

# Open Day for Village Residents

## Key points

- There are still strong feelings of sadness about the closure of the school and resentment at the way the process was managed by the council, not just in the final months, but over a number of years.
- There is a lingering sense of mistrust about the Council's intentions and willingness to be supportive of solutions relating to the school as an educational facility going forward.
- There is a broad consensus that a thriving school would need 50+ pupils – and a feeling that, realistically, there is no viable route back to that over the next 2 years (the remainder of the mothballing period).
- People are keen to see children back in the building, and almost all support the idea of a nursery facility with wraparound care to support working families is – particularly since this seems to offer a potential route back to a school community for early primary school in the longer term, or at least a good way of continuing to build strong relationships between children and families and a strong connection to the village.
- There is almost unanimous support for the idea that we should take the Council up on its offer of a short-term lease of part of the building and explore how this might be developed as an asset for the community, and offer learning opportunities / activities for all.
- There are many ideas about how the building could be developed as a community hub over time.
- There are concerns about the challenges and risks inherent in that – particularly regarding a sustainable business / funding model
- There are concerns about how this might affect the future of the village hall.

## Here's what people said on each of the Scenarios

### Scenario 1: We work towards reopening the school

"A village school has to be the ultimate goal – it is, with the church, the heart of the community. Without a school, Eddleston becomes a collection of houses on the A703, with no community."

"As the school roll falls, so the experience for children becomes much more restrictive – social interaction becomes limited, as do sports and the general energy and vibrancy of the school is lost...bottom line is that the village needs to expand significantly to warrant school reopening."

"There is a chicken and egg situation regarding the roll size, as SBC won't reopen without interest, but understandably parents won't commit to a poorly attended school."

- In order for the school to be reopened, we need a critical mass of families willing to commit to the school. At the event, 50-70 young people was the number frequently cited. Children who previously attended the school are now settled elsewhere. Siblings will tend to follow siblings. It is hard to envisage how we might have numbers for a thriving school within 2 years (the official mothballing period).
- For the school to reopen as a school, it would need to be offering something different that would attract families from out with the village. Possible ideas are:

- a focus on outdoor learning
- Gaelic medium school: “very good idea if there is a market for it” – “No! Gaelic is a minority interest, let’s do something in education for a minority”; “Yes, I would have loved to learn Gaelic when I was younger”, “Yes why not, Eddleston could perhaps do half-half.”
- a school for specialising in additional support for learning: “Would be a perfect place for a special school: enough space, no stairs, great environment.”/ “There is already a special needs school (Leader Valley) which operates in smaller provisions to avoid long travel for complex needs”.
- A number of people mentioned the importance of housing development to bring more families into the village – others highlighted that even if houses are built, the closure of the school is likely to make the village less attractive to families, and a large number of houses would be needed quickly to make the reopening of the school viable within the Council’s mothballing timeframe.
- Start with nursery/ early years of primary
- Wraparound care important

Examples to look into further regarding specialist schools / units:

- Glencorse Primary – Midlothian – unit for additional support needs
- Beeslack High School – Midlothian – unit for additional support needs
- Bun-sgoil Taobh School Leith (Gaelic medium)

## Scenario 2: The school becomes a nursery facility with options for community use

“It would be great to see children back in the building.”

“This would be an amazing option as ELC places are so difficult to get and I imagine it would be well used by Eddleston parents and parents commuting into Edinburgh”

“It would attract more young families to the village. If it was an outdoor nursery it would attract families from far and wide.”

“A nursery could be a stepping stone to reopening the school.”

“Very unique setting which would be a USP”

- The idea of a nursery facility was well received – partly because it would be an asset to the village in its own right, and partly because it is the most likely way to gradually build a cohort of children who might want to stay in the village for primary school (perhaps just the early years of primary school in the first instance).
- It would be important that the nursery offered wraparound care (8am-6pm) to be of use to working parents
- Some people feel a private nursery would be the best route, others felt that Scottish Borders Council should get behind this
- Perceived benefits – building relationships across the community between children and parents; a good ‘community experience’ for young children in the village; volunteering opportunities for local young people
- As an educational building already, it was felt that the school would require minimum alterations to support a nursery
- Peebles nurseries are nearing capacity
- Possible downsides: having a nursery in the school building might mean less autonomy for the community

- Could incorporate an after-school club
- All possible models of provision could be explored – SBC / private provider / social enterprise model / community run model
- Incorporate government free childcare hours into set-up of nursery
- Nursery is lower risk than community-owned asset
- Can it be a nursery by day and used by community the rest of the time?

### Examples

Outdoor nursery Mortonhall  
Newlands model  
Acre Wood Nursery (Bilston)

### Funding ideas

- Woodland Trust
- National Lottery Community Fund?

Advice:

- from Romanno Bridge Community
- Whitmuir Farm do nursery forest days

## Scenario 3: The school becomes a community-owned asset offering a range of services and activities

### Benefits

“The school as a community asset could be the new ‘heart of the community’ and bring it together.”

“Whatever its future use or uses – Eddleston needs a viable, vibrant multi-use hub. This is it.”

“It’s a flexible space – could be put to multiple uses, appealing to different age groups”

“it would encourage maximum participation from the local community.”

“The village has control over the future of the building”

“Accessible building.”

“Excellent services for local residents.”

Attractive to visitors

Prevent building going into disrepair

### Challenges / risks

“Are there enough services / activities to justify use of school as well as the Hall?”

“This would mean the permanent loss of the school – there has been a school in Eddleston since the 1700s”

“The village hall, in my view, should be left completely out of any discussion about the school as current thinking about the school is unclear.”

“Too many buildings for community use for the village.”

- Sustainability – you would need to consider paid roles
- What would this mean for the future of the village hall?

- It will be a lot of work to ensure the space is well used
- Management and maintenance of the building
- Not possible to maintain 2 community buildings in a small community

**Possible overarching themes (cohesion would make it more attractive to funders:**

Could we capitalise on the unique location of the school?:

“Let’s utilise this fantastic setting for our young people to learn.”

“This is a unique space – we should make best use of its special position to support learning across generations.”

**Wellbeing Hub**

“post Covid there is a huge demand for support for wellbeing – this place would be an ideal space to promote wellbeing for young people and adults.”

“Ideal space for a community wellbeing hub”

Environmental / Sustainability Education Hub with educational opportunities for all ages “beautiful idea and great setting”

**Ideas for what might be offered**

- Community library
- Gym – free weights and machines
- Yoga classes
- Dance classes
- Sports classes
- Art / photography classes
- Art studio
- Outdoor learning offer for local schools
- Forest school
- Workshop – could double up as a resource for residents and a Men’s Shed
- Village swap
- Link with Borders College for community / vocational learning / employability programmes
- Study room for teens
- Cycle rental and maintenance linked to the multi-use path
- Library “could work well alongside a school specialism”
- Village shop / ‘pop up’ grocery store
- Café
- Co-working space
- Tennis and basketball courts
- Pump track
- Horse riding stable
- Electric Car charging
- ping pong table for teens
- Rooms could be rented to wider community
- Music groups/classes
- Village preschool playgroup - great indoor/outdoor space for this, as away from main road, suitable for older siblings to join too and play football etc. It could be open to families from

outside the village (e.g. like popular Cardrona playgroup) and may lead the way to the opening of a nursery in the space.

- Covered seating area outside so outdoor space can be used in all weathers. Particularly useful for parents supervising children playing outside.
- Outdoor play facilities (develop/repair the existing ones)

### **Enablers**

*“You’d need a committed board signed up early for momentum.”*

*“It would need a transparent, communicative and accountable steering group”*

*“Community would need to fully commit to this option”*

*‘Actively engage with people in surrounding areas to establish skills and abilities*

### **Organisations who could help**

Wellbeing Scotland

National Rural Mental Health forum

Scottish Borders Third Sector Interface

Scottish Enterprise – could potentially provide a grant to allow us to scope a sustainable business model

Scottish Government – Rural Development

National Lottery Community Fund

Live Borders

Sports groups

Local businesses

Local dance schools (Fiona Henderson)

Sports groups e.g. Tennis Scotland

### **Related local /other examples**

Glencourse community centre

Newlands community centre

Wilderness Foundation

### **Other scenarios / uses for the school building that no one has thought of yet**

- Sheltered housing
- Private business use
- Hill walking centre
- Bunk house
- Leisure centre
- Space to hire out to groups e.g. Scout camp, outdoor activities
- Pump track (Velosolutions style)
- After School club

### **Voting on temporary lease of building - comments:**

- “doing nothing is not an option, we need to give this a try”

- “best route to maintaining future access”