



**Questionnaire to assess the viability of
establishing Welsh-medium provision
in Dolau**

Report of findings

November 2022

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1. SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1.1 The engagement period

Between the 29th of September 2022 and the 10th of November 2022, the Council carried out an engagement exercise to understand the views of parents on the possibility of establishing Welsh-medium provision in Dolau, and to understand the possible demand for this type of provision.

A questionnaire was circulated to schools and early years providers in the Llandrindod and Presteigne / Knighton areas and was also available on the Council's website. Information about the questionnaire was shared in the local press and on the Council's social media platforms.

1.2 Responses received

224 responses were received to the online questionnaire. All of the responses were through the medium of English.

In addition 4 written responses were received.

2. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following section summarises the feedback received in the online response forms which were completed.

Part 1 – About you

1. Please indicate how you are responding to this questionnaire

Response	No.	%
Current parent, carer or guardian	116	51.8%
Prospective parent, carer or guardian	58	25.9%
Other	50	22.3%
Total responses	224	100.0%

2. Do you currently have children of primary school age?

Response	No.	%
Yes	143	63.8%
No	81	36.2%
Total responses	224	100.0%

If yes, please indicate their current school:

Response	No.	%
Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School	33	14.74%
Presteigne C.P. School	22	9.82%
Ysgol Trefonnen	22	9.82%
Rhayader Church in Wales School	19	8.49%
Knighton Church in Wales School	13	5.80%
Crossgates C.P. School	7	3.13%
Llanbister C.P. School	5	2.23%
Radnor Valley C.P. School, New Radnor	5	2.23%
Cefnlllys C.P. School, Llandrindod Wells	5	2.23%
Gladestry Church in Wales C.P. School	3	1.34%
Builth Wells Primary School	2	0.89%
Newbridge on Wye, Church in Wales School	2	0.89%
Newcastle Church of England School, Newcastle on Clun, Shropshire	2	0.89%
Ysgol Calon Cymru, Llandrindod Campus	2	0.89%
St George's Church of England Academy, Clun	1	0.45%
Not answered	81	36.16%
Total responses	224	100.0%

3. Do you currently have children of pre-school age?

Response	No.	%
Yes	65	29.02%
No	159	70.98%
Total responses	224	100.0%

If yes, please indicate any pre-school providers they currently attend

Response	No.	%
Cylch Meithrin Dolau	16	7.13%
Presteigne Little People's Playgroup	12	5.35%
First Steps Llandrindod	7	3.13%
Playdays Knighton	7	3.13%
Little Acorns Crossgates	6	2.68%
Rhayader	3	1.34%
Jigsaw Preschool, New Life Church, Llandrindod Wells	2	0.89%
Ysgol Trefonnen	2	0.89%
Children's World Newport	1	0.45%
Clun Nursery	1	0.45%
Little Orchard Nursery, Kington	1	0.45%
Pembridge Pre-school, Pembridge, Leominster	1	0.45%
Ysgol Cefnlllys	1	0.45%
Not answered	164	73.21%
Total responses	224	100.0%

4. Please provide your postcode:

Response	No.	%
Llandrindod Wells	122	54.44%
Knighton	40	17.86%
Presteigne	32	14.29%
Rhayader	20	8.93%
Builth Wells	3	1.34%
Kington	2	0.89%
Crickhowell	1	0.45%
Ruthin	1	0.45%
Aberystwyth	1	0.45%
Newport (Shropshire)	1	0.45%
Llanwrtyd Wells	1	0.45%
Total responses	224	100.0%

5. How old are you?

Response	No.	%
Under 16	2	0.89%

16-24	8	3.57%
25-34	58	25.89%
35-44	87	38.84%
45-54	33	14.73%
55-64	12	5.36%
65-74	14	6.25%
75-84	2	0.89%
85+	0	0%
Prefer not to say	4	1.79%
Not answered	4	1.79%
Total responses	224	100.0%

6. What is your gender?

Response	No.	%
Male	49	21.89%
Female	164	73.19%
Transgender	0	0%
Nonbinary	1	0.45%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	4	1.79%
Not answered	6	2.68%
Total responses	224	100.0%

7. Can you understand, speak or write Welsh?

Response	No.	%
Yes	102	45.53%
No	96	42.86%
Prefer not to say	17	7.59%
Not answered	9	4.02%
Total responses	224	100.0%

8. If you have school-aged children, are they entitled to receive free school meals?

Response	No.	%
Yes	15	6.70%
No	135	60.26%
Prefer not to say	7	3.13%
Not applicable	37	16.52%
Not answered	30	13.39%
Total responses	224	100.0%

9. If you have school-aged children, do they have any additional learning needs?

Response	No.	%
Yes	21	9.38%
No	130	58.03%
Prefer not to say	7	3.13%
Not applicable	33	14.73%
Not answered	33	14.73%
Total responses	224	100.0%

10. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Response	No.	%
Yes	17	7.59%
No	185	82.59%
Prefer not to say	11	4.91%
Not answered	11	4.91%
Total responses	224	100.0%

11. What is your ethnic group?

Response	No.	%
White	203	90.61%
Black, African or Caribbean	1	0.45%
Mixed	2	0.89%
Gypsy/Traveller	1	0.45%
Other	1	0.45%
Prefer not to say	6	2.68%
Not Answered	10	4.47%
Total	224	100.0%

Part 2 – Response to questionnaire

Q7 The Council is investigating the viability of establishing Welsh-medium provision in the current Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School building in the village of Dolau.

If the Council were to establish Welsh-medium provision in Dolau, would your children be interested in attending?

Response	No.	%
Yes	98	43.75%
No	90	40.18%
Don't know	27	12.05%
Not answered	9	4.02%
Total responses	224	100.0%

Q8 The Council has identified 2 options which would result in the establishment of Welsh-medium provision in Dolau.

To what extent do you agree that each of these options would be an appropriate way forward to establish Welsh-medium provision in Dolau?

	Option 1: Establish a new Welsh-medium school on the current site of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School on a phased basis, starting with the Foundation Phase pupils and attending the provision as these pupils move through the school.	Option 2: Change Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School's language category from English-medium to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, starting with pupils in the early years then phasing in each year as the pupils move through the school.
Strongly Agree	21 (9.81%)	102 (45.94%)
Agree	36 (16.82%)	39 (17.57%)
Don't know	32 (14.95%)	25 (11.26%)
Disagree	53 (24.77%)	19 (8.56%)
Strongly disagree	72 (33.65%)	37 (16.67%)
Total responses	214	222

Q9 Are there any other options you think the Council should be considering to establish Welsh-medium provision in Dolau? Please provide details below.

The comments received are summarised below:

i) The Council should leave the school to operate as an English-medium school

- Keep the school as it is
- Keep the school as an English medium school as this would best suit the children and families of this area
- Keep the school as it is as you promised us all at the elections!!
- We do not need a Welsh medium school. We need an English medium school

- The council could consider maintaining the current school and building on its success by introducing more Welsh provision in the current curriculum. In geographical and community terms, Dolau is ideally placed to serve the area of east Radnorshire.

ii) The Council should proceed with closure of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

- The school closure has cost taxpayers money. The Council needs to be firm and continue with the closure. Dragging this matter further simply wastes more money.
- Is there a viable alternative to closure? Children are either already first language Welsh, or the parents have no desire to have first language Welsh education, or they would have chosen Welsh-medium education.
- You have no money yet kept the school open for another year at a cost, for what? Complete waste of money to educate a handful of children.
- There is no demand for a Welsh language school in Dolau, it would be waste of resources. This would just be a guise to save the school.

iii) Concerns about the suitability of the school building in Dolau

- The current school building will be in need of structural changes to make it big enough to be financially viable
- The building is not practical and not energy efficient
- How can you phase in Welsh-medium education on a year-by-year basis in the building at Dolau? It only has 2 or 3 classrooms, surely you can't say the reception pupils are Welsh medium if others in the same room are being taught through English?

iv) Comments about staffing arrangements should Welsh-medium provision be established in Dolau

- The staff at the school are not Welsh speakers. There is a huge difference between fluent Welsh speakers and those who are trained on the job.
- For either option – where do you think the staff are to fulfil this dream? Schools that offer Welsh-medium education now struggle to fill Welsh speaking posts.
- The school will not be able to find Welsh staff

- Welsh staff are difficult to recruit in the area, so another Welsh medium school is totally impractical and not well thought out.

v) Comments about cost

- The proposal seems ridiculous in the current financial climate. The school is a small school and per pupil already costs much more than other local schools.
- I feel this is a waste of council funds. How much is all this costing Powys?
- How can the council afford to explore Option 2? Can the council justify putting a Welsh teacher in a room with 3 children, whilst a teacher teaching children of the same age in another school has a class of 30? Where is the equality or equity for all Powys children in this proposal?

vi) Dolau is not the right location for a Welsh-medium school

- Why are you looking at keeping a small old building open. If a Welsh school is needed then build a new purpose-built school in a central location.
- Focus Welsh-medium provision in larger towns!
- Dolau is not the correct location. You would be taking pupils from Llandrindod and Rhayader who are currently in strong Welsh medium units with fantastic Welsh speaking staff.
- Dolau is the wrong place, with Welsh-medium Secondary education being in Builth Wells. A large number of Trefonnen Welsh stream go to the English stream in Llandrindod. Welsh-medium provision needs centralising in primary locations to match the secondary availability
- Too far to transport children to Dolau when there is Welsh provision in my local school.
- Why not create Welsh medium schools in Knighton or further North or South? Dolau is not the correct place

vii) Welsh-medium education is already available in nearby locations to Dolau

- Is there really a need? Why don't they just attend the Welsh stream at Ysgol Trefonnen where staff are already employed to teach through Welsh? How much is this idea actually going to cost the council?
- No need for a Welsh Medium School in Dolau. If parents wish they should use the current Ysgol Trefonnen or Rhayader.

- There is Welsh provision in Trefonnen and Rhayader and both schools provide good Welsh education in a very English area. It would be more useful to finance those schools properly rather than waste money on Dolau which is a small and old building not fit for 21st century teaching.
- Why try and have a negative impact on local schools who already have superb Welsh units, a strong Welsh community and fluent Welsh speakers? Rhayader and Trefonnen have large Welsh units, why not support those instead?
- There is Welsh-medium provision at Trefonnen already – no need for more?
- Why would parents from Llandrindod consider moving their children to Dolau when there is already an excellent Welsh-medium school in Llandrindod?
- As Welsh medium education is available in Llandrindod and Rhayader why not invest in those schools. Both of those schools could accommodate the extra children at a lower cost per pupil than in Llanfihangel Rhydithon.

viii) No evidence of demand for Welsh-medium education at Dolau

- Is there a demand for Welsh education in Dolau? No!
- Why close an English school which there is a demand for, to open a Welsh school where there is no demand.
- How many Welsh speaking children are in the catchment area?
- Is this financially viable? Is there a demand in a small hamlet?
- I hope that the Council have evidence of the need for Welsh medium provision in this locality. Are other Welsh-medium schools in the County full?
- I'd like to know the number of children wishing to be taught through the medium of Welsh in this area of the county.
- There are not enough Welsh speaking children in the area
- It's a crazy idea. No one has any inclination in this area to have their children taught in Welsh full time.

ix) General comments in support of Welsh-medium education

- There should be more provision for Welsh first language in our area.
- Teach it better in existing schools so 4 year olds don't have to travel an hour a day to access it
- A lot of children in our area attend nurseries and pre-school education where they learn Welsh, it would be nice to see

them have a local opportunity to be schooled in Welsh not having to travel 12 miles each way to school and back.

- I think we would be really lucky if the school was to become Welsh speaking there are no other rural schools that offer this and feel it will be a huge hit with people in the surrounding area especially Knighton, Presteigne etc.

x) General comments not in support of Welsh-medium education

- Welsh should not be used in any local schools - English is a universal language
- Concern about the impact on children. They have so much to learn and contend with as it is without any added pressure of listening to a teacher trying to teach you in a language that is not your first language. It would be a very hard and long process for the children. Learning the basics of Welsh in this part of Wales is sufficient enough.
- Making the school Welsh-medium will disrupt the pupils

xi) Other options for providing access to Welsh-medium provision

- Linking with Ysgol Trefonnen - could Llanfihangel Rhydithon become a satellite school?
- Why not strengthen links with Trefonnen instead, possibly providing transport for pupils wishing to attend the Welsh unit.
- Consider dual stream – provides choice

xii) Other Comments

- The high school decision needs to be made before looking at primary Welsh education as what provision is there in Llandrindod for high school education!
- What is the provision for secondary education in Welsh?

Q10 Welsh-medium education is already available in the area at two dual stream schools in the Llandrindod catchment – Ysgol Trefonnen C. in W. Community Primary in Llandrindod Wells and Rhayader C. in W. School.

If your child/ren currently attend English-medium education, please provide an overview of the reasons why you did not choose for them to attend one of the existing Welsh-medium providers in the area.

The comments received are summarised below:

i) The location was not suitable

- Location was an important factor when choosing a school
- Children should not have to move out of their community, attending a Welsh stream would have meant they would have had to do so
- We chose our children's school based on location – for parents living and working in Presteigne, Llandrindod and Rhayader are too far away to be realistic choices
- Living in Presteigne or Knighton may dissuade me from sending my children to Trefonnen or Rhayader due to the distance needing to be travelled there and back.
- It was too far for my children to travel to Ysgol y Bannau or Trefonnen (our 2 closest Welsh medium schools). My children would be isolated socially from their peers, living so far away.

ii) No wish for Welsh-medium education

- I did not wish for them to attend a Welsh-medium school
- I do not wish my children to be wasting valuable learning time on a language that is of no use to them now or in the future.
- Because we don't speak Welsh in this area. The question should be why would I want my child taught in Welsh

iii) Other comments

- As there is insufficient Welsh-medium provision at high school, then what is the point?
- The schools offering Welsh-medium provision are too big
- Chose a school which my school's friends / family were already attending
- Chose Dolau because of its wonderful atmosphere and educational standards – the language in which they were taught was less of a priority than the educational standards and their happiness at school
- Children already learn lots of Welsh in English-medium schools

Q11 The Council has made a commitment to develop Welsh-medium provision across Powys and to introduce Welsh-medium

education in areas where there is currently no provision, such as the Presteigne/Knighton area.

If you live in the Presteigne/Knighton area, do you think Dolau would be an appropriate location to provide Welsh-medium education to serve the Presteigne/Knighton area?

Response	No.	%
Yes	83	37.06%
No	33	14.73%
Don't know	30	13.39%
Not answered	78	34.82%
Total responses	224	100.0%

Q12 Are there other locations in the Llandrindod / Presteigne / Knighton area where you think the Council should be looking to establish Welsh-medium provision? If so, please list them below.

Response	No.	%
Yes	70	31.25%
No	32	14.29%
Don't know	2	0.89%
Not answered	120	53.57%
Total responses	224	100.0%

54 respondents suggested alternative locations in the area, these were as follows:

Response	No.	%
Presteigne	10	18.53%
Knighton	8	14.81%
Dolau	7	12.96%
New Radnor	6	11.11%
Llandrindod Wells	6	11.11%
Llanbister	4	7.41%
Trefonnen	3	5.56%
Beguildy	3	5.56%
Rhayader	2	3.70%
Crossgates	1	1.85%
Glasbury	1	1.85%
Newbridge	1	1.85%
Teme Valley	1	1.85%
Whitton	1	1.85%
Total responses	54	100.0%

The written comments received are summarised below:

i) Comments mentioning other locations in the Llandrindod/ Presteigne/ Knighton area suitable to establish Welsh-medium education

- Dolau is too remote from Presteigne/Knighton. It could be one of multiple sites, but would be better if there were others nearer (in Presteigne or Knighton)
- If numbers show demand, then it should be a dual stream school in either Presteigne or Knighton.
- Build a new Welsh school in Presteigne and Knighton. Dolau is too far away.
- Knighton has a large campus and a fair size building, the council could look at running a Welsh and an English stream there for children in the area.
- Knighton as a dual stream, or Presteigne, Gladstry or New Radnor as Welsh medium provision would be a better option.
- Maybe consider a larger school with a larger catchment such as Knighton rather than Llanfihangel Rhydithon
- Creating a dual stream provision in Presteigne would be a good idea. Dolau may be a little too far away for some parents, and would discourage them from sending children there. This would result in under registration at Dolau.
- Llanbister could be both Welsh and English
- Beguildy would have been a good spot or Whitton but both of these schools are now closed

ii) Comments in favour of Dolau being the best site for Welsh-medium education in the Llandrindod/Presteigne/Knighton area

- Dolau has already established itself as a location of good education with community engagement - this ought to be utilised, built on and used as a springboard.
- Dolau would be a brilliant location for this as a central basis from Llandrindod Wells and Knighton/Presteigne. They already have the Ti a Fi and Cylch so would be a good transition for younger pupils to begin learning Welsh.
- Dolau would be perfect as long as there is a bus
- Dolau is very central for the area, and an ideal site.
- We are so close to the border which makes Dolau a good place to start

Q13 Do you have any other comments about Welsh-medium provision in the Llandrindod / Presteigne / Knighton area or about establishing Welsh-medium provision in Dolau?

The comments received are summarised below:

i) Comments generally in support of establishing Welsh-medium provision in Dolau

- It's a great idea, the Welsh language is needed in so many jobs. Dolau would be the perfect site with Cylch Meithrin and a Ti a Fi already in place
- Llanfihangel Rhydithon already operates a Cylch Meithrin so preschool links are already in existence
- There is no Welsh-medium provision available in Presteigne or Knighton so it would be lovely to have Dolau, as a choice for this area.
- The establishment of a rural Welsh-medium school would provide a new dynamic in mid Wales, an option which is currently unavailable and is one that I believe would be tempting to many prospective parents
- It would be nice to have the choice of a Welsh rural primary school
- Dolau is the perfect opportunity for a rural based Welsh-medium school. Rural communities will always be more willing to send their children to a rural school than to an urban one.
- Welsh-medium in Dolau is a good idea, but there are problems in accessing post 11 and 16 Welsh medium provision, and transportation would need to be provided.
- We live in Dolau and my children have to travel to Trefonnen by bus daily, I wish there had been Welsh provision for them as here as it was important to me for them to go through Welsh-medium education after Cylch Meithrin.
- There is currently no Welsh-medium provision in the east Radnorshire area. Changing Dolau would help to achieve PCC's strategy of more Welsh learners. My child will start school in 2025 and I'd be happy to send them to Dolau to receive a Welsh education

ii) Comments generally not in support of establishing Welsh-medium education at Dolau

- There is already excellent provision in Llandrindod – why is this authority prepared to waste money even considering this?
- It's the most stupid idea I've ever heard from the Council regarding education. I'm all for learning Welsh but it's so silly to think those of us who live in this area would want our children taught as Welsh first language. How would we help with homework?

- There is enough Welsh-medium provision and this engagement exercise is a sham to keep Dolau school open, when it should be closed to save money.
- What is the need? Minuscule? We are so anglicised this end of Powys that it is completely unreasonable to expect a Welsh school. It's only been done to save the school which are the wrong reasons.
- I don't see the merit of having an all Welsh medium school in Dolau where numbers are so low, especially when there is provision in 2 neighbouring towns.

iii) Concern about the impact on other schools

- If you open this in Dolau, what are you planning for our school in Llandrindod? Will you then close our school? That would be terrible.
- Establishing Welsh-medium education in Dolau is likely to impact on the provision in Llandrindod and Rhayader. If the council is to provide Welsh-medium provision in the Presteigne / Knighton area, provision should be in one of those towns to minimise travel

iv) Dolau is the wrong location

- Dolau is absolutely the wrong place. Either keep it open as a small English school or close it. Do not turn it into a Welsh medium school when there are other location with higher pupil numbers and higher demand.
- Dolau is middle of nowhere needs to be in a larger town

v) Concern that there isn't demand for Welsh-medium education in Dolau

- If Dolau parents wanted Welsh-medium education for their children, they would already attend in Trefonnen. What they want is a school in their village, but this surely cannot be financially viable. It would be better value for money to invest further in it
- We won't know the true demand for Welsh until school is up and running and has been for several years.

vi) Difficulty recruiting Welsh-medium staff

- Recruitment of Welsh-medium staff is difficult, as such the establishment of a Welsh-medium school in an area already difficult to recruit and retain teachers, more so for Welsh

language teachers will only thin the pool instead of providing good quality.

- The pool of Welsh medium teachers and staff is limited.

vii) Comments about lack of secondary Welsh-medium education in the area

- Have Powys considered which high school Welsh-medium primary pupils would move on to attend in the Presteigne/ Knighton area? PCC should be transforming our secondary schools not our primary schools.
- Pupils need to continue in WM and not change at secondary
- If children living in Knighton travelled to Dolau each day, which might take an hour to get to and home from school, where do you propose they transfer to at 11 – Builth?

viii) Other comments

- Close Dolau school as it is just a drain on the education budget. Invest the money on thriving 'excellent' schools in the area.
- How much support will be given to parents as we know very little Welsh!
- There is very good provision at Trefonnen in Llandrindod. The school has just had an excellent Estyn inspection. Surely it would save money to send a child from those areas by bus to Llandrindod rather than trying to turn a school into a Welsh one?
- Current provision in Llandrindod is limited by it being a dual stream school – the stream and the Cylch is not sufficiently promoted. The reduction of the classes from 4 to 3 a few years ago has removed the chance of growth.
- Could there be a halfway house? More Welsh spoken at school all round? I was brought up in Canada and there are good systems with French and English.
- The current playgroup needs investigation as it is not Welsh

3. OTHER WRITTEN RESPONSES

4 other written responses were received. 3 of these made comments relating to the closure of Llanfihangel Rhydithon school in Dolau, but made no comments in relation to the viability of establishing Welsh-medium education in Dolau.

The points raised in the fourth response are as follows:

- Discussion is needed with nearby dual stream providers as key stakeholders in promoting Welsh-medium education
- The current engagement exercise will give some indication of the possible demand for Welsh-medium provision in Dolau, but is likely to be skewed by the depth of feeling there is about keeping Dolau open
- The dual stream provision in the area has helped to grow the numbers being educated in Welsh in the area
- If needed, additional Welsh-medium capacity could be provided by adding capacity at the existing providers
- Any Welsh-medium school at Dolau would continue to be a small school, and the cost per pupil would be close to the highest in the county.
- Any new Welsh-medium provision in Dolau might impact on Welsh-medium pupil numbers at Rhayader and Trefonnen, making it more difficult to keep up the growth in these schools
- Data suggests there is physical space in the Presteigne catchment to add a Welsh stream in one of the current schools, however this would incur additional costs in funding a small Welsh stream

4. CONCLUSION

The responses to the questionnaire suggest that should the Council establish Welsh-medium provision in the current Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School building in the village of Dolau, there are parents who would wish their children to access this provision – the responses to Question 7 show that 98 of those that responded to the questionnaire (45.6%) would be interested in their children attending Welsh-medium provision in Dolau.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to give their view on the suitability of 2 options would result in establishing Welsh-medium provision in Dolau. Of the two, option 2 was considered by respondents to be the most suitable, with just over 141 respondents (63.51%) stating that they agree or strongly agree that this would be option would be a suitable way forward.

The questionnaire also asked respondents whether they thought Dolau would be an appropriate location to establish Welsh-medium provision to serve the Presteigne / Knighton areas. 83 respondents indicated that they thought it would be an appropriate location.

Whilst the quantitative data suggests that there would be support for any Welsh-medium provision established in Dolau, many written comments were also included in the responses received.

Some of the comments indicated support for the idea. These included the following:

- Dolau would be a suitable site for Welsh-medium provision as there is already a Cylch Meithrin and Ti a Fi
- This would provide the option of a rural Welsh-medium school which is not currently available in the area

However, the written comments also include some concerns about the idea of establishing Welsh-medium provision in Dolau. These include the following:

- The Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School building is not suitable
- Concern about staffing arrangements
- Concern about the cost of establishing this provision given the current financial climate
- Welsh-medium provision should be offered in a more central location e.g. larger towns
- Welsh-medium education is already available in the Llandrindod area at the Welsh-medium streams at Ysgol Trefonnen and Rhayader C. in W. School
- Concern that there would be insufficient demand for this provision in Dolau