

APPENDIX B - LOG OF RESPONSES TO FORMAL CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO CLOSE DOLFOR C.P. SCHOOL

REF.	COMMENT
D1	<p>Closure of the School would have a “devastating” impact on the community and rob the area of a good school and the last facility in the village. Children in the area are a “close knit” family and sending them to Newtown schools would break this up as they might only meet children from the village in school holidays. If they made friends in Newtown schools, it would be difficult for them to meet socially outside school hours. Closure of the school would have a detrimental impact on the future of the village and village life.</p>
D2	<p>Rural life in Wales is under threat. Closing the only remaining village school in the area would add to this threat. WAG and PCC should be trying to protect Welsh rural life as well as the Welsh language. Closing rural village schools seems to be against the ethos of what is being said by the Government.</p> <p>Children of the Dolfor area will be “disadvantaged by sending them to schools outside their area” as they would be unable to socialise with their peers outside school hours due to the distances involved.</p> <p>Dolfor School is a centre of family life in the area for young and old. If children are sent to schools in other areas’ families would not have occasion to meet and get to know other parents and grandparents, which would have a devastating impact on a community struggling to keep its identity.</p>
D3	<p>Community Council members are disappointed that closure of Dolfor School is apparently being considered before considering the future of neighbouring primary schools over the Radnorshire border.</p> <p>When a school closes and children are sent to different schools, it impacts on children’s friendships and that of their parent/grandparents, which is detrimental to the rural community and organisations it supports.</p> <p>Community Councillors are concerned that pupils are not being offered places at similar rural schools, but at schools in Newtown. The nearest rural school “Kerry” is currently full to capacity and in need of capital investment to provide adequate facilities and places for an increasing catchment area.</p> <p>Due to geographical position of Dolfor School, there are concerns about children travelling along narrow roads especially during the winter months.</p> <p>The road from Dolfor to Newtown is notorious for accidents and unsafe for children to be expected to walk any distance along this road. Community Councillors seek assurance that transport would be provided to all pupils.</p> <p>Dolfor Community Hall would suffer loss of income from the school use of the hall, and also, should the school site be sold, loss of car parking facility for the community hall.</p> <p>If Dolfor School closed, the Kerry ward would be reduced to one primary school in Kerry.</p> <p>Rural schools play an important part in their communities; taking children away from the village has a “knock on” effect, as children and parents no longer get involved in their community, which has a negative impact on village life.</p> <p>Dolfor School premises are in extremely good condition and have the advantage of being linked to the recently built community hall.</p> <p>Has the cost of providing school transport been taken into consideration, including the carbon footprint? Why at the same time as the Authority is encouraging home working and setting up rural businesses, is it considering transporting children further away for their education?</p>

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	<p>Dolfor CP School, unlike many, still has it own canteen, with an award winning cook.</p> <p>The benefits of a rural school should not be overlooked; pupils flourish in this environment and take pride in themselves and their school.</p>
D4	<p>Staff at Dolfor School have displayed commitment, perseverance and the ability to adapt and develop an environment and their own skills so that pupils with differing needs can thrive and develop in all aspects of learning and change their behaviour (in cases of pupils with behavioural difficulties). Dolfor School was highly praised for its commitment to inclusion in the Estyn 2010 report. The space and facilities at Dolfor School are conducive for inclusion of pupils with special needs. Consideration might be given to keeping Dolfor School open and using the school as a work base for primary- aged pupils who have been excluded from their present schools. Perhaps the school could be used as a resource to maintain other pupils in a main classroom environment rather than receiving individual tuition in hired community rooms, as presently there is no space provision for the primary aged pupils who are permanently excluded.</p>
D5	<p>If rural communities are to have any prospect of a future then there must be the facilities to sustain existing families and to attract new families into the area. Dolfor school has successfully educated generations of families. If the pupils of Dolfor are split to separate schools in the Newtown area this will leave them feeling isolated when they are at home and during school holidays. The closure of the school would have a devastating effect on the community and leave it in a position from which it might never recover and be instrumental in the further and continued decline of rural life in Wales.</p>
D6	<p>The members of the WI believe that the lack of an obvious plan for the development of Dolfor has resulted in the present situation. The village still has the framework to support growth that would hardly impinge on the countryside. The primary school is an excellent asset. When the Village Hall hosts events it uses car parking at the primary school. Powys CC have made no effort to reconfigure the school to make it more efficient financially or more attractive to families who send their children elsewhere. The village primary school helps to give a sense of community to farming families. Together with organisation like the YFC and WI, it helps to offset the sense of isolation that can be so devastating. Dolfor WI relies on its continued membership from a vibrant community committed to its school and developing the area.</p>
D7	<p>Closure of the school would not only have an adverse effect on the children but on the community as a whole. In a rural community spread over a large area the school is the only meeting place and is at the heart of the community. It is through the school, children meet and the community continues. There is no shop or pub in the village and, without the school, the community would just be a series of homes spread over a large area with no connection. If young families moved into the area how would their children meet anyone locally? The school gate is traditionally the place for newcomers to meet and be welcomed into the community.</p> <p>The Dolfor Community Fund holds events for the community and a great number of these are child orientated, which at present can be organised through the connection with the school. If there was no school it is unlikely that these events would continue.</p>
D8	<p>Saddened that the "future of the school is being decided by a financial balance sheet". Rural communities that have shaped Wales over the generations are now the target for what does appear to be "short term financial savings."</p> <p>Dolfor School is at the heart of the village and provides important educational choice for parents and families not only from Dolfor but from the</p>

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	<p>surrounding area. It is the last remaining rural school in the Newtown area. It is a central daily meeting point for community families. The school provides a great deal of pleasure to the entire community in organising community activities. It provides the foundations that ensure that the community will always benefit from past pupils. Closing the school may well bring short term financial gain, but the legacy that will be left by having no school in the Dolfor community will ultimately prove to be far more costly.</p>
D9	<p>The community hall was built with priority use for the school in mind. The community hall also provided the basis for developing pre-school provision in the locality. Since the hall's opening in October 2006, the most frequent user of the community hall has been Dolfor Play Group. The playgroup is highly valued by parents and provides an early link with the school. The impact on the playgroup, were the school to close, would be terminal. Rural isolation is a real problem in Dolfor. Many families in the area are not able to travel into town to access pre-school provision. Dolfor Playgroup not only provides for the children but gives support to parents. Some children need a small school environment. With the closure of Aberhafesp CP School, Dolfor is now the only option for these "vulnerable" children. Through joint working of the school and the playgroup, early friendships have been formed and teaching staff at the school have had an early opportunity to work with future pupils, to the great benefit of both parties.</p> <p>Dolfor School has use of two buildings (one new build and one in good condition) The school has excellent grounds and outdoor facilities. There is a huge opportunity to work together to enhance the pre-school provision, which would have a beneficial effect on the school in terms of pupil numbers and cut costs. The Community Hall provides a venue for the village but it is the school which is at the heart of the community.</p>
D10	<p>Closure of Dolfor School would have a devastating effect. In a small community the school is the main hub. The children would be split up and have to go to other areas. It would make a difference to the Sunday School. There are close links between the school and the Church.</p>
D11	<p>Concern expressed re lack of formal response to a document that was submitted by the school in May, 2011. "Report for PCC compiled on behalf of the Staff, Pupils, Governors, Parents and Community of Dolfor."</p> <p>It is clear to many in the community that the Council's intention has been to close the school for purely financial reasons "from day one".</p> <p>Lack of response to above document and respect for views of the community and parents suggests that the consultation process is a "sham". Suggestions made by the community and parents for keeping the school open have been ignored.</p>
D12	<p>Dolfor CP School is the heart of the village. The school plays a very active part in community events e.g. Dolfor Village Show, Dolfor Chapel harvest service, Christmas Nativity and Pantomime etc The village hall was built with Dolfor School in mind. The hall would lose out if the school was no longer there. Dolfor CP School is the only small rural school in the area. Has the impact on rural children of having to travel to school in a town environment been considered? What will happen to the school staff? There will be redundancy costs for the Authority and there are few re-employment opportunities in the area.</p>
D13	<p>Without the school the children of the village will miss being able to take part in many community activities as they will not have the same friendships if they are sent to schools outside Dolfor. The children would feel isolated if their school friends are in Newtown and not in Dolfor. The</p>

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	car parking facility at the school would be lost to the village hall.
D14	If Dolfor School were to close, the impact on the community would be devastating. The school is the centre of community life in Dolfor. The school offers a chance for children to learn and thrive in an environment familiar to them. Without the channels of communication the school provides, active village life will be unlikely to thrive long-term. Loss of the school would be a “nail in the coffin” for small rural communities. Powys County Council has a duty to consider the future of rural communities and to consider the impact that closing the local school would have on the locality. Dolfor area offers very few other services; the most important local service is the school.
D15	What about the impact of the school’s closure on the children who will be “farmed out” to any school that will take them? What about those children who will be overwhelmed by a bigger school? Have the costs of redundancy payments to staff been considered? What about the effect of school closure on the community? What about those Radnorshire children facing school closure who could come to Dolfor? Is the proposal to close the school just about saving money?
D16	Dolfor Primary School has been a keen supporter of the annual Kerry Eisteddfod over many years. The school is an important contributor to the success of the Eisteddfod. Should the pupils transfer to another school, where the staff have no interest in supporting Eisteddfodau, then these pupils will not be able to benefit from gaining in confidence through participating in the Eisteddfod. Closure of Dolfor CP School would be a detrimental step for the community of Dolfor and for the pupils of today and the future.
D17	The school and Church are vital to the life of the village community and both have an important link to each other. If the school was closed, the link between the Church and the children of Dolfor would be broken. Dolfor School provides an educational environment which meets the needs of individual children in a caring and supportive way and also embraces rural life in Mid Wales. The school’s location is convenient for both parents and grandparents allowing them to be active in their children’s education including extra-curricular activities. If Dolfor School were to close it would break up the important relationship between school, family and community.
D18	The community hall benefits financially from the education payment received via the Dolfor School budget. If the school closed, the loss of this income would have a major impact on the finances of the Community Hall. The school playground is used for parking out of school hours when there is an event held at the community hall. There are many issues involved with the proposed closure of the school which would affect the community life and therefore would have a detrimental effect on the community hall.
D19	Concerns expressed re future Dolfor YFC membership numbers if the school closes. Many pupils from Dolfor School join Dolfor YFC at the age of 10. These pupils have the opportunity to meet new people and gain new skills through YFC. If the school closes, this would impact on community life and Dolfor YFC membership would decrease. Dolfor School is a central part of everyday life in Dolfor community. It provides a

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	<p>loving and caring environment where individual pupils are treated with respect. If the school was to close the village would “collapse” as the school is the “heart and soul” of the community.</p>
D20	<p>The school is at the centre of community life and the Dolfor Show and Sports Committee rely on Dolfor School pupils to enter many of the competitions at the annual show. Each year the school pupils design a suitable front cover for the show programme. The Committee works very closely with teachers and pupils with regards to the variety of competitions. The possible closure of the school would have a major impact on the success and the existence of future shows.</p>
D21	<p>Apart from the educational consideration, it is the very survival and future of community life in what is a very rural area, which is “at the heart of everyone’s concern”</p> <p>Pupils from the school play an active part in many of the village activities which bring the community together. Dolfor school has represented the community at the local Eisteddfod, and the school pupils take part in an annual Nativity and pantomime.</p> <p>Chapel and Church form an integral part of village life and the children attend Sunday school with their school friends. Closure of the school could result in a reduction in Sunday school attendance and Church congregations in both places of worship. The school pupils take part in the Christmas nativity and Harvest Festival service.</p> <p>The introduction to local Young Farmers Club would be made more difficult if the children came from different schools outside the area and without having any friends in the village. Dolfor YFC could suffer a decline in membership if the school was closed.</p> <p>The school children take part in Dolfor Show and the school sports day is a community event. Dolfor School pupils have joined the Urdd and will be taking part in many of the events.</p> <p>Should the school close the need for the Community Fund would be brought into question and associated community fundraising activities would not take place.</p> <p>Dolfor Playgroup is highly valued by parents and provides an early and beneficial link with the school. If the school was to close, the impact on the playgroup would be terminal. Many farming families are not able to travel to town to access s pre-school provision. The playgroup provides much-needed support to parents.</p> <p>The Village Hall is essential for many of the school’s activities. The hall is an important asset to the school but it works both ways. The school provides annual funding for its use of the hall, thereby benefitting the hall and the community.</p> <p>In rural life the “social” aspect cannot be overlooked. Children from Dolfor would find it difficult to establish friendships within their own community if they were fragmented to other schools in the Newtown area. Any friendships made in school would be difficult to nurture outside school hours due to the distances involved, leaving children in Dolfor feeling isolated from the town children.</p>

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	<p>Closure of Dolfor CP School would have a profound effect on the community now and in the future. The savings the Council is endeavouring to make in closing the school are immeasurable against the human cost to Dolfor community and its way of life.</p>
<p>D22</p>	<p>View expressed that at the initial consultation meeting officers gave the impression that the closure was a “done deal” and that the meeting and consultation were being held only to meet a legal requirement.</p> <p>Expressed concern that the information regarding possible closure of the school was “leaked” to the press before the headteacher and governors were informed. Suggests that the leak of information makes closure a “foregone conclusion” as parents withdrew their children from the school and prospective parents went elsewhere. Requests information as to results of investigation into the “leak” of information.</p> <p>The aspirations for education stated in the Authority’s Policy for Organisation of Primary Schools” are achieved at Dolfor CP School.</p> <p>If Dolfor School is closed, combined with the fact that the school at Aberhafesp has already closed, there will be no rural school within the Newtown High School catchment, which means parents are deprived of the option for their children to be educated in a rural school.</p> <p>What effect will the school’s closure have on the 46% of pupils in the school who have special educational needs and what efforts will be made to ensure that they are integrated into their new schools with minimal effect on them?</p> <p>A recent Estyn report grades the facilities at the school as only one grade below that of a new build school. Resources are excellent due to the contribution to equipment provided by a loyal and active Friends of School group.</p> <p>Respondent suggests that children benefit from small class sizes which help to reduce influences such as peer pressure and actively encourage learning.</p> <p>Respondent suggests that per pupil funding for Dolfor CP School is in the mid, rather than high range.</p> <p>Suggests that pupil numbers at Dolfor CP School fluctuate and there were some parents from Newtown who had expressed interest in their children being educated in a rural school but were told Powys would not provide school transport due to cost; however funds now seem to be available to provide additional transport for pupils of Dolfor CP School who would be displaced if the school closes.</p> <p>Disputes information in the consultation document that the proposed alternative schools are less than three miles form Dolfor School. The shortest distance over three miles requires the use of the Upper Dolfor Road which is a single track road with passing places. Neither of these options or the Middle Dolfor road, another single track road, is safe for the children to walk on as none of them have pavements.</p> <p>Parental choice is being removed by offering alternative places at Ladywell Green Infants or Hafren Junior school as parents’ school of choice is Dolfor CP School.</p>

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	<p>Has the psychological impact on the pupils of removing them from a small rural school to a much larger urban school been considered?</p> <p>Why can't consideration be given to amalgamating some of the Newtown primary schools with surplus capacity rather than closing Dolfor CP School?</p> <p>Recent Estyn inspection report classifies school as "adequate" which is first time Dolfor CP School received this grade. The Headteacher had had a long period of illness during the year the school was inspected and also the method of inspection had changed and is largely based on statistics.</p> <p>Respondents consider that the case for the closure of Dolfor School has not been proven other than satisfying the financial needs of the Authority.</p>
<p>D23</p>	<p>Objection to proposal to close Dolfor CP School on the following grounds:</p> <p>The impact on the community will be "considerable, long lasting and extremely damaging." Respondent expresses concern re absence of communication with local community groups in the preparation of the draft community impact assessment report.</p> <p>Expresses concerns in relation to the process of review including:</p> <p>Unofficial leak to press in January 2011 that Dolfor CP School was under review. No formal apology or explanation has been given to counter the detrimental effect the leak had on pupil numbers.</p> <p>Disappointment expressed re lack of information provided from PCC throughout the whole process. Considers there has been little or no engagement with the governors.</p> <p>There was little meaningful debate around the proposal to close the school at the Cabinet meeting of 5th July. Governors received the impression that there was no point in attempting to contest the decision.</p> <p>The proposed receiving schools are not a like for like alternatives. The proposed alternative schools are separate infant and junior schools rather than junior mixed infant and neither of the proposed alternative schools are "rural" schools. The nearest "like for like" rural school would be St. Michaels Kerry.</p> <p>Requests that Dolfor School is considered as part of a Newtown catchment area review rather than in isolation, particularly as neighbouring primary schools will be implicated in the John Beddoes modernisation review, which could mean that there is no primary school between Newtown and Knighton.</p> <p>With the closure of Aberhafesp CP School, there is now only one small school in the Newtown cluster i.e. Dolfor CP School. Respondent contends that a small school option must be maintained for both parents and children who feel that their educational and welfare needs are best met in a small school environment.</p>

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	<p>Dolfor school has a rural location which provides “added value” to the school and pupils. Dolfor School provides an unrivalled learning environment for pupils with all types of need including pupils with ALN and has an excellent record in the care and education of vulnerable children.</p> <p>The condition of Dolfor School and the facilities that are used on site (including the Village Hall alongside) are in outstanding condition with low maintenance costs.</p> <p>The school governors wish to work with the Authority to ensure the future of Dolfor School and as yet, there has been no discussion re possible ways forward e.g. federation and enhanced pre-school provision.</p>
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