

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES  
CONSULTATION REPORT**

**PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**Please share your views, comments or alternative proposals with us before 19 July 2019 at:-**

Eccles Leitholm School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA; or

Email Address: [schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk); or

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholmconsultation>

# SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS CONSULTATION REPORT

## Introduction

- 1.1 This Consultation Report has been issued as part of a statutory consultation process required in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (**2010 Act**). The 2010 Act sets out the consultation process that local authorities must follow when proposing a permanent change to any of their schools – such as a closure, relocation or change of catchment area.
- 1.2 The 2010 Act also sets out the process, duties and considerations that a Council must comply with when considering the closure of a rural school. Eccles Leitholm Primary School is defined as a Remote Rural School in accordance with the Scottish Government's Rural School List May 2017<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.3 This consultation has been undertaken following a decision by Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee on 7 November 2017 to progress the consultation process in respect of a proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School and the subsequent rezoning of its catchment area.
- 1.4 This Consultation Report, in conjunction with the Proposal Paper and Options Appraisal (both attached as **Appendix 1**), details the Council's compliance with the terms of the 2010 Act.

## Proposal Paper

- 1.5 A Proposal Paper detailing the proposals and the Council's reasons for making the proposals was published on 14 March 2019. A copy of the Options Analysis that had been undertaken by Council officers prior to making the closure proposal was included as an appendix to Proposal Paper. The Options Appraisal considers, in detail, all a reasonable alternatives to closure.
- 1.6 A copy of the Proposal Paper was made available free of charge in these locations: –
  - Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
  - Coldstream Primary School, Coldstream, TD12 4DN
  - Swinton Primary School, Swinton, TD11 3JJ
  - Berwickshire High School, Duns, TD11 3QG
  - Coldstream Library, Gateway Centre, Coldstream, TD12 4AE

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm>.

## Advertising of the Consultation Process

- 1.7 The publication of the Proposal Paper was advertised in Southern Reporter, on the week commencing 18 March 2019, providing the dates for the consultation period and the public meeting. There were also press releases made and social media postings at the start of the consultation process, before the public meeting and before the end of the consultation period.
- 1.8 Formal notice of the proposal was sent by Letter or email to:
  - the parents/carers of the children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment area and all children who attend Swinton Primary School, Coldstream Primary School and Berwickshire High School;
  - the Parent Councils of the affected schools;

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<sup>1</sup> [Scottish Government Rural School List](#)

- the parent/carers of any children from the Eccles Leitholm Primary School catchment area who are likely to attend Primary School within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- the staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the affected schools;
- the Community Councils in the affected area;
- Community Planning Partnership named partners;
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

### **Length of Consultation period**

1.9 The consultation for the proposal ran from 14 March 2019 and ended on 10 May 2019 (both dates inclusive). This period allowed for the statutory minimum of 30 school days. There were 24 responses and a letter received from the Headteacher of Swinton Primary School received in respect of this statutory consultation, both on line and in writing. The responses are summarised and responded to in **Section 4** below.

### **Public meetings**

1.10 A public meeting was held on:

**25 April 2019 at 7pm at Eccles Village Hall, Eccles (14 members of the community attended along with Councillor John Greenwell)**

Minutes were taken at the meeting and views were sought following a presentation being given. Copies of the meeting minutes are included as **Appendix 2** (which includes a copy of the presentation).

### **Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

1.11 Meetings were held with pupils from the former Eccles Leitholm catchment area, now attending Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School and staff at Coldstream Primary School who had formerly worked at Eccles Leitholm. A summary of these discussions is in **Section 3**.

### **Involvement of Education Scotland**

1.12 Education Scotland was notified in advance of this Statutory Consultation process being approved. On completion of the Statutory Consultation period, a copy of the Proposal Paper was sent by Scottish Borders Council to Education Scotland. Education Scotland also received a copy of all relevant additional materials, minutes of public meeting, a summary of the written representations and replies received by the Council during the consultation period.

1.13 Education Scotland has prepared a report on the educational aspects of the Proposal, based on the representations and documents mentioned above as well as their interviews with pupils, parents, staff, and associated schools. In preparing their report, Education Scotland visited the affected schools and reasonable enquiries as they considered appropriate. Their report can be found at **Appendix 4** and also on the Education Scotland Website [Education Scotland Consultation Reports](#). Education Scotland state in their report that the proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School is of potential educational benefit. The report also states that the Council have reasonably concluded that re-opening Eccles Leitholm Primary School is not a viable alternative.

- 1.14 The Issues raised in the Education Scotland Report with regards to Eccles Leitholm Primary School being permanently closed and the catchment being rezoned to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School and the Council's responses are set out in **Section 5** of this Consultation Report.

### **Preparation of Public Consultation Report**

- 1.15 The Council has reviewed the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, the discussions from the public meeting, comments from pupils and staff and all the responses received during the consultation period. This Consultation Report has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services team as a result. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats. It will be available on the Council web-site and from Council Headquarters, public libraries in the vicinity of the affected schools, as well as the affected schools and the Eccles Village Hall in Eccles, free of charge. Anyone who made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School was mothballed by Scottish Borders Council in 2016, following a sustained and dramatic fall in the school roll, with the catchment area being temporarily rezoned to Coldstream Primary School.
- 2.2 In February 2016 the Council's Executive (Education) Committee agreed to commence a School Estate Review process regarding the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like. As part of the Review, the Council was required to consider schools that had been mothballed and what should happen with them. In November 2017 the decision was made by the Executive Committee to progress to the next stage of the consultation process in respect of the mothballed schools.
- 2.3 As Eccles Leitholm Primary School is deemed a Remote Rural School in terms of the 2010 Act, the Council is required to have special regard to a number of factors before formulating a proposal for closure. Accordingly the Council considered all reasonable alternative options to closure of the School and a copy of the Options Appraisal is attached in the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.4 The Options Appraisal considered:-
- the educational benefits of all the options;
  - pupil projections;
  - demographics of the area;
  - the level of proposed development in the area;
  - opportunities for catchment area amendments;
  - impact on the rural community and the role of the school in the community;
  - Safe Routes to School and travel arrangements;
  - impact on pupils in the catchment area;
  - impact on staff;
  - impact on pupils in other schools in the area;
  - rural impact of proposals;
  - financial impact of proposals; and
  - impact on the environment.
- 2.5 The Options Appraisal concluded that closure of the school was the most reasonable option and accordingly a Proposal Paper was prepared detailing the closure proposal, with the catchment area being permanently rezoned to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School. A statutory consultation process commenced on 14 March 2019.
- 2.6 The detailed reasoning for this proposal is set out in the attached Proposal Paper. The Proposal Paper states that there are positive Educational Benefits for current and future pupils within the

Eccles Leitholm Primary School catchment area and for the staff of the schools within the area. The Proposal Paper also considers the impact of the proposed closure on the Community.

## **PUPILS AND STAFF – ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

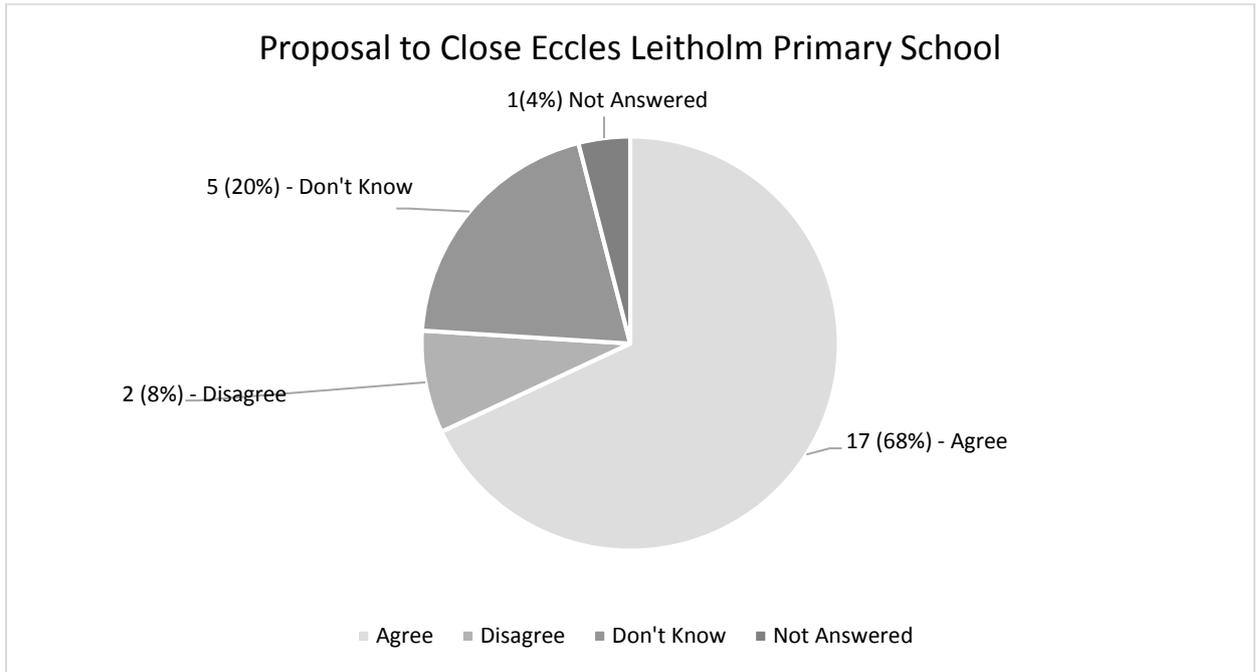
- 3.1 Discussions were held with a group of pupils at both Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) and staff who had previously worked at Eccles Leitholm.
- 3.2 Key points raised at these discussions with pupils were:
- The children that had attended Eccles Leitholm spoke fondly of their time and experiences at the school.
  - The children said the facilities were not great at Eccles Leitholm and that they had used the village hall for PE
  - None of the children would chose to attend Eccles Leitholm if it re-opened as they were all happy with their learning experiences and opportunities that they had at their current primary schools.
  - The children at Swinton wanted the Council to provide transport to their school as they were not happy with the safety of the current drop off and pick up arrangements.
  - Pupils considered that providing transport from Leitholm to Swinton would cut down the amount of single car journeys which would not only be safer but better for the environment.
- 3.3 The key point from the discussions with 2 former member of staff from Eccles Leitholm were:-
- The staff member were very sad and disappointed about the proposal to close the school, they were very fond of the school and had great memories of working at the school;
  - While there was a great deal of pride about the school, both staff members considered that closure was probably inevitable as the demographics of the area had changed and parents had made choices to send their children to other schools;
  - The staff were very positive about the learning experiences and opportunities that the children had at Eccles Leitholm but understood that parental choices had led to the roll dropping and they considered it highly unlikely that there would be any demand for the school to re-open.

## **RESPONSES**

- 4.1 There were 25 responses made during the consultation period in respect of the proposals. The key points raised within the written representations regarding the proposed closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School were:-

**Do you agree with the proposal to permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School?**

25 responses were received.



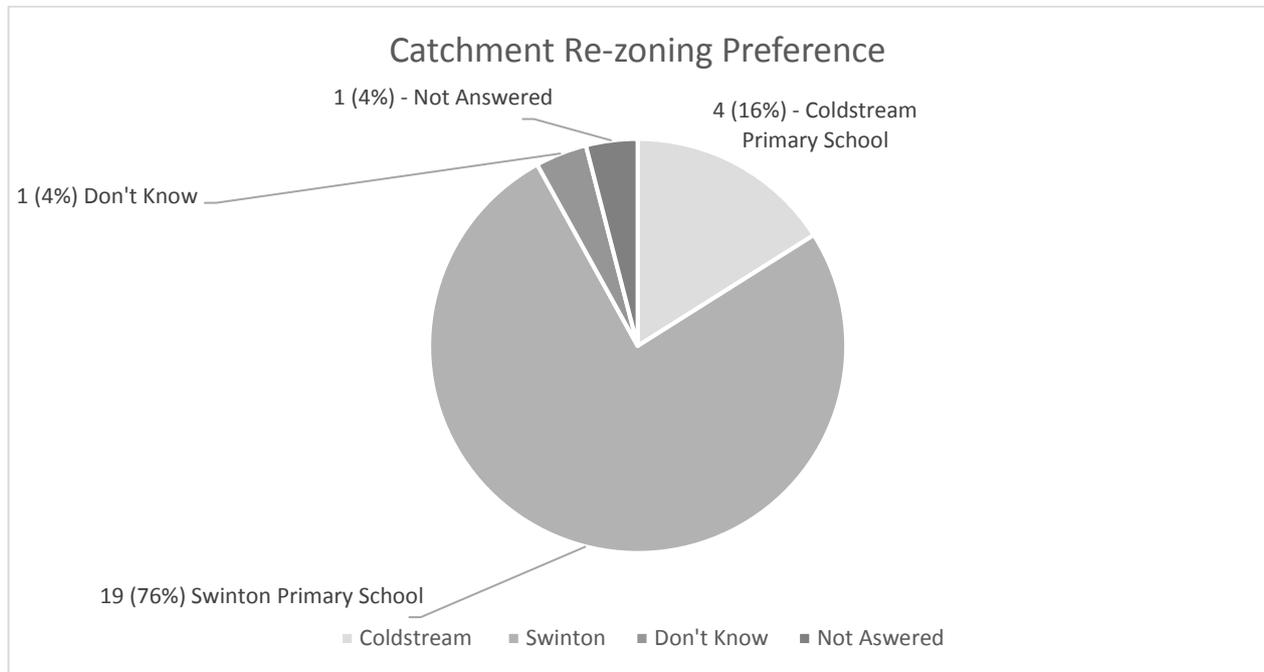
Questionnaire Comments	Council Responses
<p><i>The school has managed with small number for over 50 odd years, had a much better education in a small school.</i></p>	<p>Noted. Unfortunately the numbers of pupils attending the school fell to a level that led both parents and SBC to have concerns about the educational opportunities and experiences that the children could receive at the school. The parents decided to submit placement requests to attend other schools. During this consultation process Council officers have been unable to identify demand from parents for the school to re-open.</p>
<p><i>When the pupil numbers fell so low we felt it was having a detrimental effect on our child's education so we had no choice but to move them. The school should be closed and Swinton made the catchment.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>It is not viable to keep a school building mothballed indefinitely. The money would be better spent on other buildings that are in use. The numbers of pupils on the roll at Eccles Leitholm dropped rapidly over a short period of time. Rather than re-open the school I think it would be prudent to close it and re-draw the catchment areas.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>

<p><i>Agree, the numbers have been too low for an individual school to remain open given the other near options.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>
<p><i>I think that this should be a community centre for this area offering classes/meetings/a hub for people to use. It's a perfectly good useful building. It would be a shame if it gets into disrepair due to underuse.</i></p>	<p>Noted. If the decision is made to close the school, the building will pass to SBC's Estates Team. SBC officers will provide support to any community body or group who might wish to use the building or acquire it under the Community Empowerment Act.</p>
<p><i>All the primary school age children in the area are now settled in other schools and I do not think that parents/carers would move their children back to the school.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>As it has been mothballed for 3 years it will be logical to close it and reallocate the catchment area to another small school to maintain its viability</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>Despite this being inevitable I believe that measures should have been put in place years ago to prevent this from happening. As far back as 2013 it was obvious when things started to go wrong. The main reason for numbers dropping was due to staff changes and mismanagement as a result of those changes. Parents became dissatisfied and protested by changing to other schools in the area.</i></p> <p><i>Perhaps in future where schools have a diminishing roll, more effort should be made to discover why instead of just accepting the situation. Whilst closures may be the desired option for council cutbacks, ultimately centralising facilities into one cluster, it is the rural communities that suffer the consequences of a closure.</i></p>	<p>Noted. There were placement requests being submitted before the roll numbers fell to one class. SBC officers consider that once a school roll falls to one class then often parents decide to submit placement requests. In 2016 SBC commenced a School Estate Review, this involved working with every school with a roll of under 50 pupils. School rolls are monitored on an ongoing basis and if a roll is dropping Council officers will work with the school and the parents to understand why and develop sustainability plans for the school to boost its roll and sustainability.</p>
<p><i>It's very sad that this is happening but I did find because of the small amount of numbers when my children were there it was a big shock to them moving to busier schools because of socialisation.</i></p>	<p>Noted. SBC is working to ensure that there is greater support for pupils with their transition to High School. This support is tailored to individual requirements.</p>
<p><i>I understand that a school is only viable if there is a certain threshold of pupil numbers.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p><i>In my opinion, when the school roll dropped to 8, the children were not being provided with the education they were entitled to. Furthermore the school has deteriorated, with no security being provided.</i></p> <p><i>It was admitted at the meeting on 25.04.2019 that a school that has been mothballed has never re-opened.</i></p> <p><i>If the school is to be offered to for community use the costs of refurbishment would be horrendous.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
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**If Eccles Leitholm Primary School is to close, which school do you consider that the catchment area should be re-zoned to:-**

There were 25 responses



Response Comments	Council Response
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>A number of pupils already chose this school, it would provide them with transport and greater sense of community with us. It also means a greater number of pupils to secure the future of Swinton Primary School as well.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Swinton is a small rural school. It has adequate capacity to include this area. People chose</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p><i>Eccles/Leitholm for their children which was a small rural school, it fits to keep rural schools with rural schools.</i></p>	
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Eccles/Leitholm was a small, rural school (as was Leitholm school before it). I would like my children to continue to attend a small, rural school and I believe Swinton is most able to replicate that environment. My eldest daughter has already started at Swinton in P1 and loves it. Three other P1s from our village have also started at Swinton this year, making it feel like our community school as well. Leitholm and Swinton have long standing connections as well which have been strengthened in recent years by the revival of the Swinton Summer festival.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>It is quite clear what parents' wishes are in the village. The council need only look at their own data to assess the situation. Most of the primary age children in Leitholm currently attend Swinton primary, including six P1's one P7 and one P4 Such a shame the council have waited so long to address this matter. Now maybe we can finally get some school transport put on.</i></p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>I would suggest that the previous catchment for Eccles Leitholm should be included with Swinton PS. That would increase the numbers there which has the classroom capacity to do so. Coldstream PS is a large school and does not need extra pupils. Swinton PS is closer than Coldstream to Eccles and Leitholm</i></p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Swinton is better situated and would benefit from more pupils!</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Pupils would still be involved in a "small school "setting. There are still going to</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Leitholm is closer to Swinton than Coldstream and yet we fall to Coldstream catchment. It doesn't make sense. I'm sure other rural areas are the same.</i></p>	Noted
<p><i>Whichever school has the room and facilities makes sense. If necessary the children need to be split up between the schools.</i></p>	Noted.
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Swinton is the nearest school to Leitholm and I feel we should be supporting the small schools rather than attending large schools and seeing the closure of the smaller schools</i></p>	Noted
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Although it is sad that the school has had to close, in order to safeguard other rural schools, such as Swinton, it is important that the rezoning encourages continued growth and sustainability for those remaining schools where school roll is at times low. Swinton Primary School is at the heart of Swinton village and has strong community ties, a wider catchment will ensure the continued success of the school. It will also help all those pupils and families who have already chosen to travel from the Leitholm area.</i></p>	Noted.
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>My son did go to Swinton for his last 2 years of primary and I feel Swinton would benefit for a small wee village and keep the school thriving, Coldstream is busy enough and further away</i></p>	Noted
<p><u>Swinton</u></p> <p><i>Giving Swinton the Eccles catchment area would protect the future of the primary school, it has the capacity for the small numbers that were at Eccles</i></p>	Noted.
<p><i>Eccles/Leitholm is clearly no more. The two villages should then not be classed as one entity. Ideally, Eccles should be zoned with the Kelso cluster due to the proximity and postal address (Roxburghshire). Families moving to the village would, naturally, choose the schooling closest to their home regardless of transport available to the catchment schools. Most parents in Eccles over the last 15 years</i></p>	Noted. Amending the cluster catchment would require a much larger statutory consultation process involving the whole of the Kelso and Berwickshire clusters. It is not currently SBC's intention to revise secondary catchment areas.

<i>have chosen to educate their children in Kelso despite the financial burden of transporting them there.</i>	
<u>Swinton</u> <i>As in the previous comment to reallocate the Leitholm -Eccles catchment area to Swinton this would maintain and likely improve its viability.</i>	Noted
<u>Swinton</u> <i>Swinton PS has the capacity to take more children and at the moment the majority of children from Leitholm come to Swinton PS. If it was to change it would mean these children would get a bus which would help their parents. Swinton is a big family who want to keep expanding!!</i>	Noted.
<i>As stated at the public meeting 77% of the Eccles Leitholm catchment have opted for Kelso Cluster schools. In my opinion they should be given this option.</i>	Noted. Amending the cluster catchment would require a much larger statutory consultation process involving the whole of the Kelso and Berwickshire clusters. It is not currently SBC's intention to revise secondary catchment areas.

**One of the alternative proposals that Council officers considered was the re-opening of Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.**

<b>Response Comments</b>	<b>Council Response</b>
<i>It would be great to see the school open but more families would need to move to the villages</i>	Noted. Unfortunately there has been no identifiable demand from parents for the school to reopen, during the consultation process
<i>If there is any chance of the school reopening and being sustainable then I feel it would require a larger catchment</i>	Noted.
<i>This will not happen. Too much time has elapsed since the mothballing and parents are happy with their choices of alternative school. Also, the financial burden on the council dictates that this would never be a reality.</i>	Noted.
<i>I think small schools have huge positives but when the size of school is such that it is only one teacher the children are not get the best education that they could be</i>	Noted.

<p><i>It would make sense provided there is enough children attending to make it a viable idea.</i></p>	<p>Noted. Unfortunately there has been no identifiable demand from parents for the school to reopen, during the consultation process</p>
<p><i>Would there be sufficient children to make this a viable alternative?</i></p>	<p>Noted. Unfortunately there has been no identifiable demand from parents for the school to reopen, during the consultation process</p>
<p><i>Doubt this will work longer term due to attendee count.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>There are still going to be problems due to lack of “nursery” provision and also the proximity to Kelso motivates parents to gravitate in that direction.</i></p>	<p>Noted. A new Early Learning and Childcare setting will open at Swinton Primary School in 2020.</p>
<p><i>It is not justifiable to spend money on opening a building for such a small number of pupils. The money would be better spent on Swinton PS if the pupils went there. Personally I think pupils benefit more educationally as part of a larger school. having about 7 pupils in a school in one class has many disadvantages</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>There aren't the pupil numbers to sustain it which is obvious. Why would the council wish to spend money on a school for a only a few pupils as it is schools budgets are squeezed and the parents end up funding play equipment, books, trips etc. Surely it does not make economic sense to reopen it. Parents don't wish their children to attend a school with only a handful of pupils</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>I would have concerns about the projected roll of the school and the possibility of future closure looming over the community. Too small and I feel the school can be ineffective at fostering a variety of relationships and exposing young people to diversity (equally I have concerns about schools that are too big and friendship groups become cliquey). Eccles/Leitholm also was always in the funny position of having some of its pupils head to Kelso High for S1 and some to BHS thereby splitting friendship groups which is not ideal.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

One of the options that Council officers considered was to reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with an extended catchment area. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.

Response Comments	Council Response
<i>Since the school was closed parents have all made other arrangements so why would we suddenly pull our children out of a settled environment if you do reopen it? It would make no economic sense to reopen it.</i>	Noted.
<i>I don't think this is a good idea as it will impact other rural schools.</i>	Noted.
<i>This may work it would be lovely to see children back in the building, I think it would be hard being in between Swinton and Ednam</i>	Noted.
<i>To make the school sustainable a larger catchment area would be a must but this could be detrimental to the other local primary schools</i>	Unfortunately there has been no identifiable demand from parents for the school to reopen, during the consultation process
<i>This will not happen. Too much time has elapsed since the mothballing and parents are happy with their choices of alternative school. Also, the financial burden on the council dictates that this would never be a reality.</i>	Noted.
<i>This option would potentially reduce pupil numbers at neighbouring schools.</i>	Noted.
<i>With Swinton numbers improving to then take part of our catchment to give to Eccles would just cause a similar problem to happen at Swinton which seems silly</i>	Noted.
<i>Possibly a good option</i>	Noted. Unfortunately there has been no identifiable demand from parents for the school to reopen, during the consultation process
<i>This would negatively impact the other small schools such as Swinton</i>	Noted.
<i>Can't think that this would impact as it would mainly contain farms and do not think this would accrue any significant increase in numbers.</i>	Noted.
<i>I think it would be more sensible to extend the catchment area for Swinton which is a school currently open and about to have works to improve the building. If you re-opened Eccles</i>	Noted.

<i>Leitholm and extended the catchment I would suggest that it should not affect Swinton PS but reduce the area for Coldstream and reduce the pressure there.</i>	
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**One of the options that Council officers considered was to continue mothballing Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Please tell us if you have any comments or suggestions regarding this option.**

<b>Response Comments</b>	<b>Council Response</b>
<i>If there are no immediate plans to reopen Eccles and with Swinton and Ednam not far away the building should be sold and the money split between the two schools and the catchment area split between the two schools.</i>	Noted.
<i>Could the building be used for extra curriculum so it's kept in use even a nursery would be good</i>	Noted. If the decision is made to close the school, the building will pass to SBC's Estates Team. SBC officers will provide support to any community body or group who might wish to use the building or acquire it under the Community Empowerment Act.
<i>This will not happen. All the while the school remains empty and unused, its condition deteriorates. The council will want to realise an asset before its value diminishes further.</i>	Noted.
<i>This option would make the building further deteriorate without regular maintenance.</i>	Noted.
<i>Continuing the mothballing of Eccles/Leitholm would only make the building in a worse state of repair</i>	Noted.
<i>Again, it depends on the amount of children attending to make the school pay</i>	Noted.
<i>Not my first thought, feel it could be used for other uses.</i>	Noted.
<i>Why maintain a building when it's not needed? Get shot of it.</i>	Noted.
<i>Main worry would be the deterioration of the building.</i>	Noted.
<i>This means that money (which is desperate short supply) would have to be spent on the safety of a building not in use. If it is closed permanently then the building can be sold off and used for a different purpose. This would bring in finance to SBC and also benefit the village and not have a disused site.</i>	Noted.
<i>No! You mothballed the school waited until there were about 4/5 pupils and then they got transport put on to their choice of school. Meanwhile all the parents who had already pulled their children out because the situation</i>	Noted. The decision to make Coldstream the catchment school at the point of mothballing Eccles Leitholm was based on many factors including :-

<p><i>was not good from an education and social point of view were left to fund their own transport. The council made Coldstream the catchment school even though no one in Leitholm wants to send their children there. This whole situation has been very unfair. I hope the council will finally take notice of what parents want.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The schools were partner schools with a shared head teacher</li> <li>• Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed Coldstream for activities and facilities</li> <li>• The schools were in the same secondary school cluster</li> <li>• The improvement plans, curriculum and teaching plans were aligned across the 2 schools.</li> </ul> <p>Council officers have been monitoring the placement requests patterns and that is why we are consulting with parents to establish what the catchment preference is. All pupils will receive transport to their catchment school if they live more than 2.5 miles from that school.</p>
<p><i>Nope it's a waste</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>I do worry about the state of the building having been shut up for so long now. I would imagine it is very musty and damp inside and would need considerable investment already. Further "mothballing" would only perpetuate this condition. I believe the building should be sold on or used for some other function.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>Seems like a waste of resources unless you are of the knowledge a significant number of children will rerun to the area in the future</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>Continuation of mothballing Eccles Leitholm School would result in further deterioration of the building. There has been no refurbishment for the last 3 years and unlikely to be any.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

**Please tell us if you have any further comments or alternative suggestions regarding the proposals**

<p><b>Response Comments</b></p>	<p><b>Council Response</b></p>
<p><i>I think the building should be used and maintained for different activities so it doesn't go to waste</i></p>	<p>Noted. If the decision is made to close the school, the building will pass to SBC's Estates Team. SBC officers will provide support to any community body or group who might wish to use the building or acquire it under the Community Empowerment Act.</p>
<p><i>Split Eccles catchment between Ednam and Swinton to help support and future proof to local very highly thought of primary schools.</i></p>	<p>Noted. Re-zoning part of the catchment to Ednam would result in the part of the catchment being re-zoned to a different High School cluster. This amendment would require a much larger statutory consultation process involving the whole of the Kelso and Berwickshire clusters.</p>
<p><i>Eccles/Leitholm is clearly no more. The two villages should then not be classed as one</i></p>	<p>Noted. Re-zoning part of the catchment to Ednam would result in the part of the catchment being re-</p>

<p><i>entity. Ideally, Eccles should be zoned with the Kelso cluster due to the proximity and postal address (Roxburghshire). Families moving to the village would, naturally, choose the schooling closest to their home regardless of transport available to the catchment schools.</i></p> <p><i>Most parents in Eccles over the last 15 years have chosen to educate their children in Kelso despite the financial burden of transporting them there.</i></p>	<p>zoned to a different High School cluster. This amendment would require a much larger statutory consultation process involving the whole of the Kelso and Berwickshire clusters.</p>
<p><i>Get it back open</i></p>	<p>Noted. Unfortunately there is no identifiable demand for the school to be re-opened from parents.</p>
<p><i>I currently have a concern about the placement requests at Swinton Primary as there are at least six young people currently attending from Leitholm; transport is a major issue with considerable safety concerns as there is no school transportation from our village. There is no appropriate parking for school drop offs and pickups and parents end up parking on the road bend creating an unsafe area for drivers. Obviously we do our best to keep our children safe but I do fear it is only a matter of time before an accident occurs. A dedicated school transport would reduce traffic congestion if the official catchment was changed.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><i>At the public meeting the proposal were quite clear. People of the community were given their say. Several questions were put forward and answered fairly. Until the statutory time elapses we will need to wait for your decision.</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>

## 5 LETTER FROM SWINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

5.1 The Headteacher from Swinton Primary School submitted a letter following engagement with staff, pupils and parents to ascertain their views on this Consultation and the proposals. A copy of the letter is attached as **Appendix 3**. The main points raised in the letter can be summarised:-

- The Swinton parents are in agreement that the villages of Eccles, Leitholm and Swinton are close to each other, not just in a geographical sense but consider that their communities are closely connected and identify closely with each other. There is deep rooted feeling that Swinton and Leitholm have long standing connections and traditions.
- It is agreed that the re-zoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment to Swinton would help ensure the sustainability of the Swinton and reduce the possibility of closure. Swinton parents are keen for the roll to stay over 50 and avoid falling into the School Estate Review for schools with less than 50 pupils. There are 6 children currently attending Swinton from Leitholm through placing

requests, this has increased the roll to over 50. The parents have stated their wish for the children to remain at Swinton regardless of the decisions reached in this Consultation. There is a clear preference for a smaller community based school.

- The majority of families live in villages or rural areas and have a strong affinity for rural life which is echoed in the values for Swinton Primary. Swinton is closer to Leitholm than Coldstream and the connecting road provides a safe route for pupils all year round.
- A Leitholm pupil considers that re-zoning to Swinton is common sense as Swinton is closer (4 miles rather than the 6 miles to Coldstream). The Council providing one vehicle to transport the children from Leitholm to Swinton would be safer and more environmentally friendly.
- The potential of splitting the Eccles Leitholm catchment was suggested between Swinton and Coldstream.

## 6 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

6.1 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was provided by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal. Education Scotland's report is attached as **Appendix 4**

6.2 Issues raised and comments made in the Education Scotland Report with regards to the proposed closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School are set out below:

<b>Education Scotland Comments</b>	<b>Council Responses</b>
<i>The council gave due consideration to the educational aspects of the proposal to close the school permanently and re-zone the catchment accordingly</i>	Noted.
<i>Overall the feedback from stakeholders supports the council's plan to close the school permanently.</i>	Noted and agreed. This reflects the feedback received during the consultation period.
<i>Parents in the two villages are unlikely to send their children to Eccles Leitholm should it be re-opened.</i>	Noted and agreed. This reflects the comments made by parents to Council officers during the consultations
<i>Several parents stated that they were happy with the current arrangements despite the travel involved.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>Several of those who responded to the consultation recognise that the school is not viable and is unlikely to be so for the foreseeable future.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>Parents, children and staff overwhelmingly supported the proposal by the council to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School.</i>	Noted and agreed.
<i>A few of those who responded to the consultation raised the issue about the future of the building. This was also raised at the public meeting. However, a few local residents thought that the</i>	Noted and agreed. If the decision is made to close the school, the building will transfer from Education to Estates within SBC. Estates will liaise with the

<p><i>school had already been permanently closed and that it made sense to make a final decision about the school's future. It was suggested at the public meeting that the closure could be an opportunity, under the auspices of the Community Empowerment Act, for the building to be used for community activity. It was agreed that a period of 6 months should be allowed for any interested parties to develop of business plan.</i></p>	<p>community regarding the future of the building. Support will also be available from the Council to any party wishing to make a bid in terms of the Community Empowerment Act</p>
<p><i>The Council considered an option to reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its existing catchment, on the basis of lack of community demand and projected pupil number, reasonably concluded that this was not a viable alternative.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p>
<p><i>As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. The council identified the reasons for the closure of the school and gave due consideration to the alternatives. They took account of the local, social and economic impact of the closure and concluded that it was unlikely that any of these would have an adverse impact on the area. Because the school has been mothballed for some time, the local community are keen that a decision is made about its future. The council recognise that the re-zoning of the catchment area of Eccles Leitholm may result in some changes to travelling arrangements, although at this stage the numbers are unknown. Transport is currently provided for children attending Coldstream Primary School. The Council have consulted with parents to establish which school they consider that the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be permanently re-zoned to (Coldstream or Swinton). Transport will be provided to the permanent catchment school and exiting transport arrangements to Coldstream will continue to be honoured for current pupils and their siblings, in the event that the catchment is to be permanently re-zoned to Swinton Primary School. Children from the current catchment also attend a range of different schools in line with parental choice. The council's analysis of postcodes for</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Council officers undertook a detailed analysis of the all the alternative option to closure. A consultation regarding the catchment zones has been carried out and indicates a strong preference for Swinton. A formal proposal to Council will be made following the 3 weeks consultation period on this Consultation Report.</p>

<p><i>school-age children indicates that there is not a significant demand for places at a re-opened Eccles Leitholm Primary School.</i></p>	
<p><i>HM Inspectors consider that there is no educational benefit in re-opening Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Children from the current catchment already attend a number of other schools in line with parental choice and this is unlikely to change. The current arrangement where children are experiencing a variety of learning and teaching experiences may not be possible in a school with very low numbers. The continued mothballing will result in further deterioration of the building. This could lead to the council spending monies unnecessarily in terms of keeping it wind and watertight. The move to permanent closure of the school will allow other options for use by the community to be explored.</i></p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Making a proposal to close a school is never a decision taken lightly and is only following extensive analysis and pre-consultation works</p>

## INACCURACY IN THE PROPOSAL PAPER

- 7.1 One error has been identified in the Proposal Paper which indicated that a new Early Learning and Childcare setting would open at Swinton Primary School in 2019. This is incorrect as the setting will open in August 2020 and will provide 1140 funded hours of pre-school childcare each year for 3 and 4 years old and all eligible 2 year olds. This error is not considered material to the Consultation process and was corrected at the public meeting on 25 April 2019.

## CONSULTATION REPORT NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 This Consultation Report will be published at on 19 June 2019 and is available for further consideration until 12 July 2019. **The intention is that interested parties should have time to consider the Consultation Report and if they so wish, to raise concerns and pose alternative solutions by making written or electronic submissions to:**

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation  
 Children and Young People's Services  
 Scottish Borders Council Headquarters  
 Newtown St Boswells  
 Melrose  
 TD6 0SA; or

Email Address: [schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk)

Consultation Site:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholmconsultation>

If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member

of the community” etc. Responses from Parent Councils, Staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Scottish Borders Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.

For any written or electronic response to be considered it must be received by the Council no later than the last day of the consultation period, **12 July 2019**.

## Decision

- 8.2 This report together with all other relevant documentation will be considered by Scottish Borders Council who will be asked to make a decision at the full Council meeting on **29 August 2019**.

## Distribution

- 8.3 A copy of the Consultation Report will be made available free of charge for public consultation from **19 June 2019 to 12 July 2019** in these locations –

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- Coldstream Primary School, Coldstream, TD12 4DN
- Swinton Primary School, Swinton, TD11 3JJ
- Berwickshire High School, Duns, TD11 3QG
- Coldstream Library, Gateway Centre, Coldstream, TD12 4AE

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholmconsultation>

## SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

- 9.1 If Scottish Borders Council, as the Education Authority, makes a final decision to implement the proposal, it will notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. This must be done within 6 working days of that decision. The Education Authority must also publish on its website the fact that it has notified Scottish Ministers of its decision and of the period during which consultees have the opportunity to make representations to Ministers. For rural school closures, such as this, the Education Authority must also give notice of the reasons why the Council is satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for bringing forward the proposal.
- 9.2 The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. Within the first 3 weeks of that 8 week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8 week call-in process is known, the Authority cannot proceed to implement the proposal. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than eight weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- 9.3 If Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, they must refer it to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels for determination by a School Closure Review Panel. Scottish Borders Council as the Education Authority may not implement the proposal (wholly or partly) unless the Panel has granted consent to it (with or without conditions) and either the period for making an appeal to the Sheriff has expired or, if an appeal has been made, it has either been abandoned or the Sheriff has confirmed the Panel’s decision.

- 9.4 The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the proposal, refuse consent and remit the proposal back to Scottish Borders Council as the Education Authority or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally.
- 9.5 The Act, as amended, gives Ministers and School Closure Review Panels the right to call on advice from Education Scotland in relation to a proposal at the call-in or determination stage.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

- 10.1 Scottish Borders Council would like to thank all the members of the Community that have participated in this consultation process and also invite them to make any further comments, observations or suggestions regarding the proposals prior to the final decision is made by the Councillors on 29 August.
- 10.2 Please take this opportunity to have your say and share your comments at:-

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA; or

Email Address: [schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk)

Consultation Site:

<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholmconsultation>



**Stuart Easingwood**

Interim Service Director, Children & Young People's Services

19 June 2019

March 2019



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES  
STATUTORY CONSULTATION  
PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**CONSULTATION PERIOD**

**FROM 14 MARCH 2019 TO 10 MAY 2019**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**AT ECCLES VILLAGE HALL**

**ON 25 APRIL 2019 AT 7PM**

*This Proposal Paper has been issued by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.*

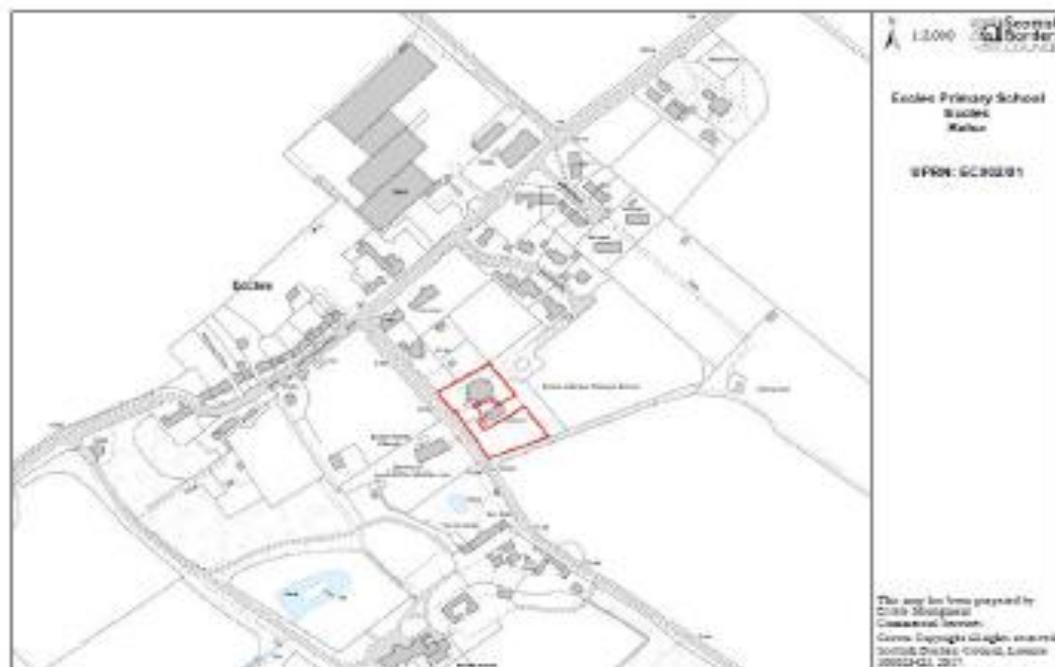
## THE PROPOSALS

- 1 It is proposed that, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation,:-
  - Eccles Leitholm Primary School (currently mothballed) is permanently closed on or around 20 August 2019; and
  - If Eccles Leitholm Primary School is closed, that its catchment area is permanently re-zoned to the catchment area of either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School (the Proposals).

## BACKGROUND

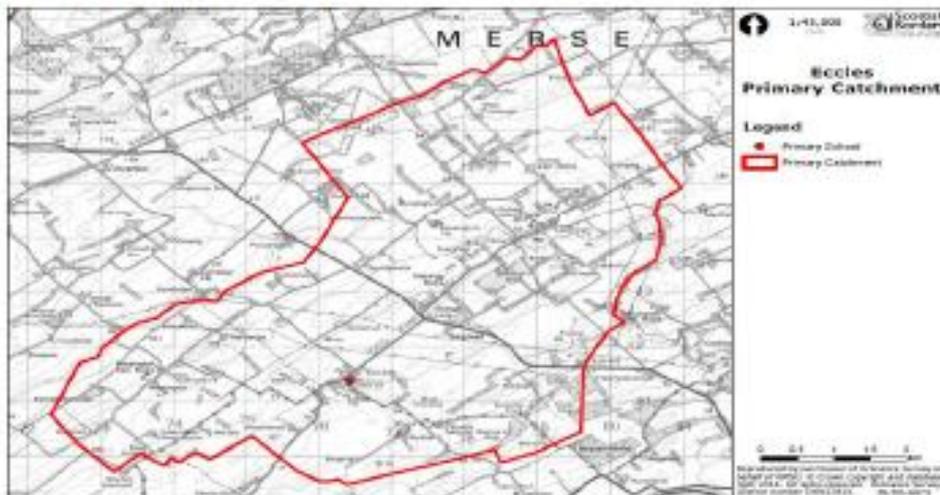
### 2 Eccles Leitholm Primary School

- 2.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School, Eccles, is a non-denominational primary school that opened in 1964 and had capacity for 50 pupils. The school is in the catchment for Berwickshire High School and lies within the Berwickshire learning cluster of schools. The school has been designated as an accessible rural school by the Scottish Government<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 Its location is shown on this map:-



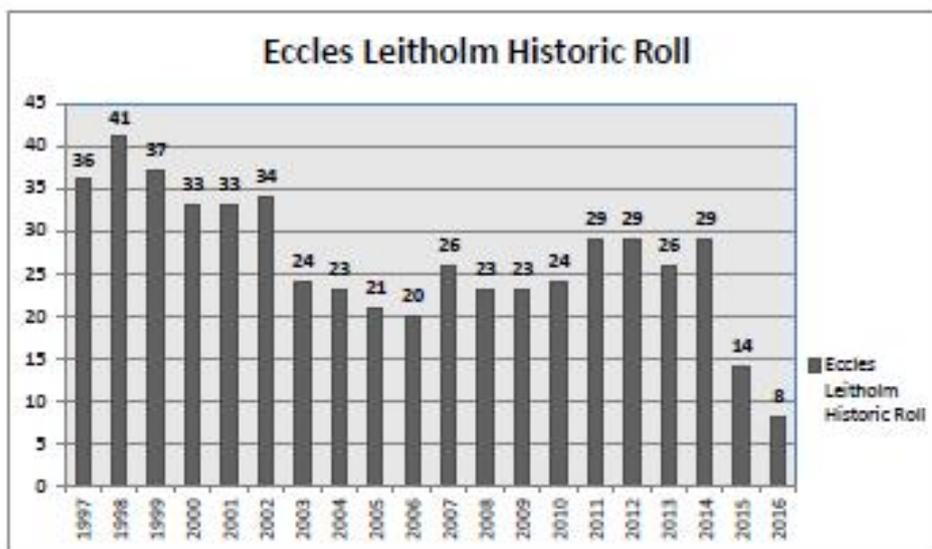
<sup>1</sup> [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

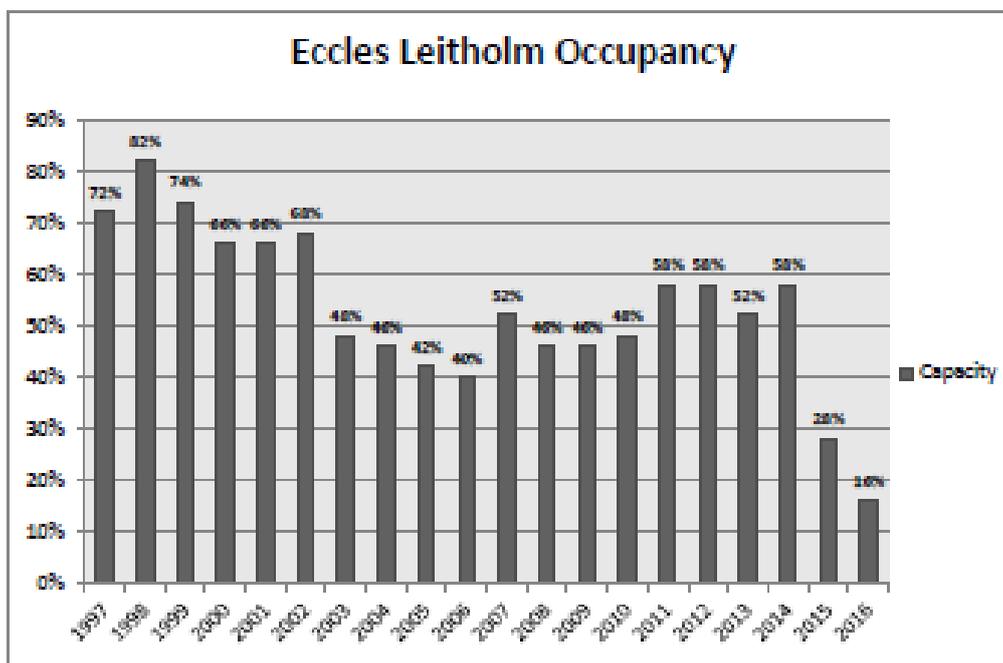
2.3 The catchment area is shown below:-



2.4 In August 2013 there were 29 pupils attending the school in 2 classes. The roll dropped dramatically in the next school year to 14 pupils (3 pupils had transitioned to high school, 6 placing requests had been made and 6 other pupils had left the area). Session 2015/16 started with a roll of 8, but this had decreased to 5 by April 2016. The School roll was forecast to fall to 3 pupils for 2016/17. Given the school capacity of 50 pupils this would have meant occupancy of the school was only 6%.

2.5 The historic school roll and occupancy levels are shown below:-



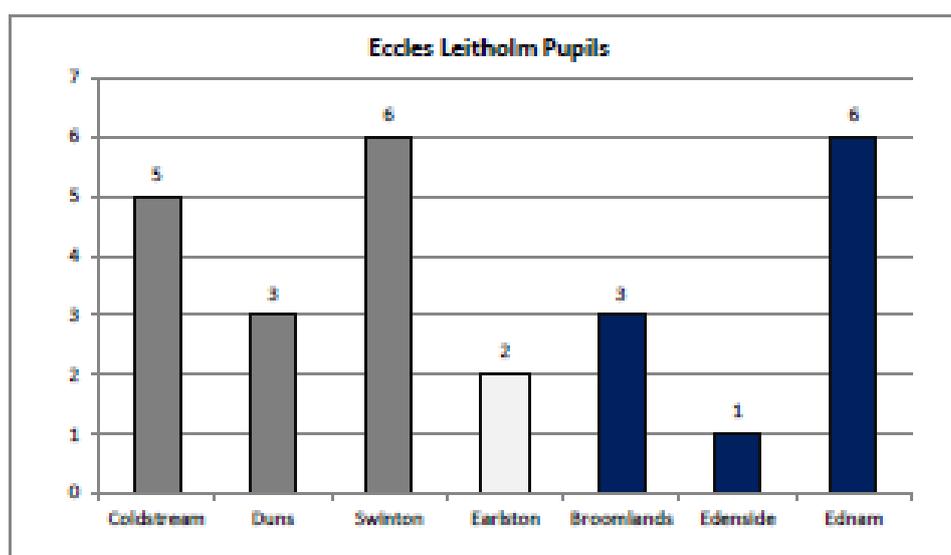


- 2.6 There had been an emerging pattern of placement requests to other schools, prior to mothballing.

	New Placing Requests	School	Roll	% of Catchment
2013 - 2014	2	Edenside PS	29	
	1	Duns PS		
	1	Broomlands PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>12%</b>
2014 - 2015	3	Duns PS	14	
	2	Ednam PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>			<b>30%</b>
2015 - 2016	2	Duns PS	8	
	1	Coldstream PS		
	1	Edenside PS		
	1	Swinton PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>38%</b>

- 2.7 In May 2016 there were 5 pupils at the school, with no pupils enrolled in P1-3. 2 of these pupils were in P7, so would be transitioning to high school during the summer. Given the considerable drop in the school roll, lack of enrolment at P1 for 3 years and number of placement requests being made, Council officers recognised that Eccles Leitholm Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the local councillors initially to consider all the options available regarding the school. It was recognised that there were challenges in providing a positive school experience to such a small roll and it was agreed that parental opinion should be sought.

- 2.8 Parents recognised a number of issues relating to the size of Eccles Leitholm and the impact that that could have on their children's education. These included difficulties for children to form wide friendship groups with similar interests; anticipated difficulties with transition to High School; lack of opportunities for games and team sports and lack of links into a network of clubs and activities. Potential educational benefits were discussed should the children be able to attend a larger primary school: greater opportunities for socialisation; collaborative learning and greater opportunities for participation in team activities and greater opportunities to experience the skills and abilities of a wider staff group. There was also recognition that the children were not able to fully participate in the Curriculum for Excellence as opportunities for collaboration and peer working among learners were limited.
- 2.9 Following these discussions, the families of the remaining pupils chose to make placing requests to other schools in the area, which were granted. As a result of these placing requests no pupils were enrolled to attend the school in the 2016/2017 session.
- 2.10 In May 2016, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee agreed that Eccles Leitholm Primary School be mothballed for an interim period. The position of the school was to be monitored on an ongoing basis; with a decision to be made regarding the future of the school once all options had been assessed.
- 2.11 It was clear that the placing requests over the preceding years were to a number of different schools (15 children attending 6 schools), as the Council was supporting choice as far as possible. Council officers considered a number of factors (distance, travel times, safe routes to school, transition, staff and parental wishes) before making a proposal regarding the temporary rezoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment.
- 2.12 Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easier transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.
- 2.13 There are currently 26 primary aged children living in the Eccles Leitholm catchment. These children attend 7 different primary schools located in the Berwickshire cluster (Coldstream, Duns and Swinton) and the Kelso (Broomlands, Edenside and Ednam) and Earlston clusters.



- 2.14 There currently 12 pre-school aged children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment who are attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings across several locations. Prior to mothballing there was not an ELC setting at Eccles Leitholm Primary School.
- 2.15 The condition survey was carried out on Eccles Leitholm Primary School in 2015 and the overall site is rated as Condition B Satisfactory (Performing adequately but showing minor defects). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.
- 2.16 The suitability of Eccles Leitholm Primary School prior to mothballing was categories as B (Satisfactory) with elements of C (Poor). Suitability is a more subjective assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the Impact these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.
- 2.17 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Leitholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for certain lessons and activities.

### 3 AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School is situated in Eccles, Berwickshire within the Scottish Borders. The village of Leitholm is a 2.5 miles to the northeast of Eccles. Both villages are located less than 7 miles from Coldstream. As can be seen across the Scottish Borders, the area has witnessed a change in local population demographics. We have analysed data derived from the National Records of Scotland. We have considered data from 2 larger areas which comprise the Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. While this data does not directly reflect actual movements within the catchment area, it reflects population changes in the larger area.

Year		Swinton Leitholm and Fogo Area	%	Gordon and Hume Area	%
2011	0 to 15	177	18%	212	21%
	16 to 64	611	64%	577	58%
	65+	173	18%	209	21%
	<b>All people</b>	<b>961</b>		<b>998</b>	
2017	0 to 15	132	15%	204	19%
	16 to 64	555	63%	615	58%
	65+	199	22%	250	23%
	<b>All people</b>	<b>886</b>		<b>1069</b>	

3.2 As the table above shows there has been a decline in the number of children within the area since the start of the decade, with the number of children in the Swinton, Leitholm and Fogo area declining by 25% and in Gordon and Hume by less than 4%. Overall the population in the Swinton and Leitholm area has only declined by 6% where the Gordon and Hume population has grown by 7%. Noticeably the population is aging in both areas.

3.3 The villages of Eccles & Leitholm fall within the Eastern Housing Market Area, while parts of the catchment area fall within the Central Housing Market Area, both as identified within the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2016 (LDP). The LDP allocates 2 housing sites within Eccles, namely: Cherryburn and Main Street. The former allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 7 units and the latter 5 units. One site is allocated within Leitholm, on Main Street. The allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 25 units. The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2017 programmes the 12 units in Eccles to be built in 2021 and 2022. This has been informed using past completion rates and the lack of developer interest to date. The larger site in Leitholm is programmed to release 5 units a year from 2021. This level of development could be estimated to add pupils to the school rolls. However, taking on board the programming contained within the HLA, the delivery of housing within the area could be spread over several LDP periods.

3.4 In terms of potential new business ventures in the area, there have been no enquiries to the council's business & economic development team. They have advised that there are unlikely to be any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles & Leitholm Primary school catchment area as a result of business growth.

#### 4 COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

4.1 Coldstream Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Coldstream and surrounding area. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017<sup>2</sup> classifies Swinton Primary School as "Accessible-rural".

<sup>2</sup> [Scottish Rural Schools List 2017](#)

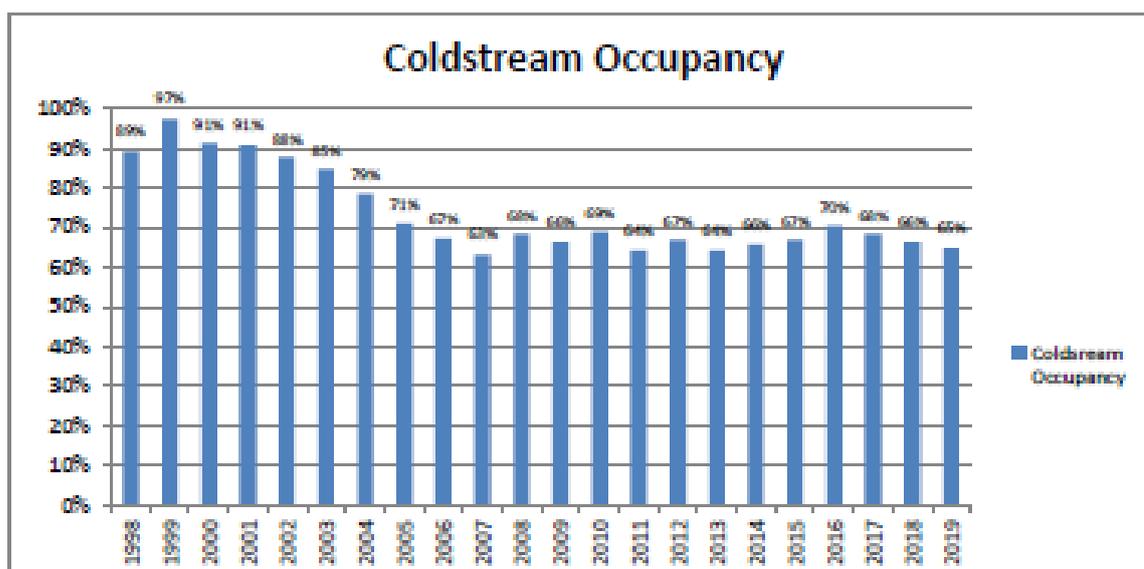
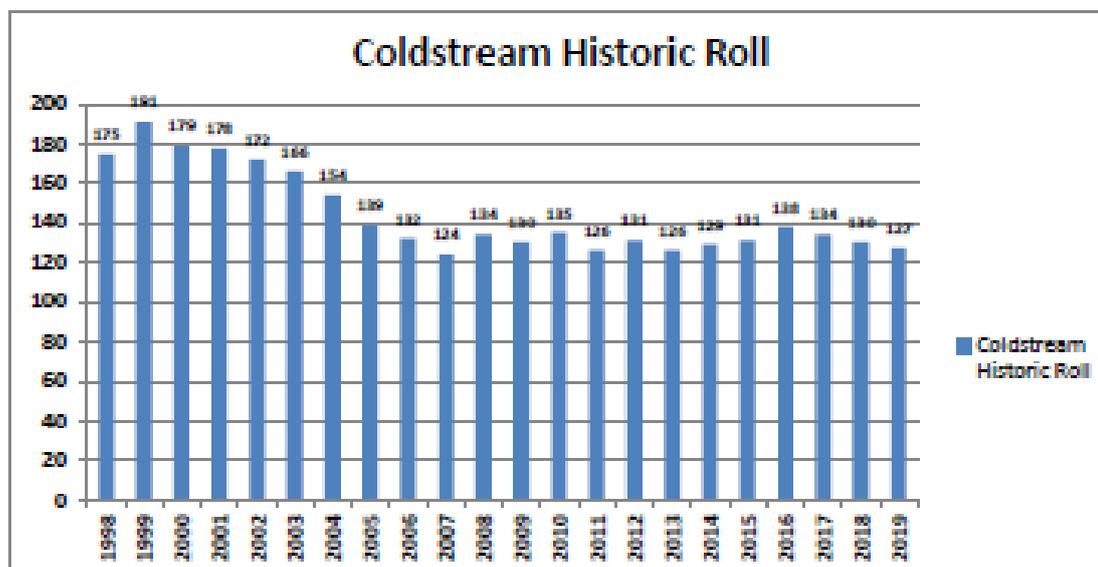
4.2 The location of Coldstream Primary School is shown here:



4.3 The catchment area for Coldstream Primary is shown here:-



4.4 The school has capacity for 196 pupils. The school roll is currently 127 which equates to 65% occupancy. The school roll has remained fairly steady over the last decade at an average occupancy of 67%.



4.5 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2016 and the overall site is rated as Condition C - Poor (Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately)<sup>3</sup>. A suitability survey was carried out in 2016 on Coldstream Primary School and it was rated C - Poor (Showing major problems and /or not operating optimally)<sup>4</sup>. Both surveys are undertaken on a 5 year cycle and data is reviewed and investment planned accordingly annually.

<sup>3</sup> Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.

<sup>4</sup> Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.

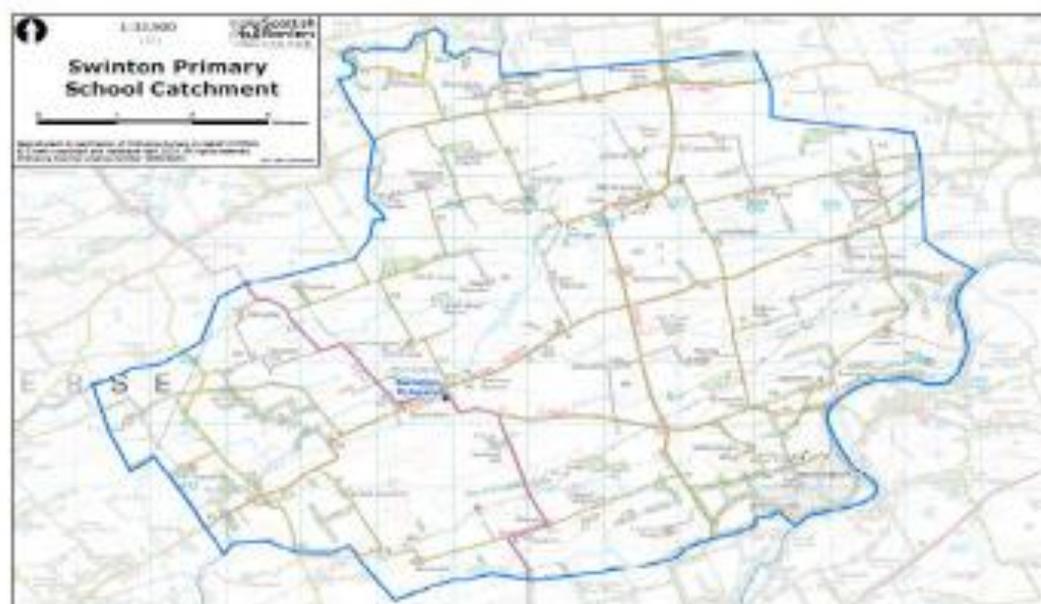
## 5 SWINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

5.1 Swinton Primary School provides non-denominational primary education to pupils from the village of Swinton and surrounding area. The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017<sup>5</sup> classifies Swinton Primary School as "Accessible-rural".

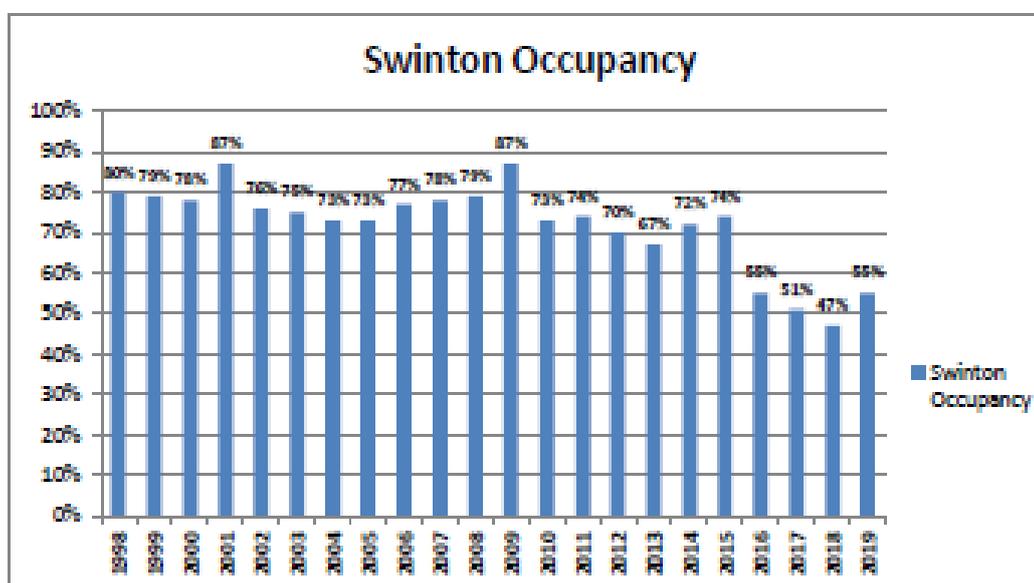
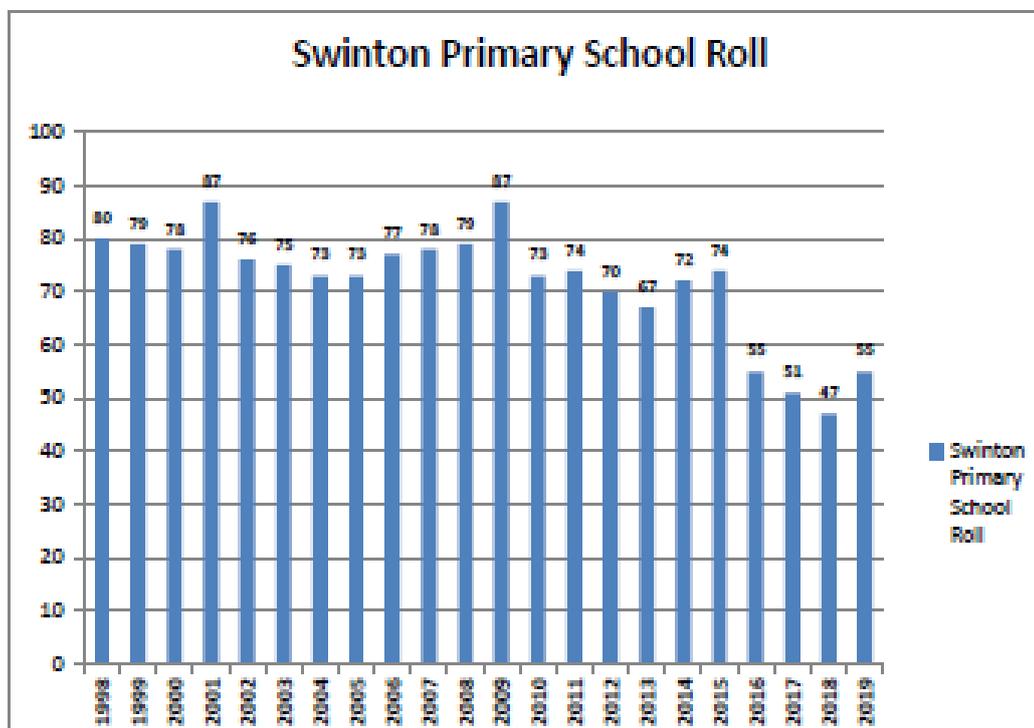
5.2. The location of Swinton Primary is shown here:-



5.3 The catchment area of Swinton Primary is shown here:-



5.4 The school has capacity for 100 pupils. The school roll is currently 55 which equates to 55% occupancy. The school roll has fluctuated over the years but has had an average occupancy over the last 10 years of 64%.



5.5 A condition survey was carried out on the building in 2017 and the overall site is rated as Condition C - Poor (Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately)<sup>6</sup>. A suitability survey was carried out in 2017 on Swinton Primary School and it was rated C - Poor (Showing major

<sup>6</sup> Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds.

problems and /or not operating optimally)<sup>7</sup>. Both surveys are undertaken on a 5 year cycle and data is reviewed and Investment planned accordingly annually

## 6 PRE-CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Scottish Borders Council commenced a pre-consultation process in 2016 focused on the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like across the region. The Council undertook to engage with all stakeholders to obtain information and opinions regarding all the current school estate and to seek views and ideas in respect of the vision of the future.
- 5.2 The five strategic principles that were adopted when reviewing the school estate were:
- 5.2.1 Increased educational and learning opportunities for all generations within the community;
  - 5.2.2 Improved outcomes for children and young people;
  - 5.2.3 Sustainability;
  - 5.2.4 Future proofing the school estate; and
  - 5.2.5 Affordability.
- 5.3 In February 2016 the Council launched a Pre-consultation and Review of its School Estate, promoted through letters issued to every Press family group via school mail, all school user groups, elected members and Community Councils. Press releases, social media updates, posters and school newsletters were used to advertise the pre-consultation events. Nine consultation events were held, one in each High School. This included a review of the mothballed schools.
- 5.4 In November 2017 the Council's Executive (Education) Committee, as part of the next stage of the School Estate Review, approved a proposal to re-visit the mothballed schools.
- 5.5 As Eccles Leitholm Primary School is a Rural School, specific provisions under Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (2010 Act) apply. Council officers have, in accordance with the 2010 Act, prepared detailed Options Appraisals in respect of Eccles Leitholm Primary School; analysing a range of available options to ensure that the most reasonable and appropriate course of action was identified.
- 5.6 A summary of the Options Appraisals is given in below. The complete Options Appraisal Report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 5.7 The Options Appraisal concludes that the closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School is the most appropriate option. The statutory consultation process is set out in the 2010 Act. The principal purpose of the 2010 Act is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. All consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and be seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland. This proposal paper has been prepared in accordance with the terms of the 2010 Act.

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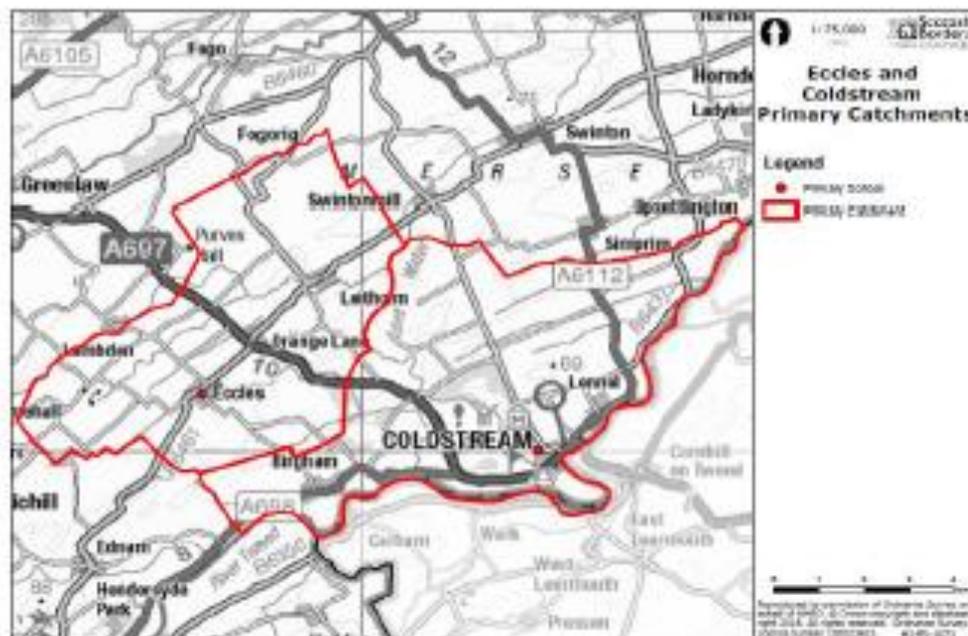
<sup>7</sup> Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users.

## 6 PROPOSALS AND REASONS FOR THE PROPOSALS

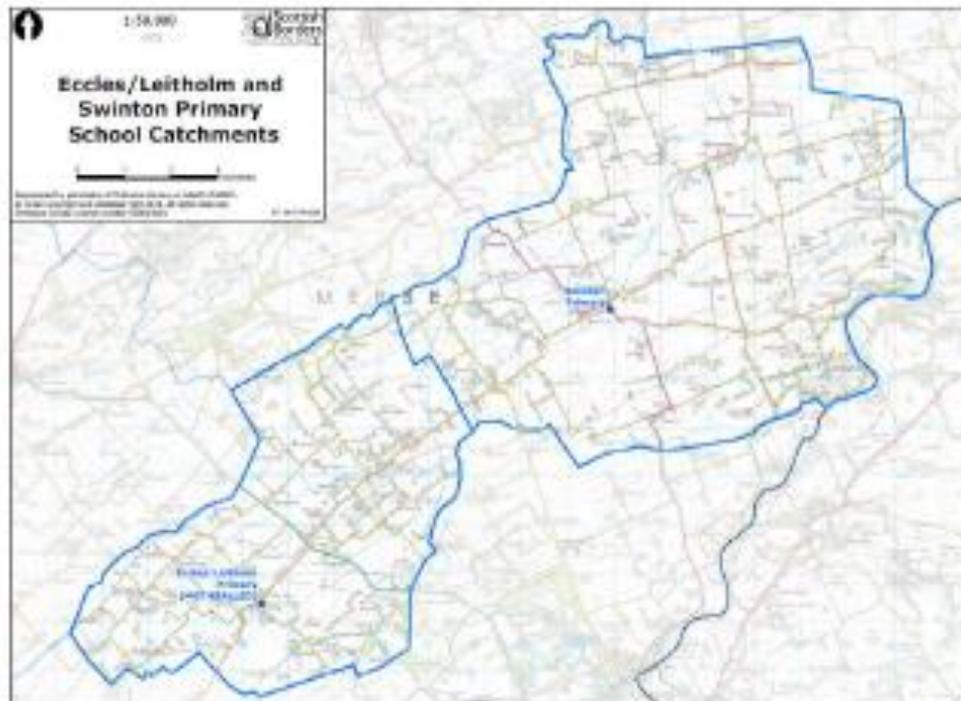
- 6.1. The Council wishes to consult with parents, pupils, staff and the community on a proposal to permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School and then re-zone its catchment area permanently.
- 6.2. Recognising that the children from the original Eccles Leitholm catchment currently attend 7 different primary schools, it is clear that there is not a preferred school option for the re-zoning of the catchment area. At the time of mothballing the decision was made to temporarily re-zone the catchment to Coldstream; given the shared head teacher between the schools and as the pupils accessed Coldstream for certain lessons and to share the facilities. However, only 19% of the children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment currently attend Coldstream Primary School. It is therefore proposed that there should be consultation on which school would be the preferred option for the permanent re-zoning of the catchment area. We have examined the pattern of enrolment for primary schools across the Berwickshire school cluster and it proposed that views and comments should be sought regarding whether the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be re-zoned to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School.
- 6.2 There are a number of reasons why the Council wishes to consult on these Proposals:-
- 6.2.1 Councils have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. The school education provided has to be flexible to fit individual needs and to be tailored by age ability and aptitude.
- 6.2.2 Councils also have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value and optimum efficiency. The Council is therefore required to regularly review services. The organisation of the school estate is kept under regular review, including the need for school provision and other factors, such as altering catchment areas and the implementation of shared headships.
- 6.2.3 Scottish Borders Council is committed to promote exemplary learning environments to support dynamic learner progression from early years through to entry into employment, vocational study or further and higher education.
- 6.2.4 Prior to Eccles Leitholm Primary School being mothballed, the roll numbers had experienced a significant decline (down 73% from 2014 to 2016). Part of the reason for the fall in roll was that many parents/carers had decided to make placing requests for their children to be educated in a range of other primary schools, including schools in other high school clusters. Since 2016 there have been no enquiries made in relation to children enrolling at Eccles Leitholm Primary School and no children are likely to attend the school in the future.
- 6.2.6 It is considered that the low pupil roll at Eccles Leitholm Primary School had presented challenges in providing the breadth of learning, social and emotional experiences required to meet the needs of pupils. Prior to mothballing, Eccles Leitholm pupils were already accessing Coldstream for certain lessons, with increasing number choosing to attend other schools in preference to Eccles Leitholm (15 children attending 6 other schools in the 3 years prior to mothballing).
- 6.2.7 Following mothballing, pupils from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area have been attending a variety of schools. If Eccles Leitholm Primary school was to re-open in August 2019 (with the same catchment or increased catchment) it is unclear how many if any pupils would wish to enrol at the school. Council officers have been unable to identify demand in the local area to re-open Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

Parents/carers appear satisfied with their children's learning experiences and outcomes at the schools they are attending.

- 6.2.9 If Eccles Leitholm was to reopen in 2019, there would still be a requirement to visit Coldstream for certain lessons and to access facilities.
- 6.2.10 There are currently 5 children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment attending Coldstream Primary School. However 2 of these children are due to transition to High School this year. Currently only 8% of the parents of pre-school children, in the original catchment for Eccles Leitholm, have indicated that they wish to enrol their child at Coldstream Primary School.
- 6.2.11 There are currently 6 children from the original Eccles Leitholm catchment attending Swinton, with 4 P1s from the area having enrolled into this school year. None of the parents of the pre-school children in the area have currently indicated a preference for Swinton Primary School. Although this may change once an Early Learning and Childcare setting opens at the school in August 2019 offering 1140 hours funded childcare, as there will be improved transition from Early Learning to Primary School.
- 6.2.12 Currently 77% of parents/carers pre-school children residing in the original catchment area for Eccles Leitholm have indicated a preference for their children to attend a primary school in the Kelso cluster. However it is proposed that the consultation regarding a permanent re-zoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment be limited to schools within the Berwickshire cluster as otherwise a large scale consultation would be required to amend the secondary catchment areas. It is important to note that Parents still retain the right to make a placing request for another school of their choice as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, the Council will continue with its policy to support this choice as far as possible.
- 6.2.13 This map indicates the enlarged catchment area if consultees indicate a preference for the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm to be permanently re-zoned to Coldstream Primary School:-



- 6.2.14 Council officers consider that the proposal for pupils from the Eccles Leitholm catchment to attend Coldstream Primary School would have educational benefits for pupils. Permanently re-zoning the catchment area will increase pupils' resilience through being part of a larger school community and will also help promote their social and emotional development by providing greater challenge as well as the opportunity to be part of a wider, age-appropriate peer group.
- 6.2.15 This map indicates the enlarged catchment area if consultees indicate a preference for the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm to be permanently re-zoned to Swinton Primary School:-



- 6.2.16 Council officers consider that there would be educational benefits to the children attending Swinton Primary School as this would provide a rural school option for children within their community. The school currently has 55 pupils so can provide the pupils with a chance of a smaller school experience, with the opportunity for composite classes and a wider peer group than would be available at Eccles Leitholm.

## 7 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing. As Eccles Leitholm is a rural school, the 2010 Act requires that prior to making a proposal to closure that all reasonable alternatives to closure are considered by a Council, with a closure proposal only being made if it is the most appropriate option. In order to determine the options available regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options and assessed these to assist in identifying the most reasonable option to make a proposal to Councillors. The analyses has taken consideration of the provisions of the 2010 Act; in particular the provisions regarding rural schools. Through the Options Appraisal process a number of possible options were identified by the Council for the future of Eccles Leitholm Primary School's namely:

OPTIONS FOR ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL	
Option 1	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment area
Option 2	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with an expanded catchment area
Option 3	Continue mothballing Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment area remaining zoned to Coldstream Primary School
Option 4	Close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment area zoned permanently to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School

7.2 A summary of the Options Appraisals is given in below. The complete Options Appraisal Report is published on the Scottish Borders Council website: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm> and attached as Appendix 1.

#### 8. OPTION 1

##### REOPEN ECCLE LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ITS ORIGINAL CATCHMENT AREA

- 8.1 It is considered that this was not a reasonable alternative to closure. Council officers have been unable to identify a demand within the community to re-open the school; the parents/carers appear satisfied with the education and experiences that their children receive at their current schools. In line with other rural areas there has been a decline in the population the 0-15s age group as working patterns change across the country with many rural schools witnessing a decline in pupil numbers. We have been unable to establish any planned development or business activity that would be likely to impact on the current demographics of the area.
- 8.2 At the time of mothballing Eccles Leitholm was rated as a B and C for Condition and Suitability. The Council's estates team estimate that it would cost £108,845 to remedy the current defects with the building. These works would allow the school building to be re-opened however pupils would still require to travel to Coldstream Primary School to access facilities and certain lessons.
- 8.3 It is considered that while Eccles Leitholm reopening would be likely to allow for greater involvement with its community, there could be educational disadvantages in reopening Eccles Leitholm Primary School with a small school roll versus the opportunity for combined provision that is currently being consulted upon regarding the re-zoning of the catchment area to Coldstream or Swinton. Many of the educational benefits that can be considered to arise from attending a smaller rural school also apply to both Coldstream and Swinton; with close bonds across year groups and opportunities to collaborate across the age range. Both these schools provide the opportunity for smaller class sizes and composite classes, which cannot exceed 25 pupils
- 8.4 Changes to travel arrangements cannot be accurately quantified as currently only 5 children are being transported to Coldstream from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. If the school was to re-open it is difficult to estimate how many children would wish to enrol at the school and

whether they would require transport to and from school. It is clear that the provision of funded transport has not been a material concern for parents when choosing which school they wish to enrol their child.

- 8.5 In conclusion it is not considered a reasonable or sustainable option to re-open Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment zone.

## 9 OPTION 2

### **REOPEN ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REDELINEATE THE CATCHMENT AREA**

9.1 Given the questions raised in Option 1 about levels of demand in the area for the school to be re-opened, it was deemed reasonable to consider whether expanding the catchment area would allow the school to be re-opened to provide a viable primary school for an enlarged catchment.

9.2 A mapping exercise of the postcodes of children in the neighbouring catchment areas has been carried out. This confirmed that there were almost no children in the neighbouring catchments living closer to Eccles Leitholm Primary School than their current catchment school. Given the rurality of the area, safe travel routes were also considered and it was concluded that the current travel plans would be preferable. Given the impact that amending catchment areas can have on schools this is not considered a reasonable option. Particularly as any changes to catchment areas would require a Statutory Consultation with Identified Educational Benefits. Officers do not consider that there would be an arguable basis for catchment amendment on the basis of demand or Educational Benefits. No evidence of demand to attend Eccles Leitholm has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Eccles Leitholm catchment area is not considered a reasonable option as it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable on this basis.

9.3 In conclusion this is not considered a reasonable option as the mapping exercise only identified a few children who might live closer to Eccles Leitholm than their current catchment school, however when taking into account travel time and safe routes to school it is difficult to establish if there would be any children that might prefer to attend Eccles Leitholm. Council officers have also been unable to establish persuasive educational benefits to support a change in catchment to attempt to re-open the school, particularly when taking cognisance of the parental choice away from the school had preceded the mothballing decision.

## 10 OPTION 3

### **CONTINUE MOTHBALLING ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

10.1 This option considers whether the school should continue to be mothballed as re-opening is not immediately viable but may be reasonably viable in the future. The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The statutory guidance to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states: *"the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote."*

10.2 The school has been mothballed for over 3 years. Pupil numbers in the area are not projected to rise in the future and there is currently no significant planned housebuilding or business development to increase population numbers.

- 10.3 At the community meetings people were disappointed that the school was still mothballed and generally considered it was already in effect closed. They considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community viewed the long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise as an opportunity for the community.
- 10.4 On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase, mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and the building could be used to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

#### **11 OPTION 4 – THE PROPOSAL**

##### **CLOSE ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL PERMANENTLY AND RE-ZONE THE CATCHMENT AREA TO EITHER COLDSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL OR SWINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- 11.1 Option 4 would result in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone. However the new catchment area is still to be determined. It is therefore part of this consultation process to obtain views regarding which catchment the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be merged with. Once views on the catchment have been obtained a formal recommendation will be made to the Councillors. If the decision is made to close Eccles Leitholm, Children and Young People Services will declare the school building as surplus and alternative uses for the building could then be progressed. It should be noted that it is proposed that if the decision is made to change the catchment area to Swinton Primary School, the children currently attending Coldstream Primary School, along with their siblings (providing the older sibling is still attending the school) will continue to receive funded transport to Coldstream until their transition to high school.
- 11.2 In the analysis of Options 1, 2 and 3 it has been concluded that it would not be reasonable to re-open the school with its current or an extended catchment and that continuing to mothball would not be a reasonable conclusion

##### **Evidence of Demand for Eccles Leitholm**

- 11.3 Eccles Primary School was mothballed in November 2015 after a rapid decline in the school roll (73% reduction 2012 - 2015) and an increase in placement requests (9% of the roll in 2013/14 increasing to 43% at the start of 2015), with the pupils from the catchment attending 7 different schools in the current school year. There are currently 26 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Eccles Leitholm Primary School. These pupils attend primary schools in the Berwickshire (54%), Kelso (38%) and Earliston (8%) clusters. Council officers have not identified demand for the school to be re-opened and have been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- 11.4 Both Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School have capacity to accommodate all the children in the Eccles Leitholm catchment.
- 11.5 There are no areas of housing or business or economic development currently planned or expected that would lead to any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles Leitholm Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

## Educational Benefits

- 11.6 The Council has statutory duties relating to the provision of education in the Scottish Borders. Children and Young People's Services key priorities are to improve well-being, inclusion, experiences and opportunities for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum. As part of a multi-agency partnership, the following priorities have been identified within the Children and Young People's Services Plan:
- 11.6.1 Keeping children and young people safe;
  - 11.6.2 Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities;
  - 11.6.3 Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people;
  - 11.6.4 Increasing participation and engagement
  - 11.6.5 Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
- 11.7 The Curriculum for Excellence is the national curriculum for Scottish schools. It aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work now and in the future. The Council has a further duty to deliver a service which meets the criteria for best value, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities, and which meets the agreed priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement and Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Plan.
- 11.8 The purpose of the Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities to enable each child or young person to be:
- a successful learner;
  - a confident individual;
  - a responsible citizen; and
  - an effective contributor.
- 11.9 The Curriculum for Excellence encourages children and young people to develop through different learning experiences. These can include:-
- 11.9.1 Collaborative learning - where children can work collectively within a group setting. This allows children to learn from each other and to share experiences and skills;
  - 11.9.2 Individual learning- where children are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning. This encourages children to learn in the most effective way for them;
  - 11.9.3 Peer to peer learning and assessment;
  - 11.9.4 Relevance in learning, where children learn through experiences;
  - 11.9.5 Outdoor learning – where learning takes place out of the classroom or school setting.
- 11.10 The Educational Benefits of the Proposals have been assessed taking account of the requirements under legislation and the priorities and aims of the Children and Young People's Services Plan and having regard to the terms and guidance of the Schools (Consultation ) (Scotland) Act 2010.

## Educational Benefits for the Pupils

### 11.11 The educational benefits of the Proposals have been considered:-

- 11.11.1 Given the low roll before mothballing and the limited likelihood of many (if any) of the pupils in the Eccles Letholm catchment area wanting to attend Eccles Letholm, it is considered that by attending Coldstream or Swinton, pupils would be attending a school with a larger peer group where the children will be able to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of grouping.
- 11.11.2 Some of the educational benefits arise not just from larger pupil numbers but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of adults leading a range of activities will support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum.
- 11.11.3 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 11.11.4 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 and reform.
- 11.11.5 A very small school roll can restrict opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
- 11.11.6 As with sports, the larger roll would also provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities.
- 11.11.7 The development of an Early Learning and Childcare structure across a larger catchment area involving more pupils provides a viable service-children at a younger age will have benefit from having an Early Learning and Childcare provision within the area with children attending who have similar interests and life experiences; the richness of the rural life will come through in an early level curriculum driven by child centred learning experiences. There is currently an Early Learning and Childcare setting in Coldstream and there will be one opening at Swinton in August 2019.

### Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff

- 11.12 While it is recognised that some staff may prefer working in a small team, staff recruitment and retention can be more challenging in a small school. Staff can feel more isolated in a single teacher school and may not be able to receive the same support in providing an inclusive curriculum and nor be able to work collaboratively with other teachers. Staff can benefit from being part of a larger team and being able to share planning and curricular resources and also learning from each other.

### Impact on Pupils at Other Schools In the Council Area

- 11.13 The Impact on pupils at other schools is considered to be minimal as the children currently within the Eccles Leitholm catchment area are attending seven different schools. It is considered that closing the school will not have much impact as officers do not expect that many children would move or change schools. Scottish Borders Council's policy of supporting parental choice for schools will continue with placement requests being accommodated as far as possible.

### Educational Benefits - Impact upon the Community

- 11.14 The closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary school would have little effect in terms of the community's educational access to the school and its resources. The building prior to mothballing was not used by any community groups or organisations and this remains the case post mothballing.
- 11.15 Both Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools are in the heart of their communities. Each school presents a different option, with Coldstream offering a slightly larger school environment and Swinton a smaller rural school option. More children being located within either school may bring a greater sense of the larger community.

### Likely Effect on the Local Community

- 11.16 As Eccles Leitholm Primary School is a rural school, special regard was paid to the rural school factors in the Options Appraisal stage. It is considered that the Proposals will not adversely impact on local, social or economic activities of that area. The Primary School has been mothballed for some time and the communities main issue is that they wish the school building to be put to some better use within the area.
- 11.17 The community made limited use of Eccles Leitholm Primary School prior to mothballing for community events given that both Eccles and Leitholm have their own village halls for community use. Views varied in the community regarding the long term use of the Eccles Leitholm school building with a large number of suggestions at community events. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community, less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders.

### Likely Effect Caused By Different Travelling Arrangements

- 11.18 The rurality of the area considered fully in the Options Appraisal stage. All three schools are in rural locations and all present their different challenges regarding access to services and facilities. The current proposal may result in some changes to travelling arrangements, particularly if the decision is made to re-zone the catchment area to Swinton as this will require new travel arrangements to be established. It is hard to quantify the impact of this change (both in terms of money and environmental impact) until there is more visibility of the numbers involved and what the demand is within the community.

### Financials

- 11.19 See Appendix 2 for detailed financial information. The approximate cost to bring the property into an acceptable condition for reopening is £108,845. It should be noted that there may be potential further costs for further works if the building were to reopen permanently. Based on the number of pupils at the time of mothballing if the school was to re-open it is projected that it would cost c£31k per pupil to operate the school.

- 11.20 It is envisaged that should this closure proposal be approved, the Children and Young People's Services Directorate would then declare the building surplus to requirements and thereafter the Place Department of the Council will make recommendations on its future use or disposal in line with Council policy. There would be a discussion with the community the possibility and implications of a community asset transfer.

#### **Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements**

- 11.21 Currently there are 5 pupils being transported to Coldstream Primary School from the Eccles Letholm catchment area. This arrangement will continue for all the pupils currently attending the school and for their future siblings (if the decision is taken to change the catchment area).

#### **Rural Factors - Community Impact**

- 11.22 Council officers have considered the impact upon the community and will hold meetings with the community and the Community Council to discuss the proposals for the school. To date the majority of comments from the community have been supportive of the mothballing. People have been clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There has been a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a final solution was required. Particularly there are concerns regarding the maintenance of the building.
- 11.23 The local Community Council has indicated that it is investigating opportunities that will arise from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed.

#### **Conclusions**

- 11.24 The number of primary school aged children, in the catchment, wishing to attend Eccles Letholm Primary School declined rapidly prior to mothballing. Officers have been unable to identify a demand within the community for the school to be re-opened. So it is possible that if it the school was to re-open in August 2019 that there might be no pupils enrolling at the school. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future.
- 11.25 Officers have been unable to establish a demand to re-open the school in the 3 years since mothballing. Pupil numbers are not projected to rise within the Eccles Letholm catchment and there is no significant planned housebuilding.
- 11.26 Councillors have advised that the community is disappointed that the school is still mothballed and generally consider that it is already in effect closed. It is considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise can be viewed as an opportunity for the community.
- 11.27 Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School are both located approximately 7 miles from Eccles Letholm Primary School. Given the rurality of the area it is recognised that there will several different journey times for pupils to access either school.

- 11.28 It is estimated that it would cost c£109k to remedy the current defects at the school. Pupils attending Eccles Letholm would still be required to travel to Coldstream to access certain facilities and lessons.
- 11.29 The Options Appraisal has demonstrated that the option for the permanent closure of Eccles Letholm Primary School with the pupils zoned to either Coldstream or Swinton Primary Schools is both reasonable and the most appropriate.

## 12. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

- 12.1 This Proposal Paper has been prepared by the Council's Children and Young People's Services in accordance with the 2010 Act. The 2010 Act sets out a consultation procedure that a Local Authority must follow for certain proposals affecting schools in their area. The 2010 Act and its explanatory notes are available for reference at the following websites, respectively:

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010 - Explanatory Notes](#)

- 12.2 The proposals to close Eccles Letholm and to re-delineate the catchment area are deemed relevant proposals in terms of the 2010 Act (the Proposal) and is therefore subject to the statutory consultation procedure specified in the 2010 Act.

- 12.3 The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- Coldstream Primary School, Coldstream, TD12 4DN
- Swinton Primary School, Swinton, TD11 3JJ
- Berwickshire High School, Duns, TD11 3QG
- Coldstream Library, Gateway Centre, Coldstream, TD12 4AE

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesletholm>

- 12.4 Copies of this Proposal Paper are available in English and other languages upon request) from:

Eccles Letholm Primary School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA  
Telephone: 01835 825080  
E-mail: [schoolstates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolstates@scotborders.gov.uk)

- 12.5 Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- the parents/carers of the children who attend an affected school;
- the Parent Council of an affected school;

- the parent/carers of any children likely to attend an affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
- the pupils attending an affected school;
- the Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at an affected school;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- The Community Councils;
- the community planning partnership (as defined in section 4(5) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the area where an affected school is situated or any other community planning partnership that the Education Authority considers relevant;
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

#### **12.6 Advertisement in Local Media**

Advertisements were placed in the relevant local media the week beginning 18 March 2019, giving the dates for the consultation period and for the public meeting.

#### **12.7 Consultation Period**

The consultation for the Proposals will run from 14 March 2019 and will end 10 May 2019. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

#### **12.8 Public Meetings**

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

**Eccles Village Hall on 25 April 2019 at 7pm**

#### **12.9 Format of Public Meeting**

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council, will be addressed by Children and Young People's Services and other relevant parties.

The meetings will provide an opportunity to:

- Hear more about the Proposals
- Ask questions about the Proposals
- Have your views recorded so that they can be taken into account as part of the proposal process.

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions and officer responses. These notes will be published on the Council website and a copy will be made available on request. These notes will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

#### **12.10 Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

Meetings will be held with pupils and staff in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

## HAVE YOUR SAY - RESPONDING TO THE PROPOSALS

- 13.1 A consultation regarding a proposed change to your child's or your community's school is your chance to share your views. Your responses can really shape and influence future decisions; you can play your part by:
- Submitting a written or electronic response to the Council as outlined below;
  - Attending the public meeting on 25 April 2019 at Eccles Village Hall at 7pm- ask questions; raise concerns/issues; make suggestions;
  - Speaking to your local Councillors;
  - Engaging with your school's Parent Council. The Parent Council can play a key role in engaging with the Council throughout the process;
  - Make representations as part of your Community;
  - Informing Scottish Borders Council if you think that this Proposal Paper has significant inaccuracies or omissions.
- 13.2 All interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions to:
- Eccles Leitholm School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA  
Or
- Web Address: <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm>
- 13.3 A response form is available from Children & Young People's Services, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA or online at [Eccles Leitholm Consultation](#).
- 13.4 Use of the response form is not compulsory. If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, "pupil", "parent", "carer", "relative", "former
- 13.5 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should note that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish pupil", "teacher in school", "member of the community" etc. Responses from Parent Councils, staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome. If anyone does not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: "I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Scottish Borders Council and officers of Education Scotland and the Scottish Government". Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.
- 13.6 All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, **10 May 2019**.

- 13.7 Education Scotland has prepared guidance regarding School Consultations. This can be accessed at [Education Scotland's Guidance on School Consultations](#)

#### 14 INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A copy of this Proposal document will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period or, if Education Scotland agree, a summary of them. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Council at the public meeting that will be held and, as available (and so far as otherwise practicable), a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposals not later than 3 weeks after the Council has sent them all representations and documents mentioned above. In some cases, it is possible for them to extend the 3 weeks with the agreement of the Authority. However, for the avoidance of doubt, the 3 week period will not start until after the consultation period has ended. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may enter the affected school(s) and make such reasonable enquiries of such people there as they consider appropriate and may make such reasonable enquiries of such other people as they consider appropriate.

#### 15. PREPARATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT

- 15.1 The Council will review the Proposals having regard to the Education Scotland report, the written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report.
- 15.2 This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, the public library in Coldstream as well as Eccles Leitholm, Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools and Berwickshire High School free of charge. Anyone who made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report. The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report as well as 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.
- 15.3 The Consultation Report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of three weeks, before it is presented to Full Council at the next scheduled Council meeting.

#### 16. NOTE ON CORRECTIONS

- 16.1 If you consider that there is an inaccuracy or omission in this Paper please contact Scottish Borders Council at

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation  
Children and Young People's Services  
Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newtown St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA

Telephone: 01835 825080

E-mail: [schoolclosures@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosures@scotborders.gov.uk)

- 16.2 If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by Scottish Borders Council or any person, Scottish Borders Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or there has been an inaccuracy. It will then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the re-issuing of the Proposal Paper, or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised

## 17 SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL DECISION AND SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

- 17.1 No decision will be taken in regard to the proposals or any changes put into effect by either the Council or the Council's Executive (Education) Committee until the statutory consultation process has been properly completed.
- 17.2 If the Council makes a final decision to implement the proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the Proposal document and Consultation Report. This must be done within 6 working days of that decision. The Council must also publish on its website the fact that it has notified Scottish Ministers of its decision and of the period during which consultees have the opportunity to make representations to Ministers.
- 17.3 The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in a proposal regarding a closure. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. Within the first 3 weeks of that 8 week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8 week call-in process is known, the Council cannot proceed to implement the proposals. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than eight weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- 17.4 The Scottish Ministers may issue a call-in notice only if it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the Council has:-
- 17.4.1 failed, in significant regard, to comply with the requirements of the 2010 Act in terms of a closure proposal; or
  - 17.4.2 failed to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to the decision to implement the closure proposal.
- 17.5 If Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, they must refer it to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels for determination by a School Closure Review Panel. The Council, as the Education Authority, may not implement the closure proposals (wholly or partly) unless the Panel has granted consent to it (with or without conditions) and either the period for making an appeal to the Sheriff has expired or, if an appeal has been made, it has either been abandoned or the Sheriff has confirmed the Panel's decision.
- 17.6 The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the closure proposal, refuse consent and remit the closure proposal back to the Council as the Education Authority or grant their consent to the closure proposals subject to conditions or unconditionally.

- 17.7 The 2010 Act, as amended, gives Ministers and School Closure Review Panels the right to call on advice from Education Scotland in relation to a closure proposal at the call-in or determination stage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Easingwood', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

**Stuart Easingwood**

**Interim Service Director of Children & Young People**

14 March 2019

APPENDIX 1 – OPTIONS ANALYSIS REPORT



**THE SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES  
OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT**



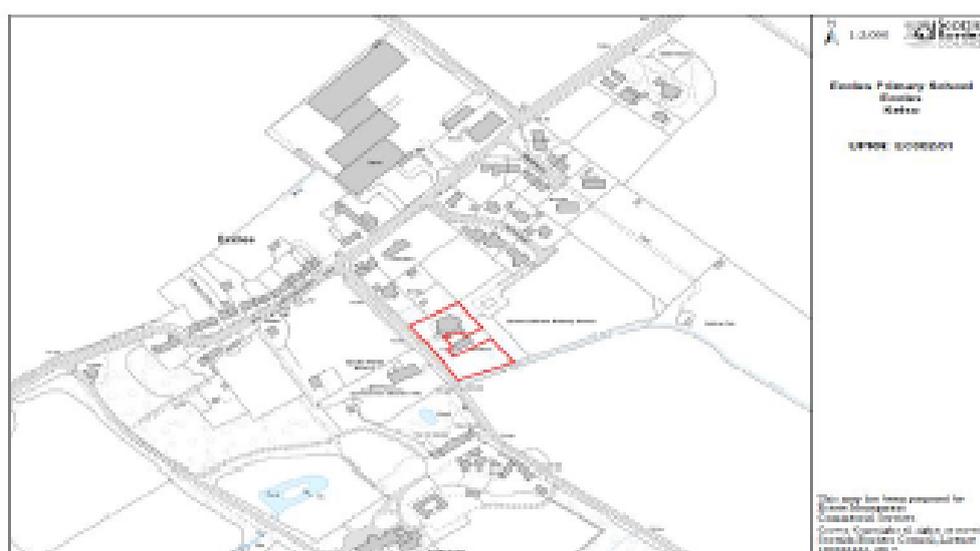
**ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scottish Borders Council commenced a School Estate Review in 2015, of all the schools across the region, seeking to deliver the maximum educational benefits for all the children and young people in the area. On 7 November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee approved amended guiding principles to the School Estate Review to ensure that a strategic approach is taken whilst delivering:
- Increased education and learning opportunities for all generations within the community;
  - Improved outcomes for the community;
  - sustainability;
  - a future-proof school estate; and
  - affordability.
- 1.2 In November 2017, the Council's Executive (Education) Committee also agreed to review the schools that had been previously mothballed and make a decision on their future. In order to determine what the next steps should be, Council officers have carried out detailed option analyses in respect of each school, considering all reasonable options. The analyses also consider the impact of each of the options on the wider community. This process adheres to the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 (2010 Act) - which contains specific provisions regarding rural schools.
- 1.3 This report details the options analysis process for Eccles Leitholm Primary School which was mothballed in 2016.

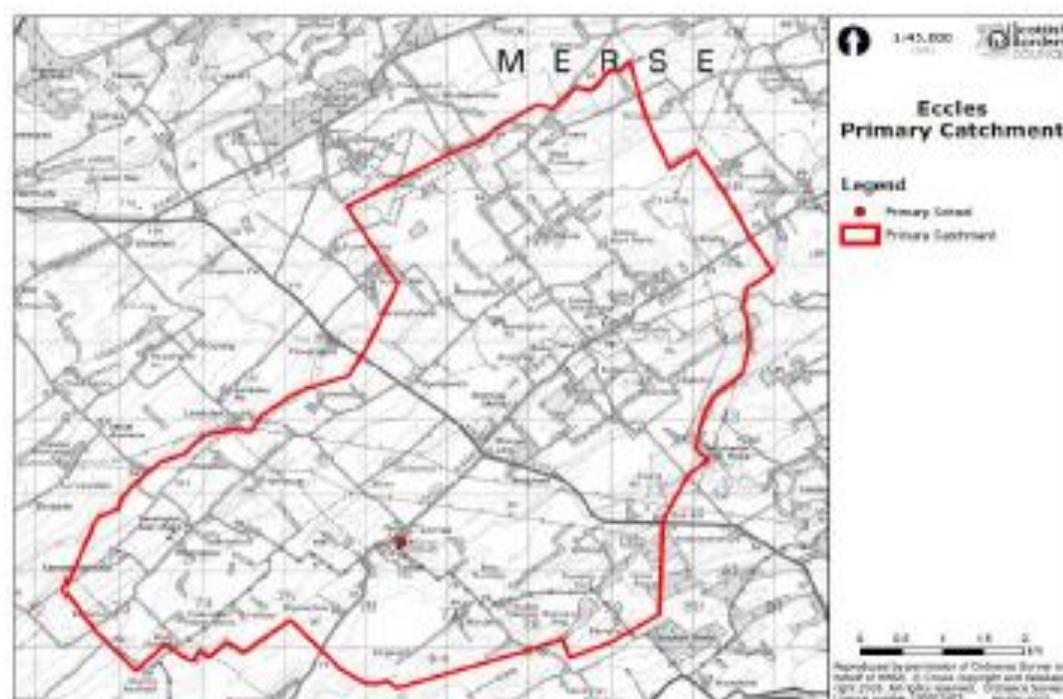
## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School, Eccles, is a non-denominational primary school. It opened in 1964 and had capacity for 50 pupils. The school is in the catchment for Berwickshire High School and lies within the Berwickshire learning cluster of schools. The school has been designated as an accessible rural school by the Scottish Government<sup>8</sup>. Its location is shown on this map:-



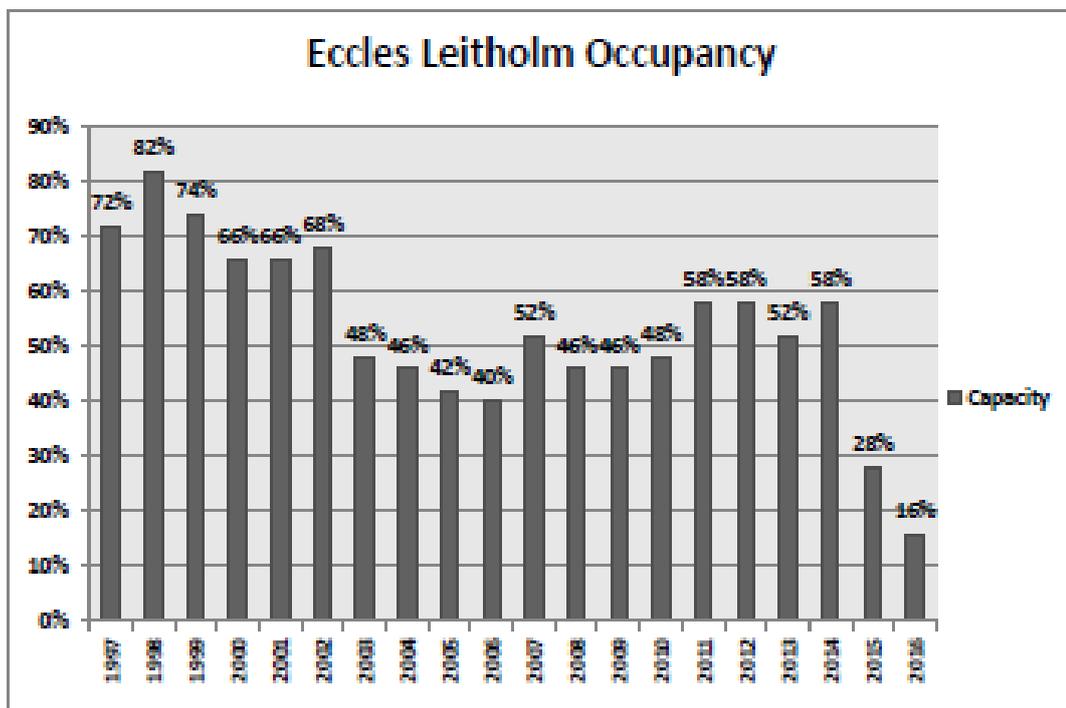
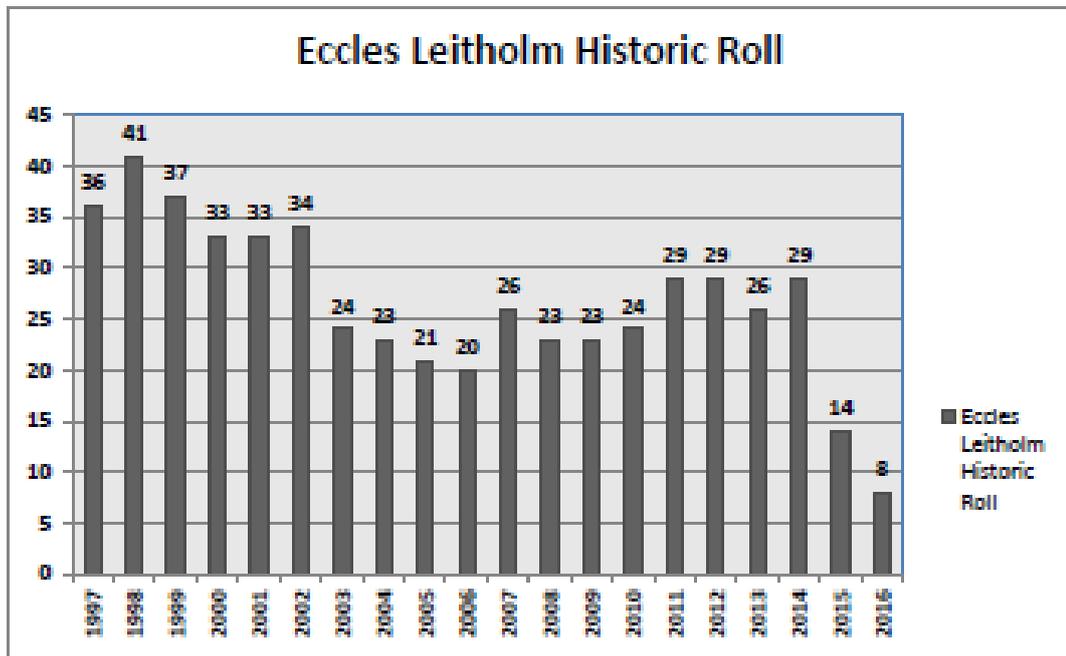
<sup>8</sup> [Scottish Government Rural Schools 2017](#)

2.2 Eccles Leitholm's catchment area is shown below:-



2.3 In August 2013 there were 29 pupils attending the school in 2 classes. Despite only 3 children transferring to high school, the roll dropped dramatically in the next school year to 14 pupils - 6 had made placing requests and 6 pupils had left the area. Session 2015/16 started with a roll of 8, but this had decreased to 5 by April 2016. The School roll was forecast to fall to 3 pupils for 2016/17. Given the school capacity of 50 pupils this would have meant occupancy of the school was only 6%.

2.4 The school roll and occupancy levels are shown below:-



2.5 In May 2016 there were 5 pupils at the school, with no pupils enrolled in P 1-3.

Primary 4	2 pupils
Primary 5	1 pupil
Primary 7	2 pupils

2.6 There had been an emerging pattern of placement requests to other schools.

	New Placing Requests	School	Roll	% of Catchment
2013 - 2014	2	Edenside PS	29	
	1	Duns PS		
	1	Broomlands PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>12%</b>
2014 - 2015	3	Duns PS	14	
	2	Ednam PS		
	1	Swinion PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>			<b>30%</b>
2015 - 2016	2	Duns PS	8	
	1	Coldstream PS		
	1	Edenside PS		
	1	Swinion PS		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>36%</b>

2.7 Given the considerable drop in the school roll, the lack of enrolment of Primary 1 pupils for 3 years and the number of placement requests being made, Council officers recognised that Eccles Letholm Primary School was at risk. Discussions were held with the local councillors initially to consider all the options available regarding the school. It was recognised that there were challenges in providing a positive school experience to such a small roll and it was decided that parental opinion should be sought.

2.8 The parents recognised a number of issues relating to the size of Eccles Letholm and the impact that that could have on their children's education. These included difficulties for children to form wide friendship groups with similar interests; anticipated difficulties with transition to High School; lack of opportunities for sports and arts; lack of links into a network of clubs and activities. Potential educational benefits were discussed should the children be able to attend a larger primary school: greater opportunities for socialisation; collaborative learning and greater opportunities for participation in team activities and greater opportunities to experience the skills and abilities of a wider staff group. There was also recognition that the children were not able to fully participate in the Curriculum for Excellence as opportunities for collaboration and peer working among learners were limited.

2.9 Following these discussions, the families of the remaining pupils chose to make placing requests to other schools in the area, which were granted. As a result of these placing requests no pupils were enrolled to attend the school in the 2016/2017 session.

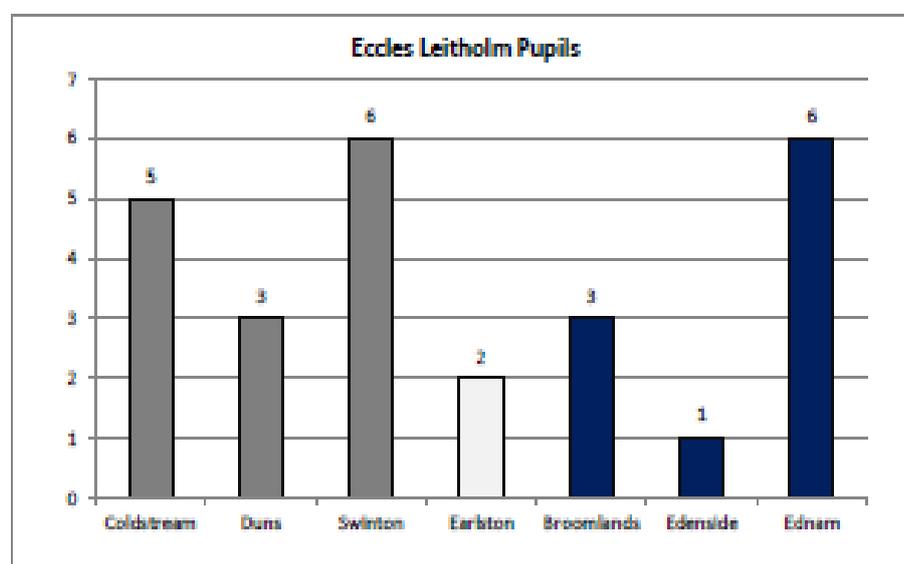
2.10 In May 2016, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Committee agreed that Eccles Letholm Primary School be mothballed for an interim period. The position of the school was to be

monitored on an ongoing basis; with a decision to be made regarding the future of the school once all options had been assessed.

2.11 It was apparent that the placing requests that the parents/carers had made were to a number of different schools (15 children attending 6 schools), as the Council had supported choice as far as possible. Council officers considered a number of factors (distance, travel times, safe routes to school, transition, staff and parental wishes) before making a proposal regarding the temporary rezoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment.

2.12 Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easy transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.

2.13 There are currently 26 primary aged children living in the Eccles Leitholm's original catchment area, attending 7 different primary schools located in the Berwickshire cluster (Coldstream, Duns and Swinton) and the Kelso cluster (Broomlands, Edenside and Ednam) and the Earliston cluster. There were 6 Primary 1 aged pupils starting school this year from the catchment – 67% of them have chosen Swinton Primary School. No P1 child from the Eccles Leitholm's original catchment chose to attend Coldstream Primary School.



2.14 There currently 12 pre-school aged children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment who are attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings across several locations. Prior to mothballing there was not an ELC setting at the Eccles Leitholm.

2.15 In February 2016 the Council launched a Pre-consultation and Review of its School Estate, promoted through letters issued to every family group via school mail, all school user groups, elected members and Community Councils. Press releases, social media updates, posters and school newsletters were used to advertise the pre-consultation events. Nine consultation events were held, one in each High School. This included a review of the mothballed schools.

### 3. AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

3.1 Eccles Leitholm Primary School is situated in Eccles, Berwickshire within the Scottish Borders. The village of Leitholm is a 2.5 miles to the northeast of Eccles. Both villages are located less than 7 miles from Coldstream. As can be seen across the Scottish Borders, the area has witnessed a significant change in local population demographics. We have analysed data derived from the National Records of Scotland. We have considered data from 2 larger areas which comprise the Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. While this data does not directly reflect actual movements within the catchment area, it reflects population changes in the larger area.

Year		Swinton Leitholm and Fogo Area	%	Gordon and Hume Area	%
2011	0 to 15	177	18%	212	21%
	16 to 64	611	64%	577	58%
	65+	173	18%	209	21%
	All people	961		998	
2017	0 to 15	132	15%	204	19%
	16 to 64	555	63%	615	58%
	65+	199	22%	250	23%
	All people	886		1069	

3.2 As the table above shows there has been a decline in the number of children within the area since the start of the decade, with the number of children in the Swinton, Leitholm and Fogo area declining by 25% and in Gordon and Hume by less than 4%. Overall the population in the Swinton and Leitholm area has only declined by 8% where the Gordon and Hume population has grown by 7%. Noticeably the population is aging in both areas.

3.3 The villages of Eccles & Leitholm fall within the Eastern Housing Market Area, while parts of the catchment area fall within the Central Housing Market Area, both as identified within the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2016 (LDP). The LDP allocates 2 housing sites within Eccles, namely: Cherryburn and Main Street. The former allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 7 units and the latter 5 units. One site is allocated within Leitholm, on Main Street. The allocated housing site has an indicative site capacity of 25 units.

The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2017 programmes the 12 units in Eccles to be built in 2021 and 2022. This has been informed using past completion rates and the lack of developer interest to date. The larger site in Leitholm is programmed to release 5 units a year from 2021. This level of development could be estimated to add pupils to the school rolls. However, taking on board the programming contained within the HLA, the delivery of housing within the area could be spread over several LDP periods.

- 3.4 In terms of potential new business ventures in the area, there have been no enquiries to the council's business & economic development team. They have advised that there are unlikely to be any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles & Leitholm Primary school catchment area as a result of business growth.

#### 4 OPTIONS ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Scottish Government guidance indicates that local authorities should review a mothballed school within 3 years of mothballing. In order to determine the options available regarding the future of the school, Council officers have identified several potential options and assessed these to assist in identifying the most reasonable option to make a proposal to Councillors. The analysis has taken consideration of the provisions of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (2010 Act); in particular the provisions regarding rural schools.

- 4.2 A number of possible options were identified for the future of Eccles Leitholm Primary School namely:

Option 1	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with its original catchment area
Option 2	Reopen Eccles Leitholm Primary School with an expanded catchment area
Option 3	Continue mothballing Eccles Leitholm Primary School, with the catchment continuing to be zoned to Coldstream Primary School
Option 4	Permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School, rezoning the catchment area to either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School

#### 5 OPTION 1

##### REOPEN ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ITS ORIGINAL CATCHMENT AREA

##### Demand

- 5.1 To assess whether it would be a reasonable proposal to re-open the school, officers examined available information on the number of pre-school and primary aged children in the catchment area. Current records indicate there are currently 26 primary pupils in the catchment area, attending 7 different primary schools. There are also 12 pre-school aged children living in the catchment attending 5 different Early Learning and Childcare settings.

<b>Eccles Leitholm Pupils' School Choices</b>		
<b>High School Cluster</b>		
<b>Berwickshire</b>	Coldstream Primary	19%
	Duns Primary	12%
	Swinton Primary	23%
<b>Earlston</b>	Earlston Primary	8%
<b>Kelso</b>	Broomlands Primary	12%
	Edenside Primary	4%
	Ednam Primary	23%

- 5.2 Pupil numbers had fallen dramatically before Eccles Leitholm Primary school was mothballed – a fall of almost 90% in the 5 year period preceding mothballing. It was also evident that immediately prior to mothballing that almost 90% of catchment pupils were choosing to attend an out of catchment school; while this may have been for numerous reasons it does indicate a significant drift from the school. The Council has not received any enquiries regarding enrolment at the school since mothballing and during the pre-consultation process in 2016, there were no comments made regarding the school.
- 5.3 From meetings with the community council and discussions with the community we have been unable to identify demand within the community for the school to be reopened. It is not certain how many or if any of the pupils from Eccles Leitholm Primary School catchment area would choose to return to the school if it were to reopen.

### **Condition and Suitability**

- 5.4 The most recent condition survey was carried out on the building in 2012 rated the site as Condition B (performing well but showing minor deterioration). Condition is an assessment of physical condition of the school and its grounds. The suitability of was categorised as B (performing well but with minor problems) with elements of C (Poor). Suitability as an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings, its grounds and the impacts these have on the learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and health and wellbeing of all users. It is currently estimated that approximately £109,000 would be required to remedy the current defects in the school building. If the school was to re-open is likely that pupils will still be required to access Coldstream Primary School to share facilities and to participate in aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence.

### **Educational Benefits**

- 5.5 The potential Educational Benefits were considered if the school was to be re-opened.

#### **Pros**

- A smaller school can play an important role in the community and provide opportunities for members of the community to become involved in learning. Closer ties to the community can provide specific learning opportunities and experiences which can enhance the sense of community across the generations.
- Students at small schools may be engaged in their school community, leading to a sense of personal responsibility for the community. Pupils may have greater exposure to friends across a wider age range, which can assist with social skills and development.
- Students at small schools can develop strong relationships with their peers and their teachers. This can increase confidence and reduce the fear of making mistakes.

- The nature of composite classes can encourage pupils to work together across the age ranges and abilities which can have a positive impact on all learners
- Travel time to school may be less which then allow more time for pupils for homework, hobbies and out of school activities.

### Cons

- Pupils attending a school with a small peer group may not be able to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of groupings.
- A small roll can result in a smaller number of staff and parent body reducing the opportunity of adults leading a range of activities to support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum. This can reduce the likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wide range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities when compared with a school with a larger roll.
- As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding of skills acquisition can benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age and stage. This would be very difficult to achieve in a small school roll.
- The level to which pupils are able to have social interaction can be impacted by the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem can be enhanced through being part of an age-appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interaction and relationships to form and reform. The pupils in the Eccles Leitholm catchment currently all attend larger schools which can provide increased opportunity for social interaction and wider friendship groups.
- A small roll can restrict opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities as well as participation in individual sports. Whilst some of these problems can be overcome by taking pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back. As was seen, prior to mothballing, the partnership between Eccles Leitholm and Coldstream primaries did not boost the roll number at Eccles Leitholm but in fact increased the number of placement requests as children wished more access to the facilities at other schools.
- A smaller roll and a smaller peer group may result in pupils requiring more support in the transition to secondary school.

### **Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff**

- 5.8 While it is recognised that some staff may prefer working in a small team, it must be noted that staff recruitment and retention can be more challenging in a very small school. Potentially staff could feel more isolated in a single teacher school and may not be able to receive the same support in providing an inclusive curriculum and nor be able to work collaboratively with other teachers. Staff can benefit from being part of a larger team and being able to share planning and curricular resources and also learning from each other.

### **Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements**

- 5.9 Following the decision to mothball Eccles Leitholm Primary School in 2016 the Council agreed to provide school transportation to all pupils, who resided in the Eccles Leitholm catchment area, attending Coldstream Primary School. These travel arrangements have been in place for over 2 years. There are currently 5 children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment area attending Coldstream Primary School. The impact for some children is that it has resulted in a longer home to school journey, while for others it has shortened the journey. If this proposal was to go ahead and parents and children took up the option to return to Eccles Leitholm Primary School this provision may require to be altered however as has been stated above this may result for some children in longer journeys and some children in shorter journeys versus the status quo of

them currently going to Coldstream Primary School. If the decision was taken to re-open the school, future pupils in the Eccles Leitholm catchment would no longer be provided funded transport to Coldstream but would only be provided transportation to their catchment school, if appropriate. Pupils currently attending Coldstream and any younger siblings enrolling at the school (while the older sibling continues to attend) would still receive funded transport to and from school.

- 5.10 It is recognised that adverse weather in the winter currently impacts on travel arrangements in this area. There are likely to be issues in the area because of the rural nature of the location. Headteachers take into account the local circumstances when deciding to close the school and/or send pupils home early. There is an emergency closure plan for severe weather in place for all schools across the region.

### **Rural Factors – Community Impact**

#### **Community Feedback**

- 5.11 At the time of mothballing, the community in general viewed the mothballing as appropriate. Subsequent interaction has indicated that people do not wish the mothballing to continue indefinitely and are supportive of a final decision being made. The general consensus was that there was concern that a school with a small roll the size of Eccles Leitholm's at the point of mothballing (3 pupils) could impact on the breadth of their children's education. The Community considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed and wished to consider long term plans regarding the use of the building.
- 5.12 From our discussions it would appear that children attending other schools are happy with their current arrangement and the impression is that the school has already been closed.
- 5.13 The school was not used for external lets prior to being mothballed; there was no use of the building outwith school hours, other than in respect of school meetings. Since mothballing there has continued to be no community use of the building. We have been advised that the halls in both Eccles and Leitholm serve the community requirements and opinions have been expressed that the school building should be used for another purpose; the exact purpose is as yet unclear. Some members of the community view the freeing up of the building through closure of the school as a potential opportunity and enquiries have been received in this regard.

#### **Financial Impact**

- 5.14 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Leitholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for ICT and PE. Based on the pupil numbers at the point of mothballing (5), it is estimated that it would cost c£31,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum.

#### **Environmental Impact**

- 5.15 The reduced travel for some of the children to Eccles Leitholm Primary would be cancelled out by the impact of reinstating services having to travel further to access the school



argued that it could prove challenging to establish the Educational Benefits for such a proposal. As these schools are all located in rural area, the geography and options in relation to safe travel are limited. The summary of the findings is as follows:

- Coldstream Primary School currently has 127 pupils, which equates to 65% occupancy of the school. A significant majority of pupils live either in or very close to the village. 4% of the pupils attending Coldstream reside in the former Eccles Leitholm catchment zone. The mapping exercise has confirmed that almost all of the pupils living close to the boundary of Eccles Leitholm and Coldstream's catchment areas live closer to Coldstream Primary School. Where children live closer to Eccles Leitholm it is marginal and the routes to Coldstream are more established. It is considered that it would be unlikely that a choice would be made to attend Eccles Leitholm, in preference to Coldstream, as the journey times would be roughly the same and Eccles Leitholm would have lesser facilities and the curriculum offer would not be as full.
- Greenlaw Primary School currently has 51 pupils, which equates to 51% of capacity within the school. The mapping exercise did not identify any pupils that live closer to Eccles Leitholm than Greenlaw, so it is considered that there would not be support for a catchment change.
- Swinton Primary School Community currently has 55 pupils, which equates to 55% of capacity. Currently 11% of these pupils reside in the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. The mapping exercise did not identify any pupils that live closer to Eccles Leitholm than Swinton so it is considered that there would not be support for a catchment change. In addition, reducing the number of pupils attending Swinton Primary School may in turn impact on its sustainability, resulting in more parents/carers choosing to send their children to other schools.

- 6.3 From our analysis of the postcodes of the school aged children it is not considered likely that there would be a significant demand for spaces at a re-opened Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Almost all the pupils that reside near the catchment boundaries currently have shorter and quicker journeys to their current catchment school. Given the geography of the area careful consideration has been paid to the distance of journeys and to safe routes to school; it is the Council's policy to support placement requests wherever possible and officers have been unable to identify a reasonable proposal that could be consulted upon to expand Eccles Leitholm catchment area.

#### **Educational Benefits**

- 6.4 In order to change a catchment area a statutory consultation would be required in terms of the 2010 Act. A proposal paper for the consultation would require to detail the Educational Benefits attached to the proposal. It is not considered that there would be any significant educational benefits arising from a proposal to change any or all of the above catchment zones. It is also considered that a proposal to amend the catchment zones of Coldstream, Greenlaw and/or Swinton Primary School would be unlikely to receive support from those communities.
- 6.5 As was identified in Option 1 that the re-opening of Eccles Leitholm would be likely to allow for greater involvement within that community however educationally it could be argued that there are few other educational reasons to change the current catchment zones.

#### **Educational Benefits and Impacts on Staff**

- 6.6 These will be the same as Option 1.

#### Rural Factors – Travel Arrangements

- 6.7 The re-opening of the school and increasing the catchment would most likely result in shorter journeys for some and longer for others. Any decision to change catchment would require careful consideration of safe routes to school. In addition this would be likely to result in increased costs to the Council. Currently journeys are often planned to transport children to both primary and secondary schools; changing the catchment would result in some children travelling in the opposite direction, which would be likely to increase the costs, times and environmental impact.

#### Rural Factors – Community Impact

- 6.8 The impact on the community requires careful consideration of the positive and negative impact that amending catchment zones may have on all affected communities. The biggest impact in amending the catchment area could be felt in 3 rural communities. The re-opening of the school with an increased catchment might have a positive impact on the local community of Eccles and Leitholm. However this would depend on the level of enrolment at the school. Given the geography of the local catchment zones and the impact those changing catchment zones may have on the other villages it is not considered that there would be support to change the catchment nor strong demand to enrol at Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

#### Financial Impact

- 6.9 As in Option 1.

#### Environmental Impact

- 6.10 The reduced travel for some of the children to Eccles Leitholm Primary would be cancelled out by:-
- the requirement for procurement of new transport which may be against the direction of travel of most journeys going to the Secondary school
  - services and staff having to travel further to access Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

#### CONCLUSION:

- 6.11 Following the mapping exercise, it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable with the options examined; this is because most pupils in the neighbouring catchment areas live closer to their current catchment school or would be most likely to have a quicker and safer journey to school. It is therefore not considered a reasonable option given that this would require a successful Statutory Consultation with Identified Educational Benefits. No evidence of demand to attend Eccles Leitholm Primary School has been identified and there appears to be satisfaction with the current primary schools attended. Accordingly the option to amend/extend the Eccles Leitholm catchment area is not considered a reasonable option.

## **7 OPTION 3 CONTINUE MOTHBALLING ECCLES LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

7.1 This option considers whether the school should continue to be mothballed as re-opening is not immediately viable but may be reasonably viable in the future. The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. The statutory guidance for the 2010 Act, in relation to mothballing, states: *"the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to reopen a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote."*

7.2 Pupil numbers are not projected to increase over the next four years. There has been a downward trend in the number of people under 16 living in the catchment area in recent years. This reflects a change in demographics seen across rural area in the region. There are few new homes projected to be built in the area and their impact is not considerable significant to projected figures given the predicted protracted development timelines.

### **Community Impact**

7.3 There was a significant view at the community meetings that mothballing the school over a long period was wasteful it was also the view at the community meetings that the school was already viewed as closed. There have been a number of suggestions for how the building could be utilised in the future. The negative impacts as outlined in respect of the closure of the school would largely remain, but there would be the added uncertainty of it being mothballed and without it being able to be put to more fully put to other uses or potentially being transferred to the community. The community is keen to have the school building closed so that it can be put to an alternative use. There is therefore little argument for continuing the mothballing.

### **Financial Impact**

7.4 The financial impact of the decision to continue mothballing the school is not quantifiable at this stage; however the building will continue to deteriorate through lack of use over time which may have a negative impact on the neighbourhood and ultimately result in greater expense for the Council or any new proprietor once a final decision is made regarding the future of the school.

### **Environmental Impact**

7.5 N/A

### **Conclusion**

7.6 The school has been mothballed for almost 3 years. Pupil numbers are not projected to rise in terms of pre-school children living within the catchment and there is no significant planned housebuilding.

7.7 Community member have expressed their disappointment that the school was still mothballed and generally considered it was already in effect closed. They considered that the building could be better utilised and that resources were being wasted by keeping the school mothballed. The community viewed the long term utilisation of the building by the community or otherwise as an opportunity for the community.

- 7.8 On the basis that pupil numbers will not increase mothballing is not considered a good use of resources and the building could be used to benefit the community, continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

## 8 **OPTION 4**

### **PERMANENTLY CLOSE ECCLES LEITHOM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND RE-DELINEATE THE CATCHMENT ZONE**

- 8.1 This option would result in the permanent closure of the school and the permanent re-delineation of the catchment zone.
- 8.2 In the analysis of Options 1, 2 and 3 it has been concluded that it would not be reasonable to re-open the school with its current or an extended catchment and that continuing to mothball would not be a reasonable conclusion

#### **Demand for School**

- 8.3 Eccles Leithom Primary School was mothballed in May 2016 after a rapid decline in the school roll (c90% reduction in the 5 years preceding mothballing) and a very significant increase in placement requests to numerous schools across the area. In 2018/19 there 26 primary school aged children residing in the catchment area for Eccles Leithom Primary School attending 7 different schools. Council officers have not been able to identify a demand for the school to be re-opened and have been advised that the community already considers the school is closed.
- 8.4 There are no areas of housing or business or economic development currently planned or expected that would lead to any significant changes to the population relative to Eccles Leithom Primary school catchment area that would be likely to generate demand for the school to re-open.

#### **Placement Requests and Catchment Area**

- 8.5 Parents/carers have decided to choose several different schools for their children's education, with no one school attracting a majority of placement requests. While it is recognised that there a number of reasons that parents chose a particular school it is evident that there is no clear preference in the area. Currently parents/carers are choosing to enrol 47% of Eccles Leithom children in primary schools outwith the Berwickshire learning cluster.

<b>Eccles Leithom Pupils' School Choices</b>		
<b>High School Cluster</b>		
<b>Berwickshire</b>	Coldstream Primary	19%
	Duns Primary	12%
	Swinton Primary	23%
<b>Earlston</b>	Earlston Primary	8%
<b>Kelso</b>	Broomlands Primary	12%
	Edenside Primary	4%
	Ednam Primary	23%

- 8.6 At the time of mothballing the decision was taken to re-delineate the schools catchment to Coldstream Primary, with transport being provided. This decision was made for a number of reasons which included familiarity as pupils attended the school to utilise facilities and to access aspects of the curriculum for excellence; proximity; safe routes to travel; shared head teacher

and curriculum. However currently only 5 pupils are attending Coldstream, which equates to only 19% of the original catchment area pupils.

- 8.7 Given that Eccles Letholm is in the Berwickshire High School catchment it is considered reasonable that only other primary schools within that catchment should be contemplated as alternatives for re-zoning the Eccles Letholm catchment area. It is therefore proposed that views should be sought as soon as possible, as part of any statutory consultation process, regarding the catchment zone. Based on the current choice of parents it is proposed that parents should be consulted on whether the catchment is permanently re-zoned to Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School.

#### **Educational Benefits - Impact on Pupils**

- 8.8 The Educational Benefits of delineating the catchment area to either Coldstream or Swinton Primary Schools:-:

- 8.8.1 Pupils would be attending a school with a larger peer group which will allow more opportunities to experience a variety of learning and teaching experiences offered through flexibility of grouping.
- 8.8.2 There are and will be greater opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.
- 8.8.3 There is and will be a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of adults leading a range of activities will support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum.
- 8.8.4 As with sports, the larger roll would also provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities.
- 8.8.5 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.
- 8.8.6 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 and reform.

#### **Educational Benefits - Impact on staff**

- 8.9 As part of a larger team, staff will be able to share planning and curricular resources. They can also learn from each other to provide improved approaches to learning and teaching. Eccles Letholm as a one teacher school would present challenges in attracting and supporting staff. In larger schools staff will be able to receive support in providing an inclusive curriculum and work together to

#### **Educational Benefits-Impact upon the community**

- 8.10 The closure of Eccles Letholm Primary school would have little impact in terms of the community's educational access to the school and its resources. The building prior to

mothballing was not used by any community groups or organisations and this remains the case post mothballing.

#### **Rural Factors – Impact from Travel Arrangements**

8.10 The schools in the area are relatively close, with both Swinton and Coldstream located within c7 miles of Eccles Letholm Primary School. However given the rurality of the area some journeys may require more time than others.

8.11 Transport is currently provided for children in the Eccles Letholm catchment attending Coldstream. If the decision is made to change the catchment to Swinton then the funded transport to Coldstream would continue for those pupils currently enrolled at Coldstream and their siblings (but only if they enrol at the school while the older sibling still attends). Future transport provision would be required to be put in place for Swinton. This cannot yet be quantified until it can be established how many children would require transport and where they reside.

#### **Rural Factors - Community Impact**

8.12 Council officers have considered the potential impacts upon the community of the school closure. Discussions have been previously with Councillors, the community and the Community Council regarding proposals for the school. The majority of comments from the community was supportive of the mothballing and understood the implications of closure of the school. People were clear about the challenges that faced the community; less employment, fewer families, less pupil and more holiday homes for weekenders. Many people supported the school closure and had suggestions for the building's use after closure. However a number of people did comment that they were sad to see the school go. There was a general feeling that continued mothballing was not an option and that a more final solution was required.

8.13 Opportunities for the community arise in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for future use of the building. The proposed future use of the building is still to be agreed but the Community Council has indicated that the building could be developed into a meaningful asset for the area and beyond.

#### **Financial Implications**

8.14 The backlog maintenance costs at Eccles Letholm are currently estimated to be £108,845. This would remedy the current issues; it is very likely that other costs would be incurred to re-open the building as a school. The facilities at the school would be adequate but there would most likely still be a requirement to share facilities with Coldstream Primary School for certain lessons and activities. Based on the pupil numbers at the point of mothballing, it is estimated that it would cost c£31,000 per pupil to operate the school. The average in the Borders is c£4,000 per annum.

#### **Environmental Impact**

8.15 The environmental impact of the proposal is not considered material. Given the rurality of the area many of the pupils all require to be transported to school. However operating another school which is not designed to be environmentally efficient will have some negative impact.

#### **Conclusions**

8.17 It is considered that closing Eccles Letholm Primary School is the most reasonable option. Council officers have been unable to detect any demand to re-open the school and it is

considered that the Educational Benefits of the children attending a larger Primary School are particularly persuasive as the school can offer a fuller curriculum and the modern facilities required to support the pupils' learning journey. Both Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools have the capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers and are located in the larger community. The closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School is not considered to have been detrimental to the area and pupil numbers have remained consistent. The school building is seen as an opportunity for the community and several interested parties have already made enquiries. Accordingly this option is considered to be the most appropriate for all the reasons given above.

## 9 CATCHMENT AREA

- 9.1 Given that over 80% of the children in the Eccles Leitholm catchment are currently choosing to not to attend the school that their catchment was re-zoned to following mothballing, it is considered that a consultation should be carried out with the parents and community to establish which school the preference would be for the re-zoning.
- 9.2 The decision was made to re-zone to Coldstream, at the time of mothballing for a number of reasons. Eccles Leitholm was a partner school with Coldstream Primary School and they had a shared head teacher. Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary. The schools were both within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community. Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was therefore considered by the Council at this time that this would result in an easy transition for pupils from Eccles Leitholm into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported. The catchment area for Eccles Leitholm was therefore rezoned to Coldstream Primary School and transportation was provided for the children to their new school.
- 9.3 However it is clear that parental choice has led to the children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment attending a number of schools across 3 different High School clusters (Berwickshire, Kelso and Earlston). Council officers consider that any catchment re-zoning should remain within its High School cluster as the re-zoning of secondary catchments would be a significant undertaking which would require clear and identifiable Educational Benefits.
- 9.4 It is therefore considered reasonable that a consultation should be carried out to establish views on which school the catchment area should be re-zoned to. Council officers are satisfied that there would be strong educational benefits attached to both proposals and wish to establish what their views and preferences are within the Eccles Leitholm area before a final proposal is made to Councillors.

**APPENDIX 2- FINANCIAL TEMPLATE**

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	<b>Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure</b>			
Row 2	Name of School Eccles Leitholm	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school (enter name of school)	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 3	School costs			
Row 4	Employee costs - note 1			
Row 5	teaching staff	115,603		56,860
Row 6	support staff	25,729		25,729
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)			
Row 8	support staff training	1,128		0
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2			
Row 10				
Row 11	<b>Building costs:</b>			
Row 12	property insurance			
Row 13	non domestic rates			
Row 14	water & sewerage charges			
Row 15	utilities costs	7,622		7,622
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,169		4,169
Row 17	building repair & maintenance			
Row 18	grounds maintenance			
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6			
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital			
Row 21	Other			
Row 22				
Row 23	<b>School operational costs:</b>			
Row 24	learning materials			

Table 2	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
Capital costs		School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7			
Third party contributions to capital costs			

Table 3	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
<b>Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal</b>			
property insurance			
non domestic rates			
water & sewerage charges			
energy costs			
cleaning (contract or inhouse)			
security costs			
building repair & maintenance			
grounds maintenance			
facilities management costs			
other			
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL</b>			

Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	3,607		3,607
Row 26	SQA costs			
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			
Row 28				
Row 29	Transport costs: note 3			
Row 30	home to school			
Row 31	other pupil transport costs			
Row 32	staff travel			
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	157,857		97,986
Row 34				
Row 35	Income:			
Row 36	Sale of meals	-2,917		-2,917
Row 37	Lets			
Row 38	External care provider			
Row 39	Other			
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-2,917		-2,917
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	154,940		
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (based on 5 pupils at mothbell)	30,988		

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 3	
	-14,000
GAE IMPACT	-14,000

## Appendix 2 – Minutes of Public Meeting 26 March 2019

### Statutory Consultation on Proposal to Close Eccles Leitholm Primary School Minute of Public Meeting at Eccles Village Hall on 25 April 2019 at 7pm

Present from Scottish Borders Council (SBC)

Michelle Strong (**MS**) – Chief Officer Education

Lesley Munro (**LM**) – Lead Education Officer, School Estates

Gillian Sellar (**GS**) – Solicitor, School Estates

There were 14 members of the community present

There was 1 elected member present – Councillor John Greenwell

#### Introduction

MS welcomed everyone to the meeting and SBC officers introduced themselves

#### Presentation

MS presented an overview of SBC's proposals to permanently close Eccles Leitholm Primary School and to re-zone the catchment area to either Coldstream or Swinton Primary Schools (copy of presentation attached).

#### Placement Requests

- There was discussion regarding the catchment areas and explanation of why SBC were now asking which catchment is preferred.
- One community member asked if the children in Birgham had been included in the consideration of extending the Eccles Leitholm catchment area (Birgham forms part of the Coldstream catchment area). GS explained that the analysis was done on a postcode basis and that while a few households c3 had been identified (confirmed following the meeting to be 7 children) it had been considered that maybe not all these children want to come to Eccles Leitholm, particularly as a number of these children currently attend Kelso cluster schools (57%). The options analysis also considered safe routes to school and educational benefits. GS advised that, the process would indicate if there was demand from parents in the Eccles Leitholm catchment to re-open the school.
- Councillor Greenwell asked who is on the School Closure Panel – GS advised that is an independent statutory body, the Convener is appointed by the Scottish Government and the Convener in turn appoints panel members.
- A member of the community asked about the large number of placement requests. MS explained that these were made for a large number of reasons including work, childcare, family, personal experiences etc. MS explained that parents had a legal right to make placement requests and that a local authority only has limited grounds to refuse requests; in particular if there is not space in the school. MS advised that all placement requests for primary schools for 2019/20 had been granted by SBC to date.
- There was a discussion about school transport and MS confirmed that parents/carers must pay or arrange their own transport to all out of catchment schools.
- MS explained that the significant decline in the school roll raised concerns for education team at SBC regarding:-
  - Breadth of curriculum – learning experiences and opportunities
  - The social experience for the children – limited peer group
  - Restricted activities available
  - The overall holistic development of the children

- The impact of a deteriorating roll was discussed. LM advised that evidence seemed to prove that once a school drops to one class it is very hard for the school roll to recover. It is considered that often parents make a decision to move their children to another school when there is only one teacher at the school.
- LM provided details of the School Estate Review – which includes working closely with all schools with a roll of under 50. Council officers are working with schools and parents to make the lower roll schools more sustainable.
- Parents of former pupils from Eccles Leitholm stated how well the school had performed when it was open and how they strongly felt it had punched above its weight. There was very proactive teaching at the school and the pupils had many opportunities and experiences, with fantastic trips and great achievements. The parents did not want anyone to lose sight of these achievements. They considered that the school had been at a size that allowed a proactive flexible approach for forest school and day trips etc.
- The conversation returned to transport with a Leitholm parent advising of the current issues regarding drop offs at Swinton and asked if transport could be provided between Leitholm and Swinton. MS answered that this was part of the consultation to consider what the preferences were regarding catchment. It was suggested that the catchment area could be split. MS advised that the catchment would be considered once we had all the feedback and responses.
- LM explained that the building (if it was no longer to be a school) could be an opportunity for the community. If the school was to be closed then interested parties would be able to discuss any proposals that they have for the building. SBC's Estates Team will deal with the building if the school is to be closed. The preferred route is always a sale but SBC will take into account the Community Empowerment Act. It would be advisable for interested community groups to consider any plans that they may have for the building. SBC have a team who can support and work with a community to develop a business plan. Any business plan must be evidenced to be sustainable and appropriate. LM advised that if there is no interest in the building at some point the decision may be made to demolish, if that is what the community would prefer. It was discussed that the community would be afforded some time to prepare their business plans - c 6 months.
- LM advised that SBC would be mindful of the building, to ensure that it does not become an eyesore.
- A community member living next to the school expressed his concern regarding the future maintenance of the joint boundaries, which is expensive. LM confirmed that all legal obligations would be maintained and any transfer of the property would be subject to those legal obligations. Access rights were also discussed and LM confirmed that these would remain in place.
- A community member mentioned that SBC had planted trees in the football area that had damaged a wall. Councillor Greenwell advised that he would take this up and asked to speak to the gentleman at the end of the meeting to assist with this issue.
- It was asked if children going to Coldstream would continue to receive funded transport if the catchment was changed. This was confirmed to be the case by MS.
- A question was asked about capacity at the Early Learning and Childcare setting at Coldstream. It was confirmed that the setting had been expanded and that there was capacity for all children within the Eccles Leitholm catchment. LM also advised that a new setting would open at Swinton in 2020.
- A community member, whose house neighbours the school, expressed his concern regarding the school being entered and occupied at 1.30am one night. He advised that the next day the doors were closed but that the lights were on. He had phoned the Council to report the incident. LM advised that an SBC colleague had been alerted and had checked the building and it appeared that some furniture may have been removed from the building. The incident was still being investigated. LM requested that any future disturbances are reported to the police.
- A community member stressed the importance of all personal data being removed from the school. LM acknowledged that this should always be done,
- A community member asked if any mothballed school had ever been re-opened. LM advised that this had not happened in the Borders.
- A community member asked what would happen to all the memorabilia in the school – including the cups that had been donated following fundraising. LM advised that this would be handled carefully and

it was acknowledged that the history of the school needed to be recognised and recorded. This would be carried out by the Education team in conjunction with the head teachers and the community. **Following the meeting it was established that the cups, trophies etc. were now held at Coldstream Primary School.**

- A Birgham parent suggested that while Birgham was part of the Coldstream catchment that this did not reflect its identity and suggested that its catchment area should be amended. GS suggested that this could perhaps be mentioned in the response to the consultation, to be considered in the Consultation Report.
- A community member mentioned that prior to the school being mothballed there had been an increase in children with ASN (Additional Support Needs) attending the school which changed the balance of the school.
- The Chairman of Swinton Community Council asked for a copy of the Minutes of this meeting as soon as they are available. GS confirmed that this would be actioned.

The meeting was concluded and MS thanked everyone for their attendance.

### **Presentation from Public Meeting**



## **Eccles Leitholm Primary School Public Meeting**



**25 April 2019**

## **School Estate Consultation in respect of proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School**

### **The Proposals are that**

- Eccles Leitholm Primary School is permanently closed; and
- If the school is to be closed, the catchment area is permanently re-zoned to the catchment area of either Coldstream Primary School or Swinton Primary School

### **STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS**

- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the consultation process that local authorities must follow when proposing a permanent change to any school
- This includes:
  - Publishing a proposal paper, including an Educational Benefits Statement
  - 6 week consultation period (minimum of 30 school days)
  - Holding a public meeting
  - Education Scotland meeting with parents, pupils and staff and report on Educational Benefits
  - Council must publish a consultation report responding to issues raised during the consultation

### STATUTORY CONSULTATION (cont'd)

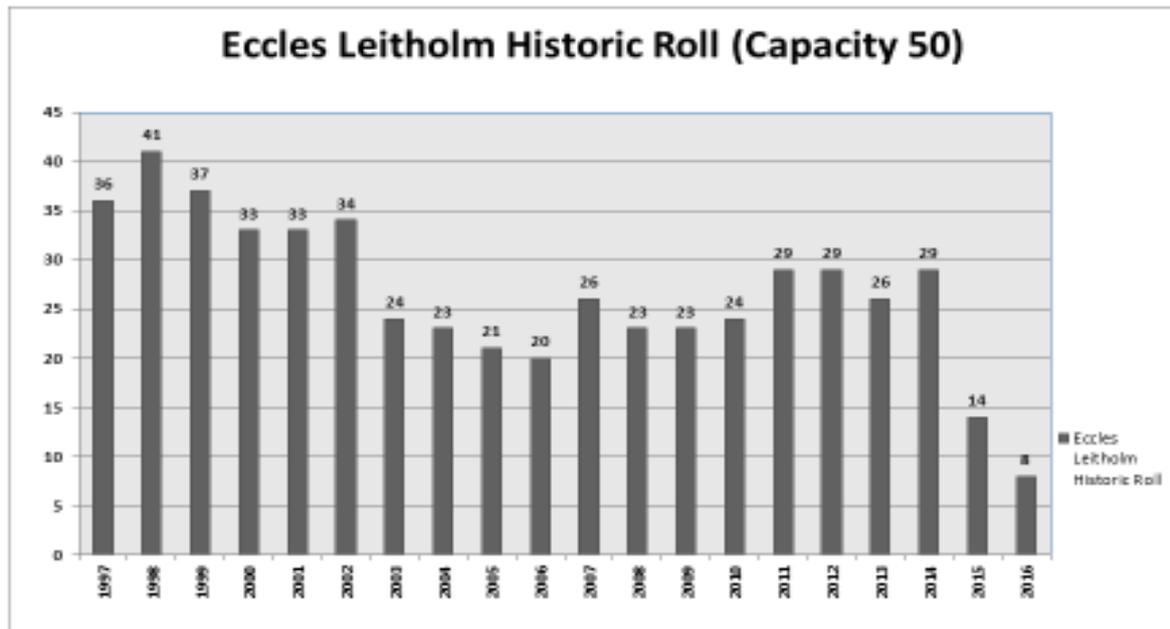
- The consultation report is published, followed by a further 3 week consultation period.
- Following which the Council makes a decision.
- The Scottish Ministers then have 8 weeks to call in a closure proposal for referral to Schools Closure Panel.
- If Schools Closure Panel do not support the closure a future closure proposal cannot be consulted on for a minimum of 5 years.

### REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL - CLOSURE

- The school roll fell significantly following a sustained increase in placement requests to other schools.

	School Roll	New Placing Requests	School	% of Catchment
2013 - 2014	29	2	Edenside PS	
		1	Duns PS	
		1	Broomlands PS	
<b>Total</b>		4		12%
2014 - 2015	14	3	Duns PS	
		2	Ednam PS	
		1	Swinton PS	
<b>Total</b>		6		30%
2015 - 2016	8	2	Duns PS	
		1	Coldstream PS	
		1	Edenside PS	
		1	Swinton PS	
<b>Total</b>		5		38%

## REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL



## REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL - CLOSURE

- In May 2016 there were 5 pupils at the school. There were no pupils enrolled in P1-3 and 2 pupils were in P7.
- A school roll at such low levels causes concern regarding the range of curricular and learning opportunities available to the children.
- Smaller rolls can constrain opportunities for team and group work – collaborative working is an important part of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- This proposal seeks to provide increased learning opportunities and experiences for the pupils
- The proposal seeks to strengthen the children’s social and emotional development – it is considered important that the children have a peer group.

## **OPTIONS ANALYSIS**

- The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that a local authority considers all “reasonable” alternatives before making a proposal to close a rural school.
- SBC has carried out a full options analysis regarding alternatives to closure which has considered –
  - Re-opening the school with its current catchment
  - Re-opening the school with an extended catchment
  - Continuing mothballing the school
  - Permanent closure of the school.
- This analysis report is available in the Proposal Paper and concludes that the most reasonable option is to close the school.

## **CATCHMENT - BACKGROUND**

- Prior to mothballing, there were 15 children from the Eccles Leitholm catchment, attending 6 different schools.
- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that a parent/carer can make an application for a child to attend a school of their choice. There are only limited grounds where a Council can reject the application. It is the Council’s policy to support choice as far as possible.
- Before temporarily re-zoning the Eccles Leitholm catchment area to Coldstream, Council officers considered a number of factors (distance, travel times, safe routes to school, transition, staff and parental wishes).
- The decision at that time was taken to re-zone to Coldstream as:-
  - The schools were partner schools, with a shared head teacher.
  - Pupils from Eccles Leitholm regularly accessed facilities and activities in Coldstream Primary.
  - The schools were within the same secondary cluster (Berwickshire) and worked in the same learning community.
  - Improvement plans were aligned across the 2 schools, along with curricular and teaching plans. It was considered that this would result in an easier transition for Eccles Leitholm pupils into classes at Coldstream and that their learning continuity and progression would be supported

## Catchment – Current Position

**Currently 26 pupils attend 7 different schools. There are 12 pre-school aged children**

### COLDSTREAM

- 5 children (19%) from Eccles Leitholm attend Coldstream. 2 are in P7
- Only 8% of the parents of pre-school children from Eccles Leitholm catchment have currently indicated that they wish to enrol their child at Coldstream Primary School.

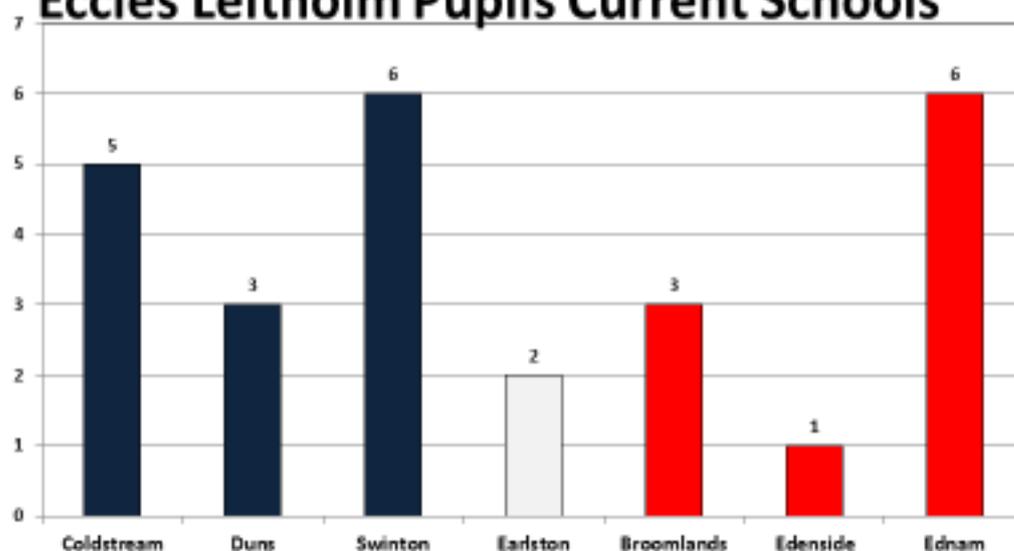
### SWINTON

- 6 children (23%) from the Eccles Leitholm catchment attend Swinton - includes 4 P1s
- None of the parents of the pre-school children in the area have currently indicated a preference for Swinton Primary School. Although this may change once an **Early Learning and Childcare setting opens at the school in August 2019 offering 1140 hours funded childcare.**

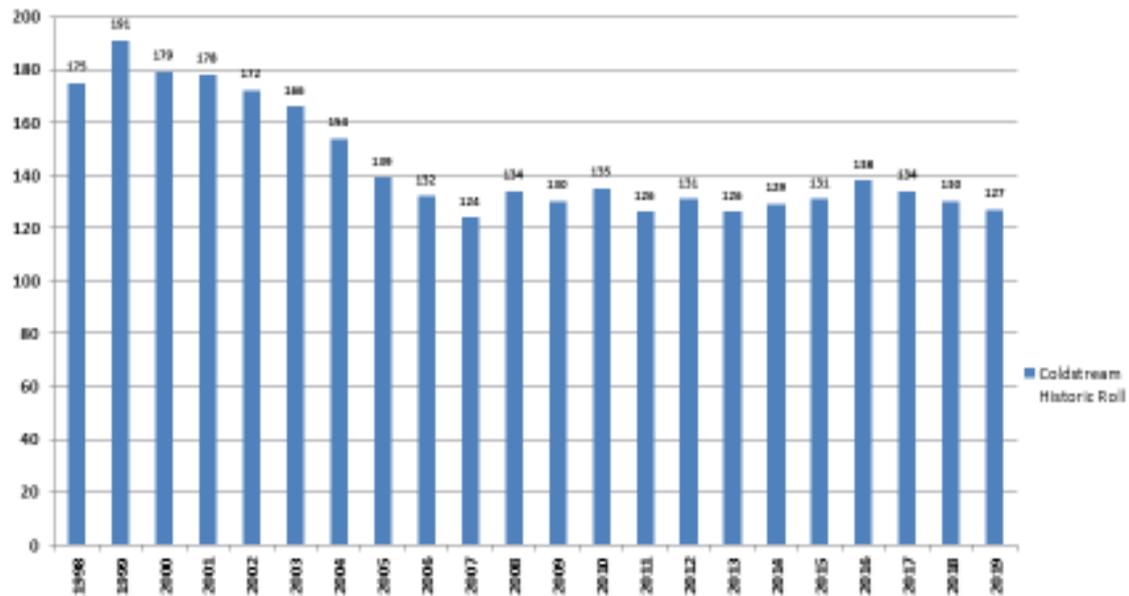
### KELSO AND EARLSTON CLUSTER

- 10 pupils (38%) attend primary schools in the Kelso High School Cluster
- 77% of parents/carers pre-school children residing in the area have indicated a preference for their children to attend a primary school in the Kelso cluster.
- 2 pupils (8%) currently attend a primary school in the Earlston High School Cluster.

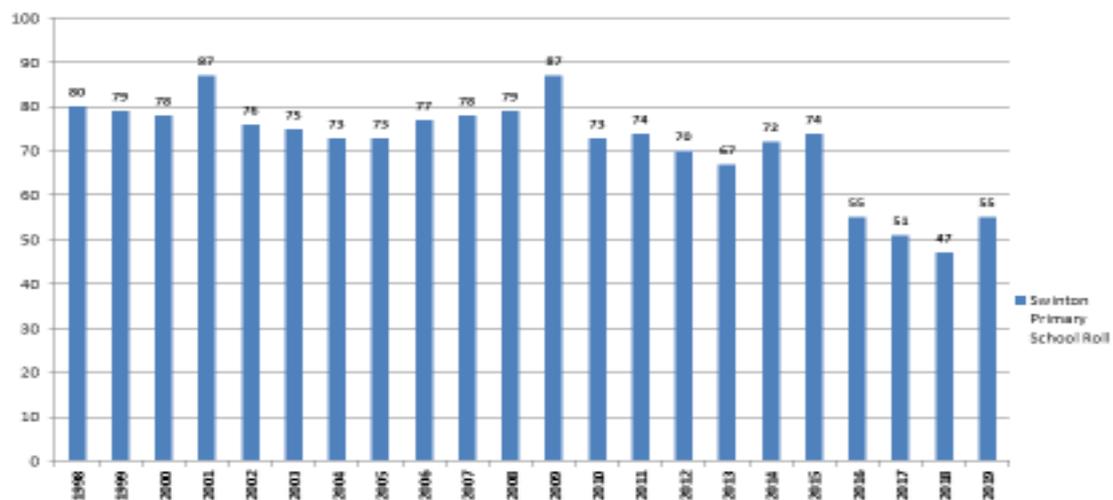
### Eccles Leitholm Pupils Current Schools



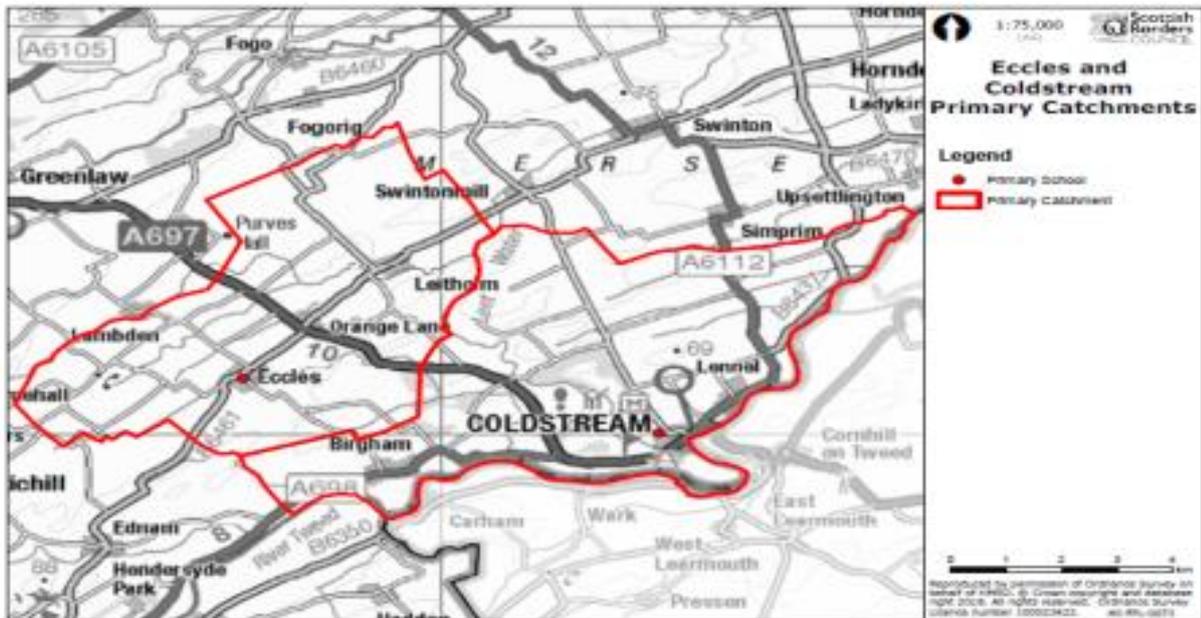
**Coldstream Historic Roll (Capacity 196 Pupils)**



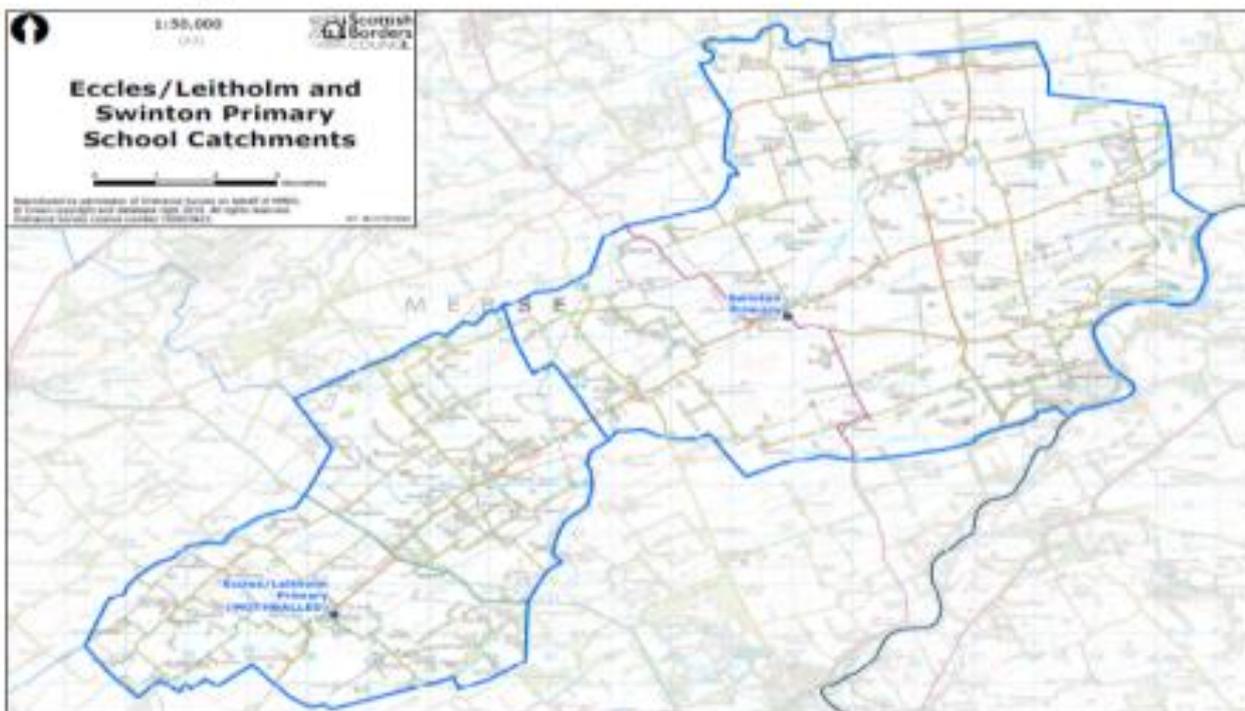
**Swinton Primary School Roll (Capacity 100 pupils)**



## Proposed Catchment Area - Coldstream



## Proposed Catchment Area - Swinton



## **NEXT STEPS**

**This is a chance for you to have your say.**

- Proposal Papers and Response Forms available here and at <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/children-and-young-people/ecclesleitholm>
- Consultation Period is open until 10 May 2019
- Education Scotland will visit Eccles Leitholm, Coldstream and Swinton Primary Schools and meet with pupils, parents and staff
- A Consultation Report will be published for further comments in May/June 2019
- Report on Consultation Process will go to Council in June 2019
- Scottish Government then review the decision and the consultation process.

## **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

## Appendix 3 – Letter from Swinton Primary School 7 May 2019



### Swinton Primary School

Mrs R. Bennett – Acting Head Teacher

Coldstream Road

Swinton

Duns

Scottish Borders

TD11 3JE

Tel: 01890 860237 (Swinton)

Tel: 01361 810264 (Greenlaw)

7 May 2019

Eccles Leitholm Primary School Consultation

Children and Young People's Services

Scottish Borders Council

Council Headquarters

Newtown St Boswells

T6D 0SA

via email: [schoolstates@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:schoolstates@scotborders.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs,

We wish to submit the following comments regarding the permanent re-zoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment area. We have engaged our staff, pupils and parents to ascertain their thoughts on this Consultation and would comment as follows:

- Our parents are in agreement that Eccles, Leitholm and Swinton as small villages are close to each other; not just in the geographical sense but it is strongly felt that their communities are very much connected and identify closely with each other. There is a deep rooted feeling among our families that Swinton and Leitholm have long standing connections and traditions.
- At the Consultation meeting, there was much discussion concerning "the under 60 club". In order to avoid the risk of making a big school bigger, and our small village school at Swinton smaller, it is generally agreed that re-zoning the Eccles Leitholm catchment to Swinton Primary would ensure the sustainability of our school and reduce the possible risk of closure. The 2018/19 placement requests of children from Leitholm increased Swinton's roll to above 60 and removing them could potentially put the school back at risk. Our parents have made it clear to us that they would request to keep their child at Swinton regardless of the decision proving that parents continue to have a preference to the smaller community based school. With the proposed opening of the Early Learning and Childcare facility at Swinton in 2020, this can only benefit the younger families within the surrounding communities and ultimately benefit the school as a whole.
- The vast majority of our families live in villages and rural areas and they feel a strong affinity for village life which is echoed in the values of Swinton Primary School. There has been an increasing number of parents from Leitholm choosing Swinton as their school of choice. Swinton is closer to Leitholm and the B6461 road into Swinton is better for winter transportation providing a safer route for our pupils.

- During the consultation process with pupils, one of our P7 pupils who is a Leitholm resident spoke first-hand about his own experiences travelling to school and being a pupil at Swinton. He noted that with the number of families within Leitholm choosing to send their children to Swinton increases; and he knows of several families from the area enrolling their children in Swinton School for next year. He feels that re-zoning the catchment to Swinton is just common sense. Swinton is only 4 miles from Leitholm, whereas Coldstream is 6 miles away. He also notes that if a taxi was provided it would cut down on the number of car journeys that parents are currently having to take to drive their children to and from school which is better for the environment. The children from the Eccles Leitholm area enjoy the smaller classes here at Swinton and he believes that a smaller village school is what local families from the area want.
- At the re-zoning meeting there was a suggestion that perhaps the catchment could be split with Leitholm children zoned to Swinton and others (perhaps Birgham etc.) zoned to Coldstream as the catchments previously were separate as Leitholm had its own school.

In conclusion, the staff, pupils and parents of Swinton Primary School fully support the re-zoning of the Eccles Leitholm catchment area to Swinton. We hope you find our comments informative and that they assist you in making a decision.

Yours faithfully



Rosemary Barrett  
Head Teacher  
Swinton Primary School

## Appendix 4 – HMIE Report dated May 2019



### **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

May 2019

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Scottish Borders Council's proposal to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School and re-delineate the catchment zone. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant 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 this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the catchment area; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- 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
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- 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; and
- visits to the sites of Coldstream Primary School and Swinton Primary School, and discussions with relevant parents, children and staff. A visit to the mothballed Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Eccles Leitholm Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Scottish Borders Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 In 2016 Scottish Borders Council conducted a pre-consultation process that focused on the school estate across the area. As part of this process they communicated with families, school user groups, Community Councils and elected members. This resulted in the mothballing of Eccles Leitholm Primary School due to its falling roll. As the school has now been closed for almost three years, Scottish Borders Council set out their consultation period from 14 March to 10 May 2019 in order to consider future options. They consulted with a range of stakeholders including parents. A public meeting attended by 14 people was held on Thursday 25 April 2019. The council received 22 written responses to the consultation and a letter from the headteacher at Swinton Primary School. Of the responses, 16 agreed with the proposal to close the school permanently, two disagreed and five either did not know or did not answer the question.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council gave due consideration to the educational aspects of the proposal to close the school permanently and re-zone the catchment area accordingly. Prior to the closure, numbers in the school had dwindled to five children and there have been no enrolment requests since 2016. There has also been a decline in the population. The council's own mapping of postcodes has shown that there are no children in the neighbouring catchments living closer to Eccles Leitholm than their current catchment school.

3.2 The council considers that re-opening the school will have no educational benefit. Children from the two villages now attend a range of other primary schools although most are at either Coldstream or Swinton. The larger peer groups in these two schools was cited by the council as being beneficial to children's learning in terms of experiencing a variety of learning and teaching experiences. They also cite the importance of children developing social skills and interaction in line with the aspirations of Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. The council also argues that very small schools can restrict opportunities for team sports and other recreational activities.

3.3 There was no early learning and childcare provision at Eccles Leitholm Primary School. However, there is currently one at Coldstream Primary School and a new provision is being developed at Swinton Primary School. The council believes that this will help children make the transition in to primary school more easily.

3.4 Staff recruitment and retention can be more challenging in a very small school. The council considers that there is greater benefit for staff being part of a larger group in terms of working collaboratively and sharing resources.

3.5 The council believes that the closure of the school will have little effect in terms of the impact on the local community. Prior to mothballing, the school was not used by community groups or organisations.

3.6 Overall, feedback from stakeholders supports the council's plan to close the school permanently. Parents in the two villages are unlikely to send their children to Eccles Leitholm Primary School should it be re-opened. Several parents stated that they were happy with the current arrangements despite the travel involved. Even if Eccles Leitholm Primary School was re-instated, elements of the curriculum would need to be delivered at Coldstream Primary School. Several of those who responded to the consultation recognise that the school is not viable and is unlikely to be so for the foreseeable future. Parents, children and staff from Coldstream and Swinton Primaries overwhelmingly supported the proposal by the council to close Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Whilst some had fond memories of being in a small school, they recognise the challenges of maintaining a rounded education in that setting.

3.7 A few of those who responded to the consultation raised the issue about the future of the building. This was also raised at the public meeting. However, a few local residents thought that the school had already been permanently closed and that it made sense to make a final decision about the school's future. It was suggested at the public meeting that the closure could be an opportunity, under the auspices of the Community Empowerment Act, for the building to be used for community activity. It was agreed that a period of six months should be allowed for any interested parties to develop a business plan.

3.8 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. The council identified the reasons for the closure of the school and gave due consideration to the alternatives. They took account of the local, social and economic impact of the closure and concluded that it was unlikely that any of these would have an adverse impact on the area. Because the school has been mothballed for some time, the local community are keen that a decision is made about its future. The council recognise that the re-zoning of the catchment area of Eccles Leitholm may result in some changes to travelling arrangements, although at this stage the numbers are unknown. Transport is currently provided for children attending Coldstream Primary School. The Council have consulted with parents to establish which school they consider that the Eccles Leitholm catchment should be permanently re-zoned to (Coldstream or Swinton). Transport will be provided to the permanent catchment school and existing transport arrangements to Coldstream will continue to be honoured for current pupils and their siblings, in the event that the catchment is to be permanently re-zoned to Swinton Primary School. Children from the current catchment also attend a range of different schools in line with parental choice. The council's analysis of postcodes for school-age children indicates that there is not a significant demand for places at a re-opened Eccles Leitholm Primary School.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that there is no educational benefit in re-opening Eccles Leitholm Primary School. Children from the current catchment already attend a number of other schools in line with parental choice and this is unlikely to change. The current arrangement where children are experiencing a variety of learning and teaching experiences may not be possible in a school with very low numbers. The continued mothballing will result in further deterioration of the building. This could lead to the council spending monies unnecessarily in terms of keeping it wind and watertight. The move to permanent closure of the school will allow other options for use by the community to be explored.

**HM Inspectors**  
**May 2019**