

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
24<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Pete Roberts  
Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys

**REPORT TITLE:** Plans for Newtown Schools

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The aim of this paper is to outline the findings of the engagement which has taken place on the potential enlargement of the new building for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen in Newtown.
- 1.2 The report requests Cabinet approval to commence the statutory process on the following proposal:

**Phase 1:** Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1 September 2025

**Phase 2:** Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

- 1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:

Appendix A – Newtown Options Appraisal  
Appendix B – Newtown Engagement Report  
Appendix C – Impact Assessment

**2. Background**

**Review of Newtown Schools**

- 2.1 In September 2021, the Council merged Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren Junior School in Newtown to establish a new school, Ysgol Calon y Dderwen. The school was established on the existing school sites, with the intention that a replacement building would eventually be provided.
- 2.2 Since then, the Council has been developing plans for the new school building. A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) has been developed and

approved by the Council's Cabinet and Welsh Government, and plans for the new building had been developed to the end of RIBA Stage 2.

- 2.3 The intention is that the planned replacement building for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen will be part of the North Well-being Programme's new Health and Well-being Campus. The Council has been working closely with colleagues from the North Powys Well-being Programme throughout the development of plans for the replacement school building.
- 2.4 Following consideration of these plans by the Council's Cabinet, officers were asked to consider whether it would be possible to increase the size of the planned new building, to accommodate more pupils, potentially the pupils currently attending Maesyrrhandir C.P. School and Treowen C.P. School as well as Ysgol Calon y Dderwen pupils.
- 2.5 Current pupil numbers at these three schools are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total R-Yr6
<b>Ysgol Calon y Dderwen</b>	40	36	44	25	34	39	33	251
<b>Treowen C.P. School</b>	10	15	15	9	16	14	27	106
<b>Maesyrrhandir C.P. School</b>	12	11	12	10	15	19	16	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>452</b>

### The Case for Change

- 2.6 The reasons why the plans to provide a replacement building for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen are being reviewed are as follows:

#### **2.7 Decrease in pupil numbers**

Total pupil numbers at the three schools decreased from 619 in 2016 to 452 in 2023. This is a decrease of 167.

The latest projected pupil numbers also show that total pupil numbers across the three schools are projected to decrease further in the coming years.

#### **2.8 Increase in surplus places**

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<sup>1</sup> Teacher Centre, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Currently the three schools combined have a surplus capacity of 276 pupils, or 37.9%.

As pupil numbers in the three schools are expected to fall, these surplus places will increase. By 2027, according to the projections, surplus places across the three schools could be 346 places or 47.5%.

## **2.9 Building condition**

There are issues with building condition in the three schools, in particular the former Ladywell Green Infants building of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen which has been assessed as Condition C/D.

### **Engagement Period**

- 2.10 A period of engagement with the three school communities was carried out in June and July 2023, to understand the views of stakeholders at the three schools on the plan to potentially increase the scope of the new building to include additional schools. The findings of this exercise are outlined in the Engagement Report which is attached as Appendix B, and are summarised below.
- 2.11 During the engagement period, face to face meetings were held with staff and governors at the three schools. The issues raised at these meetings are summarised in the Engagement Report.
- 2.12 In addition, an online questionnaire was developed which was available from the 23<sup>rd</sup> June to the 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Information about the questionnaire was circulated to the three schools to share with their school communities.
- 2.13 301 responses were received to the questionnaire. This included 111 responses from stakeholders associated with Ysgol Calon y Dderwen, 101 that were associated with Treowen C.P. School and 55 that were associated with Maesyrrhandir C.P. School. 34 respondents stated that they had no association with any of the schools.
- 2.14 The questionnaire asked respondents about the benefits of the idea to increase the size of the Ysgol Calon y Dderwen replacement building and include pupils from Maesyrrhandir and Treowen. The following is a summary of the responses received:
- Improved facilities for all pupils
  - Potential reduction in costs
  - Financial benefits for the Council
  - Potential integration of communities across Newtown
  - The proposal could lead to more funding for a larger school
  - One school would be easier for parents
  - Positive experience for pupils from all backgrounds

- 2.15 The questionnaire also asked respondents to outline their concerns relating to the idea to increase the size of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen replacement building to include pupils from Maesyrrhandir and Treowen. The following is a summary of the responses received:
- Concern about the impact of pupils attending a larger school
  - Concern about traffic and parking
  - Concern about the impact on staff
  - Concern about loss of community identity and facilities
  - Concern about land and facilities for the replacement building
  - Concern about location and access to the new building
  - Suggestions that smaller schools are preferred
  - Concern around wellbeing, bullying and behavioural issues
  - Concern around loss of parental choice
  - Concern around the impact on pupils with ALN
- 2.16 Respondents were asked to outline any specific local issues which the Council would need to consider when exploring the idea further. The following is a summary of the comments received:
- Traffic and parking in the Park Street area of Newtown
  - Impact on pupils and learning around class sizes
  - Impact on communities and families
  - Concerns around the North Powys Wellbeing Programme
  - Size of the new school
  - Accessibility and transport from Treowen and Maesyrrhandir

### **Options Appraisal**

- 2.17 An options appraisal has also been carried out to consider options for the three schools. This is included as Appendix A. This document includes the following:
- An overview of current provision and key data related to the three schools
  - Identification of possible future options for the three schools
  - An assessment of the options against Critical Success Factors
  - A SWOT assessment of options
  - Identification of possible implementation options
  - An assessment of the implementation options against Critical Success Factors
  - A SWOT assessment of implementation options
  - A financial evaluation of implementation options
  - Further consideration of the emerging preferred option against factors listed in the School Organisation Code (2018) as factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals.
- 2.18 Based on the options appraisal carried out, the paper identified the following preferred option for the schools:

- **New build for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to accommodate pupils currently attending Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School**
- **The expansion of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to incorporate the Treowen C.P. School site from September 2025**
- **All pupils to transfer to the new building at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen when this is ready.**

2.19 The reasons for this are as follows:

- Provides the opportunity for all learners from both Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School to benefit from an improved learning environment
- A larger school provides a more efficient model of education
- Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School have a similar pupil profile in terms of additional learning needs and pupils eligible for free school meals – this would enable a positive transition process
- Removal of backlog maintenance at two schools
- New school building at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen would be fully accessible and would meet the requirements of the Equality Act
- New build is planned to be a Passivhaus building which is a very efficient energy standard, and the school would meet Welsh Government's net zero targets
- Reduces surplus places but places remain available at other schools in Newtown, including Maesyrrhandir C.P. School, to accommodate for future fluctuations in pupil numbers
- Minimal impact on staff and pupils at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen who have only recently gone through a staffing restructure process during the establishment of the new school
- Would provide education in Treowen until the new building is constructed.
- Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location until the new building is constructed.
- Would enable staff expertise and good practice to be shared across both sites during the transition period.
- Would enable the school to run more efficiently during the transition period through shared staffing and resources
- Improved transition arrangements to support pupils' move from Treowen to the new building as they would already be part of the school.
- Avoids expenditure associated with establishing a new school

2.20 This would mean that Maesyrrhandir C.P. School would continue as a standalone school as options which would result in changes to this school were discounted in the options appraisal (Appendix A).

- 2.21 In addition to the options appraisal exercise, the document also considers the impact of the preferred option on the factors listed in the School Organisation Code as factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals.
- 2.22 The preferred option aligns with the vision and guiding principles as set out in the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030.
- 2.23 Implementation of the preferred option is subject to the statutory process outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).

### **Statutory Process for School Organisation Proposals**

2.24 The process for school organisation proposals is set out by the Welsh Government in the School Organisation Code (2018). The process is summarised below:

i) Consultation

Consultation would be carried out with stakeholders as required by the Code. This includes consultation with the pupils, to ensure that their views are taken into account, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Feedback from the consultation would be collated and summarised, and a report would be presented to the Cabinet. Cabinet would consider the report and the feedback received during the consultation period, and would decide whether to proceed with the proposal, to make changes to the proposal or to not proceed with the proposal.

If Cabinet decides not to proceed, that would be the end of this proposal.

ii) Statutory Notice

If Cabinet decides to proceed, a Statutory Notice would be published, which would give a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

If there were objections, the authority would publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and the authority's response to them. A further report would be presented to the Cabinet, which they would consider alongside the objection report, in order to decide whether or not to approve the proposal.

iii) Implementation

If Cabinet approves the proposal, it would be implemented in accordance with the date given in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date.

### **3 Advice**

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the options appraisal exercise and the engagement exercise carried out, the advice of officers is that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process to implement the following proposal:

**Phase 1:** Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1 September 2025

**Phase 2:** Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

- 3.2 The reasons for this are set out in 2.19 above.
- 3.3 However, it must be noted that the assessment in the options appraisal has been carried out based on the fact that the site will be shared with the North Powys Wellbeing Campus. If the whole site was available, the preferred option may have been different, and may have included all three schools.
- 3.4 Should the recommendation to commence the statutory process be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in November 2023.
- 3.5 It must also be noted that implementation of this proposal does not preclude schools from being part of future reorganisation proposals.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The intention initially is to extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the Treowen site. No savings to the Council would be identified at this stage in terms of delegated funding, however the school would be able to combine resources and potentially reduce management costs for the school, as there would be one senior leadership team.
- 4.2 There would be no additional transport costs associated with this phase, however there may be some additional costs associated with extending Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the Treowen site, such as new signage. This is estimated to be in the region of £15k and would be funded by the Council's Corporate Transformation budget.
- 4.3 Eventually, the intention is that the new school would move to a new building located on the site of the current Ysgol Calon y Dderwen. It is

estimated that the capital cost of this (excluding optimism bias, risk, client costs and fees) would be £16m at today's prices, however this would be reviewed and updated as the design process moves forward.

4.4 The move to one new building would result in estimated revenue savings in delegated funding amounting to £108.6k per annum (after taking account of the estimated increase in business rates of £14.0k). In addition, there may be some minimal savings for catering functions. It is currently projected that there would be no additional transport costs as the new building is located less than 1 mile from the existing Treowen school building. The school itself is also anticipated to realise savings to its budget as they will be able to pool resources as well as put more cost-effective class structures and a single leadership team in place, however it is expected utility costs would increase by approximately £20.0k for the new school.

4.5 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- Removal of powers of virement'

The Council will consider the use of these powers of intervention where appropriate.

4.6 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from various service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.

4.7 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the contents of this report and supports the recommendation.

## **5. Legal implications**

5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view provided the statutory process for school organisation proposals in the School Organisation Code (2018) are followed.

5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendations"

## **6. Climate Change & Nature Implications**



- 6.1 Implementation of the proposal would eventually result in a new build primary school in Newtown. This would result in more environmentally friendly buildings, which would be more energy efficient than the current buildings. The school will be built to meet Welsh Government standards for net zero.
- 6.2 Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Treowen C.P. School, however the distance from Treowen C.P. School to the Calon y Dderwen site is less than 1 mile. Whilst it is unlikely that pupils would be eligible for home to school transport, it is possible that the change in location would result in pupils being transported in cars to the new site.
- 6.3 Should Cabinet agree to proceed, further consideration will be given to the impact of the proposal in terms of carbon emissions related to the above, and will be reflected in future Cabinet papers related to the proposal.

## 7. **Data Protection**

- 7.1 N/A

## 8. **Comment from local member(s)**

- 8.1 8.1 Cllr Joy Jones, Newtown East

TREOWEN

Key questions

Your stated aims are:-

- To cut the number of empty spaces in Newtown schools
- To ensure a better school environment in terms of better buildings etc
- To ensure parity of opportunity

I note from your reports:-

1. Maesyrrhandir has the most empty spaces ie 55% or around 95 in number
2. Maesyrrhandir has higher than average for the other schools costs. This being circa £800 per pupil.
3. Maesyrrhandir has also the poorest building condition according to your information.

YET –

- You want to close Treowen?
- Closing Treowen will not resolve any of the above issues –
- It does not get rid of the 55% empty spaces at Maesyrrhandir
- It doesn't solve the issue of above average expenditure there

- It doesn't solve the poor condition of the buildings

Therefore this seems to –

- Lack a coherent strategy
- Lack of capital investment strategy? How much will rebuilding Maesyrrhandir cost and when will it be done?
- What other options have been considered for the two schools could they not work together and share staffing resources without closing either site
- All this doesn't take into consideration the fact that following the yellow brick road which is the suggested route into town from the railway by active travel
- Children will come off Treowen which is built on a very steep hill. They will then walk over the main railway bridge which is the train main line this is very narrow road with nasty corners over the bridge (car driver can't see small children running over the bridge as it is a solid bridge and there's no footpath over it but there is small narrow one down the narrow road which is not fit for purpose, so most people walk in the road. Then at the bottom of the hill, turn left to in front of the railway station, cross the road and walk along t toward the old college, this is what they call the yellow brick road (done by active travel not safe as cars weave in and out of the bollards as its not a foot path just the side of the road with a white line. Then down to very narrow path to stand by a very busy main road and junction i.e. New Road where the pedestrian crossing is. Once across along another main road i.e. Back Lane towards the town centre. Crossing the end of Market Street to reach the zebra crossing by Iceland is the only safe place to cross Black lane. All this before even reaching Park Street from Treowen.
- How can this be a safe school route for primary children and how can it be a green route as you state as a Cabinet to be an important principle.
- This will push more patients to use cars as it's a long way for small children to walk, patients with our small children or disabilities. Bad weather as children will be completely soaked in the all the storms we have been experiencing this year. Pavements are very slippy on Treowen in the winter months, as Treowen is high and steep.
- Extra cars will have a major impact on Park Street which is overcrowded and long queues at the best-off time. The road has been blocked often over the last few years as it is the route to the vaccine centre and there has been long queues waits to get in and out. It is also the route to GPs practise so is extremely busy road. This is also going to have increased traffic with the proposed build of the new health hub. It could become a very dangerous area for years to come with the add traffic when the new health hub is built after the new build of the new school.

- Also, the empty school building will become an eyesore leaving the estate with more problems and causing a community without any public resource and support.
- Treowen is an estate that is part of Newtown East which is high for it deprivation and poverty so the school is extremely important as it provided valuable education but support for the whole family and whole estate
- The [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(WIMD\) 2019](#) measures deprivation at a small geographical level called LSOA (lower tier super output areas). LSOAs have an average population of 1,600 and are smaller than wards.

## **9. Impact Assessment**

9.1 An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached as Appendix C. The impact assessment considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

9.2 The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

'This impact assessment suggests that the impact is generally positive with some negative aspects, such as the requirement for some pupils to travel further than they currently do to school, and loss of provision in Treowen. Whilst the intention is to close Treowen C.P. School and initially extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the current Treowen site, the intention is that the school would move to a new building. This would provide much improved buildings and facilities for pupils compared with the current poor condition buildings, ensuring that future pupils would be taught in facilities that are fit-for-purpose, improving their learner entitlement and experience. The new facilities would be fully DDA compliant, supporting learners with disabilities.'

9.3 Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process, the impact assessment would be updated throughout the process, to take account of feedback received.

## **10. Recommendation**

10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

**Phase 1:** Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1 September 2025

**Phase 2:** Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

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