



# Tain Royal Academy

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Dear Parent/Carers,

## **Important Update on Tain 3 to 18 Campus**

As you may be aware, Highland Council is currently preparing its budgets including the Capital budget which deals with school estates. This budget was due to be finalised by 15<sup>th</sup> February but has recently been pushed back to March, while HC debate what is in and what is out.

Over the last few weeks, TRA Parent Council became increasingly worried that the new 3 to 18 campus, promised in the budget in previous years, for Tain was no longer going to feature in the next round of budgets. Our fears became even more real when we started reading some of the newspaper articles around cuts to ASN, teacher cuts and money being assigned to Inverness schools but not to our area. This was just not acceptable to us and we felt it would be a devastating blow to all our children, our teachers and our community if ASN cuts took place, teacher posts were axed and the new Tain 3 to 18 campus did not go ahead.

So we decided to make a noise and write, phone and generally make a nuisance of ourselves with Highland Council, as we didn't want Tain to drop off the radar and move down the list of priorities in this area. We were also appalled that our children and teachers would potentially have to carry on working in current school buildings that are no longer fit for purpose.

Luckily the proposed cuts to ASN and also teaching posts have been dropped by Highland Council now and we have now been assured they won't happen.

However we were still very concerned about the new 3 to 18 campus so we decided to hold a special meeting last week and invite you all along to get your views. We also invited Alister Mackinnon, who heads up the budget committee at Highland Council to come and listen to us and give us the latest news on the budget.

Several of you were able to attend and the meeting went well, in fact better than we had initially expected. The good news is we have managed to get immediate commitment that an urgent and long overdue survey of Tain Royal Academy, Knockbreck Primary School and Craighill Primary School will be carried out by HC to assess what is required to bring the buildings up to the standard and budget will be made available to do this.

We have also been assured that the new site selection consultation for the 3 to 18 campus will go ahead over the coming months, at which point we hope that as a community we can all agree on a suitable site and way forward. Once this is agreed, Highland Council will look at all the funding options available to try to make this happen - including keeping £28M in the budget towards this. The previous build was costed at £52M.

However, this is still by no means a done deal and as a community of parents and residents we will need to work together to get our new school in Tain. Firstly to agree on a suitable site and secondly to keep lobbying hard with HC to explore all available funding options.

TRA Parent Council want to work with other parent councils in the area, other community groups and the Highland Council to ensure that the site selection consultation is driven as much as possible by parents, teachers, pupils and the wider community and we are all fully engaged in the process of choosing a new site for the school. This is the only way we believe we will get the right site and the right building for all our children and our community.

We promise that we will keep you informed at every step of the way as to what is being done as part of the consultation. We want to be involved in organising a series of drop in sessions and provide as much information as we can that allows you all to understand the options, pros and cons of each and the potential design options that could be considered. We want to make sure that you as a parent community feel you have had input into the process. We will also continue to keep you regularly updated on the parent council Facebook page, and through newsletters in school bags.

**However, in order to do this we need your help and would urge you all to get involved as much as you can in the coming months. Please come along to the drop in sessions if you can, share your thoughts and views, and work together with us to let Highland Council know what we want. As a parent community let's choose a site and a way forward which we can all get behind so that the new school can get built for all our children and our teachers**

Please get in touch if you want to know more or have any thoughts on how we can reach parents. If you would like to get more involved and have some time to spare to help organise drop in's, then we would love to have as many of you as possible on board. This affects us all and together we are stronger.

Thanks to all.

*Wendy*

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