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| MAB/SR13 June 2019 Leader of the CouncilCouncillor Murray LylePerth & Kinross Council2 High StreetPerthPH1 5PH | 2 High StreetPerthPH1 5PHTel: 01738 475000 Email: mbarnacle@pkc.gov.uk[www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)MoorendWaulkmill RoadCrook of DevonKINROSSKY13 0UZTel: 01577 840516**An Independent Councillor** | Councillor Michael Barnacle |

Dear Murray

**Lack of Policy on Sustainability of Rural Communities**

I am moved to write to you on the above, which I perceive to be the case, both locally in PKC and nationally in Scotland.

The Independent Group have discussed this issue and are supportive of my stance. I also raised the matter at the last meeting of the Council of APRS (Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland), which I am a member of, in the context of 2 recent primary school closures sanctioned by your Administration at Abernyte and Blairingone. There was general agreement at the APRS Council AGM that this was an issue at the core of the objects in their governing document and should be pursued.

The Lifelong Learning Committee’s decisions on the above schools were very controversial, particularly given the closeness of the votes and the fact that in both communities the school was the last remaining public building for community use. I was not present for the Abernyte decision but did take a prominent role in arguing against the closure of Blairingone school, within my Kinross-shire ward.

I am attaching background correspondence in relation to Blairingone that highlights the closeness of the vote, the wrong advice given by PKC Officers on voting rights previously (now corrected belatedly by the Motion to Full Council on 24/4/19), the omissions and inaccuracies in the consultation report regarding housing development interest and the extent of the school catchment, the role of PKC’s forward planning in the decision and ‘the complete failure of your Administration to promote the sustainability of rural communities by such decisions’.

In my representations on LDP2 of July 2017 and February 2018, I suggested the consideration of a new policy to protect hotels and inns from immediate closure and change of use, citing recent experiences in Glenfarg and Kinnesswood. In England, I believe that a community can register such establishments as an ‘Asset of Community Value’, which gives them an opportunity to put forward alternative proposals to closure before planning decisions are made. I suggest our policy on Residential Amenity should be enhanced and is currently not strong enough in seeking to protect community facilities generally.

During my time as ward councillor since 1999, Blairingone has lost all its facilities – namely its pub, post office, church and now it’s school; the latter should have been kept open pending the outcome of consultations on a masterplan and the possibility of enhancing its facilities for nursery and play provision. It is very disappointing that Scottish ministers did not see fit to call in this decision.

The situation of villages like Abernyte and Blairingone is compounded by Tayplan policy that concentrates development to tiered settlements rather than rural villages; I believe this goes too far and results in a lack of sustainable development in smaller villages, particularly in relation to affordable houses.

We need a fresh approach, if the continuing decline in rural communities and their transport connections are to be reversed, both locally and nationally. One could start by appointing a planning officer with a specific remit to promote and protect rural sustainability, as exists in some other local authorities I am aware of.

I look forward to your response with interest.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Michael Barnacle

Independent Member for Kinross-shire

Cc Karen Reid, Chief Executive

 Peter Marshall, Forward Planning

 Roseanna Cunningham, MSP

 John Mayhew, Director of APRS

 Cllrs, McDade, Purves, Stewart, Robertson, Watters

Enc Background papers re Blairingone School Closure consultation enclosed.

 01/05/19 Email to Richard Lochhead, MSP and attachment.

11/04/19 Letter to Richard Lochhead, MSP and attachment.

Copy of my address to Education Committee on 16/05/18 and enclosures referred to.