

Education, Leisure and Housing

Kirkwall Grammar School - Information on Barrier Closures



Weather Disruption to Churchill Barriers

During the winter we can be faced with disruption due to barrier closures. Although to some extent wind and tide can be forecast, there is no identifiable pattern for when the barriers close, e.g. a certain time before high tide. Likewise the actual length of the closure can vary from one hour to four or five hours. Similarly the review period can vary, leading to uncertainty about when updates are made available.

The following paragraphs set out our general principles to managing barrier closures.

Procedures to Deal with Barrier Closures

Decision to Close the Barriers and Barriers Monitoring Conditions

Orkney Islands Council Roads Department along with Police Scotland monitor weather conditions on a continuous basis. Where it is considered that wind and tide are likely to have an adverse effect on the Barriers, a meeting will take place in order that an assessment can be made regarding closure. If they deem appropriate that a barrier is unsafe to cross they will close the road until such time as it is safe to cross.

This information is passed on 'in real time'. This means we receive the news at the same time as anyone else in the community who has 'signed up' for the relevant social media alert.

We, along with the various transport providers also monitor conditions and every effort is made to alert to the possibility of a Barrier closure before it happens.

Morning Closures – if the barriers are closed before the school opens at 08:35 pupils and staff who reside across the barriers cannot get to school.

How can we inform parents and pupils of this – if the closure happens before or at the time of Radio Orkney broadcasting then it will be announced on the radio and on their Facebook page. It will also be on the OIC School Transport Facebook page. If it is announced after 08:00, it is likely that the Radio Orkney Facebook page will carry the news. The OIC Facebook page and Twitter will also report up-to-date information on the barriers.

School transport - Routes 32 (South Ronaldsay) and 33 (Hope and Burray) will not be able to operate. If the barriers open before 09:00, Stagecoach will undertake to operate their Routes 32 and 33. If they open any later than that they cannot commit to picking up the pupils. They will operate in the afternoon as usual so any pupils who managed to get to school will be able to get their school transport home. (Please note this is different from snow closures where if the bus cannot operate in the morning it will not operate in the afternoon. The reason for this is that if the road was too dangerous in the morning it is unlikely that it will be safe in the afternoon.)

Routes 32 and 33 are operated by Stagecoach. Stagecoach reserve the right at any time not to cross the barriers (even if they are open) if they do not think it is safe for a bus full of pupils to cross. They will always take the safety of their passengers as their prime consideration.

Throughout the school day - if the barriers close throughout the day it will be the intention, where possible, to keep the pupils in class to avoid and minimise disruption to their learning.

If the closure extends beyond the school day pupils will be kept in school unless prior arrangements have been made by the parents and the school office are informed. A snack will be provided if the closure extends between the hours of 17:00 – 18:00.

Parents wishing to collect their children must report to the school office. No pupils will be allowed to leave with other parents unless the school has been informed of this by the parent of the pupil receiving the lift.

School transport will collect the pupils from the school as soon as the barriers are reported open.

Exceptions to the above

The exception to the above (Monday – Thursday) will be if the high tide is expected at 17:00 – 18:00 or later and they start to review the barriers mid-afternoon. Consideration would be given to organising the buses to take the pupils home before the end of the school day. If they closed two hours before high tide and did not open until 2 - 3 hours after, it could mean that the pupils would not get home until possibly as late as 20:00 – 21:00.

The same example would apply for a Friday, as the school closes earlier; if the high tide was expected at 15:00 – 16:00 and there was possibility of a closure late morning we would look at getting pupils home before 13:00.

In the event of the barriers being unsafe to cross in the morning, the driver of the relevant service(s) will contact the Stagecoach Office, after which depot management will liaise closely with OIC and KGS as to the best action to follow (dependent on prevailing conditions at the time) whether to return pupils home or to wait for calmer conditions. If in the afternoon it is unsafe, the buses will return to the school, having first informed Stagecoach depot, who will in turn inform OIC and KGS.

Note: If the Barriers close, arrangements are in place with Stagecoach for any Holm pupils, that may be allocated a seat on the Route 32 bus, to be picked up or dropped off by the Route 34 Holm bus. Any queries contact School Transport direct 873535 ext 2427.

Information on the Barriers can be obtained from the following sources

OIC Twitter feeds

- Follow [@OIC_Roads](#) for Churchill Barrier closures.
- Follow [@OrkneyCouncil](#) for general Council news and information, including adverse weather school closures.

OIC Facebook Pages

- Follow us on our [OIC School Transport Facebook page](#).
- We also use our [OIC Updates Facebook page](#) to provide you with more general Council news and information.
- Please note that Twitter and Facebook are independent websites and the Council cannot guarantee against the alerts being delayed.

BBC Radio Orkney

- Morning broadcast (93.7 FM) and [Radio Orkney Facebook page](#).

Any questions or comments

Please contact the Head Teacher, Kirkwall Grammar School, telephone 01856872102 or Karen Walter, Education Resources Manager, Orkney Islands Council, telephone 01856873535 extension 2421.