



School Closure
Review Panels

**The Convener of the School
Closure Review Panels**

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

The School Closure Review Panels and the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels are independent statutory bodies which have been created to enhance and strengthen the process of local authority school closures in Scotland.



School Closure
Review Panels

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Ms Somerville

I have pleasure in submitting this, the eighth Annual Report of the School Closure Review Panels, to the Scottish Ministers.

Mr Iain Nisbet
Convener

School Closure Review Panels

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The office of the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels and the School Closure Review Panels were established by virtue of section 17A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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Foreword

by the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels

I am pleased to present my eighth annual report as Convener of the School Closure Review Panels.

While there were no school closure decisions called in by Scottish Ministers for review in 2022, it remains necessary for me to retain the capacity to convene a panel at short notice in the event that this is required. To maintain that state of readiness, much work continues behind the scenes, including ongoing training for School Closure Review Panel members.

A training event took place in Edinburgh in May 2022, which served as an opportunity for newly appointed members to hear from other members who had chaired or sat on Panels. It also allowed us to discuss and finalise the internal guidance for Panel Members. The training was well attended, and participation never less than fulsome. I am extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated and talented pool of persons eligible to be Panel Members, who remain engaged and committed to the process of school closure review.

As I am now approaching the end of my period in office, this will be my last annual report. It does not seem like eight years ago I took up the post, and I will be sorry to see this chapter of my professional life close. I am tremendously proud of how the panels have conducted their reviews and in the quality of their decision making. I recall that when I was being interviewed for the role, I said that I wanted to see the School Closure Review Panels firmly established as a trusted and effective part of the schools and education framework in Scotland, and I think I am safe in saying that this ambition has been achieved.

Of course, that is mainly down to the hard work of others, as my own role is one step removed from the actual business of considering and reviewing school closure proposals. I would therefore like to take one last opportunity to thank all the panel members, past and present, for their interest and enthusiasm, particularly over periods when there have been no referrals to offer them! I would also like to thank the staff of the Scottish Arbitration Centre, who have provided invaluable administrative support to both the panels and myself over the years - and especially to Andrew Mackenzie, the Chief Executive who has been involved in the panels since their inception and whose support and counsel has been greatly appreciated."

Iain Nisbet

Convener
January 2023



ABOUT THE CONVENER AND THE PANELS

The School Closure Review Panels and the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels are independent statutory bodies which have been created to enhance and strengthen the process of local authority school closures in Scotland.

Scottish local authorities proposing to close a school within their area must do so in line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) and it is for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether the authority has met these statutory requirements. The 2010 Act contains the power for Ministers to “call in” a local authority school closure decision, if there is evidence that the requirements may not have been met. When the Scottish Ministers decide to call in a decision, they refer the decision to the Convener, who appoints a Panel of three to review the closure decision.

In making decisions on appointments of Panels, the Convener is independent of the Scottish Government and any other body or individual. The Convener is also independent of the Panels and has no input on review decisions made by a Panel. The Convener is responsible for providing the Panels with necessary staff and services for the delivery of their functions as well as making appropriate arrangements for training the persons eligible to be selected to serve as a Panel Member. The Convener is appointed for a period of up to five years and is eligible for reappointment thereafter. The current holder of the Office of the Convener, Iain Nisbet, agreed to extend his appointment for a further five years, finishing in January 2023.

The main statutory function of a Panel is to review a called in closure decision of an education authority. Each Panel is independent of other Panels, the Convener, the Scottish Government and any other bodies or individuals. School Closure Review Panels cannot become involved in any school closure unless the decision is called in by Scottish Ministers. The Convener appoints persons eligible to serve as a Panel Member for a period of up to five years and each individual is eligible for reappointment thereafter. Currently there are eight persons eligible to serve as a Panel Member.

Further details on the Convener and Panels can be found at www.scrp.scot.

PERSONS ELIGIBLE TO SERVE AS MEMBERS OF A PANEL

Biographies can be found at www.scrp.scot.



**Beverley
Atkinson**



**Dr. Charles S.
Bestwick**



**Roddy
Macleod**



**Helen
McGhee**



**Catriona
Waddington**



**Sally
Wainwright**



**Justin
Willey**



**Nairn
Young**

Administrative Support Services

The Scottish Arbitration Centre (“the Centre”) provides administrative support to the Convener and the Panels, including the coordination of training for persons eligible to serve as Panel Members. The Centre is a not-for-profit company providing an administrative service to the Convener and Panels and is not involved with the decision making of the Convener nor the Panels. In 2021 the Centre successfully bid and won a competitive tender exercise to continue to provide administrative support to the Convener and the Panels for a further three to five years.

For more about the staffing structure of the Centre, see <https://scottisharbitrationcentre.org/about-us/our-people/>

THE YEAR 2022

There were no new call-ins of school closure decisions in 2022.

The Convener

The Convener has exercised his statutory functions during the year. These functions include appointment of persons eligible to be selected as a Panel Member and making arrangements for the training of these persons.

Training

One of the statutory responsibilities of the Convener is to make appropriate arrangements for the training of the persons eligible to be selected as a member of a Panel.

In May 2022 an afternoon of in person training was arranged to bring the pool of persons eligible to serve as a Panel Member together.

The training sessions focussed on updating our internal guidance, with discussions centring on the role of the Panel chair. The internal guidance was subsequently developed to reflect this review, with support from persons eligible to serve as Panel Members and past Panel chairs. There were also opportunities for those who had previously worked on the panels to reflect and share their experiences.

Recruitment

In October 2022 the Scottish Government commenced a recruitment process for the appointment of a new Convener.

FINANCE

Background

The Scottish Arbitration Centre provides administrative services to the Convener and Panels and has done since the establishment of these statutory bodies.

Expenditure 2022

Payment for service and other expenses by Scottish Government.

The actual expenditure for the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 was £76,877.83. This is an increase of £6,381.35 on the expenditure for 2021.

Expenditure breakdown 2022

Administrative, business, financial and payroll services, including staff costs and office overheads	£70,512.16
Training and recruitment and accommodation hire	£878.03
Additional costs, including annual report, IT and postage	£1,390
Fees for Convener	£1,362.50
Fees for Panel Members	£1,930.74
Expenses for Convener and Panel Members	£300.40
Legal Advice	£504.00
Total	£76,877.83

THE CALL – INS

THIS YEAR SAW ZERO CALL-INS BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT.

CONCLUSION

While there were no school closure decisions called in by Scottish Ministers for review in 2022, to maintain that state of readiness, much work has continued behind the scenes, including ongoing training for persons eligible to be Panel Members School Closure Review Panel members. As a result of this activity, the Convener and persons eligible to be Panel Members are well prepared to deal with any call-ins which may arise in 2023 or beyond.



School Closure Review Panels

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