

## **Appendix E – Responses to issues raised during Full Council debate**

The portfolio holder's recommendation 'to approve the publication of a statutory notice' in respect of the proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School was debated by Full Council on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

During this debate, a number of issues were raised in relation to the proposal. These issues have already been responded to within the consultation report (Appendix B), however the responses are repeated below:

### **1. Reference to Category 2B status**

- a) Had the council fulfilled its promise to provide funding to bring Brecon High School up to Category 2B status, pupils from the Sennybridge area would not have left to go to Ystalyfera.**

The Cabinet minutes of a meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011, following an informal consultation on secondary school modernisation, state that additional investment and support would be provided to dual stream schools to achieve the target of a Category 2B school.

Following this decision, discussions took place with all dual stream secondary schools about their Welsh-medium provision at the time and how they would develop this in order to move towards achieving the target of a Category 2B school. This included Brecon High School, Builth Wells High School and all other dual stream secondary schools in Powys.

Whilst the Cabinet minutes refer to 'additional investment', it was not possible to fulfil this due to the challenging financial situation facing the council.

Subsequently, the Fair Funding Formula arrangements were reviewed for the 2013-14 financial year, which included a review of the funding provided to support Welsh-medium provision in dual stream schools. The arrangements are very similar in respect of dual stream schools to the model used in Ceredigion: additional funding support is provided to schools based on the number of subjects delivered through both languages, and the same level of funding support is provided to all dual stream secondary schools. Whilst some schools have succeeded in strengthening and increasing the Welsh-medium provision available, this has not been the case at Brecon High School.

A decision to move to an alternative model in relation to Welsh-medium secondary provision was made by Cabinet on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2015. At this meeting, Cabinet received the outcome of a review of secondary schools which had been carried out by PriceWaterhouseCooper. The report stated that:

'The sustainability, both financially and educationally, of some of the county's Welsh-medium and English-medium streams suggest that it is necessary to consider how Welsh-medium education should be delivered in the secondary sector in order to provide the appropriate range, quality and Welsh experience to all learners who choose to be educated through the medium of Welsh.'

At the meeting, Cabinet approved the commencement of a Secondary School Reorganisation programme, which intended to transform the secondary and post-16 sector across the county. One of the aims of this Programme was:

‘Reconfiguration of Welsh medium education with the aim of establishing at least one Welsh-medium secondary school in the county and consolidation of other Welsh medium streams into larger units.’

**b) Brecon High School only needs £47k to bring it up to Category 2B status.**

During the recent consultation on the proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School, a county councillor requested details of the additional funding that would be required for the Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School to meet the definition of a Category 2B school. The figure provided was £47000, which is the additional funding that would be provided to the school through the authority’s funding formula to support the provision of Welsh-medium subjects for 80% of curriculum time in years 7 to 11.

However, whilst the funding provided to dual stream schools through the authority’s funding formula is based on the % of curriculum time where Welsh-medium options are available to pupils, the Welsh Government’s definition of a category 2B school is as follows: ‘At least 80% of **subjects** (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught through the medium of English.’

In relation to the funding provided through the formula to support dual stream provision in key stage 4, the authority considers that Welsh-medium curriculum time is available when a minimum of 1 Welsh-medium options subject is available in each options block. For example, a dual stream school offering 1 Welsh-medium subject and 5 English-medium subjects in each options block, as well as all core subjects through the medium of Welsh, would receive the maximum funding available from the authority to support its dual stream provision, and would be providing 80% of curriculum time through the medium of Welsh. However, this school would not necessarily meet the Welsh government definition for a category 2B school, as the school would not be providing 80% of **subjects** through the medium of Welsh and English.

Therefore, whilst the figure of £47000 provided during the consultation is the maximum additional funding that would be provided to support dual stream provision at Brecon High School based on the authority’s funding formula, this would not be sufficient to enable the school to provide Welsh-medium provision which would meet the definition for a category 2B school.

## **2. Pupil numbers**

- a) Two previous consultations and decision to grant free transport to pupils wishing to transfer to Builth Wells High School have not helped pupil numbers at Brecon High School.**
- b) Pupil numbers had been stable until 2014/15 when the actions of the Council had contributed to a fall in numbers**

The impact of previous consultations on the number of pupils accessing the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School is noted.

Following the initial Cabinet decision to carry out consultation on closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015, a number of parents of pupils that were attending the Welsh-medium stream decided to move their children to another school to access Welsh-medium education. As an admissions authority, the council cannot refuse places to children if there is a place available at the school to which they apply.

When parents applied for places at Builth Wells High School, there were places available, therefore the authority was unable to reject the applications. However, transport was refused at Stage 1 and 2 of the transport application process. Following this, the applications were taken to appeal, and the appeal panel took the decision to award transport, on the grounds that the breadth of Welsh-medium provision offered in Brecon High School was lower than the breadth of Welsh-medium provision offered in Builth Wells High School.

During 2016/17, the number and percentage of subjects provided through the medium of Welsh in each year group at the two schools is as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Brecon High School</b>	<b>Builth Wells High School</b>
<b>7</b>	6 (46.15%)	12 (75%)
<b>8</b>	6 (46.15%)	12 (75%)
<b>9</b>	6 (46.15%)	12 (75%)
<b>10</b>	1 (6.67%)	9 (37.50%)
<b>11</b>	2 (13.33%)	9 (40.91%)
<b>Overall %</b>	32%	61%

Whilst it is acknowledged that the previous consultations have impacted on Welsh-medium pupil numbers at Brecon High School, the authority does not agree that the stream would be viable had pupils not transferred to alternative providers. The number of pupils accessing the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School since 2010/11 was provided in the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A), and is copied below:

	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Total</b>
2010/11	12	17	14	12	12	67
2011/12	6	11	19	14	17	67
2012/13	10	7	13	18	15	63
2013/14	19	10	8	13	13	63
2014/15	14	13	9	8	13	57
2015/16	3	7	4	8	8	30
2016/17	2	3	5	3	6	19

This shows that before the authority commenced any consultation in relation to the future of the Welsh-medium stream, total pupil numbers were approximately 65, across years 7-11. Whilst this figure was fairly stable over a number of years, this figure is low, and would not enable the school to provide a comprehensive Welsh-medium curriculum to pupils across all key stages.

The number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium secondary provision in mid and south Powys is not large enough to sustain two Welsh-medium streams and to provide appropriate curriculum choice to Welsh-medium pupils in both locations, therefore the authority does not agree that continuing to provide Welsh-medium secondary provision at two locations in mid and south Powys is viable.

### 3. Quality of education

- a) **The timing of the consultation had been unfortunate as the school has now come out of special measures.**
- b) **There is no evidence that Builth Wells is better placed to deliver Welsh-medium education**
- c) **The report takes no account of Estyn ratings with Builth Wells being in special measures and Brecon out of special measures**

At the time of writing the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A), Brecon High School was in Special Measures. It is true that Brecon High School was removed from Special Measures before the end of the consultation period, and this is noted in the consultation report which was produced following the end of the consultation period (Appendix B).

It is also true that Builth Wells High School is currently in Special Measures, following an inspection which took place in October 2015. This is stated in the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A). Although the school remains in Special Measures, the authority is confident that the school is making good progress.

Both Builth Wells High School and Brecon High School were placed in Standards Group 2 by Welsh Government in the National Categorisation in 2017. The capacity to improve at Builth Wells High School has also improved, as evidenced in the National Categorisation of Schools.

The 2017 categorisations for both schools are provided in the following table:

<b>School</b>	<b>Standards Group</b>	<b>Improvement Capacity</b>	<b>Support Category</b>
Brecon High School	2	B	Yellow
Builth Wells High School	2	C	Amber

These categorisations are based on data for the schools as a whole, including both Welsh-medium and English-medium pupils. Due to the small number of Welsh-medium pupils at each school, particularly Brecon High School, it would not be valid to compare the performance of Welsh-medium pupils in these schools.

Estyn's response to the consultation on the proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School is provided in full on page 13 of the consultation report. Estyn's response includes the following summary / conclusion: 'It is Estyn's view that the proposer appears to have suitably demonstrated that, given the small

numbers of pupils in the Welsh medium stream, that overall the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.'

In addition, Estyn states the following in their response: 'The proposer has not provided any performance data on standards in the Welsh medium stream in any of the affected schools, but reasonably makes the statement that as numbers are small in Brecon High School, it would not be valid to compare the performance of Welsh-medium pupils in these schools.'

At the time of consultation, there were 19 pupils in the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School, across years 7 – 11. Pupil numbers per year group range from 2 to 6. Due to the small number of pupils in these classes, the learning experiences for pupils are limited. For example, there is limited scope and opportunity for group work, problem solving activities and peer review, all of which are recognised as good practice in a learning experience for pupils.

As stated on page 14 of the consultation document (Appendix A): 'In its Welsh-medium Education Strategy (2010), the Welsh Government states that 'Bilingual / dual stream settings should aim to provide as much provision through the medium of Welsh as is necessary for learners to achieve fluency in two languages.'

Details of the Welsh-medium provision currently available at Brecon High School was provided in the consultation document (Appendix A) and is copied below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Welsh-medium subjects</b>
<b>7</b>	6 – Science, History, Geography, RE, French, IT
<b>8</b>	6 – Science, History, Geography, RE, French, IT
<b>9</b>	6 – Science, History, Geography, RE, French, IT
<b>10</b>	1 – Science
<b>11</b>	2 – Science, History

Based on this information, it is clear that the Welsh-medium provision available to pupils at Brecon High School is limited, and is not comparable with the opportunities available to pupils studying through the medium of English.

**d) Now that Brecon High School has come out of Special Measures, it will attract more pupils**

If all Welsh-medium pupils in the Brecon catchment transferred to Brecon High School, pupils numbers across years 7-11 would remain relatively low, and it would be difficult for the school to provide an appropriate Welsh-medium curriculum for pupils.

The number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium secondary provision in mid and south Powys is not large enough to sustain two Welsh-medium streams and to provide appropriate curriculum choice to Welsh-medium pupils in both locations, therefore continuing to provide Welsh-medium secondary provision at two locations in mid and south Powys is not viable.

**4. Transport / Travel**

**a) Pupils would be travelling 30 miles one way from Sennybridge to Builth Wells**

The authority's proposal, as stated on page 3 of the consultation document that was issued (Appendix A), states that 'pupils wishing to access Welsh-medium secondary provision who live in the catchment area currently served by the Welsh-medium stream of Brecon High School would be able to access provision at Builth Wells High School / the Builth Wells site of the proposed new dual-sited secondary school in Mid Powys or their closest secondary Welsh-medium provision.'

The proposal also states that 'Pupils living in the Sennybridge area would continue to be able to access Welsh-medium provision at Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera.'

Should the proposal be implemented, pupils living in the Sennybridge area would not be expected to travel 30 miles one way from Sennybridge to Builth Wells in order to access secondary provision.

**b) The report refers to a saving of £58k but does not mention the additional costs of over £100,000 of transporting pupils from the Brecon catchment to Builth and £20,000 to Ystalyfera.**

**c) The projected £58k savings was outweighed by the current £116k cost of transporting pupils.**

As stated in the consultation document that was issued in respect of this proposal (Appendix A):

'Following previous successful transport appeals, transport is already provided by the authority to Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera for Welsh-medium pupils from the Sennybridge area and to Builth Wells High School for Welsh-medium pupils from the Brecon area. As this transport is already provided, implementation of the proposal would not incur any additional transport costs.'

The total saving to the authority should the proposal be implemented is estimated to be £58,475'.

**d) It would cost £38,000 to transport pupils to Pontypool, money which could be used to fund the school properly.**

As stated in the proposal outlined on page 3 of the consultation document (Appendix A), 'Pupils living in other parts of the catchment area currently served by the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School that live closer to alternative Welsh-medium secondary provision outside Powys would have the opportunity to transfer to these schools.'

Should the proposal be implemented, the closest alternative provision for some pupils living in the current catchment area of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School would be Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, which is located in Pontypool. As stated in the consultation report (Appendix B): 'If dedicated transport was provided, this could cost up to £200 per day (£38,000 per annum). However, should the proposal be implemented, the authority would look to work with Torfaen and

Monmouthshire councils in order to ensure that transport was provided as efficiently as possible.'

However, the current Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School is not providing equality of opportunity for Welsh-medium pupils. Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is a Welsh-medium secondary school which provides a full Welsh-medium curriculum for learners. Based on the current Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School, and previous transport appeals related to accessing provision at Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera, it is likely that parents in the Brecon catchment area wishing to access the provision at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw now would be successful in securing transport should they go to a transport appeal.

**e) Pupils from Sennybridge and Ysgol y Bannau have a right to be educated in their own community**

The limited Welsh-medium provision currently available at Brecon High School is not providing equality of opportunity for Welsh-medium pupils.

Should the proposal be implemented, Welsh-medium pupils could either access Welsh-medium secondary provision at their nearest alternative school, to which free home to school transport would be provided, or they could choose to attend English-medium provision locally.

This is the same as the choice currently faced by pupils in many other Powys towns, including Newtown, Welshpool, Llandrindod Wells and Ystradgynlais, and in many other areas across Wales.

**5. Proximity of Ysgol y Bannau**

**a) Reference to the fact that Ysgol y Bannau is situated next door to Brecon High School**

**b) The decision to have a Welsh-medium stream in Brecon was made when Ysgol y Bannau was sited next door**

It is true that Ysgol y Bannau is situated next door to Brecon High School. However there are currently only 19 pupils across years 7-11 accessing the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School, which means that the school can only offer limited Welsh-medium provision to pupils. This does not provide equality of opportunity for Welsh-medium pupils.

In its Welsh-medium Education Strategy (2010), the Welsh Government states that 'Bilingual / dual stream settings should aim to provide as much provision through the medium of Welsh as is necessary for learners to achieve fluency in two languages.' The current number of pupils attending the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon high School is making it increasingly difficult for the school to offer an appropriate Welsh-medium curriculum for pupils.

For many years, pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision in Newtown and Welshpool have travelled to Llanfair Caereinion to access Welsh-medium secondary provision at Ysgol Uwchradd Caereinion. Following significant growth in pupil numbers at Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd in Newtown, the council has recently invested in a

new building for the school, which is located next door to Newtown High School. However, the high school does not provide Welsh-medium secondary provision.

**c) With Ysgol y Bannau being located in Brecon, the secondary provision should be in Brecon, not Builth Wells.**

Whilst Ysgol y Bannau is a Welsh-medium school and all other primary feeder schools in mid and south Powys are dual stream schools, the number of Welsh-medium primary pupils in the catchment of the Welsh-medium stream at Builth Wells High School is larger.

The number of primary Welsh-medium pupils in the current catchment of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School was provided in the consultation document (Appendix A), and is as follows:

	<b>Ysgol y Bannau</b>	<b>Sennybridge C.P. School</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>R</b>	17	8	25
<b>1</b>	28	6	34
<b>2</b>	18	11	29
<b>3</b>	15	5	20
<b>4</b>	24	5	29
<b>5</b>	10	2	12
<b>6</b>	19	5	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>173</b>

The number of primary Welsh-medium pupils in the catchment of the Welsh-medium stream at Builth Wells High School was provided in the consultation report (Appendix B), and is as follows:

	<b>Builth Wells CP School</b>	<b>Llandrindod C. in W. School Trefonnen</b>	<b>Rhayader C. in W. School</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>R</b>	22	8	8	38
<b>1</b>	11	20	9	40
<b>2</b>	16	8	11	35
<b>3</b>	14	8	7	29
<b>4</b>	21	12	13	46
<b>5</b>	19	11	4	34
<b>6</b>	14	6	5	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>247</b>

In addition, there are other providers of Welsh-medium secondary provision which can be accessed by pupils in the current catchment of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School, such as Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera and Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, however there is no alternative provision which is accessible to pupils in the current catchment of the Welsh-medium stream at Builth Wells High School.

## **6. New Building**



- a) Wrong that a multi million pound investment in Brecon High School should just be for English language pupils**
- b) The provision of a new building in Brecon was the opportunity to create a centre of excellence and provide a wider range of subjects.**

Whilst the new building for Brecon High School would be a fresh start for secondary education in Brecon, there would be no significant increase in Welsh-medium pupil numbers in the short term, therefore it would be difficult for the school to offer any more Welsh-medium subjects than are currently offered.

Should the proposal be implemented, there would be no Welsh-medium stream in Brecon High School, and therefore there would be no Welsh-medium stream at the new school building. However, Welsh-medium pupil would still be able to apply for a place in Brecon High School, should that be their preference, and places would be allocated in accordance with the authority's Admissions Policy.

Should the proposal be implemented, Brecon High School would be categorised as a category 4 school, which is described as a 'Predominantly English Medium Secondary School', therefore the provision in the new building would be in accordance with the definition for this category.

The Welsh Government document 'Defining Schools according to Welsh medium provision' (2007) provides the following definition for the curriculum provision of this type of school: 'Pupils are mainly taught through the medium of English. Welsh is taught as a second language up to KS4. One or two subjects (which would include Welsh first language) may be taught as an option through the medium of Welsh or using both languages.' Therefore, the school could continue to offer some level of Welsh-medium provision in the new building.

There are examples of 'Predominantly English Medium Secondary Schools' in Powys that do provide the opportunity for pupils to study Welsh First Language, however no funding is provided by the authority to support this provision.

## **7. Welsh Language**

- a) Removing the Welsh stream from Brecon High School would have a negative impact on Ysgol y Bannau and the Welsh language in the area.**

It is acknowledged that the proposal could have a negative impact on Ysgol y Bannau in the short term, and this risk is identified in the consultation document (Appendix A). However, whilst Welsh-medium pupil numbers in other parts of Powys have grown over recent years, this hasn't been the case at Ysgol y Bannau.

There has been dissatisfaction with the Welsh-medium secondary provision available in Brecon for many years, since long before the authority mentioned the possibility that the Welsh-medium stream could close, which has resulted in a number of parents choosing for their children to attend alternative provision, instead of transferring to the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School. It is likely that this uncertainty in relation to secondary progression has contributed to the lack of growth of Ysgol y Bannau.

Closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School would provide greater clarity in terms of the Welsh-medium provision available in the secondary sector. This would enable the authority to work with other organisations such as Mudiad Meithrin and Menter Brycheiniog a Maesyfed to promote the benefits of bilingualism and Welsh-medium education, with the aim that any reduction in pupil numbers could be reversed in the longer term, with the potential that they could increase.

**b) Duty on the council to promote the use and development of the Welsh language and provide services and education locally in the area**

The current method of delivering Welsh-medium education in the area has not led to any significant increase in the number of Welsh-medium pupils. Change is needed to the method of delivery in order to encourage confidence and the system and a growth in Welsh-medium pupil numbers.

There was a decrease of 1.7% in the number of Welsh speakers in Brecon between the 2001 census and the 2011 census, which suggests that the proportion of Welsh speakers in the area was declining before the authority commenced any proposals to close the Welsh-medium stream.

Should the proposal be implemented, pupils in the Brecon area would continue to have access to Welsh-medium education, at Ysgol y Bannau and Sennybridge CP School in the primary sector, and at alternative providers such as Builth Wells High School / the new Mid Powys Secondary School and Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera in the secondary sector. The improved choice and linguistic experience for Welsh-medium pupils at these alternative providers would enable them to be even more confident Welsh speakers. These pupils would continue to live in the Brecon area even if they were receiving their education elsewhere, and they would still be able to contribute to the development of the Welsh language in the Brecon area.

**c) The Welsh language is being treated less favourably**

The current Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School is treating Welsh-medium pupils in the Brecon area less favourably than English-medium pupils. The aim of the proposal is to provide greater equality to Welsh-medium pupils compared with English-medium pupils.

**d) The council must play its part in meeting the ambition of the Welsh Government to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050.**

The council's draft WESP for 2017-20 takes account of the Welsh Government strategy to create a million Welsh speakers by the year 2050.

The current method of delivering Welsh-medium education in Powys has not led to an increase in the number of pupils educated through the medium of Welsh. In the draft WESP for 2017-20, the authority recognises that 'a fundamental change is required in Powys to ensure all learners can access high quality, robust provision from the early years onwards' and that 'significant changes are needed to the way Welsh-medium education is delivered within the county in order to encourage confidence in the system and an increase in the number and percentage of pupils accessing Welsh-medium education throughout their educational careers'.

The draft WESP also acknowledges that the authority's plans to provide access to more equitable provision for Welsh-medium pupils may have a negative impact on Welsh-medium pupil numbers in Powys in the short term, however the authority's aim is that this would be reversed in the longer term.

**e) The proposal would mean that there would be no Welsh-medium secondary education in the county south of Builth Wells – this would make it look like the council was not interested in promoting Welsh-medium education**

Should the proposal be implemented, it is true that the most southern Welsh-medium provision in Powys would be located in Builth Wells. However, Welsh-medium secondary provision is also available at a number of out-of-county locations on the periphery of south Powys, including Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera, Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.

The limited Welsh-medium provision currently available at Brecon High School is not providing equality of opportunity for Welsh-medium pupils at the school. The number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium secondary provision in mid and south Powys is not large enough to sustain two Welsh-medium streams and to provide appropriate curriculum choice to Welsh-medium pupils in both locations, therefore continuing to provide Welsh-medium secondary provision at two locations in mid and south Powys is not viable.

## **8. Reference to Council strategies / priorities**

**a) How will the proposal meet the goals of the Well-being and Future Generations Act?**

The proposal's impact on each of the Well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is outlined in the Integrated Impact Assessment carried out in respect of this proposal. An initial Impact Assessment was published with the consultation documentation, and the Impact Assessment has since been updated to take account of the issues raised during the consultation period. The updated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix D.

**b) Two key priorities in the Corporate Improvement Plan are Supporting People in the Community and Learning**

The proposal's impact on the council's priorities is outlined in the Integrated Impact Assessment carried out in respect of this proposal. This includes the priority of 'Supporting people in the community to live fulfilled lives' and 'Improving learner outcomes for all, minimising disadvantage'. An initial Impact Assessment was published with the consultation documentation, and the Impact Assessment has since been updated to take account of the issues raised during the consultation period. The updated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix D.