

LOG OF OBJECTIONS TO STATUTORY NOTICE – DOLFOR CP SCHOOL

REF.	DATED	OBJECTION COMMENT	POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL COMMENT
DO1	12.12.11	<p>Letter in support of maintaining rural schools. Once a school is closed it will not re-open, even if the economic climate improves</p>	<p>Whilst the council recognises the strongly held views of local people about the closure of small rural schools, a balance needs to be struck between maintaining the character of rural areas and the need for efficient use of council resources. Dolfor CP School has costs per pupil nearly 40% higher than the Powys average and the council has a target to maintain these costs within the range of 90% to 120% of the average. There were 17 pupils at Dolfor CP School at the start of the 2011/12 academic year, 8 of whom were in the top two year groups. It is not sustainable for the council to keep open schools with pupil numbers this low.</p>
DO2	12.12.11	<p>Closure of Dolfor CP School will adversely affect community life in a rural area.</p> <p>Transporting children several miles to alternative schools is not sustainable - increased fuel usage, and more traffic on roads.</p> <p>Small children will have longer days because of time taken travelling and will have less time to play and study.</p> <p>Even if numbers of children/young in the area increase in future, it may not be possible to reopen the school, following its closure</p>	<p>The school is one of the only community facilities left in the village so its loss will have some impact on village life. However, this needs to be balanced against the very small number of pupils and the cost to the council and the wider community that this represents.</p> <p>The named receiving schools are more than two miles away from Dolfor CP School. These schools are therefore quite likely to be beyond the qualifying distance (for free home to school transport) from the home addresses of the majority of pupils. If free home to school transport was provided by the council in the event of Dolfor's closure, it is likely that children would be picked up in a coach or minibus. This is potentially more sustainable than many shorter private journeys by parents if the receiving schools were less than two miles away.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that pupils will spend significant amounts of time on school transport as a result of this school's closure. The distances and travel times involved are not great and are well within the guidance time (30 minutes) for the length of time that primary school pupils should spend on school transport.</p> <p>The council does not foresee a time when pupil numbers will rise to levels where reopening the school would be justified. Pupil numbers in the primary</p>

			sector generally are projected to stay stable or decline over the next five years.
DO3	20.12.11	<p>The need for small and rural schools should be included in thinking around equality and diversity. Children's needs are being disregarded in trying to force children from small rural school to go to larger urban schools. Comments that she is impressed with the standards and ethos at Dolfor CP School. Her child who has special educational needs has thrived at the school. It will be difficult for parents to be involved with their children's schooling if they do not have easy access to staff at the school. This will be more difficult if Dolfor School is closed and the alternative school is at a distance from children's homes. If Dolfor CP School closes she will opt for home education.</p>	<p>The council is confident that any ethnic or cultural issues will be adequately catered for at the receiving schools. It does not believe that the needs of rural children will suffer by transferring to a school in Newtown less than 3 miles away. There is also a rural school at St Michael's Kerry (3.7 miles away) if parents prefer to send their children to a rural school. It is an excellent school (6x1s and 1x2) and is of more sustainable size at over 130 pupils. Free transport would be provided for qualifying pupils; for some existing Dolfor pupils it will be their closest school.</p> <p>Dolfor CP School has dealt satisfactorily with pupils with ALN but there is no reason to believe that this will not be done just as well at the receiving schools. Whilst the council sympathises with parents having to familiarise themselves with new teachers, there is no reason to suggest that teachers at the receiving schools will deal with pupils with ALN less adequately than Dolfor.</p>
DO4	19.12.11	<p>Councillors are disappointed that the proposal to close Dolfor CP School is being considered alone ahead of a review on schools modernisation in the Newtown area.</p> <p>Closing rural schools has a detrimental effect on village life as children and parents no longer get involved in their community if there is no school.</p> <p>The nearest rural school – St Michaels Kerry - is currently full to capacity and in need of capital investment to provide places for an increasing catchment area. Dolfor CP School premises are in extremely good condition (Category B rated) and they are linked to a recently built community hall.</p> <p>The cost of fuel is increasing and the carbon footprint</p>	<p>The school has not been reviewed as part of a wider review of the Newtown area. This area review is currently not scheduled within the Schools Service. The council's Policy for the Organisation of Primary Schools (2006) reserves the right for an individual school review to take place at any time if there has been a significant change in pupil numbers.</p> <p>Whilst the council recognises the impact of the closure of small rural schools on their communities, a balance needs to be struck between maintaining the character of rural areas and the need for efficient use of council resources. Dolfor CP School has costs per pupil nearly 40% higher than the Powys average and the council has a target to maintain these costs within the range of 90% to 120% of the average. There were 17 pupils at Dolfor CP School at the start of the 2011/12 academic year, 8 of whom were in the top two year groups. It is not sustainable for the council to keep open schools with pupil numbers this low.</p>

		<p>should be a major consideration of County Councils. Why at a the same time as they are encouraging working from home and setting up rural businesses, are Councils transporting children further away for their education?</p> <p>The benefits of a rural school should not be overlooked; pupils flourish in this environment and take a pride in themselves, their school and their community.</p>	<p>St Michael's C in W (A) School Kerry also has condition B graded buildings. It's 'Suitability' rating is B/C whereas Dolfor's is D. Both schools have a 'Sustainability' rating of B. Inspections were carried out independently by the same firm of private consultants funded by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The costs of transport to the receiving schools have been factored in to the council's decision to publish statutory notices for closure and there would still be a substantial annual financial saving (£75-100,000). There will not be a significant environmental impact or major additional carbon emissions from the increased transport from this proposal. The named receiving schools are more than two miles away from Dolfor CP School. These schools are therefore quite likely to be beyond the qualifying distance (for free home to school transport) from the home addresses of the majority of pupils. If free home to school transport was provided by the council in the event of Dolfor's closure, it is likely that children would be picked up in a coach or minibus. This is potentially more sustainable than many shorter private journeys by parents if the receiving schools were less than two miles away.</p> <p>The council is confident that pupils from Dolfor will also flourish in the environment of the receiving schools with the greater availability of resources and the educational benefits of single age group classes.</p>
DO5	21.12.11	<p>Objector (Dolfor CP School Governing Body) believes that decision is pre-determined due to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaked report in Jan 11 • Delay in response to May 11 gov body submission • Lack of democratic process • Alleged comments of portfolio holder that there was no point in objecting • Lack of consultation on CIA with local groups • Receiving school has separate infant and junior facilities which is contrary to PCC policy <p>Dolfor School has:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent quality building and facilities 	<p>The council's decision to proceed to statutory notices for closure was made after a thorough review from January 2011 taking in to account all views expressed. The decision on Dolfor's closure was not pre-determined but the decision to publish statutory notices was made following consideration of all comments received during a six week consultation process in September and October 2011.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this process the council apologised for the unfortunate leak of a confidential report that took place in January 2011. • The governing body's submission of May 2011 (including a DVD made by pupils) was considered fully by the Learning in the Community Programme Board before it made its decision on 24th May 2011. When the lack of response to questions raised in that submission were pointed out to the council during the consultation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural, safe location • Excellent IT • Excellent canteen • Improving teaching • Proven record for pupils with ALN and staff have appropriate experience <p>School should be part of Newtown review.</p> <p>School is an important part of the community.</p>	<p>period, a full response was given.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full report on the issues around the potential closure of Dolfor CP School was presented to the body with delegated authority to make that decision i.e. the council's Cabinet on 5th July. • The alleged comments of the portfolio holder for Learning and Leisure were raised with directly with him at the consultation meeting on 22nd September. The governing body's account of the conversation is not the portfolio holder's recollection of what took place. • The Community Impact Assessment was presented at the start of the consultation period as a draft document on which the community's views were invited. The governing body have taken the opportunity to make amendments to it following this invitation. The governing body provided the council with a list of groups who use the adjacent community hall and these were then invited to the public meeting on 22nd September. • The two receiving schools occupy adjacent sites and, whilst it is not a fully integrated single school which would be the council's preference, it operates in this way to all intents and purposes. <p>The good quality of buildings at the school is not in dispute nor are the other positive features identified by the objector. However the council believes that the facilities at the receiving schools are at least of the same standard as those at Dolfor.</p> <p>The school has not been reviewed as part of a wider review of the Newtown area. This area review is currently not scheduled within the Schools Service. The council's Policy for the Organisation of Primary Schools (2006) reserves the right for an individual school review to take place at any time if there has been a significant change in pupil numbers.</p> <p>Whilst the council recognises the impact of the closure of small rural schools on their communities, a balance needs to be struck between maintaining the character of rural areas and the need for efficient use of council resources. Dolfor CP School has costs per pupil nearly 40% higher than the Powys</p>
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			average and the council has a target to maintain these costs within the range of 90% to 120% of the average. There were 17 pupils at Dolfor CP School at the start of the 2011/12 academic year, 8 of whom were in the top two year groups. It is not sustainable for the council to keep open schools with pupil numbers this low.
DO6	21.12.11	The school serves a wide rural area as well as the local community. Numbers could go up again and urges PCC to think again.	Whilst the school's value to the community is recognised, there are other local rural schools such as St Michael's Kerry that serve a much wider rural area by the nature of their size. Numbers of pupils at Dolfor are low and are not projected to increase. Indeed nearly half of the pupils are in the top two year groups which will only exacerbate its falling numbers.
DO7	17.12.11	Where will the next generation of children be educated? School provides a friendly, caring atmosphere with excellent teaching. It is the main focus of the community. The savings that will be made are not worth detrimentally affecting children's education. Excellent school with good facilities and strong reputation – taking away choice from parents to have their children educated in a small rural school.	The next generation of children will, by the nature of the numbers involved, only be very small. The council believes that the same qualities highlighted by the objector will be provided in the receiving schools. The projected savings of £75-100,000 are substantial and the council believes that there is no evidence to support any detriment being caused to the children's education. The school has reasonable standards and good facilities but the high standards of education are not best served by children remaining in schools with such low pupil numbers. The council does not believe that the needs of rural children will suffer by transferring to a school in Newtown less than 3 miles away. There is also a rural school at St Michael's C in W (A) School Kerry (3.7 miles away) if parents prefer to send their children to a rural school. It is an excellent school (6x1s and 1x2) and at over 130 pupils is of more sustainable size. Free transport would be provided for qualifying pupils; for some existing Dolfor pupils it will be their closest school.
DO8	17.12.11	School has been an inspiration for past pupils who have gone on to a variety of successful careers and has allowed them to move on and make a success of their lives out of the area. Believes that the authority could look for other cost savings rather than close the school.	The council believes that the quality of education in <u>all</u> Powys schools allows children to pursue successful careers and fulfil their potential often outside of the area. It does not believe that moving Dolfor pupils to other schools in the area will prevent this from happening in the future. As part of a wider programme of savings, the council is looking to make efficiencies in its budget but the Schools Service must play its part in this process. Costs per pupil at Dolfor CP School are 38% higher than the Powys

			average.
DO9	19.12.11	Three generations of family have been educated there. By working together with PCC it can be a thriving school once again. It provides a choice of a rural rather than a town school, this option helps to promote diversity and the school helps to hold the community together.	It is very unlikely, taking in to account current pupil numbers and the age profile of those children, that the school can have sustainable numbers or thrive in the way that the objector describes. Even if Dolfor closes there will still be a choice of rural and urban schools but with pupil numbers at the remaining schools that are more sustainable.
D10	Dec 11	Past pupils have done well educationally. It is a community focused school and if it closes this will be lost.	There is no evidence to suggest that pupils will not do just as well at the receiving schools where educational standards as rated by Estyn are at least as good as at Dolfor.
D11	19.12.11	School is the heart of the community. It is scary for country children going in to a town school. Transporting them several miles is not sustainable, more fuel will be used and children will have longer days due to travelling. The community hall is of great benefit to the school.	<p>The council does not anticipate that children will be adversely affected emotionally by transferring to a school in a more urban setting.</p> <p>The named receiving schools are more than two miles away from Dolfor CP School. These schools are therefore quite likely to be beyond the qualifying distance (for free home to school transport) from the home addresses of the majority of pupils. If free home to school transport was provided by the council in the event of Dolfor's closure, it is likely that children would be picked up in a coach or minibus. This is potentially more sustainable than many shorter private journeys by parents if the receiving schools were less than two miles away.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that pupils will spend significant amounts of time on school transport as a result of this school's closure. The distances and travel times involved are not great and are well within the guidance time (30 minutes) for the length of time that primary school pupils should spend on school transport.</p> <p>The community hall is not proposed for closure and it is likely that this will continue to be run and maintained by the Dolfor Community Hall Trust.</p>
D12	20.12.11	Three generations of family were educated at the school; with determination by locals and PCC it can be sustainable for years to come. School is a community hub and enables lots of community activities which are good for local well-being. Community spirit is lacking elsewhere in the country and don't want it to happen in	<p>It is very unlikely, taking in to account current pupil numbers and the age profile of those children, that the school can have sustainable numbers or thrive in the way that the objector describes. Even if Dolfor closes there will still be a choice of rural and urban schools but with pupil numbers at the remaining schools that are more sustainable.</p> <p>The school is one of the only community facilities left in the village so its loss</p>

		Dolfor.	will have some impact on village life. However, this needs to be balanced against the very small number of pupils and the cost to the council and the wider community that this represents.
D13	22.12.11	There should be a choice for parents who want to send their children to a rural school. The school, its location and facilities have suited local children and they have gone on to have successful careers.	For those parents who wish to have a choice of rural schools, there is one at St Michael's C in W (A) School Kerry (3.7 miles away). It is an excellent school (6x1s and 1x2) and is of more sustainable size at over 130 pupils. Free transport would be provided for qualifying pupils; for some existing Dolfor pupils it will be their closest school. The council believes that the quality of education in <u>all</u> Powys schools allows children to pursue successful careers and fulfil their potential often outside of the area. It does not believe that moving Dolfor pupils to other schools in the area will prevent this from happening in the future.
D14	23.12.11	In our previous report to the Council, we suggested several different options for working together with you to keep the school open, none of which have been satisfactorily acknowledged or explored. The community was not contacted during the Community Impact Assessment. It makes more sense for the future of Dolfor School to be considered within the upcoming Newtown Schools Modernisation Review. The 'consultation' process itself was a farce because all communications from the Council (including minutes from your internal meetings) indicated that it was your intention from the outset to close the school.	The council responded in full to the report of the governing body, however it does not believe, given the small number of pupils at the school and their age profile, that there are any viable options for working with the governing body to keep the school open. The Community Impact assessment was produced as a draft document at the beginning of the consultation process and was therefore subject to a six week period of consultation with the community. The governing body coordinated the views of the community during that period so that the final document reflected the views of the community. The school has not been reviewed as part of a wider review of the Newtown area. This area review is currently not scheduled within the Schools Service. The council's Policy for the Organisation of Primary Schools (2006) reserves the right for an individual school review to take place at any time if there has been a significant change in pupil numbers. The council's decision to proceed to statutory notices for closure was made after a thorough review from January 2011 taking in to account all views expressed. The decision on Dolfor's closure was not pre-determined but the decision to publish statutory notices was made following consideration of all comments received during a six week consultation process in September

	<p>Leaked information to the press about the proposed closure of the school, meant that it has been impossible to recruit the additional pupils required to keep us open.</p> <p>Dolfor School is a fantastic rural school where pupil literacy is being improved. At a time when no other school in the area would enrol an SEN pupil, Dolfor School took that pupil in and that pupil has thrived. Small schools by their nature are an excellent resource for nurturing and educating SEN pupils who would not thrive in larger schools. In closing Dolfor this type of resource will disappear which will have a negative impact on many children's lives. Also Dolfor is the only rural school in the area and its closure would deny parents that choice.</p> <p>We hope that the Welsh Government will not be so short sighted and promote rural schools as a vital part of the education system rather than a short term economic inconvenience.</p>	<p>and October 2011. During this process the council apologised for the unfortunate leak of a confidential report that took place in January 2011.</p> <p>Dolfor CP School has dealt satisfactorily with pupils with SEN but there is no reason to believe that this will not be done just as well at the receiving schools. Whilst the council sympathises with parents having to familiarise themselves with new teachers, there is no reason to suggest that teachers at the receiving schools will deal with pupils with SEN less adequately than Dolfor.</p> <p>For those parents who wish to have a choice of rural schools, there is one at St Michael's C in W (A) School Kerry (3.7 miles away). It is an excellent school (6x1s and 1x2) and is of more sustainable size at over 130 pupils. Free transport would be provided for qualifying pupils; for some existing Dolfor pupils it will be their closest school.</p> <p>The final decision on the review will now be made by the Minister at the Welsh Government. However the council believes that, given the low pupil numbers at Dolfor CP School and the high costs per pupil, there is a strong case for the school to close despite the objections received.</p>
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