



## **Parents' Disbelief at Council Decision on Rural Schools**

### **Campaign group to pursue complaint against Acting Council Leader**

Argyll Rural Schools Network (ARSN) has expressed disbelief at Argyll & Bute Council's decision on the 19th April to consult on the closure of 11 primary schools. They also confirmed their intent to progress a complaint against Acting Leader Cllr Ellen Morton with the Standards Commission.

An ARSN spokesman said, "Councillors have had over six months to consider the facts and opinions provided to them. Pre-consultation meetings provided them with first hand accounts of the vital roles that rural schools and their communities play in supporting each other. The claimed educational benefits of closures are thoroughly unconvincing and ignore evidence provided by communities.

"With little or no real savings to be made, no demonstrable educational benefit, and immense potential damage to the sustainability and growth potential of rural villages across Argyll & Bute, what further evidence do councillors feel they need? We are firmly of the opinion that closures are being driven by the will of a handful of senior members of the Council Administration."

Executive Director, Cleland Sneddon, acknowledged at the Council meeting that there is significant mistrust over the Council's motives and actions with regard to the school review process and consultation. ARSN are convinced that nothing the Council has done has given schools or communities any confidence that the Council will work differently in future.

ARSN also confirmed that their complaint about Cllr Morton's personal role in the selection of schools for consultation will now be taken up with the Public Standards Commissioner in Edinburgh. The spokesman said "Cllr Morton has clearly led this selection process herself, using criteria which the council has twice attempted to clarify, but which remain opaque and impossible to apply objectively. The public can therefore have no confidence that the selection list is free from personal or political bias, as the Councillors' Code of Conduct is intended to ensure."

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

ARSN is a network open to all schools in Argyll and Bute. The Network originally formed as a response to Argyll and Bute Council's 2010 proposals to close 26 primary schools (one third of all primary schools in the area). The Network successfully campaigned to persuade Argyll and Bute Council to abandon the original proposals.

ARSN provides a forum for schools to support each other. The current focus is to fight closure proposals, but the Network also wants to support the long term sustainability of rural communities. ARSN believes that communities are only truly sustainable if there is easy access to primary education so that families can feel confident when they choose to move to rural villages and settlements.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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