

Additional costs too high to save building

Continued from front page

The building is owned by the council and for the last two years has been leased to Urachadh Uibhist and sub-let to the NUDC. Although currently in poor condition there were plans to upgrade the building and extend it to create more space for businesses.

A Comhairle spokesman said the current lease has a provision for a one month notice period.

He explained: "Although the Comhairle plans to demolish a section of the existing school as initial-stage enabling works in the very near future, the demolition of the former Head Teacher's House shall not be carried out until later in the year when the main construction works are being undertaken."

He added: "We will have an updated construction programme from the contractor in the next week or so and anticipate being able to give the occupants considerably more than the one month's notice."

However the board of the NUDC has been critical about how the Comhairle reached the decision to demolish the building.

A statement from the board said that while the company welcomes the building of the new school it has concerns "that the behaviour of the Comhairle in its dealings with us on this matter has been cavalier at best".

It continues: "We believe they have not listened to our concerns or taken seriously the work and investment which has been put in over the last couple of years by NUDC and others to develop the Head Teacher's House into a vibrant and valued community resource."

NUDC Director Ada Campbell added: "The issue about



The North Uist Development Company welcome the building of the new school but is concerned about the loss of the former Head Teacher's House. Pictured is the design for the new Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath.

retaining the house had been raised many months ago, before the site at Paible was chosen.

"We were of the understanding that the fact the community wanted to save the house would be made known to the architects."

However Mrs Campbell said she was not confident that was indeed the case.

The Comhairle spokesman insisted the viability of retaining the building was raised with the design Team and Lead Architect at an inspection meeting in January 2014, on account of representation made by local Members.

He continued: "The matter was again discussed at an update meeting with Project partners, including the lead Architect, in April 2014, at which it was indicated that full rationale would be required should there be a proposal that the schoolhouse be demolished."

The report before coun-

cillors last week, prepared by Comhairle officers, said the retention of the old Head Teacher's House would require additional earthworks and the construction of retaining walls. It stated keeping the building would incur a net additional cost of £37,500.

Councillors were told: "In the context of current affordability issues and the negative impact the retention of the building would have on the general setting of the new school, it is recommend the Head Teacher's House be demolished."

But now the Comhairle is being urged to explain what it will do to make up for the loss of the facility.

The statement from the NUDC concluded: "We call on Comhairle representatives to join with NUDC round the table in the coming weeks to mitigate the effects on North Uist of the loss of the Head Teacher's House and find a way of continuing to develop

the community enterprise hub which we have started to build there."

Meanwhile alternative locations for the fortnightly GP sessions are being looked into. This will be the second time in the last few years that the service has had to relocate. The previous premises, the Tigh Ceilidh, was turned into homeless accommodation.

Dr Wheeler from the North Uist Medical Practice said he has not yet had any official confirmation that the building is to be demolished and was not consulted before the decision was taken.

He said he is hopeful they will be able to relocate the service in Bayhead and is currently in talks with the primary school about holding the sessions there. However he said: "This has put us in a difficult situation."

The Comhairle spokesperson said the council will "provide every assistance to those who are displaced".