

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Education and Skills

SCHOOLS' FORUM

29 September 2016

Holy Island and Longridge Towers

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Schools Forum of the background leading to the provision of education and boarding for children resident on Holy Island at Longridge Towers School.
- 1.2 To inform Schools forum of the projected numbers for forthcoming years and the current costs of boarding fees at Longridge Towers to the County Council.

2. Recommendation

The Schools Forum is recommended to note the information in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Holy Island has always needed special arrangements for the education of its children. Most of today's parents were educated on the island and have first-hand experience of the difficulties and opportunities this has presented. Tidal variations dictate departure and return times from and to the island and consequently affect the daily routine of parents, children and the schools they attend. Travelling to and from the island to school for a regular 9.00 to 3.30 attendance at school is not possible.
- 3.2 Children of first school age were then, and continue to be, educated at either Lowick or Holy Island First Schools, depending on the tidal conditions. The schools share a Headteacher and teaching resources, allowing a degree of continuity and integrated provision. Home to school transport is provided by the County Council.
- 3.3 Due to the impact of the tides it became established practice for children to be offered boarding at Longridge Towers School from age 9 upwards during the school week. Parents, wishing to avoid this type of long-term boarding arrangement, sought to explore options of a more flexible arrangement that would allow children to return to the island whenever practically possible.
- 3.4 A report on the situation, costings and projection were presented to the Schools Forum in June 2011. The report looked at a number of suggested solutions as set out below:

- **Enhancement of provision at Holy Island First School**
 Consideration be given to enhancing IT facilities at Holy Island First School in order to support distance learning so that children can receive education on the first school site on those occasions when the tides are against transport during 'normal school hours'
- **School Organisation and Age of Transfer**
 The impact of tidal variations on the children's second tier of education (currently age 9+) would be lessened by the implementation of the possible change in the age of transfer to age 11. The effects of this change would be to extend the children's education on the island and at Lowick by two years, with transition to secondary school (probably in Berwick) at age 11.
- **Home-to-school transport options (Holy Island – Berwick)**
 - **Option 1:** Commercial contract with private hire operator). Risks/Issues: Tidal variations require that any commercial contract is flexible enough to allow varying collection & drop-off times.
 - **Option 2:** Parental Allowance. Risks/Issues: Ability/willingness of parent(s) to operate a daily transport service; potential impact of return crossing times on parents.
- **Boarding options (Berwick)**
 - **Option 1:** Occasional boarding at Longridge Towers when tides prevent travel to/from the island. Cost to be determined by negotiation with Longridge Towers based on a maximum of 152 nights boarding. With the minimum of 65 overnight stays, this cost per pupil could be reduced.
 - **Option 2:** Occasional boarding with approved B&B/boarding house facility in Berwick. Cost to be determined by negotiation. A similar proposal in Cumbria has run into difficulties over the requirement to register the proposed facility as a children's home due to the "round the clock" nature of the care provision required.
 - **Option 3:** Occasional boarding at existing County Council facility (e.g. Ford Castle/Ridley Hall/Barndale School).
 County Council boarding provisions are based on weekly boarding, students arriving on Monday evening and leaving on Friday morning mainly for pupils of high school age. Arrangements would need to be set in place to accommodate students of middle school age. In addition there will be times when students will need to board on Friday and Sunday nights when the tides will not allow for crossing.
Haydon Bridge:
 The journey from Holy Island to Haydon Bridge High School is approximately 83 miles, taking at least one hour and forty minutes, well

outside the recommended distances under the County Council's home to school transport policy. Furthermore, boarding would also be required occasionally on Friday and/or Sunday evenings when tides dictated.

Barndale School:

As a special school, the limited number of boarding facilities offered reflects the needs of pupils with special needs. It would not be appropriate to remove places intended to support SEN pupils to accommodate pupils who have no additional needs, and furthermore this could interfere with the respite care that operates from the residential wing.

- **Option 4:** Develop new County Council boarding facility at or near Secondary School, likely to be significant costs in terms of premises, facilities and supervisory resources. Pupil costs for similar facility in Haltwhistle (Ridley Hall) were circa £25000 pa per pupil in 2004. See also Option 2 (requirements for children's home registration).
- **Option 5:** Parental arrangements e.g. occasional overnight accommodation with family/friends. A matter of parental choice; nil cost to the County Council - there is no known legal authority for the Council to make payments to family members in lieu of boarding.

- **Education Options**

- **Option 1:** Pupils attend Longridge Towers School as day pupils, gaining access to extensive pre- and after-school facilities. Occasional boarding at Longridge Towers School Transport to/from school:
- **Option 2:** Extend pre-school and after-school facilities in existing state school(s), providing access to extended care within pupils' normal school environment with occasional boarding.

Whilst this option could be developed in line with existing school reorganisation plans, it would be more beneficial to accelerate the creation of Primary education on the island and at Lowick to enable children to remain at these schools, at which time they would be ready for transition to Secondary school in Berwick at age 11. This would also impact on the Middle Schools to which the pupils would transfer.

- **Option 3:** Provide sea-crossing facility to allow children to cross from/to the island at convenient, pre-defined times. Transport to/from school.

No commercial operators provide such a service to/from the island around ideal school crossing times.

- **Option 4:** Enhance IT facilities on the island to allow video conferencing with secondary schools on days when tides are unfavourable; Transport to/from school.

- **Option 5:** Continue with existing arrangements. Weekly boarding at Longridge Towers School; transport to/from school.

4. Current situation

- 4.1 The Director of Education and Skills visited Holy Island and Lowick First Schools in June 2016 and plans to visit Longridge Towers early in the autumn term to negotiate.
- 4.2 Northumberland County Council currently pays for the education of the pupils boarding at Longridge Towers at a cost of £4,160 per term. From September 2016 there will be 12 pupils at Longridge Towers costing £49,920 per term, £149,760 per annum

Longridge Towers Pupil Forecast - September 2016

Intake year September	YR 5	YR 6	YR 7	YR 8	YR 9	YR 10	YR 11	YR 12	YR 13
2016	0	1	1	1	3	0	1	1	4
2017	2	0	1	1	1	3	0	1	1
2018	1	2	0	1	1	1	3	0	1
2019	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	3	0
2020	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	3
2021	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1