

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Kinross-shire Local Committee

20 January 2022

FORMER BLAIRINGONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

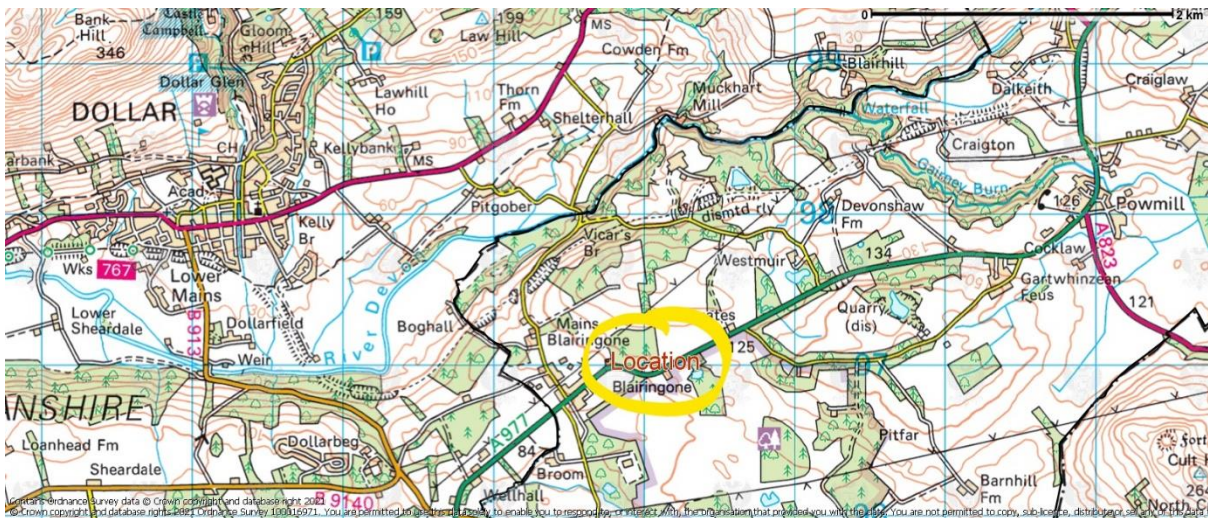
Report by the Head of Culture and Communities Services
(Report No. 22/10)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

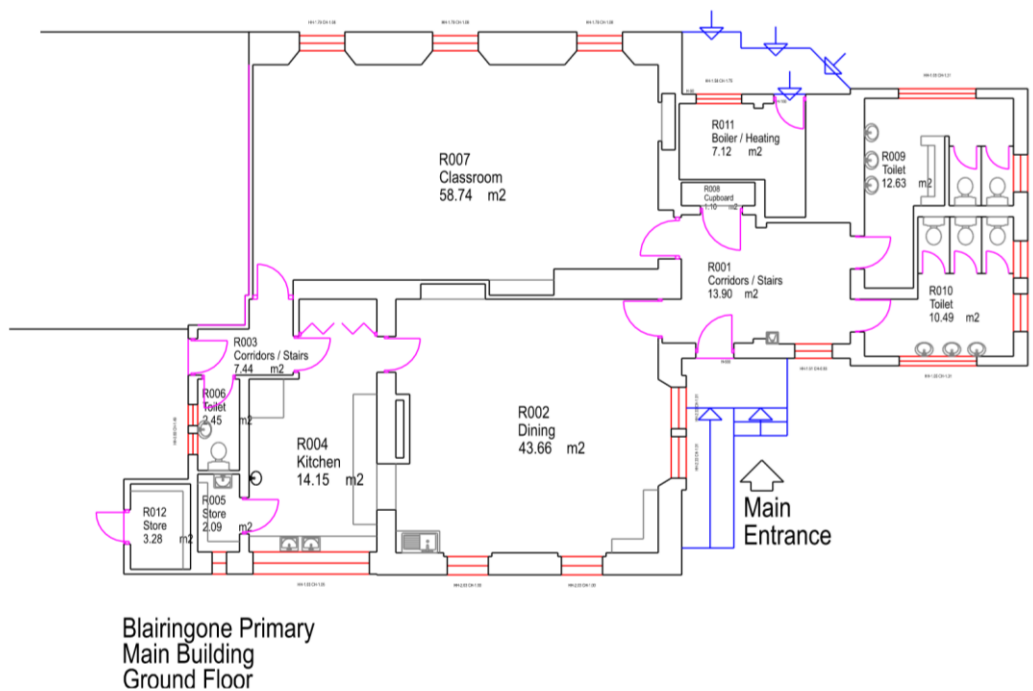
This report provides information on the former Blairingone Primary School in Kinross-shire, including details of its current condition, wider community facilities and options for a possible community-led solution to the future ownership and use of the building.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The former Blairingone Primary School is located a few hundred yards east of Blairingone, along the A977 towards Powmill. Blairingone is a small settlement located in the western part of Kinross-shire, close to the boundary with Clackmannanshire. The location of the buildings is marked on the map below.



- 1.2 Blairingone PS includes two large rooms of approximately 50m² each, kitchen facilities, toilets and storage, as per the diagram below. The total floorspace is 192m² and there is a storage unit in the former playground.



- 1.3 Blairingone PS was declared surplus to requirements by Perth and Kinross Council in June 2019. Local elected members carried out a short community consultation exercise in 2019 to assess any local interest in community ownership of the school, the results of which were inconclusive. Since 2019 the local community has been working on establishing a Community Development Trust. Discussions are currently taking place around establishing a joint Development Trust with the community of Muckhart in Clackmannanshire. The Development Trust may be the best placed community organisation to take forward the long-term management of the asset, if there is local enthusiasm to do so.

2. COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN THE AREA

- 2.1 Blairingone is a small community within the Kinross-shire Ward. The main community facility is the Loch Leven Community Campus, which is around 25 minutes' drive away and contains leisure, learning and cultural services. Dollar, in Clackmannanshire, is the other large settlement in the area and is 10 minutes' drive north-west.
- 2.2 Local facilities include a shop and a very popular garden and coffee shop in Powmill, just a few minutes along the road to Kinross. The coffee shop acts as a social hub in the area. There is a village hall in Powmill called Mowbray Hall and a village hall in Crook of Devon. The Crook of Devon hall is owned and run by the community with a hall management committee running the day-to-day operations and managing the bookings. The hall is an important hub for the community with regular activities such as yoga, parent and toddler groups, country dancing, ballet, and badminton.

- 2.3 These existing services are popular and well-used. Any re-use of Blairingone PS would need to complement rather than compete with these services and be sustainable in the longer term.

3. CURRENT STATUS

- 3.1 The most recent Building Condition Survey for the Blairingone PS buildings was completed in November 2017 and graded as "Satisfactory." This means it performs adequately as a building but shows minor deterioration (physical element fulfils its function but shows signs of age). At that time, the estimated costs to bring the property up to a suitable standard were over £30,000.
- 3.2 More recently, the property has suffered from further deterioration. A new Building Condition Survey would need to be completed to provide an accurate estimate, but it is likely to need more expenditure than previously thought. Blairingone PS has been discussed at the Council's Corporate Property Asset Management Group (CPAMG), and the recommendation is to dispose of the property. However, this has been put on hold to allow the Kinross-shire Area Committee to discuss the options and viability of a community-led solution.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 There are three options open to a community group wanting to take over the management or full ownership of Blairingone PS:
1. Community Asset Transfer
 2. Regular Lease / Purchase
 3. Disposal of Land Regulations

Summary of Option	Appropriate Circumstances
Appropriately constituted community groups (called "community transfer bodies" in the legislation) have the right to request access, management rights, a lease, or full ownership of a Council or other public sector asset through Community Asset Transfer (CAT) . There is a presumption in favour of a valid CAT request being approved, unless there are reasonable grounds for refusal.	Community Asset Transfer, either through purchase or a long-term lease works best when: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a strong community group, appropriately constituted and willing to undertake the necessary work• There is an identified need in the community, which the asset can address• There is broad support in the community• The costs of upgrade and ongoing running costs are understood and income streams, or other funds identified.
Regular lease or purchase – a community group can approach the Council about an asset at any time and begin to negotiate access, management rights, a lease, or full ownership. This approach will only apply where an asset is currently unused or has no existing lease arrangement in place	This approach can work well when: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A group is relatively new and wants to test a proposal through a short lease before making a long-term commitment• A group is keen to purchase the asset and a price can quickly be agreed between the group and the Council

Any community group could request a long lease or full ownership of the asset under the Disposal of Land Regulations (Scotland) 2010 . The Council can apply a discretionary 25% discount to the value of the asset, with any further discount requiring Scottish Ministerial approval.	<p>A disposal under Land Regulations works best when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong community group, which is not eligible to apply under Community Asset Transfer • The Council is looking to dispose of an asset and is keen to negotiate • The costs of upgrade and ongoing running costs are understood and income streams, or other funds identified.
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4.2 Before any work on any of these options is taken forward a community group with the ability to manage the asset would need to be identified. Once the new Fossoway Community Development Trust has been established it is recommended that a scoping meeting be set up with appropriate Council officers and representatives of the Trust to discuss:

- The current condition of Blairingone PS;
- Maintenance, repair, and upgrades necessary to make the asset useable again;
- Potential end-uses by the Fossoway Community Development Trust for the building;
- Timescales and actions for necessary community engagement to determine support/interest.

4.3 This work will take some time, and it is proposed to bring an update to the Committee in early 2023 once the new Trust is established and has been able to consider the viability of a community lease or asset transfer.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The former Blairingone Primary School has been declared surplus to requirements and has lain empty for some time. Estimated costs to bring it back into a useable condition exceed £30,000 and there are a number of other facilities and services provided locally, which should be taken into account. Options for bringing the asset back into use is contingent upon a community group with the capacity and desire to take it on. The new Fossoway Community Development Trust, once established, may wish to progress this.

5.2 It is recommended that Committee:

- Note** the background and current provision of services in the Blairingone area.
- Note** the options for possible future community management of the building.
- Agree** that options for community management for the building are reviewed in 12 months once the new Development Trust is fully established.

Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
James Gardner	Community Empowerment Officer	CommunityPlanningPartnership@pkc.gov.uk
Lee Haxton	Community Planning Team Leader	ComCommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Executive Director (Communities)	13 January 2022

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