

A heating problem. A closure proposal. A community fighting back.

A school needs its heating repaired. Children have to move temporarily. The question should be straightforward: what will it take to get them safely back?

At Banchory-Devenick, we are now being asked to contemplate something far bigger: losing the school permanently.

The council's published account records deteriorating heating flues, a temporary repair in December 2025, meetings about relocation on 5 March and authority to launch a closure consultation on 26 March. **How did a repair problem become a proposal to take away our school?** [1, 4]

That is the question running through this fight. And the more we have pressed for answers, the more gaps have emerged in the information residents were first given.

The £530,000 headline is not an established minimum bill for reopening. Resources have been removed without a recorded assessment of what putting them back would involve. Four Freedom of Information reviews have produced amendments or further disclosure. These are findings from the campaign's records, not reasons to shrug and give up. They are reasons to keep asking harder questions. [A, C]

Our school is not permanently closed. This is still a decision we can challenge.

The consultation is open. Our persistence is bringing more information into the open. Now we need the community behind that effort. [1, A, C]

This is about whether Banchory-Devenick keeps a school for the families who live here now and those who will come after us. We should be furious at having to fight for basic answers before such a lasting loss is even considered.

Public meeting: 29 October, 6.30pm, Portlethen Academy. Consultation closes: 4 December; online survey at 4pm. [1]

Then we asked to see the evidence.

Half a million pounds is the kind of figure that can make people stop arguing. It makes reopening sound hopelessly expensive. But a number that large demands scrutiny, especially when a school's future hangs on the discussion.

The 5 October FOI review, recorded in the earlier community report, exposed an important distinction. The £530,000 was a high-level budget estimate. It was not based on a formal cost plan, a tender exercise or a quantity-surveyor report. Separate calculations, quotations and detailed estimating schedules were not held. The council said it relied on professional assessments and comparable past projects. [A]

The figure included £180,000 for heating, alongside electrical works, toilets, roofing, playground resurfacing and a water tank. The obvious question is: **which of those works actually have to happen before children can return, and which could be done later?** [A]

The same review recorded that information was not held establishing whether the non-boiler issues would prevent reopening once the boiler was replaced. It also recorded no updated health-and-safety assessment and no expected timetable for the heating works at that point. [A]

That distinction could matter enormously.

A budget for a package of works is not the same thing as proving that every pound must be spent before the school can reopen.

Residents should not have to dig through FOI reviews to find this out. Before asking a community to surrender its school, the council should be able to show a clear, technically justified answer: these are the essential works, this is their cost, and this is when children could return.

The community alternative deserves that proper examination: carry out the works needed for safe reopening, get the school operating again, and phase longer-term improvements. The earlier report records that repair and reopening with phased works was the majority preference in informal engagement. [A]

Show us why that cannot work. A headline figure is not an answer.

The FOI findings above describe the records disclosed at the time. Any later assessment should be published with its date, so residents can see what existed when decisions were taken.

We kept pushing. More information came out.

This has not been one letter followed by one disappointing answer. It has taken repeated challenges to get a fuller picture of what the council holds and what it does not.

The first request went in on 3 June. A review produced further information on 6 August. An appeal followed to the Scottish Information Commissioner on 7 August, reference 202601438. A second review, on 18 September, produced more information about the removal of school resources. A third, on 5 October, clarified the cost estimate and briefing records. On 12 October, a fourth review amended the original decision and supplied further information, including audit forms. [A, C]

That is why we did not simply accept the first answers and walk away. The reviews have changed the information available to this community. There are still questions about assessment dates, searches and withheld drafts. A follow-up on the latest review has been prepared; sending has not yet been confirmed. [C]

What has emerged goes beyond money. Furniture, equipment and teaching resources were removed, including two Clevertouch boards transferred to Portlethen Academy. The earlier report records no held assessment of the time, cost or practical steps needed to reinstate the resources, or whether their removal could prejudice reopening. [A]

If reopening remains a genuine option, where is the practical plan to put the school back together? A community should not watch its school being emptied and then have to chase the council to establish how a return would work.

The record of a councillor Teams briefing is also gone: automatically deleted after 60 days. An attendance report survived, but the council said no presentation, script, substantive officer notes or specified follow-up emails were held. Automatic deletion explains the loss. It does not make that gap in accountability acceptable. [A]

The pressure is producing results.

We have uncovered qualifications to the cost figure, gaps in the reopening evidence and missing records. That does not guarantee victory. It gives us concrete reasons to challenge the case and demand better answers.

This page concerns Banchory-Devenick only. Private-record findings are carried forward from the earlier report and campaign correspondence. [A, C]

The next chapter needs all of us.

On 5 October, a formal challenge was sent over inaccuracies and omissions in the proposal. On 6 October, the Banchory-Devenick objection was sent to Learning Estates. In the response shared on 7 October, the council said it had identified no material inaccuracy or omission and invited further representations. [C]

That response does not settle the questions about essential repairs, reopening costs or the return of school resources. A further objection has now been prepared, demanding those answers and asking that previous objections remain on record as more evidence emerges. Its submission has not yet been confirmed. [C]

Our message is straightforward: **a temporary move is not consent to permanent closure.** Families making arrangements for their children should not have to choose between coping with the present and defending the school's future.

And this reaches beyond today's parents. It affects the families who may move here, children not yet at school, local journeys and the community we leave behind. Once a school is permanently lost, the consequences last far longer than a consultation.

Do not let the council mistake exhaustion for agreement.

If you want Banchory-Devenick to have a future as a school, say so now. Your voice belongs in this decision.

Send your own objection

Email learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. Say clearly that you oppose permanent closure and want a properly costed repair-and-reopening option. Explain what losing the school would mean to you. Ask for acknowledgement. The consultation closes on **4 December 2026**; the online survey closes at **4pm**. [1, 19]

Come to the meeting. Bring someone with you.

29 October, 6.30pm, Portlethen Academy. Ask what must be repaired before reopening, what it would actually cost and when children could return. Share this update with a neighbour and ask them to take part too. [1]

We have already shown that persistence gets more information into the open. Now let's show how many people care about the answer.

Further objections do not extend deadlines. The school consultation and FOI appeals remain separate processes. Other schools and the news link are covered only on the following background pages.

The news link: the wider picture

SEPARATE BACKGROUND • NOT PART OF THE BANCHORY-DEVENICK TIMELINE

The Aberdeen Live article shared by a neighbour prompted another look at the council's wider school-estate programme. It raises a question many communities will recognise: is our school being assessed on what it could become, or mainly on the space available elsewhere?

[Read the Aberdeen Live article shared with the campaign](#)

The article itself could not be retrieved for verification. The council's published records do, however, establish a wider estate review launched in February 2024, with options including rezoning, mothballing, mergers, closures and rural hubs. [5]

The current Phase 4 engagement covers Portlethen, Stonehaven and Fraserburgh. The Portlethen survey lists Banchory-Devenick as non-operational and says the other four primary schools currently operate above 50% capacity. It forecasts Portlethen Primary below that level by 2030. [3]

Related reporting on 12 October described 34 primary schools operating at half capacity or less, potentially rising to 58 by 2030. Those are utilisation figures, not an announced list of 58 closures. The neighbour's account of letters to every zone has not been verified. [3, 17]

Our communities are more than spare places on a spreadsheet.

The council must explain how it weighs a school's future, rural community life and the effect of its own decisions alongside occupancy figures.

The cluster survey is a separate opportunity to speak

The **Portlethen cluster survey closes on 31 October**. Use it to demand proper consideration of rural provision and a repaired, reopened Banchory-Devenick. Completing it does not replace an objection to the school's closure proposal. [3]

[Council cluster surveys and published information](#)

Other schools. A pattern worth challenging.

SEPARATE CASES • THESE ACTIONS ARE NOT BANCHORY-DEVENICK SUBMISSIONS

Fisherford and Easterfield were mothballed in August 2021. The council voted for permanent closure in September 2024. Kinneff was mothballed in August 2024; Fintry in August 2025. Both faced permanent-closure decisions on 24 September 2026. Four separate schools, the same broad sequence: temporary closure followed by a decision to close for good. [6-9]

That deserves scrutiny. When children move, friendships and routines move with them. A school can lose its functioning community while its future is supposedly still open. What did the council do to keep reopening realistic before assessing demand after that disruption?

This is not a claim that all four communities opposed closure. Some proposals had local support and favourable inspection findings. But the reports also challenge simplistic arguments: the Easterfield and Kinneff inspectors qualified the idea that small rolls automatically mean poorer education. [10, 12]

Fintry and Kinneff: representations sent

Separate representations asking Scottish Ministers to scrutinise both decisions were confirmed sent on **12 October**. Fintry's raises site selection and long-term roll analysis: inspectors saw no clear overall site advantage, and the two area committees favoured different schools. Kinneff's raises the practical reopening offer, educational reasoning and contradictory public information about the review process. [C, 12-15]

The deadline for further representations in those two cases is **14 October**, to **schoolclosure@gov.scot**. Neither receipt nor a call-in outcome has been confirmed for our submissions. A representation does not automatically trigger independent review. [2, C]

Tullynessle: external scrutiny can happen

Ministers called in the Tullynessle closure decision on 24 June. It is a separate case with its own grounds, referred to a School Closure Review Panel. Council information gives 19 October as the latest date under the extended timetable; no final determination was located for this update. [18]

A council's assurance that everything is in order does not end scrutiny. These cases deserve their own challenges, on their own evidence. The wider pattern is a reason to investigate and organise, while keeping every school's timeline distinct.

The evidence behind this update

Public sources were checked during 12-13 October 2026. Links below identify the records behind the new material. Earlier private-document findings are attributed to the existing report and campaign correspondence, not presented as fresh independent determinations.

[A] Existing campaign evidence. 5 October 2026 community report; IR 43475 review (6 August), IR 44184 review (18 September), IR 44531 review (5 October), decant records and mothballing guidance. Private records; retained as the baseline for this update.

[C] Campaign action and correspondence log. Kevin's confirmation of submissions; council response shared 7 October; IR 44563 review decision shared 12 October; follow-up and supplementary drafts, including further-representations wording. Drafts are not counted as sent.

[1] Banchory-Devenick consultation. Proposal, meeting, dates and earlier temporary-relocation account.

[2] Scottish Government: school closures. Fintry/Kinneff deadlines and ministerial call-in process.

[3] Council cluster surveys. Phase 4 and Portlethen, Stonehaven and Fraserburgh surveys.

[4] Council March 2026 update. Banchory-Devenick heating and relocation account.

[5] Learning estate review launch. Council announcement, 1 February 2024.

[6] Fisherford consultation record. Mothballing and permanent closure chronology.

[7] Easterfield consultation record. Mothballing and permanent closure chronology.

[8] Kinneff engagement page. Chronology and conflicting review information observed 12 October.

[9] Fintry / King Edward engagement page. Decision to retain King Edward and close Fintry.

[10-13] HMIE / Education Scotland reports. Easterfield and Fisherford: April 2024; Kinneff: March 2026; Fintry/King Edward: April 2026. Listed under June publication dates on the report index.

[14] Formartine Area Committee. 30 June 2026: preference for retaining Fintry.

[15] Banff and Buchan Area Committee. 16 June 2026: preference for retaining King Edward.

[16] Scottish Government statutory guidance. Decision, representations and review stages; updated 2026.

[17] Press and Journal, 12 October 2026. Related estate-review reporting and 34/58 utilisation figures.

[18] Council consultation status. Tullynessle call-in and published Panel timetable.

[19] Banchory-Devenick school website. Published Learning Estates email contact.