

Num Response

14 I wish to object to the statutory notice to close Llandrindod High School and Builth Wells High School, and to reopen a new school on two sites. It is my view that the proposed merger of the two schools does not fulfil the desired aims of PCC, and that it will have a negative impact on the education of children, particularly at the Llandrindod site. These are the reasons for my view:

1. Evidence for improved standards - part 1

Estyn reported that 'the consultation document does not offer enough evidence to support PCC's conclusion that the proposal would improve educational quality and standards' and they are also 'of the view that the possibility of the new school failing to improve standards has not been considered appropriately'. This means that PCC has failed in its duty to meet the recommendations of the Welsh Assembly School Organisation Code, which states that relevant bodies should:

- place the interest of learners above all others
- give paramount importance to the likely impact of the proposal on the quality of outcomes
- take into account what impact the proposal will have on educational attainment among children from economically deprived backgrounds

take into account whether proposals will lead to an improvement in the educational or training achievements of persons who are above compulsory school age but below the age of 19

Given that Estyn states that there is not enough evidence in the consultation to support PCC's conclusions, the proposal should be sent back to officers to collect evidence. And I am very surprised that Cabinet allowed the proposal to proceed, if the evidence did not satisfy Estyn.

14 2. Evidence of improved standards - part 2

PCC provided the following evidence to support its view that the merger would improve standards: the correlation between improved leadership and raised standards; and the recent improvement of standards at the Newtown/John Beddoes school.

The suggestion that a merged school will be able to select the strongest leaders at all levels, and therefore standards will improve has two problems: it assumed that the new school will be able to select the strongest leaders, and it assumes that the strongest leader when operating within their current leadership team at a single site school will also be the strongest leader when operating within their current leadership team at a dual site school. There is no guarantee that either is true. Leaders may choose to move to another school, once the merger becomes a certainty (we have already seen a drop in staff morale and an increase in staff turnover at Llandrindod High School due to the merger process). And strong leadership has a high dependency on teamwork - in many cases it is better to build up an existing team that is working well than to create a new one by bringing in stronger people.

It is true that the merged Newtown/John Beddoes school has improved its examination results. But three observations must be noted:

- the merger at Newtown was executed very differently to the proposed Llandrindod/Builth Wells merger, as the leadership team at Newtown was more or less left intact - it should be described as a takeover rather than a merger

- the improved examination results at the merged Newtown school still are not as good as results at Llandrindod High School

- Estyn rated Newtown as excellent before the merger, but only satisfactory after the merger - the same drop under the new framework as that recorded at Llandrindo (good to special measures).

14 3. Post-16 education

The proposal from PCC includes a recommendation that post-16 education be limited to one of the two new sites. Given that the proposal is part of a longer term process of moving secondary education to Builth, it makes sense that post-16 will be sited at Builth. This will mean some senior teacher time that is currently allocated at Llandrindod will move to Builth, including a strong possibility of moving some of the subject leaders. This move will mean (according to PCC's own logic) a drop in standards at Llandrindod High School. Given that Llandrindod has a higher concentration of children from economically deprived backgrounds than Builth does, this means that the merger again does not satisfy the recommendations of the Welsh Assembly School Organisation Code (see above.) The only way to satisfy the recommendations is to either leave things as they are, or to move post-16 education to Llandrindod.

14 KS4

The proposed merger will not improve the ability of either site to increase the number of subjects taught at KS4, unless pupils are moved between sites. But it is also PCC's view that the current movement of KS5 pupils between sites is a reason to merge the two schools. This does not make sense. Either the aim of the merger is to reduce pupil movement, or it is to increase pupil movement - it cannot be both at the same time.

14 Reasons for change

As the proposal leaves the same children occupying the same school buildings, the proposed merger can have no impact on the following 'reasons for change' specified by PCC: - falling pupil numbers

- low numbers in some year groups making it difficult to provide the full curriculum
- too many surplus places
- difficult to provide an equitable range of subjects through the medium of Welsh

The other reasons for change were:

- Limited post 16 education (mentioned twice, so it must be important). Currently, the two schools collaborate on post-16 education, together with other schools in South Powys. The proposed merger will have little impact on both the total range of subjects taught and on the quality of the teaching, and most of the benefits of a merger could be implemented with closer collaboration and sharing of best practices rather than a school merger.

- The significant forecast deficit budget at Llandrindod High School, unless action is taken. Action has been taken, and there is now no significant budget deficit forecast. - The Estyn '

special measures' status of both schools. Again, the proposed merger will have little impact on the Estyn status - the new school will continue to be monitored. And if it is Estyn's view that there is not enough evidence to support the view that standards will at least be maintained by the merger, their current position must be that the new school would also be considered, at least in the minds of the inspectors, as still in special measures.

14 Effect on leadership

The proposed merger of the two schools includes a merger of the two sets of leaders. One headteacher, one senior leadership team, one set of subject leaders, and one governing body. However, because the number of pupils will remain the same, the number of staff will only slightly reduce, and the same buildings will be used, the total amount of work that the new leadership will be required to do will be only slightly smaller than it is now. This will nearly double the workload of most of the leadership team (with the possible exception of the governing body). Additional travel time between the two sites means that the workload of some of the leaders will more than double. For example, the new head of maths would be looking after twice as many teachers and will also have to share his/her time between the two sites. No allowance has been made in the proposal for supporting this additional workload. No research has been done to predict the effect of reducing teaching time of senior leaders in order for them to increase their management time.

If, on the other hand, workload is not reduced by keeping the same number of leaders, the merged school would not be able to operate within its new budget. Again, PCC has made no proposals how the new governing body and SLT would be able to run the new school within the predicted new budget. It has just stated that this is their job and not the job of PCC.

14 7. Funding cut

The proposed budget for the new merged school is in fact a cut in the funding of education in both Llandrindod Wells and Builth Wells. It does not accurately reflect the actual costs of running the two sites. Given the general funding cuts filtering down from Westminster to Cardiff, and from Cardiff to Powys, there is general sympathy towards PCC finding ways to save money. However, this merger is not the way to do it, for the following reasons:

- It actually saves the council very little money in the medium term. The annual projected savings have already fallen from £166,000 to £123,000 and these savings still do not take into account additional travel costs that may be incurred by post-16 students, by KS4 students, by staff and by governors.
- It will (and has) cost the council in the short term. For example, the consultation process has already cost a large amount of money (in terms of paying OSS, of staff resources producing documentation and doing research, etc). And there are interim costs associated with the merger, such as employing a new head teacher, supply costs for leadership resources taken out of school during the new school set up, clerking and training costs for the shadow governing body, etc.

There are better ways of saving this relatively small amount of money than merging two schools.

14 8. Conclusion

Given that the limited benefits of a school merger (small saving cost, and post-16 education on one site) could be achieved in other ways, and given the large risk of the merger to the quality of the education in mid Powys, I urge you to overrule the decision by PCC cabinet (which was made against the wishes of the full council) and instruct the council officers to look at alternative arrangements with lower risk and greater benefits.

85 As a teacher in Llandrindod Wells CP school I thought a great deal about my response to your proposal and have made the decision to respond on my own behalf and also on behalf of my family. Currently, my son Rhys is in Year 12 in Llandrindod Wells High School and commencing his A level studies, my son Daniel attended Llandrindod Wells High School and my husband Steve has been a school Governor and therefore I feel that we will provide an informed and balanced response. Having read all the evidence provided for the consultation we understand and accept and fully agree with the fact that we must not be resistant to change and should always strive to improve standards and offer our young people the best possible education to enable them to achieve their potential. With this in mind it is difficult to understand why Llandrindod Wells High School should face closure when evidence shows that standards are improving and results this year were among the best in Powys. Estyn have stated that they are not convinced the changes will improve standards or even maintain them so why fix something that is not broken. Llandrindod High School has had problems but it is now moving forward and should be supported in this rather than pushed aside.

85 Secondly, Llandrindod Wells is the County Town of Powys and has two larger feeder Primary schools which really does cause us to really question why the High School should face closure, especially as it is the only High School in Radnorshire. Both Primary Schools are at capacity in several year groups and are looking for ways to increase capacity to accommodate the admission requests they received. Llandrindod Wells has a larger population than Builth. Why is Builth the better option?

85 We have a Powys County Council as opposed to the historical shires (Radnorshire, Breconshire and Montgomeryshire) so, why is it that the current education review has only looked at schools in Radnorshire and Breconshire?

A great deal has been said about the heavily weighted Cabinet which favours Montgomery area, is it co-incidental then that Montgomery schools are not under review currently. Furthermore, the full council voted against the school proposals yet the Cabinet continue to support the decision and this does not sit well with any of us. If a review of education is needed in Powys, then it should be reviewing the whole county at the same time in order to see the whole picture and then make a balanced and fully informed decision reflecting the needs and recommendations involving everything in the whole of Powys. The sceptical amongst us may be thinking that the Montgomery based Cabinet members are thinking ahead to the elections in May next year!

85 Although we are told that closure is not simply a budget issue surely there are many adverse budgetary implications if Llandrindod Wells High School were to close. Transport costs of the pupils would be quite substantial and the school day would be greatly increased for many pupils. The distance from the High School for many pupils could have a great impact on attendance at extra-curricular activities which are an important part of pupil development in many areas. In fact after school clubs and groups have proved to be beneficial not just for the subject area they are linked to but also for the self-esteem of pupils increased motivation and achievement in other areas.

85 Closure of Llandrindod Wells High School would inevitably result in fewer people with families moving to the area as schools are often a strong decision maker. This could then have an adverse effect on the two Primary schools. In addition to this Llandrindod Wells will no doubt suffer a negative impact on businesses and trade and the positive new initiatives and businesses that have emerged and are planned may not survive. Llandrindod Wells is beginning to reenergise and closure of its High School will slow down and could even kill the town completely.

85 There are many more minor points that could be added to this letter. We, like many others fell very strongly about this and I am sure that Builth residents will be reacting in a similar fashion to support their High School. We accept that change may be needed but without evidence to provide that closing Llandrindod Wells High School will be the best option we fail to understand how this has got as far as it has. Surely this is a very short sighted plan that may be financially a good idea at present but the long term implications are far more wide reaching. The pupils of Llandrindod Wells High School deserve the best and in our opinion that is:

- Keep Llandrindod Wells High School open

- Listen to the pupils and think of their future and their community - do not think of things in isolation.

Support the staff to ensure that Teaching and Learning standards are good to excellent.

- Work with the Governors and Leadership Team to keep moving the school forward.

- Invest in the future of Llandrindod Wells High School based in Llandrindod and invest in Llandrindod the town.

85 In conclusion, we ask you to really listen to everyone who responds. Please do not push all this aside and have the mind-set that the decision has been made and this is what is going to happen. If Brexit can be re-looked at, then surely the future of Llandrindod Wells High School can be given the same respect the priority.

86 I attended Llandrindod High School from the years 2003 - 2010 and owe my excellent academic achievements to it. Since then I have gone on to receive a first class honours degree at the University of Liverpool as well as PGCE in Secondary Music from Manchester Metropolitan University (Distinction). I now work as music Teacher in a Boys' Grammar School in Bebington, Wirral. Having read your published Secondary School Reorganisatino Programme from 27 September 2016, I am particularly dubious about the practical reality of 'improved leadership at all levels'. It is on this point (which seems to constitute the primary advantage of your proposal) that I wish to discuss in this letter. As your programme reads:

'When streamlinign the leadership structure following the joining of two schools into one split site secondary school, the newly appointed governing body are able to place the strongest leaders (...) - those who have the best track recorde of securing high outcomes and delivering the highest levels of care - leading school improvement across the two sites'.

The underlying assumption behind this statemenet is that the strongest leaders will *undeniably be available to handle the management of a dual-sited school and that this is a guaranteed way of improving performance, and subsequently learning of pupils, in the local catchmenet area. The expectation you are putting on these members of the leadership team and teaching staff to not only lead and teach on two sites, but to also travel between campuses in order to provide mentoing opportunities for colleagues, is incredibly high. In the volatile situation of the two current schools and their 'Unsatisfactory' status as labelled by Estyn, I believe that stability would be more beneficial to the improvement of the schools' pereformance as opposed to the potentially risky decision to merge.*

86 The likelihood of a successful dual-sited school emerging from September 2018 is very dependent on leadership personnel, as you have acknowledged in the report. However, I am unsure that the governing body of the new school will be guaranteed to have every current staff member at their disposal for the formation of a new leadership team. I can only imagine that the morale amongst staff members is currently very low and after your announcement to create the dual-sited school, a large proportion will be looking elsewhere for work. Therefore it could be assumed that you are going to indirectly cause the relocation of a number of teaching professionals from Powys, and this could possibly include your 'strongest leaders'. On top of the economic consequences of forcing out working professionals, you are also likely to discourage others from moving to the area, and this could well contribute to the on-going demise of the local economy.

86 Another consideration that doesn't seem to have been made thoroughly is the practicality of staff members travelling between sites. You assert that it is essential for time to be made for teachers to do this but the reality of not having consistency of personnel on one campus at all times is incredibly risky. The various needs of pupils create issues that a leadership team is responsible for dealing with, and in a school these happen on a daily basis. These can include bad behaviour incidents, SEN issues or pastoral difficulties based on students' home lives. The best leadership teams are not just those that use good policies but those that enforce these policies accurately and consistently. I am concerned that the location of personnel over two campuses will make the application of such systems very challenging. Day to day issues cannot be timed according to travel schedules and if the strongest leaders of the dual-sited school are not on hand to immediately deal with an incident, it could escalate into a much larger issue, which could then become quite a considerable barrier to learning.

86 As I have asserted, the educational situation in Powys is currently volatile, and making such a drastic change as you have suggested is likely to bring about a number of practical issues. I thank you for reading this letter and hope that you consider some of the points that I have brought forward.

- 87 1. I believe that the pupils' education will suffer due to the fact that the teachers workloads will include, especially the management and Heads of Department. The workload at present is immense without reducing the timescale in half and increasing the workload with managing it over the two schools.
2. Each town has its unique identity and the High Schools being part of that. If you merge the schools what is the point of having separate named towns.
3. Increased cost to parents for new uniform under the new name of the 'merged High School'.
4. The proposal is a cut in funding. This will be detrimental to the pupils and schools.
5. Wales Online published a report that out of 12 High Schools in Powys, Llandrindod was at the top of the results. How can you justify closing a school that at the top for learning.
6. A report from Estyn states that it is not convinced that this proposal will at least maintain standards therefore you need to produce solid evidence that merging the schools will increase the standards.
7. It will not improve the ability to increase the number of subjects taught.
8. To merge the two schools you believe there will be a saving of £128,000 which first started off at £166,000. £128,000 is not a substantial amount of savings to justify closing both High Schools and reopening of one High School. Savings could be made of this amount elsewhere within Powys County Council. Here are some suggestions:
- Charge employees of Powys County Hall to park their carpark. PCC is one of the only carparks within the town that do not charge. Gwalia workers have to pay for a permit if they wish to park in the High Street car park. Yet you have the audacity to say that PCC is a private car park and for permit holders only even though it is funded by us tax payers. If your employees have a permit to use that carpark then they should for it yearly.
 - Reduce the workforce in each department. No other company has several stages of management from line managers to Head of Departments. Depending on the size of the department one line manager and one Head of Dept should be sufficient, making a saving of thousands!
 - Stop using these consultancy firms to make decisions for Powys County Council. You employ people

252 We are writing to you to express our strong objection to the decision by the cabinet to proceed with the closure of both schools and to open back up a dual-sited bi-lingual school.

As a local business owner and Chair and Press and Promotions Officer of the Chamber of Trade and Tourism we understand the importance of a local school to a local economy. We have seen the strength of opposition at the public meetings and know how important it is the stability and long term prospects for the area and most parents are understandably very concerned at what they see as knee jerk reactions and short term solutions. As parents with a child recently gone up to the High school we are very concerned that the schools in both towns deliver better educational standards which we believe has already been adversely affected by the absence of heads over a prolonged period, until recently. We maintain that not filling these roles quickly pushed both into special measure and exacerbated the ability of both to deliver good results. We maintain that it was the council's tardiness in replacing heads that made it difficult for the schools to get back on track and intentionally or unintentionally allowed the cabinet to take the decision it has done.

252 We urge PCC to allow both schools to demonstrate their ability to deliver better standards for a period of time before any action is taken against them. We do say 'against them' as we feel there has been little attempt at cooperation, just a directive. There is no guarantee that your proposal will raise standards but will put added pressure on teachers to transition to a new format when that time should be better spent on the educational standards. We urge the schools to focus on core academic subjects and encourage the pupils to take as many GCSEs as possible in order to give them the best chance of excelling in further education. We believe that the expectations for pupils and the outcome for the schools will be more favourable. We know Ms Asplin focused the pupils' minds on excellence and having met many of our sons' teachers recently, believe that there are very good teachers already working hard, and with more time, both schools can perform well.

252 We fail to see an economic rationale of your proposal that will deliver for the schools and would be extremely disappointed if you pressed forward through to your ultimate aim of one school. We urge you to stop, reconsider, allow the schools breathing space to focus on their achievement targets and ensure that education spend is protected for the benefit of all.

It is also our understanding that the cabinet made this decision not the full council who were over-ruled. This gives us great concern not just for the future of our schools but for the fairness of our democratic system within PCC.

294 I am writing as a parent of a child in Y7 of Llandrindod High School with two younger siblings tight behind her. I am very sorry to hear the Members' decision to merge Builth and Llandrindod High Schools and I understand that this is our time to ask that you reverse the decision. I am VERY aware that neither Builth or Llandrindod (and sadly many other schools in Powys) are much good in terms of academic achievements, and as a tax payer I am expecting that major efforts should be made to improve standards in all schools in Powys - and particularly Llandrindod High School with its position firmly in Special Measures. However, I am very concerned that the merger is at best a sticking plaster and at worst a plot to make the schools fail even further so that the ultimate plan of a super school can be built. (Parents have been reliably informed that a bid for £17m had gone to the Welsh Assembly to build the super school at Builth Road, and a little honesty would be appreciated.)

294 I believe that any efforts made to change a school should be made purely to improve academic standards - particularly when standards are as poor as they currently are. I fail to see, therefore, when Estyn state they believe PCC is planning to do something they believe 'will not even maintain standards' why on earth the proposal was considered let alone was passed. If PCC is serious about improving standards, I cannot see why decision makers are being so bullish about pushing through something that even the experts have said will not improve the situation - it clearly makes NO sense. We also need to face reality and realise that Powys does not have a good track record of making its schools good - therefore Estyn's opinion has my confidence a great deal more than PCC's does.

294 Bearing the above in mind, I can therefore only conclude that there is a different reason for pushing through the proposal when the experts have clearly stated that it's a bad idea: it must be financial. We understand that PCC are seeking to remove £123,000 from the merged budget. £123,000 is a piffling sum in the great PCC scheme of things and seeing as it's already dropped from approximately £160k, confidence is very low to think that it might be accurate and achievable.

294 I am acutely aware that local government has had cuts and is facing more. That is a problem that we must all deal with and accept that there may be cuts in our standards of service. However - the public are heartedly sick of the choices that PCC make with the money they have.

For example, on the day our village's primary school was informed that further cuts would result in the loss of invaluable teaching assistants, I looked at the jobs page on the PCC website and saw an advert for a Media Officer, salary £32,000. How on earth PCC can value a Media Officer above teaching assistants (or social workers or any of the other statutory responsibilities) it is beyond the comprehension of most of the public. We don't want our money to be spent on PR and media: we want it to be spent on our statutory responsibilities.

The public are also sick of PCC employing consultants when they are unable to make a decision themselves. PCC have many fantastic (and well paid) officers and yet we seem to be afraid of allowing them to make and consider decisions, preferring instead to employ consultants to make those decisions on our behalf - madness when our officers supply them with the very information they use to base their decision on.

PLEASE can PCC use the money they pay consultants with to actually fund our schools? Maybe then we would have money to fund our services rather than paying to take on responsibilities that come with difficult decision-making away from our Members. I appreciate it's politically far easier to simply adopt the recommendations of a consultant who has been paid, but it's NOT what we pay our Members a very good salary for.

294 Therefore, in coming back to the proposals for the merger of our schools, I can imagine Members thinking 'why aren't parents behind the efforts to improve their schools?' (remembering that Estyn doesn't think that they will even maintain standards). In my opinion, it is for this reason: my daughter is at school NOW. She goes to a school that is in Special Measures. The plan is to merge that poor school with another poor school. My presumption is that if PCC and teaching staff are struggling to pull the existing schools out of the doldrums, how on EARTH are they going to organise the improvement of a merged school whilst making the practical circumstances even harder?

This is not an excellent school taking a poor school under its wings. It's a poor school merging with a poor school. I appreciate that the Heads of both schools are working very hard to improve standards and I have faith that - in time - they will do so. Each school has had a difficult past few years and I understand that turning things around is tough. Surely the last thing those members of staff need is the additional challenge of merging schools on separate sites? What they surely need are resources, support, stability and more support.

I can imagine what the disruption would look like: staff spending their time worrying about the proposal rather than focusing on improving their teaching. Good staff looking to for new jobs rather than risk losing their existing ones. I'm particularly concerned about losing the staff who are currently Heads of Dept - 50% of them are going to lose their position - they'd be mad to sit and wait for it to happen. Those who get up and go - exactly the staff we want - will probably get up and go. Heads who are currently fighting to pull things together and improve standards will spend their time considering which one of them is going to lose their position - the Head of Llandrindod has already disappeared, leaving us with an (albeit very good) acting Head with all the problems and instability that the situation provides both for her and the school.

The successful Head - bearing in mind that she is currently struggling to improve a failing school - will then be given another several hundred pupils and their parents, dozens of extra staff - some of whom will no doubt be very dispirited - another office several miles away, and then be told (against Estyn's warning) that she has to improve standards. Talk about a poisoned chalice....

294 In conclusion, THAT is why I am asking that you overturn your previous decision. Provide staff and pupils with some stability, get standards up and resilient, resource them properly. Resource them by ditching all non-essential staff at PCC: ditch any staff that you would feel uncomfortable explaining to the public whose taxes you spend. Ditch the Media Officers, the statisticians, the monitoring officers, the people who oversee the work of others and yet who aren't those peoples' line managers. The public do NOT want these staff and place no value upon them.

When those schools are performing as well as they should do, THEN you might be forgiven to try and improve them further with Estyn's blessing. The parents whose children are at these schools NOW will not thank you for spending their taxes on fiddling around with the structures: we all know that good teachers provide good education, so let's just concentrate on that.

I am therefore asking that you reverse your decision to merge Builth and Llandrindod High Schools, and start trying to improve them in a way that Estyn think will work. Put the effort and resources that you were going to put into the merger - and the money that you are allegedly happy to spend to service a £17m debt - into education for the children who are there NOW. They are our future, they deserve better than this.

295 As 294.

295 Can I ask what rate of interest would be payable on this loan of £17m? From my very basic understanding of finance I would assume a rate of around 5% for arguments sake. This would therefore require a monthly interest payment of around £120k per month. That's a figure of £120k per month when you are looking to save £123k a year, I cannot see the logic? Can you explain this to me?

295 If you were the CEO of a private company and were overseeing such ludicrous measures your job would be terminated. Yet in local government we are seeing less and less decision making and more use of consultants. As the chief executive your role is to understand how the different parts of the council (the business) work together in order to satisfy the common goal of fulfilling their ambitions. Can you not see the impact of taking away a school from both the Llandrindod and Builth communities? jobs, hopes, community functions? I hope you did the right thing and make both schools viable for long term success, rather than the shortsighted vision of a new school without a heart and at great long term cost to both communities.

1706 1. The proposal brings about a reduction in funding, not a saving, of over £100,000 which is the equivalent of one Senior Leadership team. So the reduction in the number of Senior leaders required would not free up money in the budget for the governors to employ additional specialist teaching staff, improve resources or increase support staff to help improve standards. The appointed Senior leaders would also be on a higher salary range because of the larger school.

1706 2. This effective reduction in funding would also make it impossible for the governing body to increase the range of subjects on offer without making further redundancies from the existing staff at both schools. Redundancy has a catastrophic effect on staff morale and is not cost negative. There is also a cost in restructuring the middle management team, to morale and protected salaries for those losing TLR's - not to mention the potential for increased costs as TLR holders would have responsibility for more staff and pupils so may be on a higher point. Has the authority considered the actual staffing required in order to be able to deliver to pupils split across 2 sites.

- 1706 3. Most concerning is the feedback from Estyn that the proposal will not at least maintain standards. Despite the portfolio holder's assertion that this comment only referred to the fact that Powys had not included sufficient evidence of how standards would be improved, a recent comment from an Estyn inspector seems to confirm that their concern was indeed that the proposal would not at least maintain standards, as Llandrindod governors understood, and that they were surprised that Powys was going ahead. If Powys is so concerned about the schools currently being in special measures why are they prepared to jeopardise the excellent progress made so far to improve standards just so that they can be seen to be 'doing something'.
- 1706 4. Sharing of good practice, resources and staff can contribute to a continued improvement in standards at both schools without the distraction and added pressure to governors and staff of effecting the merger. At two or more Cabinet members justified their support for the proposal against the amendment passed by full council by stating that the schools had already been working collectively and had not improved standards, so did not deserve 'another chance'. This was either a deliberate distortion of the truth or those members were seriously misled or misinformed. The collaboration was not just between Builth and Llandrindod. I believe the collaboration to which they were referring was the 14 - 16 and post-16 collaboration between the college and schools across Powys, which was intended to increase the number of subjects on offer to pupils and to give access to vocational subjects too.
- 1706 5. It is not clear if any consideration has been given to the effect of increased workload and the time and cost of travel between sites for middle and senior leaders. Neither is it clear if the implications for staff time and travel costs have been considered if teaching or support staff have to move between sites.
- 1706 6. Keeping the merged school on 2 sites negates many of the potential economies of scale. The merged school still has the same area of buildings and grounds to maintain, which are still in the same condition as before the merger. Pupil numbers on each site remain the same, except possibly for 6th form, so there are no potential savings from creating a 'critical mass' of learners, either to staffing or provision of resources.
- 1706 7. The continuing debate about Welsh Medium education in Brecon and the review of Llanidloes High School also have potential to impact on the merger of Builth and Llandrindod. In the case of the Brecon decision, this would be a negative impact. I do not believe this has been properly risk assessed.
- 1706 8. The Newtown/John Beddoes merger is cited as justification and evidence that standards are improved by merger but their results are still not as good as Llandrindod's and in their recent inspection they dropped from Excellent to Satisfactory/Adequate which is the same drop of 3 categories as Builth/Llandrindod dropping from Good to Special Measures. Hardly convincing evidence.
- 1706 There is a need for change but this proposal risks the improvements already made by the two schools and should be rejected because it is not based on any quantitative evidence that standards will improve.

1708 I have studied the Formal Consultation Document issued on the 6th April 2016, the Addendum issued on the 12th April and the Consultation Report and responses documents published in August 2016 in great detail and I remain deeply concerned at the lack of depth and clarity of what is being proposed. In addition, the fact that the Formal Consultation Document that is central to this consultation states that there will be a second stage that will 'aim to establish the New School on a single site...' suggests that secondary education in Mid Powys will be in a state of flux for many years which is a distraction that the schools, the wider community and most importantly a generation of pupils can do without. When set against the council's own Corporate Improvement Plan 2016 - 2019, which has the strap line 'Stronger Communities in the Green Heart of Wales', the proposal to close the schools is at odds with the guiding principles set out on p10 and 11 of the plan. I do hope that Cabinet will pay careful attention to the sustainable development principle of 'involvement' described on p11 and take note of what I suspect will be an overwhelming number of objections from the community when compared to the number of people declaring their support for the Cabinet's decision.

1708 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets a goal of having 'A Wales of cohesive communities' and PCC must work towards that. In rural communities, schools are central to making communities attractive, viable, safe and well connected. Anything that threatens the existence of schools in such communities will increasingly come under scrutiny from the Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

1708 I also share many of the concerns which have been well documented by others including Estyn in their 4 page response to the proposal. The overwhelming support from the county councillors who voted (32 votes to 9 with 3 absentions) to abandon the proposal for a period of up to 2 years at the full Council meeting on the 8th September 2016, and the representations made by many of those at the Cabinet meeting on the 27th September are also noteworthy. In the case of Builth Wells High School, the most recent performance data for the school and the progress the school is making against the Estyn recommendations following the 2015 inspection are clearly demonstrating that the school is capable of improving standards without merger.

1708 I am also concerned that this decision by Cabinet was taken at a time when several other consultations were about to start that each have a direct impact on what is detailed in the statutory notice dated 17th October 2016 and the business case linked to it. The Brecon High School Welsh-medium stream consultation, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for 2017 - 2020 consultation and Scheme for Financing Schools are all factors that will affect secondary education provision in Builth Wells and Llandrindod.

1708 I would like to seek clarification from you that, as Director for Education, you are confident and content that each and every member of the Cabinet has given this decision the time and attention it deserves. I look forward to receiving your response.

1709 I would like to object to the closure of Builth Wells High School followed by the reopening of one high school on two sites.

I dispute the following points that were stated as reasons for closure at your cabinet meeting on the 27th September where you passed the motion to close Builth Wells high school.

The portfolio holder Arwel Jones stated from the report that the closure would:

1. Improve leadership at all levels
2. This would lead to improved teaching
3. This would lead to improved coaching and mentoring
4. There would be less duplication of subjects
5. There would be greater choice for subjects for pupils
6. There would be no proposed change to the sixth form
7. There would be investment in the Llandrindod site

I dispute these points that you used to justify your vote to close the schools because:

1. There were no reasons given why points 1 - 5 would happen?
2. Why do the schools need to close to improve leadership?
3. Why would this lead to improved teaching?
4. I cannot see how there would be less duplication of subjects or more choice if there are two sites?
5. Why do the schools need to close in order to invest in the Llandrindod site?

I also dispute these points the following statements which the Builth Wells County Councillor and Builth High School Governor Avril York made at this meeting before she seconded the motion to close Builth Wells high school

She stated:

1. We are failing youngsters
2. The results are ok but they are not good enough
3. We are failing the whole cohort going through Builth schools at the moment
4. John Bedodes and Newtown schools had merged and results at both school had improved
5. We have got to improve the options at GCSE and A level

1709 There were no reasons given for these statements and I dispute the decision to close Builth Wells high school that has been made by the cabinet after hearing these statements because: 1. Builth Wells high school is not failing it's youngsters. In 2016 65.5% of our pupils in Year 11 achieved grade C or better in English/Cymraeg, maths and science. We are also teh 8th best school in Wales when you look at A* to A grades at GCSE for 2016.

2. These results are not ok. They are to be celebrated!

3. We are not failing the whole cohort. this statement is wrong and has misled the cabinet. We recognise there are improvements to be made with a small and sometimes challenging part of the cohort and teh school's Estyn report has made 7 recommendations which have guided the school in putting in place a rigorous and robust school improvement plan which has seen the English Grade C pass rate improve by 4.7 percentage points and maths grade C pass rate improve by 10.7 percentage points since 2014.

4. It is not correct to compare us to John Beddoes and Newtown as those schools were not closed.

5. Avril stated 'we have got to improve options at GCSE and A level. How will closing the school and reopening it improve options at GCSE and A level. How will closing the school and reopening it improve options at GCSE. Also the proposal is that there is no change to sixth form provision. So how will the closure of the school provide more options at A level?

6. Avril stated 'Have to stop leakage to other schools and to Hereford sixth form college' but again, the proposal is that there is no change to sixth form provision. So how will the closure of the school stop leakage to other schools and Hereford sixth form?

7. As for Avril's last statement ' We need one head with one governing body and one vision' , I completely agree, but why does Builth Wells High School have to close for this to happen?

1709 In summary Mr Patterson, I believe the cabinet voted on misleading and incorrect information on the 27th September and unless you can answer me very relevant and urgent points I have stated above than I dispute the closure of Builth Wells High School and ask the Cabinet to instead:

- Support Builth Wells high school as we continue to make excellent improvement
- Facilitate the continued co-operation between Builth Wells and Llandrindod Well high school
- Conduc a full review of sixth form provision in the two schools with all stakeholders so we can address Avril's and her constituents very real concerns about improving options for our pupils post-16 provision.

1713 On behalf of the Governors of Llandrindod High School I would like to object to the proposal to close Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School on 31 August 2018 and to open a new dual-sited school from 1 September 2018.

The School Organisation Code says PCC 'must consider whether there are any other related proposals'. It is PCC's School Transformation Policy to review all primary and secondary schools in the county. One of the criteria to be used to determine which schools would be reviewed is PCC's aspiration for all its secondary schools to have a minimum of 600 pupils in KS3 and KS4 and over 150 pupils in each sixth form. This must mean that the future of Llanidloes High Schools is to be reviewed. This would have an impact on the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School and the new school 'in the locality of Builth Wells' should go ahead. Many students from Rhayader who presently attend Llandrindod High School live closer to Llanidloes High School and if this were to close it would have an impact on the number of places needed at Llandrindod under the present formal proposal and at the New School under the second stage ' which aims to establish the New School on a single site in the locality of Builth Wells' . We would suggest that the review of Llanidloes High School is a related proposal and therefore must be considered as stated in the School Organisation Code.

1713 In addition, there is a review of Welsh-medium provision in north Powys. This will include the Welsh-medium provision at Llanidloes and therefore may also effect the Welsh-medium provision at Builth Wells. This is a related proposal and must be considered at the same time as the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School.

1713 There is also a formal consultation on the closure of Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School with the pupils there transferring to Builth Wells High school. Again, this is a related proposal and must be considered at the same time as the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School.

1713 One other major objection is that the proposal does not clearly show how standards at the two schools would improve. The
 School Organisation Code says that PCC 'should place the interest of learners above all others' In addition, ' they should give paramount importance to the likely impact of the proposals on the quality of
 - outcomes (standards and wellbeing);
 - provision (learning experiences, teaching, care support and guidance, and learning environment);
The words in bold above are in bold in the School Organisation Code.
Placing the interest of learners above all others should mean that the views of Estyn on the proposals should lead Powys County Council to reject the current proposal. Estyn
commented on the financial aspect of the proposal as follows:
*' Significantly, the proposer does not consider sufficiently well the impact on provision and outcomes of a reduced budget'.
 In their*
comments on the the Educational Aspects of the Proposal, Estyn state:
' Overall, the proposer has not sufficiently considered the impact of the proposal on the quality of outcomes, provision and leadership and management' ' Overall, the
*proposer does not demonstrate how the reorganisation would have a positive impact on the standards achieved by pupils at any key stage'.
 Estyn's unambiguous*
conclusion in their response to the Consultation is:
'However, the proposal does not sufficiently consider standards currently achieved at both schools or demonstrate how the changes will lead to improved standards or provision or the impact on teaching and curricular arrangements or the leadership and management of the new school.'
' As a result, it is Estyn's opinion that it is not possible to establish whether standards will be at least maintained by the proposal.' The
 governors of Llandrindod High School wish to see high standards and do not wish to see them jeopardised by these proposals which in Estyn's words do not show 'standards will be at least maintained'.

1714 I would like to object to the proposal to close Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School on 31 August 2018 and open a new dual-sited school from 1 September 2018. My
 principal objection is that the proposal does not clearly show how standards at the two schools would improve and indeed puts the present standards at risk. Same as
 1713

1715 I would like to strongly object against the closure of Llandrindod Wells and Builth Wells High Schools and the opening of a dual school in their place. My grandchildren are, and will be, pupils at these schools.
 After watching the consultation meetings at the schools I cannot see how the proposals will help either school to raise educational standards, quite the contrary. Morale amongst teachers is at an all time low as it is and I believe that having only one headteacher, one management team and one board of governors between two schools will put added stress on everyone involved and be detrimental to pupil's education. Our position and this proposal is not the same as Newtown High and John Beddoes!! At both meetings it seemed that
 the school governors, management team and staff are already stretched and stressed so I believe that if the new governors/management team and headteacher have to cover two schools this will bring added problems and impossible workloads, resulting in loss of drive to improve the schools.

1715 If the movement of Welsh medium education from Brecon to Builth Wells fails to materialise then there will not be enough additional funding to fall back on to enable more choice of subject to be offered as promised through both English and Welsh streams as detailed in the consultation. A lot seems to be resting on 'ifs' and not concrete evidence.

- 1715 I feel the Council is playing down the amount of disruption to school days with the inevitable movement of pupils between sites and more so the movement of staff which I feel may cause too much disturbance to a pupil's education as a whole.
- 1715 Surely we should be postponing these closure now and allowing both schools time to carry on working hard as they are at present to raise standards, to give them time to improve. The savings of £123,000 are minimal in my view, equivalent to at the most, two Senior Manager posts within Powys and it is not justifiable to ruin our children's education for this sum. I work for Powys County Council and frequently see the waste of money by the Council in many areas which angers me when the proposed small amount of savings to be made at both Llandrindod and Builth is mentioned. This is about our children and grandchildren's future in education and their future paths in life, NOT money. It is obvious to me that this proposal will mean a cut in funding as despite what council officers say there will not be enough courses offered across the two schools, (especially if the Welsh Medium stream is kept at Brecon High School) to attract additional funding.
- 1715 Furthermore, Estyn's report has clearly said they are not convinced that the proposal will 'at least maintain standards' surely this is a very important point. We should be listening to Estyn's observations, they are far more specialised in education standards etc. than County Councillors and Council Officers.
- 1715 Although at both meetings it was denied that it is a foregone conclusion that the Council have a plan for just one new school on a new site in Builth Wells in the near future, I believe this to be true. I was in a conversation with a staff member whose aunt is a portfolio holder within Powys CC and she assured me that the new school will be going ahead and knew where it will be sited. Also on the focused changes to the LDP the school site at Llandrindod is shown as being a housing development! I was totally flabbergasted at this especially after the denial by officers. This proposal is just a cover up for a real plan to close Llandrindod Wells High School and site one totally new school in Builth Wells. It came as no surprise then to find that Councillor York didn't consult her constituents and chose to vote for the proposal.
- 1715 Finally, Llandrindod Wells is the county town, has Powys County Hall within it, it would be nonsense to take away Llandrindod Wells High School and then undoubtedly the leisure centre, we are already losing the Youth Services, this is the County Town!!
Why is it that Council's don't stand firm and tell the Welsh Assembly and Parliament that we cannot cut services any more and we need more money to fund these services, not less. Pass the problem back to the governments.
Please leave our High Schools alone in Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells.
- 1717 This proposed merger should not go ahead. Both schools are important to both communities. Whilst I no longer live in Builth Wells I had three children who went to this truly wonderful school. A merger is unacceptable.
- 1728 I am writing to express and register my objection to the decision to close Builth Wells high school and Llandrindod High Schools; to then merge and re-open as one school on two sites. The initial PCC cabinet consultation was focused on improving educational standards. As you are fully aware the All Wales school inspectorate - Estyn responded to the consultation proposal and stated that Estyn was NOT convinced that standards will at least be maintained within the consultation process and this fact is fundamental to ensure the school children's welfare and community welfare. The merger of schools will not improve standards as per Estyn statement and by taking the special measures and releasing us from Estyn assessment for two years this fact will not help standards.

1728 The Code on School Organisations report (2013) emphasis is on the quality impact of any school organisation proposal. I have not been able to establish any evidence from PCC to 'demonstrate quality impact positively' with the proposed closure of the two schools and the re-opening of one school. PCC continue to use the recurring example of the mergers of Newtown School with Presteigne High School (HS) as good examples to support the proposals to date. Prior to the merger Newtown HS has been assessed by Estyn as excellent and Presteigne HS was in special measures and an interim team was about to be brought in to run the school. Newtown HS had an excellent standard and therefore it made perfect sense for them to utilise their proven effective standards to support and mentor Presteigne HS to improve their Estyn assessment. Following the merger further Estyn inspection put Newtown HS into satisfactory category. Builth and Llandrindod High Schools are in an unknown situation; both schools are in special measures. The two schools require support to improve their standards and the merger will not improve standards, in fact standards and quality will not improve as Estyn have stated; PCC are unable to evidence improvement in quality. I will be contacting the Children's Commissioner of Wales shortly to express my concerns that PCC have failed to demonstrate the quality impact of this merger and PCC are detrimenting our children by re-organising with no demonstrable quality improvement. My great personal concern is that my child will be commencing her GCSE's in 2018 and will be exposed to the massive change to the restructuring of staff and processes; this will affect my daughter's standard of education and therefore her academic achievements in 2020 will be detrimented.

1728 My great concern is that the community of Builth Wells and the surrounding community have been misrepresented by both County Councillors and this can be evidenced by previous filmed council meetings. The majority of the Builth Wells community DO NOT support the proposals, which is contrary to what the County Councillors for our area have stated in Council chambers. There has been a failure to engage with the community and presumptions have been made by the County Councillors due to their lack of engagement despite community members attempting to communicate with them. Following a PCC announcement 7/12/16, I understand Cllr York has now resigned from her cabinet post and I wonder if her vote for and second vote to support the merger now still stands in council chambers?

1728 Throughout the consultation there are no figures to evidence the day to day running costs of the two merged schools. The figure of £122k only represents the closure of both schools. PCC are unable to demonstrate the day to day cost savings of the running costs of the schools. I also have great concern that the Governing body for the one school on two sites will have the power to make significant changes without consultation for example, the power to close buildings or the power to separate pupils according to language with no re-dress.

1728 To create critical mass of learners does not guarantee improvement in standards. In fact, why are PCC isolating Builth and Llandrindod High School as appropriate for the changes and have dropped the proposals for Brecon community? There is no evidence that creating a critical mass of students will drive standards up. I am also concerned that each school will lose their heads of subject teaching time due to the heads managing people in both schools. The merger will cut funding to one of the schools and therefore further detriment standards.

1728 Alternative Option

I feel it is not unreasonable for you to support the proposal of Cllr Maureen Mackenzie who proposed an all council amendment and an overwhelming democratic expression was made by Council to delay the closure proposals by a realistic and prescribed time for both schools:

' For proposals to be made by the both schools to improve standards and to support senior leadership teams'.

This would give the schools an opportunity to use their expertise to improve standards collaboratively and work with Estyn inspectors. A model of collaboration which takes place for post-16 education can be adopted for both schools to address their challenges and for them to drive up standards without having to be distracted by the closure agenda proposed by PCC Education Cabinet.

Please please do not close Builth Wells High School.

1731 I am writing to you on behalf of the newly formed RhAG Canolbarth Powys (Parents for Welsh Medium Education in Mid Powys) to formally object to the Statutory Notice to close Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School and to reopen them in September 2018 as a dual-sited school (henceforth referred to as the planned merger). Whilst

understanding the serious financial situation that PCC finds itself in, as a group of parents we have a number of concerns with the planned merger in relation to Welsh Medium provision. These concerns especially relate to lack of clarity and the inconsistency we feel has been present during the consultation process undertaken in 2016. In particular, we are concerned about:

1. Incorrect Impact Assessments

The consultation documents Draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment and Draft Equality Impact Assessment available on your website do not address the impact on Welsh Medium education as a result of the planned merger, instead only focusing on the impact from the potential closure of the Welsh Medium stream in Brecon High School, which is still undergoing consultation.

As an example of this, in the Draft Equality Impact Assessment Section 8 (Areas for Improvement), question iii) 'Will Welsh speakers be affected?' the only conclusion is that 'there will be a positive impact for Welsh speakers as the school will have a larger Welsh-medium stream with an enhanced range of provision'. We would argue that there is no evidence that the planned merger would result in a larger Welsh stream with an enhanced range of provision.

These documents were referred to in the Consultation Document relating to the planned merger, including the line 'the Proposal provides positives for the Welsh Language and Welsh-medium education through improved linguistic progression and opportunities for pupils through all key stages of education' on page 31, again seemingly referring to the separate proposal to close Brecon High School's Welsh-medium stream.

We would argue that the pre-assumption that Brecon High School's Welsh stream will close apparent in these documents should mean that the planned merger should not take place and that potentially a new consultation would have to be undertaken with the correct impact assessment in place so that a fair picture of the impact on Welsh Medium education can be addressed.

1731 2. Response to questions around the impact of a 'more English' school

During the consultation period, the question was asked 'what will be the effect of injecting more English medium pupils into the school by a merger?' (Consultation Report, page 27 4.3.1. The only response given to this and other concerns regarding the impact on the 'vision of a fully bilingual school in Mid Wales' was that 'the proposal is for the Welsh stream to remain on the Builth Wells site of the new dual-sited school' and that 'the new governing body and senior leadership team would be required to develop a strong Welsh ethos across both sites'.

We feel that this does not address the questions for two reasons:

1. As yet, there is no clarity about the future of the Welsh Medium stream in Builth Wells.

While the statutory notice states that 'pupils who wish to access Welsh-medium provision will be allocated places at the Builth Wells campus of the New School', this seems to contradict responses given during the consultation process. It was suggested that it would be the governing body of the New School who would eventually have the power to decide which classes were delivered in which locations.

If the governing body did decide to move some delivery e.g. if KS4 English Medium classes were only delivered in Llandrindod, there is little clarity over where the burden of transport costs would fall. We are also concerned that where the governing body of a 'more English Medium' school could be under increasing financial pressure to make savings, this would potentially impact on the availability of Welsh provision in the 'more expensive' Welsh stream.

ii) As the need to have a strong Welsh ethos' is present for every bilingual school, no matter the ratio between English Medium and Welsh Medium learners, we feel this does not address the real concerns about extra pressures put on a proportionally smaller Welsh stream in this environment.

1731 3. Impact on Welsh Medium Teaching

We are concerned that the potential impact of the merger on the distribution of Welsh Medium teachers has not been fully explored. While there is uncertainty over the leaderships structure of the new school, we assume that various leadership roles will be split over the two sites. If a Welsh medium teacher from Builth Wells wishes to seek one of these leadership roles, this will take them away from their Welsh Medium delivery, as there will be a greater proportion of English Medium involved in split roles.

As it is already difficult to cover lessons for some Welsh Medium classes due to the availability of appropriate teachers, and there is no guarantee of extra Welsh learners in the school we believe this situation will exacerbate the problem. This may also dissuade ambitious Welsh Medium teachers from applying for leadership positions in the new school and encourage them to seek opportunities elsewhere.

We feel that this last point is a key example of how throughout this process there has been little to no consideration as to how the Welsh Medium provision can be maintained, enhanced or developed following the planned merger. Instead, we would argue, there has been a reliance on assuming that there will be more Welsh Medium learners due to the closure of Brecon High School's Welsh Medium stream.

1731 Despite our objections to the planned merger, we would also like to state our willingness to work together with you on future development of Welsh medium education in Mid Powys. In particular we are pleased to see that in the draft WESP (Welsh Education Strategic plan) there is a proposed review of primary provision in Mid Powys and exploration of late immersion provision as important steps on the journey towards a Category 2A Welsh Medium secondary school.

In light of this, we would like to state our preferred model in Mid Powys as the development of a Category 2A Welsh Medium High School for the many positive reasons you laid out on page 76 and 77 of the Consultation Document.

We would argue that the many positives of this model warrant formal exploration, particularly in relation to the assumptions made around costings. It has been shown that in other areas that if Category 2A Welsh Medium secondary provision is made available, then the demand for that provision will grow significantly. This will have an impact on assumptions around transport costs and provide a real incentive for young people from the Brecon and Sennybridge areas to attend the Mid Powys school.

A Category 2A school would address the concerns regarding the 'dilution' of the Welsh stream and the impact on teaching that would be present in the planned merger and it would attract more high-calibre teachers to the area.

We also wish to state our desire for equality of choice and parity of provision in Mid Powys in relation to any proposals being developed in North Powys. If in the future there is a Category 2A Welsh Medium school established in the North, then we would argue that it would be a fundamental issue of equality that equivalent linguistic provision be offered to learners in both Mid and South Powys.

1731 In summary, we object to the planned merger for the following reasons:

- The impact assessments and the main consultation document only considered the impact on Welsh Medium education of the closure of Brecon High School Welsh Stream. As this process is still under consultation, it is improper that a decision to proceed with the planned merger was made on this basis.

- The question over impact of the planned merger in terms of a smaller ratio of Welsh to English medium pupils was not properly addressed in the consultation response.

- The potential impact on Welsh Medium teaching has not been sufficiently explored.

- Therefore, there has been little consideration given as to how Welsh Medium provision can be maintained, enhanced or developed as the result of the planned merger/

However, we would like to reiterate that we look forward to working with you and others in the local authority on the promotion, availability and take-up of Welsh Medium education in Powys, in particular the journey towards an equitable offer of secondary education for all our young people.

1735 My daughter currently attends Builth High School and is a Year 8c pupil. I am writing to register my objection to the decision made by PCC Cabinet to close Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools in 2018 and to establish a new school on two sites.

There are a number of issues that concern me regarding the proposed merger which are as follows:

First Stage - One School on two sites:

The practicalities of having one school on two sites has not been well thought through as a first stage proposal. Should the Cabinet decide to go ahead with a merger in 2018, this will result in approximately 18 months of limbo for both schools whereby existing teaching staff will look for new jobs and the recruitment of new staff will be increasingly difficult. This is also set against the backdrop of both schools having to work particularly hard to raise standards in order to get out of their 'special measures' category.

In September 2018, one school on two sites will lead to a loss of further teaching staff with the appointment of one headteacher and one leadership team (with redundancies of existing staff an almost certainty). On a day to day basis, will staff members be expected to travel the 14 mile round trip between the 2 campuses to attend appointments, teach pupils and undertake extra-curricular activities? A teacher's already stretched workload will almost certainly be unmanageable with travel time being scheduled in. The main losers will be the children that attend the school. They will not have easy access to teaching staff due to their absence to another campus and will feel quite strongly that a raising of standards against this backdrop will be extremely difficult if almost impossible.

Both Builth and Llandrindod schools are in special measures, this is recognised, but both are working hard and making progress. It is my view that both schools are capable of improving standards without a formal merger. Both schools can endeavour to work more closely together and share best practice but a merger which would result in one headteacher and one leadership team over two sites is a backwards step and will ultimately impact upon the pupils of a merged school.

Second Stage - A single school on one site:

The formal Consultation Document that is central to this consultation states that there will be a second stage that will 'aim to establish the New School on a single site...'. This suggests to me that secondary education in mid Powys will be in a state of flux for many years to come, which will be a major distraction that the schools, the wider community and most importantly a generation of pupils can do without, particularly as they work to raise standards as required by Estyn.

The Council should be looking to put all of its resources into supporting both Builth and Llandrindod schools to raise standards now and not to push forward with a scheme that ultimately does not even have the support of Estyn (as noted by Estyn in their 4 page response to Powys Council's proposal).

Getting out of Special Measures:

I note that today (7th December 2016) Brecon High School has been officially removed from Special Measure by Estyn as a result of their most recent inspection between the 8th and 10th of November 2016. The school's website states that 'the school has demonstrated the progress required for the school to be removed from this category and is the culmination of 2 years work'. Builth and Llandrindod High Schools are both striving for an upward trend of improvement in standards and this is likely to take a period of time, similar to that of Brecon High School's journey (approximately 2 years). I would request that Powys Council's Cabinet members allow the schools to carry out the work that is required to get the schools out of 'special measures' and allow the governors, leadership teams, staff, pupils and parents from both schools to succeed without adding the pressure of a schools merger into the mix.

The impact to the local economy:

It is well documented that in rural communities, schools are central to making communities viable, safe and prosperous. In towns such as Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells, the high schools are an important draw to new businesses and families moving into the area. Would innovative companies such as 'riversimple' look to expand their businesses in a town that does not have an educational establishment for the children of their growing number of staff?

The view to 'establish a new school on a single' site during the second stage will have a wide impact on the local economies of both Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells ultimately affecting community facilities and economic growth. Towns such as Builth and Llandrindod have their schools at the
1735 hearts of their communities and their loss would have far reaching impacts.

Views of the local communities

I have attended consultation meetings and Action Group meetings in Builth Wells and have listened to the views of many local business people and parents. The overwhelming feeling is that the local community do not wish for the schools to merge believing that each school can raise standards without a merger. I urge the Cabinet to take on board the views of the local community and not to
1735 press ahead with the proposal.

New Director of Education

It is my understanding that a New Director of Education is to be appointed in due course. I would urge the Cabinet to allow this appointment to be made and for the new Director to oversee the decision making process. Surely the new Director of Education would want to have a say in such an important
1735 decision?

I urge the Council's Cabinet to take on board the views of the local communities of both Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells and listen to the views of parents, teachers and local business people who
1735 understand the likely impacts that this will have on their towns.

Language initiative) to formally oppose the Statutory notice to close Buith Wells and Llandrindod High Schools and re-open them in September 2018 as one school over two sites.

As a Welsh Language initiative, we aim to create and strengthen Welsh speaking communities in South Powys. We empower and support local communities to plan and develop opportunities for Welsh speakers and learners of all ages. Because of this aim, the initiative opposes the Statutory Notice to unite the two high schools on the basis of two specific points:

1. Assessments to measure the effect on the Welsh Language

We do not consider that the assessments to measure the effect within the consultation document is a fair reflection of the effect that merging the two schools would have on the Welsh stream. We feel that the document takes for granted that the Welsh stream in Brecon High School will close, as it mentions a higher number of pupils in the school on two sites. Of course, the Welsh stream hasn't closed, and its future is uncertain as yet, therefore a higher number of pupils should not be taken for granted.

2. Effect on the Welsh Ethos of the school

We strongly believe it would be very difficult to sustain, never mind expanding the Welsh ethos in a school where the Welsh stream is marginally smaller than it currently is in Buith Wells High School. The Welsh Ethos can be vulnerable in bilingual schools, but the school currently has a strong attitude and Welsh ethos which nurtures pupils' pride in the language and culture. We believe that merging the two schools would endanger this situation due to the change in percentage of pupils studying through the medium of Welsh. We foresee that merging the two schools would dilute the Welsh ethos of the school and possibly make it difficult to recruit and retain teachers. We are concerned on the long term effect of merging the two schools, not only on the current pupils, but also on the ability of schools with Welsh medium streams to attract new families to Welsh education.

The initiative would like to see the Council establishing a category 2A school in Mid Powys, as we believe this is the best way of developing our pupils' linguistic skills, developing confidence and