

Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Fraserburgh Project Town

Clatt School

Place and Wellbeing Assessment Report



About the report

This is a report of a Place and Wellbeing Assessment held in June 2024 to look at the options appraisal and future of Clatt Primary School, in Aberdeenshire. The Place and Wellbeing Assessment aims to build on the work done to develop the options appraisal and provide an opportunity to discuss the future direction of the school, applying a place-based approach to consider the immediate and wider impact of any potential options. The assessment process aims to develop recommendations that will support and increase the development of positive opportunities and consequences whilst also recognising and addressing any unintended negative consequences.

A Place and Wellbeing Assessment involves a workshop pulling together expertise and perspectives from a range of attendees to consider how a plan, policy or decision impacts on delivering a place that enables wellbeing and reduces inequality. To do this, attendees consider the impact on each of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and those who are experiencing inequality in that place. This paper is the output of one of these assessments.



The [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#) are the evidenced features that every place needs to have for the places we live, work and relax in, to positively enable health and wellbeing.

To get a better understanding about inequalities in the Project Towns, the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme reviewed quantitative data, using information provided by the Public Health Scotland’s Local Intelligence Support Team (LIST) as well as the statistical summary reports developed by Aberdeenshire Council’s data analysts. This quantitative data was enhanced, through qualitative information exploration and gathering, conducted by the Community Link Lead, which aimed to develop a context for the interpretation of the data and to sense check the key inequalities highlighted in the quantitative information. This data was used to highlight the people within the local area who are being impacted most by poor health and wellbeing. The recommended process for gathering data can be followed through [this guide](#).

The data for Clatt, at the time of the assessment, highlighted five key areas of focus. These are:

- Access deprivation
- Connectivity (physical and digital)
- Job opportunities
- Food insecurities
- Early deaths from Cancer (<75yrs)

Navigating the document

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Read [Appendix 1: Discussion of Specific Population Groups](#) (Pages 10 – 16) for further detail of the discussion relating to impacts on specific population groups at greatest risk of experiencing inequalities.

Read [Appendix 2: Summary of Discussion by Place and Wellbeing Outcome](#) (Page 16 - 34) for further detail. It lists the key evidence and research and a summary of the discussion that took place.

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Background to Clatt Primary School

In April 2022 a decision was made to temporarily mothball Clatt Primary School from the academic session starting in August 2022. Mothballing is the temporary closure of a school which does not, in itself, lead to statutory consultation.

The Primary 1 admission period for Aberdeenshire Schools took place in the week commencing 16 January 2023, however no applications were received. The deadline for submitting placing requests for academic session August 2023 was 15 March 2023 and no applications were received for pupils wishing to attend Clatt Primary School.

In May 2023 letters were sent out to residents of the Clatt School catchment informing them of the circumstances and advising that if no new families or existing families were interested in their children attending Clatt School it would continue to be mothballed for the 2023/24 session. As there was only one expression of interest made by a parent/carer for their two children to return to Clatt School, Aberdeenshire Council took the decision to continue mothballing for the 2023/24 academic session.

In August 2023 the Education & Children's Services Committee approved an option appraisal on the future of the school. One of the options identified as part of the appraisal could be to close the school. If this is considered to be the only viable option for the school, then Aberdeenshire Council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. If closure was the only viable option, there would be extensive consultation with the Clatt community and Marr Area Committee.

Links to Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

The ambition of the [Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme](#) is to improve Scotland's wellbeing by reducing the significant inequality in the health of its people. The programme objective focusses on the evidenced impact that the places where we live, work and relax have on our health and wellbeing. This impact can be positive or negative and the programme aims to ensure these unintended consequences are fully considered when we make decisions about a place.

Our objective is to support delivery of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes. A process used for doing so is a [Place and Wellbeing Assessment](#). This paper is the output of one of these assessments. A 'How to Guide' for [Place and Wellbeing Assessments](#) has been designed to support others to undertake their own assessments.

There is high-level evidence and research that sits behind our Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and links to health and wellbeing. Full details on all of this evidence can be found on our Wiki page on the [Shaping Places for Wellbeing Knowledge Hub](#). You will find some of this evidence listed in the body of the report.

Report Summary

The Place and Wellbeing Assessment of the Clatt School options appraisal examines the challenges and opportunities facing the Clatt community in the context of the possible permanent closure of the local school. In the assessment there were two key overarching themes identified as outlined below:

Movement and Access Challenges in Rural Areas

The assessment discussion emphasises the difficulties faced by the Clatt community in terms of transport, particularly due to the lack of public transport and the reliance on car ownership to access facilities, services and support. The assessment highlights the need for exploration of rural transport solutions and active travel options, whilst also identifying the potential use of the school building as a Community Hub, if permanently closed, to support access and reduce the need for travel. In identifying the potential opportunity of a Community Hub, there were key concerns acknowledged with the overarching concern being the community's capacity considering the limited resources and support currently available. Any initiatives to help tackle the rural specific challenges facing this community will require a level of community capacity building and so that work must be identified as a priority.

Community Capacity and Future Development

Following on from the initial theme and building on the identification of community capacity. The assessment discussion clearly highlighted the community's concerns about the future of the mothballed school and the broader implications for Clatt's civic identity and cohesion. The potential closure of the school raises issues of community engagement, identity, and the ability to sustain shared spaces and services for Clatt residents. The discussion highlighted that whilst there is interest in repurposing the school building for community use, such as a nursery or a Community Hub, there is uncertainty about the community's capacity to undertake these projects. This discussion highlights the importance of supporting community capacity building and ensuring effective communication and collaboration with external agencies to explore feasible development opportunities.

Recommendations

For ease of reference, all the recommendations contained in this Report are outlined in the table below:

| Place and Wellbeing Theme | Place and Wellbeing Outcome | Recommendation | |
|---------------------------|--|----------------|---|
| Movement | Active Travel Public Transport Traffic and Parking | 1 | The Marr Area team should highlight to Aberdeenshire Active Travel team the need to develop Active Travel links between Clatt and the surrounding villages, especially where alternative schools are located (Rhynie and Kennethmont), with a focus on improving footpaths and connections to encourage walking and cycling between villages. |
| | | 2 | The Marr Area Team should link with the Aberdeenshire Council Active Travel team to explore if and how Clatt is linked to the wider Aberdeenshire Active Travel Network, and opportunities to develop Clatt in that network. |
| | | 3 | The Marr Area team, with support from Public Health Colleagues, should investigate the current access to services such as 'Prescription delivery' in Clatt, identifying any current gaps and exploring options to introduce this essential service if needed. |
| Spaces | Streets and Spaces Natural Spaces Play and Recreation | 4 | The Marr Area Team should support Clatt community to explore opportunities to repurpose the school grounds for food-growing projects, (linking with similar initiatives in Aberdeenshire, such as those in Tarland, for learning) to address food insecurity and foster community connections. |
| | | 5 | The Marr Area Team should support the ongoing development of a resilience hub within Clatt, potentially in the village hall, by helping to make connections with other rural communities in Aberdeenshire that have successfully implemented similar projects to enhance preparedness for climate-related events. |

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| | | 6 | The local primary schools, including Rhynie and Kennethmont, should explore partnerships with nearby communities to reintroduce multi-generational activities and events in Clatt, ensuring that opportunities for intergenerational interaction and skill development, previously supported by Clatt School, are not lost. |
| | | 7 | The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should gather information on other rural villages that have undertaken renewable energy projects, such as wind farms or hydro schemes, to help to determine if similar initiatives could provide financial or infrastructural support to Clatt. |
| Resources | Services and Support Work and Economy Housing and Community | 8 | The Marr Area Team, in conjunction with the wider Local Community Planning Group, should initiate a service mapping exercise to identify current provisions in Clatt and surrounding areas, to build an understanding of where residents access services and support. |
| | | 9 | The Marr Area team should identify partners who can explore and build the capacity of the Clatt community immediately, this should include mapping out support mechanisms from the council and relevant agencies such as Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) and Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) to ensure readiness for potential future projects. |
| | | 10 | The Marr Area team should initiate discussions with Clatt community around the potential to develop a business case for an asset transfer of the school building, in preparation for the possible closure, ensuring that the community is prepared to act swiftly once a decision is made. To support this the Learning Estates team should link with the Marr Area team to ensure clarification around engagement to date and timeframes for next steps. |

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| | | 11 | The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should investigate the demand for a privately run nursery within the Clatt area. |
| | | 12 | The Learning Estates team should continue to enhance and maintain clear and transparent communication with the Clatt community regarding the school closure process, addressing concerns of procrastination by providing regular updates through the Area team, and clarity around the statutory timeframes (outlined on the Engage page). |
| Civic | Identity and Belonging Feeling Safe | 13 | The Clatt community should continue to be consulted and informed throughout the exploration of alternative uses for the school building, ensuring that any new developments align with Clatt's civic identity and heritage. |
| | | 14 | The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should identify learning from successful economic development projects in similar rural communities, focusing on those that have preserved local heritage and strengthened community identity while offering new services or facilities, and share this information with the Clatt community through the Tap 'O' North Community Council. |
| Stewardship | Care and Maintenance Influence and Control | 15 | The Learning Estates Team should enhance the current communication channels with the Clatt community, ensuring that the Engage Hub is regularly advertised to the community. This could involve exploring options for a designated point of contact or more frequent updates through colleagues such as the Marr Area team, ensuring residents feel heard and informed throughout the process. |

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| | | 16 | To improve the flow of information and enhance collaboration, there should be stronger connections developed between the Learning Estates Team and the Marr Area Team. This collaboration can help streamline communication and share relevant updates on ongoing projects. |
| | | 17 | The Learning Estates Team should advocate for the adoption of more holistic place-based processes that facilitate the consideration of the needs and preferences of the community, such as the Place and Wellbeing Assessment. |
| | | 18 | As the decision-making process progresses, the Learning Estates team should ensure that information related to potential alternatives to school closure is effectively and efficiently handed over to the relevant services, teams, and agencies. |

Next Steps

The recommendations in this report will be shared with the services and teams within Aberdeenshire Council, as well as external partners and community groups, who will have a strategic or operational role in reviewing the next steps for Clatt School. These recommendations should be reviewed to see what can be incorporated into the plans, based on the decision made around the closure of the school. That review will include identifying the aspects that require further consideration, and where collaboration is needed to take them forward. It is recognised that not all recommendations will be suitable to take forward due to time, capacity or other constraints.

Appendix 1

Discussion of Specific Population Groups and Recommendations

To consider the impact of the options appraisal for Clatt School on the Clatt community and wider surrounding area, the group began the assessment with a discussion of the specific population groups that are at risk of experiencing the greatest impacts caused by inequalities. The population groups were clustered together to facilitate the discussion within the time restrictions of the assessment.

Older People, Children and Young People

The discussion of specific population groups started by recognising that when reviewing projects relating to the learning estate, and more specifically the school provision across Aberdeenshire, the focus is on young people, as well as the parents and carers of those young people. This is appropriate due to the primary responsibility of the Learning Estates Team being the educational benefits and social wellbeing of the children in Aberdeenshire, however the group recognised that there is still a need to consider what local schools mean to the older adults' population within an area, and the role that the schools have in creating a sense of community. In the context of Clatt School, it was recognised that the activities and events provided as part of the school, such as jumble sales, coffee mornings and bake sales, all helped to socially galvanise the local community. This context highlighted that the school played a key role in providing a common link across all the Clatt community, with residents of all ages raising concerns around how that common link would be maintained if the school is permanently closed.

It is well documented within Aberdeenshire Council's Strategic Needs Assessment 2024/2025 that there are challenges across the Local Authority area because of an ageing population, with associated increases in the demand for resources, particularly in the rural areas. The most recent figures suggest there will be a 28% increase in over 65-year-olds by 2030, further compounded by the continued reduction in other age associated population groups, with the 0–17-year-old population expected to reduce by a further 4.7% in the same period. The group agreed this context must be at the forefront of the discussions when considering the rural communities and the requirements of the population groups within those communities.

It was recognised that the Clatt community feel that the local spatial area, within and around Clatt, is set up to attract older adults into the area, as opposed to younger adults and families and as such the decisions made about facilities, services and resources in the area need to reflect that.

Women, Men (including trans men/women and issues relating to pregnancy and maternity)

A review of the quantitative health and wellbeing data prior to the assessment discussion highlighted that there may be concerns relating to health during pregnancy, with slightly higher than average rates of maternal obesity within the relevant intermediate zone (Clashindarroch). Participants from community planning and public health provided the context that there are issues within Clatt and the surrounding area relating to food poverty, specifically the rural premium impacting on the cost and accessibility of healthy and nutritious food, and that these issues may be influencing the presentation of the quantitative metrics. The group recognised that maternal obesity has been identified as a concern across many areas within Aberdeenshire and based on work with food banks and food access networks, practitioners believe that factors such as the cost-of-living crisis are contributing to the issues. It was considered within the discussion that schools often play a role in helping to connect practitioners with families, helping to create networks for awareness raising, dissemination of information or implementation of initiatives, such as those around healthy eating, particularly in rural communities. A closure of Clatt school could lead to loss of that network and associated opportunity to reach families and as such, alternative methods for networking and connecting must be considered.

In the discussion of the figures around maternal obesity levels, it was recognised that the locality of Clatt along with the geographical distance to required services and facilities, often forces people into cars, rather than other more active modes of transport (such as walking or cycling). It was felt that this may also be contributing to the slightly higher rates of maternal obesity, as the option for active travel to local facilities, such as shops, is not available.

The group did not identify any additional considerations under this category of specific population groups.

Disabled People (including physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, long term medical conditions, mental health problems), Carers (including parents, single parents, and elderly carers)

In discussing this specific population group, the conversation flowed on from the previous consideration of the reliance on motorised transport to access services. The group were made aware that since Clatt School had been mothballed, Aberdeenshire Council has been providing school transport for the pupils in Clatt, to support access to their allocated schools. It was recognised that this can be a positive and a negative, depending on the personal circumstances of each family. Whilst it was identified that the need to travel further to school may have reduced the opportunity for Active travel, the impact of this was not known as there was no clear information around the number of pupils who walked or wheeled to school before the mothballing.

The group discussion moved on from the consideration of transport and active travel and started to consider those in the community with disabilities. Once again it was recognised that with the forecasted ageing population, there is potential that there will be an increase in the number of residents with additional physical disabilities, or long-term health conditions, which could increase demand for support services, or transport to support services further afield. Whilst the school would not directly have a role to play in meeting any such increased demand, the group recognised that if permanently closed, the remaining building may provide an opportunity for the physical space to provide such services in the local setting. The discussion on this point, and the associated questions and queries that were raised, led the group to recognise that there is a need to understand the current service provision (for all age groups) in Clatt and the surrounding area, and so it was recommended that a mapping exercise would be beneficial. This has been recognised in the recommendations under the 'Resources' theme, for 'Services and Support'.

Participants with a good knowledge of the Clatt community, and its history, provided the group with an understanding of the previous services that were available within Clatt and what is currently available. There was previously a renowned Tea Rooms located in Clatt Village Hall, and whilst the Village Hall is still in use, the Tea Rooms are no longer in existence, which has reduced the activity within the Village Hall. There is also an Old Kirk in Clatt that can be used by the community, but it was Clatt School that had previously provided the central point for the community. There are no shops, health care services or transport provisions within Clatt, and so the mothballing of Clatt School has left what residents describe as a 'hole' in the community. In outlining the services and facilities available, the group were also made aware that the Village Hall and Old Kirk are run by the same small number of community members. It was clearly articulated to the group that these community members do not feel they have the capacity to take on any more facilities or responsibilities with their

current capacity and so this is a cause for concern with regards to the future of the school building if it is permanently closed.

Minority Ethnic People, Refugees and Asylum Seekers and People with different religions or beliefs

In considering this cluster of population groups, the conversation started off by considering the current work being done with the resettlement of refugees within Aberdeenshire. It was raised that there is work being done by resettlement officers within Aberdeenshire council, and that linking in with these teams would be beneficial in understanding whether there are appropriate opportunities for resettlement within a rural location such as Clatt, which may have an impact on the feasibility of the continuation of Clatt School. The discussion amongst the group around this topic identified learning from other areas of Aberdeenshire. Whilst it was proposed that rural locations such as Clatt may be considered as possible options for refugees who are from rural locations, previous resettlement in areas such as Stonehaven, classified as 'Urban', were felt to be too rural by refugees and as such would not be suitable to support their wellbeing. Linked to this discussion, the group were made aware of assessments done in Lumsden, which has a similar rural classification to Clatt, that considered the settlement of vulnerable individuals in the area. These assessments have identified important considerations when locating vulnerable individuals in such a rural setting, with challenges such as a lack of car ownership and poor public transport, leading to issues with isolation and difficulty accessing key services. It was agreed that more work should be done to explore resettlement work across Aberdeenshire, but that caution must be implemented to ensure factors influencing wellbeing are well considered.

It was brought to the group's attention that whilst the statistical profile for the Clashindarroch Intermediate Zone suggests that most of the population in this area (95%) were born in the UK and are predominantly (98%) of White ethnicity, Clatt has attracted residents from across the UK and wider, with many of the residents moving to Clatt from elsewhere. This demonstrates where the specific demographics and experiences of small rural communities can be hidden in the statistics for the wider intermediate zones, highlighting the need to ensure local information, perspective and experiences are used in conjunction with the quantitative data.

Relationships (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual people and people who are married, unmarried, in a civil partnership)

There was very little discussion around these population groups within the assessment, with no key discussion points raised by the group for consideration. Under the outline of this population group and linking to the previous discussion of the representation in data, it was brought to the attention of the group that the Public Health team have been working on

completing needs assessment work in rural areas. It is hoped that this work will help to develop profiles for the smaller data zones, which in turn would provide a clearer picture of the communities in smaller rural areas.

People living in poverty and people on low income, People experiencing homelessness, People involved in the criminal justice system, and People with low literacy/numeracy

In discussing these population groups, the assessment group recognised the work being done across Aberdeenshire focusing on the 'cost of living rurally'. This work had been developed with the understanding that the nationally reported statistics used to inform the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) are not accurate in providing the context of rural communities, where residents have higher outgoings for necessities such as food, energy and transport. As raised within earlier discussions, once again the group recognised that rural poverty can be hidden at intermediate and data zone level. This can be especially relevant where large properties and private estates artificially elevate both the average reported house prices and average incomes.

With the recognition of the impact of large private estates in rural areas, the group were made aware that there have been issues associated with fuel poverty for residents living in private estate housing. There are examples of projects which aim to tackle some of these issues, such as the 'Log Bank' at Deeside providing logs for heating fuel. The number of Clatt residents living in private estate housing was not known, but it was recognised that this should be considered, to develop the understanding of the whether similar projects could be helpful and whether this features in the future options for the school building if permanently closed.

The group were made aware of the economic instability experienced by the Clatt community and surrounding communities, due to the main industries in the area being linked to agriculture, which can experience large instability year to year.

People in remote, rural and/or island locations

These population groups had clearly been considered within the work done to date around the future of Clatt School, with understanding that this community are rural based and as such are exposed to the challenges associated with rural living. Within that context, the group recognised that the school was the centre of this community and had been for many years, as is traditionally the case in remote and rural communities. With that recognition, it was agreed that the impact of a school closure can reach much further in the community. Linked to the previous consideration of populations living in poverty and the 'hidden' rural costs, the group recognised that the mothballing of Clatt School had meant that where previously families did not need to travel to access school, there was now a requirement for them to

travel. Whilst it was clarified that the community of Clatt are very used to having to travel to access services, it was also recognised that prior to the mothballing, the school was the one service that did not require travel.

Across many rural areas of Scotland there has been work done to explore and develop the model of Community Hubs, where a variety of services can be hosted in one location, improving accessibility for rural communities. Community Hubs can help support access to several key services, including health care, food pantries, and social opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of rural communities. It was proposed to the group that a permanent closure of the Clatt School, would mean that the building could be considered for suitability of a Community Hub. This work would need to be explored more fully in line with the decision around the closure of the school, with examples of Community Hubs identified to inform that exploration.

The group discussion focused in on the Community Hub model and how that would help to tackle some of the stigmatisation that residents in small rural communities raise concern about, with regards to accessing support services. For context, the group were made aware that within smaller communities there is apprehension around accessing many forms of support, and support services, due to the concern that the wider community will become aware. Previously the school offered an opportunity to address some of these associated challenges with service access, by building trusting relationships with community members and helping with signposting and information provision relating to support services. The group recognised that in the absence of a school, a Community Hub, that provides social interactions and relationship building, could help with making that link to support services and help to reduce the concerns of stigmatisation. In considering the opportunities that a Community Hub model can offer to rural communities, the group also acknowledged the poor digital connectivity in the area, recognising the digital poverty often associated with rural communities. With the school building having good digital connectivity, it was again identified as possible opportunity for the wider community to benefit from that, should the building be used for something similar to a Community Hub.

Staff including people with different work patterns (part time and full time, short term, job share and seasonal)

In discussing this final cluster of specific population groups, the assessment group acknowledged the quantitative data indicating that there is a reduction in job opportunities within the Clashindarroch Intermediate Zone, with consideration of whether the mothballing, and any subsequent potential closure of the school, would be further contributing to this trend. The Learning Estates team clarified for the group how staff at the school, including catering assistants, cleaning staff, administrators and janitors, had been impacted. It was clarified that these roles were all school cluster based, and as such these posts covered multiple schools in the cluster and so staff were still in their positions, unless they had

requested to leave. The janitorial role was specifically considered, as this role still had obligation for Clatt School during the mothballing period, to maintain the building on a wind a watertight basis. Any impact of a permanent closure of the school on this janitorial role would need to be considered. With regards to the teaching staff that were working at Clatt School, all had been offered reallocated roles across Aberdeenshire, ensuring they could also continue with their employment, if that was their preference. It was noted that some teaching staff chose to leave when the school was mothballed, rather than be reallocated.

In discussing the different jobs associated with Clatt School, the group recognised that some of the positions would have been part time posts, and that reallocation may have led to increased travel requirements, which for employees working part time can cause financial issues.

Appendix 2

Summary of Discussion and Recommendations by Place and Wellbeing Outcome Theme

Movement

Active Travel

Everyone can:

- easily move around using good-quality, accessible, well-maintained and safe segregated wheeling, walking and cycling routes and access secure bike parking.
- wheel, walk and cycle through routes that connect homes, destinations and public transport, are segregated from, and prioritised above, motorised traffic and are part of a local green network.

Evidence and research:

- Health benefits of active travel, such as increased physical activity levels, will vary in different groups.¹
- Active travel can increase social interactions.¹

¹ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

- More active travel could lead to increased exposure to air pollutants or more accidents, but the health benefits of active travel, for example from physical activity, outweigh the risks caused by air pollution or accidents.¹
- Walking or cycling to school helps children achieve a healthy weight and the beneficial effects may be greater for children from deprived areas.²
- Protected bike lanes and secure bike parking increases diversity and inclusion.³

Public Transport

Everyone has access to a sustainable, affordable, accessible, available, appropriate, and safe public transport service.

Evidence and research:

- Public transport use has the potential to improve access to services and facilities and connect communities.⁴
- Public transport should be accessible, available, affordable and appropriate.⁴

Traffic and parking

Everyone can benefit from:

- reducing traffic and traffic speeds in the community.
- traffic management and design, where traffic and car parking do not dominate or prevent other uses of space and car parking is prioritised for those who don't have other options.

Evidence and research:

- Motorised transport has the potential to increase air and noise pollution and greenhouse gases.⁴
- The volume and speed of traffic and long commutes can be detrimental to health.⁴

² [Associations of active travel with adiposity among children and socioeconomic differentials: a longitudinal study | BMJ Open](#)

³ [Women and Biking: A Case Study on the use of San Francisco Bike Lanes. University of California, Berkley\).](#)

⁴ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Summary of discussion:

The group approached the discussion of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes by focusing on the overarching themes. This enabled the group to explore the theme, recognising that the outcomes are interlinked, and that conversation would cross over. For this report the summary of that discussion is reported by Place and Wellbeing Outcome theme, with recommendations collated under each theme, and linked to the individual Place and Wellbeing Outcomes where appropriate.

The assessment discussion considered the theme of 'Movement' with the group consolidating their discussion of the three key outcomes for this theme, including Active Travel, Public Transport and Traffic and Parking. To start the discussion on Movement, the group initially recognised the importance of considering rural transport for the Clatt community. The group raised queries around car ownership, accessing services and physical activity agendas for residents, recognising that this context was required from the Clatt community to explore the Movement theme and subsequent Outcomes. Participants in the assessment, who were representing the local community, were able to provide clarification around most of these points. Car ownership is seen as essential for Clatt residents, even where they would prefer not to own a car, such as with elderly residents, due to the requirement to travel for all key services and the lack of public transport. The group were informed that residents in Clatt cannot access any shops, or health care services within their village, and with the poor digital connectivity, online options are often not available (*NB: a number of invited attendees could not join the meeting due to the online format and so pre-assessment discussions in person had taken place*). These issues had been worsened by the reduction in the A2B bus service recently, and it was highlighted that private taxis are expensive and not accessible for many. Participants in the assessment were able to provide examples of similar rural areas across Aberdeenshire that faced similar transport issues, with discussion of how those communities had tackled some of the challenges specifically around accessing services. It was proposed that clarification of the current provision of services such as 'Prescription delivery' in the area should be explored and if absent then the options to implement this should be considered.

In discussing the clear rural challenges associated with the Movement theme and Outcomes, the group identified several current funding opportunities available to rural communities, as well examples of projects that have been undertaken by groups in other rural areas. It was clear that there are opportunities for rural communities to access funding and support to explore solutions to rural transport challenges, but the group also recognised that it was unclear if there is a desire or capacity within Clatt to explore this.

The group directed the discussion specifically to the school and identified the links with Active Travel. It was recognised that before mothballing, the pupils (and families) could walk to school, although the provision and quality of the footpaths was identified to be a problem. Since mothballing, walking to school is no longer an option for many, with one parent

recognising this specifically in the engagement survey. As such it was felt that there is a need to explore how Active Travel can be supported and promoted within the school, and wider community, if the school is closed permanently. Once again, the concept of a Community Hub in the school building was raised, recognising that depending on what was offered from the hub, and the quality of the footpaths to access the building, this may provide a means of encouraging active travel around the village. The need for links between rural areas like Clatt and the wider Active Travel routes across Aberdeenshire was also considered in this discussion, again with suggestion that the school building provides a focused location in Clatt, for that link. It was felt by the group that there is a keen desire across Clatt and the surrounding area to participate in activities such as cycling, walking, and Nordic skiing, and as such supporting more people to engage in these activities, through good quality, well connected routes would be encouraged by the local communities. It was proposed that more information around the current 'Health Walk' provision and uptake in the area would be helpful in starting to explore the demand for connected routes.

In considering the school building as a 'destination' for active travel routes, the issue of digital connectivity was also raised again in this discussion, with those point being represented in the 'Resources' section of this report.

The representative for Rhynie School (one of the schools to which Clatt pupils were relocated) provided the context for the active travel to school for their pupils. It was outlined whilst there are three buses running to the school, there are a number of students who have taken up active travel modes, including scooting, cycling and walking, with no issues raised to the school around this mode of access.

With the conversation continually identifying the opportunity for exploring a Community Hub, it was raised by several participants, that the capacity of the community must be better explored and understood. Colleagues in the assessment raised concerns around the reduction in services to support Community Development, recognising that this has an impact when there are changes such as school closures which can provide opportunities for repurposing buildings, but there can be a lack of capacity within the community and lack of external support to develop that capacity. Representatives of the community firmly outlined that the Clatt community are apprehensive at the potential of taking on responsibility for another building, with many residents feeling there is no capacity to do this. It was proposed that a co-partnership model could work, for example one that looked at developing enterprise opportunities also. This would potentially provide funding opportunities as well, that could support the development.

Recommendations:

1. The Marr Area Team should highlight to Aberdeenshire Active Travel team the need to develop Active Travel links between Clatt and the surrounding villages, especially where

alternative schools are located (Rhynie and Kennethmont), with a focus on improving footpaths and connections to encourage walking and cycling between villages.

2. The Marr Area Team should link with the Aberdeenshire Council Active Travel team to explore if and how Clatt is linked to the wider Aberdeenshire Active Travel Network, and opportunities to develop Clatt in that network.
3. The Marr Area team, with support from Public Health Colleagues, should investigate the current access to services such as 'Prescription delivery' in Clatt, identifying any current gaps and exploring options to introduce this essential service if needed.

Space

Streets and spaces

Everyone can access:

- buildings, streets and public spaces that create an attractive place to use, enjoy and interact with others.
- streets and spaces that are well-connected, well-designed and maintained, providing multiple functions and amenities to meet the varying needs of different population groups.

Evidence and research:

- Attractive neighbourhoods can improve mental wellbeing.⁵

Natural Space

Everyone can:

- access good-quality natural spaces that support biodiversity and are well-connected, well-designed, safe, and maintained, providing multiple functions and amenities to meet the varying needs of different population groups.
- be protected from environmental hazards including air/water/soil pollution or the risk of flooding.
- access community food growing opportunities and prime quality agricultural land is protected.

⁵ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Evidence and research:

- Natural spaces can provide mental health benefits.⁶
- Experts hypothesise that natural spaces can provide a sense of character and distinctiveness to a place.⁶
- There are wider environmental benefits to increasing natural space which can protect population health.⁷
- Natural spaces can have an impact on health through facilitation of physical activity, improved social interactions/relationships and stress reduction.⁸
- Natural spaces can encourage social interactions and a sense of community and belonging.⁹

Play and recreation

Everyone can access a range of high quality, safe, well-maintained, accessible places with opportunities for play and recreation to meet the varying needs of different population groups and the community itself.

Evidence and research:

- Play is important to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and wellbeing of young children.⁶
- There are health benefits of undertaking play and recreation in outdoor environments, in particular natural spaces. There are specific benefits for children such as the development of motor skills, understanding risk and environmental awareness.¹⁰

Summary of discussion:

As with the 'Movement' theme, the group considered the theme of 'Spaces' broadly with the discussion covering each of the three outcomes ('Streets and Spaces', 'Natural Spaces' and 'Play and Recreation') collectively. The group immediately started the discussion of this theme, with the recognition that Clatt is a very well-maintained village, surrounded by beautiful natural spaces. The excellent play park area, which is safely fenced off from the road,

⁶ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

⁷ INHERIT: exploring triple-win solutions for living, moving and consuming that encourage behavioural change, protect the environment, promote health and health equity www.inherit.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2017/06/INHERIT-Report-A4-Low-res_s.pdf

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-action-on-health-inequalities-reducing-social-isolation

⁹ Hartig T, Mitchell R, de Vries S, et al. Nature and health. Annual Review of Public Health 2014;35:207–228.

¹⁰ Play Scotland. Getting it right for play power of play: an evidence base. www.playscotland.org/wpcontent/uploads/Power-of-Play-an-evidence-base.pdf

was identified as a key strength of the village, along with the well-maintained roads, although it was acknowledged that the roads are all single lane and so can be challenging when cars need to pass each other. In identifying these strong positives of the area, the group were made aware that there are limited pavements around the school building and as such there is a need to walk on the main road (which is a national speed limit road) creating safety concerns.

The group acknowledged that whilst the previous theme discussion had led to the recognition of key concerns around community capacity, until that is explored fully it is still worth recognising the opportunities that could be identified as part of this assessment, particularly around alternative uses for the building if it was to permanently close. The group considered the potential for food growing opportunities within the school grounds. It was suggested that there would be good opportunities for the community to develop food growing projects on the grounds around the school, and that this may offer some solution to the food insecurities being experienced by the residents. Again, co-production opportunities were suggested to support with these types of projects and helping to build connections and support for shared learning with other communities in Aberdeenshire, such as Tarland, was recommended.

The group expanded the discussion to consider the role of the natural spaces and the links to community resilience, particularly with regards to climate change and storms. Across Aberdeenshire, communities are being encouraged to develop resilience hubs and warm spaces, to offer support when there are incidents of bad weather or damage caused by storms. Clatt community has been looking into this, for the village hall, and are exploring options such as buying a generator. It was proposed that links should be made with similar communities across Aberdeenshire who have already undergone similar resilience focused work and projects. The group was able to provide several specific examples across Aberdeenshire, and it was proposed that by building links between these communities, to share learning and experience, that it may support the development of capacity in the Clatt community. Once again, exploring the capacity and desire within the community for further projects in Clatt, was raised as a recommendation.

In relation to schools, it was clarified that Rhynie School do have growing projects ongoing, that their pupils engage with, although these are separate to the Rhynie Community growing project that has recently started.

Several organisations and projects were identified by the group as being of interest. Firstly, the Gordon Rural Action project was outlined, with the work around developing networks of wellbeing of particular interest to this discussion. The other initial project identified, was the Scottish Sculpture workshops, although less was known around this work. The Community Fund (previously the European Union Fund) was identified, with clarification that it will be targeting Youth Development. Opportunities from funding associated with the Wind Farm development were recognised, as this has proven successful for surrounding communities.

This point raised concerns, with participants identifying that the development of Wind Farms in the area has been causing further insecurity in the local communities, and this would need to be approached with caution. There was information provided around the Huntly Development Trust, and the installation of a wind turbine, with financial benefits associated and similarly the example of the Braemar Hydro Scheme was outlined, both of which demonstrated how links to renewable energy within small rural communities could help to generate financial benefits. It was recommended that these projects be explored more fully and where appropriate, connections made to the Clatt community, if they do not already exist.

The community representatives in the discussion wanted to emphasise how much the school had offered to the village in terms of a physical space that acted like a 'glue' for the community, bringing people together. Whilst events can be run from the Kirk and the Village Hall, it was felt that the school supported better engagement across the residents and forced the community to come together for a common purpose. The residents are aware that there are events such as 'Community Exchanges' that take place at some of the surrounding schools. Rhynie School confirmed they do monthly community café and a uniform exchange, whilst Kennethmont have recently set up new 'Give & Take' events. Clatt residents feel the mothballing of the school has removed these opportunities for Clatt and limited their ability to replicate them.

Similarly, the community feel that their only opportunity for multi-generational shared spaces has been lost with the mothballing of the school. The community valued the opportunity for residents from different generations to come together and interact at school events, and as such are keen to find opportunities to support this if the school is closed. As part of this discussion, it was also recognised that one of the benefits of the small school size in Clatt, had been the opportunity for children to develop skills in working across age groups. It was felt that this should not be lost and opportunities to still develop these skills should be identified in the alternative schools.

Recommendations:

4. The Marr Area Team should support Clatt community to explore opportunities to repurpose the school grounds for food-growing projects, (linking with similar initiatives in Aberdeenshire, such as those in Tarland, for learning) to address food insecurity and foster community connections.
5. The Marr Area Team should support the ongoing development of a resilience hub within Clatt, potentially in the village hall, by helping to make connections with other rural communities in Aberdeenshire that have successfully implemented similar projects to enhance preparedness for climate-related events.
6. The local primary schools, including Rhynie and Kennethmont, should explore partnerships with nearby communities to reintroduce multi-generational activities and

events in Clatt, ensuring that opportunities for intergenerational interaction and skill development, previously supported by Clatt School, are not lost.

7. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should develop gather information on other rural villages that have undertaken renewable energy projects, such as wind farms or hydro schemes, to help to determine if similar initiatives could provide financial or infrastructural support to Clatt.

Resources

Services and support

Everyone can access:

- health enhancing, accessible, affordable and well-maintained services, facilities and amenities. These are informed by community engagement, responsive to the needs and priorities of all local people.
- a range of spaces and opportunities for communities to meet indoors and outdoors.
- information and resources necessary for an included life in a range of digital and non-digital formats.

Evidence and research:

- Services and support can provide people with a sense of belonging to the community.¹¹
- People need local facilities and services to live and enjoy healthy independent lives¹²

¹¹ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

¹²

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10511482.2014.900102>; <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/spatial-planning-and-health-nice>

Work and economy

Everyone benefits equally from a local economy that provides:

- essential goods & services produced or procured locally
- good quality paid and unpaid work
- access to assets such as wealth & capital and the resources that enable people to participate in the economy such as good health and education
- a balanced value ascribed across sectors such as female dominated sectors and the non-monetary economy
- the resources that enable people to participate in the economy such as good health and education.

Evidence and research:

- Volunteering can help increase feelings of self-esteem and provide a sense of purpose.¹³
- Volunteering has been associated with improved self-rated health, mental health, life satisfaction and wellbeing, and decreased depression and mortality.¹³
- Experts hypothesise that if a place is lively and vibrant it can provide work opportunities and will encourage people to visit the area.¹³

Housing and community

Everyone has access to:

- a home that is affordable, energy efficient, high quality and provides access to private outdoor space.
- a variety of housing types, sizes and tenancies to meet the needs of the community. And of a sufficient density to sustain existing or future local facilities, services and amenities.
- a home that is designed and built to meet need and demand, is adaptable to changing needs and includes accessible/wheelchair standard housing.
- new homes that are located and designed to provide high levels of climate resilience and use sustainable materials and construction methods.
- homes that are designed to promote community cohesion.

¹³ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Evidence and research:

- Good-quality affordable housing is associated with improved physical and mental health outcomes. Housing can impact on health in three main ways: physical factors, household factors and factors related to place and communities.¹⁴
- Vacant and derelict land can negatively impact on health.¹⁴

Summary of discussion:

In discussing the 'Resources' theme, the group explored all the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes under this theme, including 'Services and Support', 'Work and Economy' and 'Housing and Community'. The group's discussion started by focusing on the housing and amenities in the area, with concern raised that the available housing in the area does not support or attract families, with no medium sized family homes available, making the likelihood of supporting an increasing the school roll unlikely. Whilst this was raised as a concern, it was clarified that there are no plans for development in the area, and that increasing the housing offering in Clatt was not a realistic possibility at this point.

The focus of the discussion moved on to explore the opportunities that would be presented should the school be closed permanently, with consideration of what the services or facilities the building could provide. Several suggestions had been put forward through the engagement with the community, included in the options appraisal, with these including nursery, office space for co-working (for those working remotely) and business units for small businesses. The group considered how any of these things might work and if there would be opportunities for these ideas to co-exist within the space available. Through this discussion it was made very clear that the community feel very strongly that they do not want the building to be empty and unused.

Recognition around the community's desire to have the building occupied and not left standing empty, prompted comments from the group that the community felt there was some procrastination around the next steps for the school, specifically the community had stated they felt mothballing the school was a way of procrastinating the inevitable outcome of closure. The Learning Estates Team were able to address these concerns and provided clarification around the required steps and timeframes for the process of a school closure. The Learning Estates Team were clear that their role is to safeguard education and wellbeing of children, and that their work to do this by mothballing the school, has been supported by the families affected, with their feedback being that it was the right thing to do. However, it was recognised through the communication and engagement with the wider community, that

¹⁴ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

there was a reluctance for the school to be mothballed or possibly closed. Due to this the Learning Estates Team have extended their timeframes for the decision on the future of the school at the request of the community.

It was hoped that this would provide the Clatt community with chance to explore the opportunities for the future of the school and allow for this Place & Wellbeing Assessment to be undertaken. It was acknowledged by the group that the Learning Estates Team were being innovative in implementing the current assessment as means of considering the impact of the future options of the school and ensuring that a broader perspective was considered than their main remit of children's education and wellbeing. It was also acknowledged that the wider Clatt community had requested more time around this process and decision making, as they were not accepting of the possibility of closure and wanted additional time to consider alternative options. It was hoped that this additional time provided had been seen as being supportive of the wishes of the wider community rather than a form of procrastination.

In considering the community concerns around procrastination, it was raised that the main concern was over any possible delay between the decision to close the school and the future use of the building. This led to the group considering the timeframes that would be associated with the asset transfer process. It was clarified that an asset transfer cannot be considered until any school closure is confirmed, which would take approximately 18 months. However, it is possible to conduct parallel work in preparation for developing a business case to support any such asset transfer. It was agreed by the group that this work should be started as soon as possible by the Marr Area Team, supported by the Marr Area Project Officer. As part of this discussion, it was again confirmed that the building will be maintained as wind and watertight, with reduced landscaping maintenance, throughout the decision process. Concerns around the boiler and heating system had been raised but it was confirmed that this is included in the reduced maintenance requirements.

The discussion outlining the concerns about procrastination, led the group to consider the reluctance from the community for the school to close. Through engagement sessions it had become apparent that the families with school children affected by the mothballing (and possible closure) did not attend the sessions, and that now the children had moved schools and settled they were generally not keen to move back (one family had specified otherwise). The frustrations and opposition to permanently closing the school had come from long standing community members, none of which still had children at the school, but who had a long-term affinity with the school. It is recognised that this affinity is valid and needs to be considered and recognised in the future direction of the school, however it cannot be the reason to keep the school open.

The group discussion acknowledged the seven options that had been identified through the engagement with the Clatt community. The focus of the discussion was on the potential for use as a nurse's home for the local surrounding areas. It was clarified that there is a council run

nursery in Rhynie, linked to the school, that caters to Clatt and Lumsden, however this was for children aged 3 to 5 years. Whilst there is no opportunity to develop a new Aberdeenshire Council nursery in this area, it was acknowledged that the building may be suitable for a private nursery. This led to consideration of linking opportunities, such as working space for parents who work remotely, or space to support parents who wish to undertake career development and training opportunities, whilst children are in nursery care. This would link to the previous discussion around the Community Hub model. Whilst this option had been outlined by the community, it is unclear of the demand for a privately run nursery in the area, and this would need to be explored fully.

In considering the potential for a private nursery business, and links to a wider Community Hub, the group explored points that were raised earlier around the community's capacity and concerns raised. It was clearly acknowledged by the group that there needs to be work done to both explore the community capacity and to build their capacity, and that the work around that needed to start immediately, with the group recommending that those support mechanisms be identified and mapped out clearly. The group discussed the need for the council and other agencies (such as Development Trusts Association Scotland and Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action) to support Clatt community with capacity building as well as identifying funding opportunities. This process should be run alongside the next steps of the decision-making process for the future of the school in preparation for the potential school closure.

Recommendations:

8. The Marr Area Team, in conjunction with the wider Local Community Planning Group, should initiate a service mapping exercise to identify current provisions in Clatt and surrounding areas, to build an understanding of where residents access services and support.
9. The Marr Area team should identify partners who can explore and build the capacity of the Clatt community immediately, this should include mapping out support mechanisms from the council and relevant agencies such as DTAS and AVA to ensure readiness for potential future projects.
10. The Marr Area team should initiate discussions with Clatt community around the potential to develop a business case for an asset transfer of the school building, in preparation for the possible closure, ensuring that the community is prepared to act swiftly once a decision is made. To support this the Learning Estates team should link with the Marr Area team to ensure clarification around engagement to date and timeframes for next steps.
11. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should investigate the demand for a privately run nursery within the Clatt area.
12. The Learning Estates team should continue to enhance and maintain clear and transparent communication with the Clatt community regarding the school closure

process, addressing concerns of procrastination by providing regular updates through the Area team, and clarity around the statutory timeframes (outlined on the Engage page).

Civic

Identity and belonging

Everyone can benefit from a place that has a positive identity, culture and history, where people feel like they belong and are able to participate and interact positively with others.

Evidence and research:

- Community belonging is described as having three elements: community attachment, community identity and social interaction.¹⁵
- Attachment to place can be associated with good-quality and well-designed public spaces, how welcoming a place is and its aesthetics.¹⁵
- If people are involved in helping to design and maintain the places they live in, this can build a sense of ownership, belonging and attachment.¹⁵
- A sense or feeling of belonging to a community is associated positively with mental health, and an improved quality of life.¹⁶
- Landmarks or something distinctive about the neighbourhood can also help to create a sense of place and belonging, which is beneficial for health.¹⁷

Feeling safe

Everyone feels safe and secure in their own home and their local community taking account of the experience of different population groups.

¹⁵ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

¹⁶ Quality of life literature review www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Literature-Review-ofQuality-of-Life-in-the-Built-Environment-Publica-4-1.pdf

¹⁷ Design for social sustainability – a framework for creating thriving new communities. <https://youngfoundation.org/publications/design-for-social-sustainability/>

Evidence and research:

- Some groups within the population can have limited access to safe and well-maintained environments.¹⁸

Summary of discussion:

In considering the theme of 'Civic' the group acknowledged both Outcomes of 'Identity and Belonging' and 'Feeling Safe'. It was clear that these two outcomes were woven throughout the assessment discussion, specifically relating to the desire by residents, for Clatt to have a role to play in contributing to the wider surrounding communities. It is recognised by the community that whilst none of the small villages in the area offer residents all facilities and services required, each village does offer something, in terms of service or support, and so has a contribution to make to the wider community. Clatt residents saw the school as being part of that network of offering and so without the school they are keen for there to be an alternative in Clatt, but they are unclear what that could be. The community of Clatt are very clear that they want a reason for people to come to Clatt, as they are concerned, they are at risk of that what has been experienced elsewhere, specifically in Gartly, where the school closure has led to the 'heart' of the community being lost. The mothballing of the school has heightened concerns in the community for a few reasons, Primarily, it is felt that mothballing a school leads to a level of insecurities amongst communities, and particularly parents of school aged children, who will then opt to school their children elsewhere, further encouraging the closure of the school. Additionally, it is felt that leaving the building empty for a long period of time cause issues within the community and lowers the sense of community spirit in the area.

The group was made aware that there is a disconnect within the Clatt community, with a division between those residents who are keen for development and new opportunities and those residents who want Clatt to stay as it is, with a quiet and sleepy atmosphere. It was recognised by the group that any future work will need to strike a balance for the community, ensuring any economic development is sensitive to the civic identity of the community. There are good examples of economic development projects that work in harmony with local communities, and identifying those that would be important for this community. There would need to be projects that have worked to enhance what is already available, that are sensitive to the community aspirations but that still provide opportunity for progression and development. Within this discussion and recognition of the different perspectives within the community, it was acknowledged that there is an agreement that the school was the heart of this community and as such the mothballing (and possible closure) has had a wide impact, with all the community keen to identify what alternatives are available for Clatt. Community

¹⁸ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

representatives were very clear that Clatt has a proud heritage, and that in the past it has been seen as being pioneering, something that residents are keen to continue with moving forward.

Recommendations:

13. The Clatt community should continue to be consulted and informed throughout the exploration of alternative uses for the school building, ensuring that any new developments align with Clatt's civic identity and heritage.
14. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing team should identify learning from successful economic development projects in similar rural communities, focusing on those that have preserved local heritage and strengthened community identity while offering new services or facilities, and share this information with the Clatt community.

Stewardship

Care and maintenance

Everyone has access to:

- buildings, spaces and routes that are well cared for in a way that is responsive to the needs and priorities of local communities.
- good facilities for recycling and well organised refuse storage and collection.

Evidence and research:

- If people perceive their neighbourhoods as being poorly maintained with high levels of environmental incivilities, they are likely to experience worse health outcomes such as lower levels of mental wellbeing.¹⁹

¹⁹ https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4174/BP_11_-_Built_environment_and_health_-_updated.pdf

Influence and sense of control

Everyone is empowered to be involved a place in which:

- Local outcomes are improved by effective collaborations between communities, community organisations and public bodies.
- Decision making processes are designed to involve communities as equal partners.
- Community organisations co-produce local solutions to issues.
- Communities have increased influence over decisions.
- Democratic processes are developed to be accessible to all citizens.

Evidence and research:

- Sense of control can be beneficial for mental health and quality of life.²⁰
- People living in more socioeconomically deprived areas can feel less confident about being involved in decision-making compared to less deprived areas.²⁰
- Those with a long-term health condition or disability can feel less empowered in decisions about their neighbourhood.²⁰

Summary of discussion:

The group considered both Outcomes under the 'Stewardship' theme, these being 'Care and Maintenance' and 'Influence and sense of control'. In this discussion it was initially acknowledged that the community had been communicated with and heard clearly through that communication, but that there was concern around the continuation of that communication and having those voices heard in the next steps and future decision-making processes. The Learning Estates team were very clear in outlining to the group that their responsibility is to explore with the community the possible alternatives to school closure. To date no feasible alternatives to closure had been identified. As part of that process there had been several future options identified by the community, which all require the closure of the school to progress and as such that is out with the remit of the Learning Estates Team. The group acknowledged this clarification but specified that the handover of that information to the services, teams and agencies who could support the community with those alternatives, was crucial and must be done effectively and efficiently. As previously mentioned, these processes can be done in tandem, but no action can be taken until any school closure is agreed.

²⁰ [Public Health Scotland, Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Participants in the group raised the point that whilst the council have made clear efforts to communicate well with the local community around this work, at times the residents can feel that they are not communicating clearly or in the way the community would like. An example of this was the community requesting one key 'point of contact' to be identified. The group considered this request and acknowledged that individual points of contact are not currently the working style of the Learning Estates Team due to working patterns and capacity. Instead, communication is directed through a central email address, to ensure it is responded to without delay. This is not clear to the community and does not help to support the more personalised approach they are seeking and so it was recognised that improvements could be made and ideas of how to improve that would be welcomed. One suggestion made was for connections between the Learning Estates Team and the Marr Area Team colleagues to be developed, which may help to provide opportunities for sharing information around ongoing projects more clearly and for communication to be more free flowing. It was agreed this could be explored as a starting point.

The group considered that there are improvements that can be made to the engagement processes when working with communities on projects like this, with a focus on working around the community and not forcing them to fit into our model of engagement. With this discussion came the recognition that the Learning Estates Team were doing exactly that by undertaking the Place and Wellbeing Assessment to review this project, with the pre-assessment work and collaborative assessment discussion all supporting better engagement processes that support community representation and try to build the voice of the community into the process.

Recommendations:

15. The Learning Estates Team should enhance the current communication channels with the Clatt community, ensuring that the Engage Hub is regularly advertised to the community. This could involve exploring options for a designated point of contact or more frequent updates through colleagues such as the Marr Area team, ensuring residents feel heard and informed throughout the process.
16. To improve the flow of information and enhance collaboration, there should be stronger connections developed between the Learning Estates Team and the Marr Area Team. This collaboration can help streamline communication and share relevant updates on ongoing projects.
17. The Learning Estates Team should advocate for the adoption of more holistic place-based processes that facilitate the consideration of the needs and preferences of the community, such as the Place and Wellbeing Assessment.
18. As the decision-making process progresses, the Learning Estates team should ensure that information related to potential alternatives to school closure is effectively and efficiently handed over to the relevant services, teams, and agencies.

Appendix 3

Participants

- Maxine Booth – Quality Improvement Manager, Aberdeenshire Council
- Rachael Goldring – Learning Estates Team Leader, Aberdeenshire Council
- Vicki Grant – Head Teacher Rhynie Primary School
- Gail Dick – Learning Estates Project Officer, Aberdeenshire Council
- Olwen Fraser – Quality Improvement Officer, Aberdeenshire Council
- Janice Smith – Tap ‘o’ North Community Council
- Caroline Rhodes – Member of Clatt Village Hall Committee
- Sarah Smith – Rhynie Parent Teacher Committee
- Nick Mardall – Area Project Officer (Marr), Aberdeenshire Council
- Hilary English – Community Planning Officer (Marr), Aberdeenshire Council
- Anne McCormack – Development Officer, Poverty Alliance
- Dawn Tuckwood – Advanced Public Health Coordinator (South), NHS Grampian
- Clare Taylor-Brown – CLD, Aberdeenshire Council
- Angie Hood – Senior Key Worker Employability, Aberdeenshire Council
- Ewen Allardyce – Employability Co-ordinator, Aberdeenshire Council
- Alice Collins (Assessment note taker) – Project Officer Shaping Places for Wellbeing, Improvement Service
- Matthew Smart – Community Link Lead (Fraserburgh) Shaping Places for Wellbeing, Aberdeenshire Council
- Laura Stewart – (Assessment Chair) Project Lead (Fraserburgh) Shaping Places for Wellbeing, Aberdeenshire Council