

Statement by North Yell Development Council

We note with some confusion the report to be considered by the SIC Education and Families Committee on 4th March, regarding progress made on consultation around mothballing of the Cullivoe Primary School.

Whilst it is factually correct to state the school roll as at November 23 was 7 pupils, the current roll is 8 pupils. This was the figure quoted by SIC officials at a meeting in Cullivoe in November 23, which would take the school roll to 20% of what is, in our opinion, an artificial and disputed capacity figure, including a reserved place. This meeting was attended by NYDC representatives as well as the SIC Director of Children's Services and Executive Manager Learning Estate.

As the report to go before committee states that pupil figures are "monitored throughout the year", we find it somewhat puzzling that current pupil figures have not been quoted, nor the fact that, given the figures stated by SIC officials last November, the Cullivoe Primary School does not currently meet their own mothballing criteria.

We are delighted to have been able to facilitate an increased roll at our school, in line with the stated action within our current development plan to increase the resident population of North Yell by 10% by 2027.

We would also like it noted that projected pupil figures for our school show a rise well beyond 20% of the artificial capacity figure currently being used by the SIC, without any further intervention by NYDC. However, it is our intention to undertake projects that will raise the school roll even further.

As the SIC are aware, there is current and ongoing action by NYDC to increase housing supply in the area, both in the short and medium term. As part of this we will shortly be submitting applications to examine the development of two community housing projects. The aim of this will primarily be to bring families and workers into North Yell, which will not only increase demand for places at our school, but also address skills shortages and vacancies locally, including SIC vacancies.

Our ability to undertake projects such as this has been greatly enhanced by the track record and income we have generated through previous community projects, including the Garth Windfarm, and the Cullivoe Industrial Estate and Marina. Projects which not only fit well with our motto of Enterprise, Initiative and Self-Help, but have also been used by the SIC as examples of excellent community development.

A number of these projects have been achieved against a background of development restrictions placed on Cullivoe by the SIC, whilst we await our ever-delayed new road. These restrictions have not only obstructed NYDC projects, but also those of businesses and individuals, including house building. This has further served to facilitate depopulation, and what we view as a temporary fall in our school roll.

We both deserve and expect the support of our local authority to help us sustain and grow our community. However, this is the third time in recent memory the SIC has attempted to take our school from us. This coupled with ongoing development restrictions lead us to wonder if the council motto should not be hindrance, inconsistency and half-truths?

As a community we stand firmly behind our Parent Council in opposing the current mothballing process being inflicted on our school, and question, given the increased school roll, why it is even being pursued?

We would ask the SIC to consider the stress and uncertainty that is yet again unnecessarily being placed on our community, particularly the parents, pupils and staff at our school, as well as the valuable SIC staff time and financial resources that are being wasted in pursuit of an action based on historic rather than current data.