communities of Douglas and Glespin.

3.7 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school as defined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, HM Inspectors also took account of the council’s consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. The council considered fully the viability of alternatives to the closure of the school before it proceeded to consult on closure. They looked at the possibility of re-building Stablestone Primary School but the diminishing numbers attending now and in the future does not make a new school a viable option. The community of Glespin would benefit from clarity on the future use of the buildings, grounds and facilities if the school remains unused. The local community hall remains in use with limited clubs still taking place there. There is no significant effect on the environment and on children and young people and other school users by the different travelling arrangements occasioned by the closure. The journey to Douglas Primary School takes around four minutes. Permanent Staff from Stablestone Primary School who have been de-canted to Rigside Primary School would benefit from information informing them if and when they will be re-deployed in the event of the closure going ahead. They all agree that re-zoning to Douglas Primary School is the best option in the present circumstances.

3.8 South Lanarkshire Council needs to ensure that parents and their children are kept fully informed of the progress of the proposal and the timescales involved.

4. **Summary**

4.1 Parents, staff and children from Stablestone Primary School and South Lanarkshire Council agree with the proposal to re-zone the children of Glespin village to Douglas Primary School. They recognise that Stablestone Primary School has offered a positive educational experience until recently, and that the extremely low numbers now and in the future means that the school is no longer viable.

4.2 The journey time from Glespin village to Douglas Primary School would be around four minutes by bus. South Lanarkshire Council have agreed to provide transport to Douglas Primary School. Parents who wish their children to attend Rigside Primary School in future would need to lodge placing requests. Funded transport should continue in the short term to ensure that the needs of the very small number of children whose parents elected to continue their learning at Rigside Primary School are met effectively. This will provide these children with continuity in their learning and assist them socially.

4.3 Douglas Primary School has ample capacity to take the small extra annual enrolment from the Stablestone Primary School catchment.
4.4 Almost all parents support the proposal to change their children’s school from Stablestone Primary School to Douglas Primary School. This view is supported by the children themselves, the staff of Douglas Primary School, senior managers of Lanark Grammar School, the decanted staff at Rigside Primary School and South Lanarkshire Council.

4.5 South Lanarkshire Council needs to ensure that parents and their children are kept fully informed of the progress of the proposal and the timescales involved.

HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
January 2014