

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

7 May 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Pete Roberts
Portfolio Holder for a Learning Powys

REPORT TITLE: Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School –
Consultation Report

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on 24th of October 2023, the Council has carried out consultation on the following proposal:

Phase 1: Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1st September 2025

Phase 2: Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory processes to continue with the proposal.

1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix A** – Consultation Document
- **Appendix B** – Consultation Report
- **Appendix C** – Minutes of meeting with Staff and Governors
- **Appendix D** – Updated Impact Assessments

2. Background

2.1 Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School are two English-medium primary schools located in the town of Newtown, in North Powys.

2.2 Current pupil numbers at the two schools are as follows¹:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total

¹ Teacher Centre, 5th of April 2024

Ysgol Calon y Dderwen	39	35	45	26	33	38	35	251
Treowen C.P. School	10	15	15	9	17	15	27	108

- 2.3 Ysgol Calon y Dderwen was established in September 2021 following the amalgamation of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren Junior School, and currently operates from the buildings of the two previous schools. The intention was that eventually a replacement building would be provided on the site, to be co-located with the new Health and Well-being Campus being developed as part of the North Powys Well-being Programme.
- 2.4 Since the establishment of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen, the Council has been developing plans for the new school building. A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) has been developed and approved by the Council's Cabinet and Welsh Government and plans for the new building had been developed to the end of RIBA Stage 2.
- 2.5 Following consideration of these plans by the Council's Cabinet, officers were asked to consider whether it would be possible to increase the size of the planned new building, to accommodate more pupils, potentially the pupils currently attending Maesyrrhandir C.P. School and Treowen C.P. School as well as Ysgol Calon y Dderwen pupils.
- 2.6 In the summer of 2023, an engagement exercise took place with the three school communities, to understand the views of stakeholders at the three schools on the plan to potentially increase the scope of the new building to include additional schools. This included meetings with staff and governors at the three schools, as well as an online questionnaire.
- 2.7 An options appraisal was also carried out which considered options for the three schools. This identified the following preferred option:
- New build for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to accommodate pupils currently attending Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School
 - The expansion of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to incorporate the Treowen C.P. School site from September 2025
 - All pupils to transfer to the new building at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen when this is ready.
- 2.8 On the 24th of October 2023, Cabinet considered the findings of the engagement exercise and the options appraisal, and agreed to commence the statutory process on the following proposals:

Phase 1: Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site

from 1 September 2025

Phase 2: Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

The Consultation Period

- 2.9 Consultation on the proposal commenced on the 15th of January 2024 and ended on the 26th of February 2024.
- 2.10 The consultation document was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.11 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team, or writing to the Transforming Education Team.
- 2.12 During the consultation period, meetings were held with pupils, staff and governors of both Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School. The minutes of all these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Responses

- 2.13 104 respondents completed the online response form which was available on the Council's website. In addition, 15 respondents completed and sent the response form by email. 5 other written responses were received, including a response from Estyn.
- 2.14 Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 15 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
- 2.15 42 letters were also received from members of the Treowen community before the start of the consultation. The comments raised in these letters are summarised in the consultation report.

Consultation Findings

- 2.16 The findings of the consultation are provided in full in the Consultation Report (Appendix B) and are summarised below.
- 2.17 Of the 119 respondents who completed the online survey or the response form, 23.53% indicated they were associated with Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and 64.71% indicated that they were associated with Treowen C.P. School.

- 2.18 The issues received in response to the consultation are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), from page 20 onwards, along with the Council's responses to those issues.
- 2.19 The issues raised relate to the following headings:
1. Comments about the current schools
 - 1.1 Comments about Treowen C.P. School
 - 1.2 Comments about Ysgol Calon y Dderwen
 2. Comments about Phase 1 of the Proposals
 - 2.1 Comments about the impact on pupils
 - 2.2 Concerns about the impact on staff
 - 2.3 Concerns about loss of school identity
 - 2.4 Comments about the impact on families
 - 2.5 Concerns about impact on the community
 - 2.6 Queries about Phase 1
 - 2.7 Comments in favour of Phase 1
 3. Comments about Phase 2 of the Proposals
 - 3.1 Concern about the impact on pupils
 - 3.2 Concern about the size of the school
 - 3.3 Comments about the location of the school
 - 3.4 Comments about the new building
 - 3.5 Comments about the North Powys Wellbeing Programme
 - 3.6 Comments about the impact on the community
 - 3.7 Comments about the impact on staff
 - 3.8 Comments about Early Years provision
 - 3.9 Other comments not in support of Phase 2
 - 3.10 Comments in support of Phase 2
 4. Other comments
 - 4.1 General comments not in support of the Proposals
 - 4.2 General comments about the impact on staff
 - 4.3 Comments about the impact on Protected Characteristic Groups
 - 4.4 Comments about the impact on Welsh
 - 4.5 Comments about the consultation process
 - 4.6 Comments about the consultation documentation
 - 4.7 Alternative options

3. Advice

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the consultation, the advice of officers is that the Council should proceed with the proposals in respect of Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School by publishing a Statutory Notice.
- 3.2 The reasons for this proposal are:
- Provides the opportunity for all learners from Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School to benefit from an improved learning environment
 - A larger school provides a more efficient model of education
 - Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School have a similar pupil profile in terms of additional learning needs and pupils eligible for free school meals – this would enable a positive transition process
 - Removal of backlog maintenance at two schools – estimated backlog maintenance at Treowen C.P. School is currently £455,286, and estimated backlog maintenance at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen is currently £620,510.
 - The new school building at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen would be fully accessible and would meet the requirements of the Equality Act
 - The new building is planned to be energy efficient, and the school would meet the Welsh Government's net zero targets
 - Reduces surplus places in Newtown, but places remain available at other schools to accommodate for future fluctuations in pupil numbers
 - Minimal impact on staff and pupils at Ysgol Calon y Dderwen who have only recently gone through a staffing restructure process during the establishment of the new school
 - Would provide education in Treowen until the new building is constructed.
 - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location until the new building is constructed.
 - Would enable staff expertise and good practice to be shared across both sites during the transition period.
 - Would enable the school to run more efficiently during the transition period through shared staffing and resources
 - Improved transition arrangements to support pupils' move from Treowen to the new building as they would already be part of the school.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that the Statutory Notice would be published in May 2024, and that a further report, summarising any objections received, will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in July 2024.
- 3.4 It must be noted that implementation of this proposal would not preclude the schools from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The intention initially is to extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the Treowen site. No savings to the Council would be identified at this stage in terms of delegated funding, however the school would be able to combine resources and potentially reduce management costs for the school, as there would be one senior leadership team.
- 4.2 There would be no additional transport costs associated with this proposal, however there may be some additional costs associated with extending Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the Treowen site, such as new signage. This is estimated to be in the region of £15k and would be funded by the Council's Corporate Transformation budget.
- 4.3 It may also be possible that some repairs and maintenance costs could be incurred on the current buildings before the new build is ready, particularly given the scale of the estimated backlog maintenance cost. Any works identified would need to be assessed against the Major Improvements Programme's criteria and prioritised accordingly.
- 4.4 Eventually, the intention is that the new school would move to a new building located on the site of the current Ysgol Calon y Dderwen. It is estimated that the capital cost of this (excluding optimism bias, risk, client costs and fees) would be £16m at today's prices, however this would be reviewed and updated as the design process moves forward.
- 4.5 The move to one new building would result in estimated revenue savings in delegated funding amounting to £107.3k per annum (after taking account of the estimated increase in business rates of £14.0k). In addition, there may be some minimal savings for catering functions. It is currently projected that there would be no additional transport costs as the new building is located less than 1 mile from the existing Treowen school building. The school itself is also anticipated to realise savings to its budget as they will be able to pool resources as well as put more cost-effective class structures and a single leadership team in place, however it is expected utility costs would increase by approximately £20.0k for the new school.
- 4.6 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- Removal of powers of virement'

The Council will consider the use of these powers of intervention where appropriate.

- 4.7 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from various service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 4.8 The Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) notes the contents of this report and supports the recommendation.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: I note the legal view and support the recommendations.

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 6.1 Powys County Council has declared a nature emergency which commits the authority to protecting our biodiversity and landscape. The new building has been located on the existing school playing field to minimise disturbance to valuable habitat located at the fringes of the site, and the school's landscaping will be designed to develop a forest school ethos. We recognise the importance of the mature trees to learners who have grown up and appreciated the very special landscape on this site and request care is taken by construction workers.
- 6.2 Implementation of the proposal would lead to the creation of a new-build primary school in Newtown. The new school building would be built to achieve net-zero carbon emissions in operation, with extensive use made of renewable technologies such as photovoltaics and battery storage coupled with low tariff supply, to support a fabric-first Passivhaus approach. The construction's embodied energy will also be designed to fall below 600kg CO₂e/m² to meet Welsh Government standards for net zero.
- 6.2 The building will be designed to optimise natural daylighting and will be fitted with energy saving LED lighting, as well as mechanical ventilation and heat recovery to provide excellent internal conditions, while reducing energy demand.
- 6.3 The new school will be designed to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent', which is a holistic sustainability standard required as a condition of funding. Within this methodology additional credits will be sought for the extension of habitat and species.
- 6.4 The location of the new building has been located on the existing school playing field to minimise disturbance to valuable habitat located

at the fringes of the site, and the school's landscaping will be designed to develop a forest school ethos.

- 6.5 Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Treowen C.P. School, however the distance from Treowen C.P. School to the Calon y Dderwen site is minimal, however the Treowen estate is located up a hill.
- 6.6 Whilst it is unlikely that pupils currently attending Treowen C.P. School would be eligible for home to school transport, it is possible that the change in location would result in pupils being transported in cars from the Treowen estate to the new site. However, some pupils currently attend Treowen C.P. School from other areas of Newtown, and are already transported to school by car.
- 6.7 Active travel would be considered when developing the new school building, and the aim would be to ensure the provision of active travel routes to minimise the use of cars for pupils living in Treowen accessing the new school building.

7. Data Protection

N/A

8. Comment from local member(s)

Cllr. Peter Lewington:

1.As a councillor for a neighbouring ward in Newtown I really do believe that we should have an overall plan for education in Newtown rather than what appears to be a piecemeal approach. It must be joined up and address all the issues we face at a town level such as equality of provision , available places, quality of buildings ,transportation links etc

2.it can't be right for a strength of the proposed merger to be that learners would benefit from an improved learning environment and a more efficient model of education– that implies hat other pupils in Newtown will be disadvantaged and if so, what will be done to address that – we can't have a two tier education provision.

3.It states that a weakness is that pupils from Maesyrrhandir will not receive the benefits of a new modern learning environment – surely that will apply to all the other Newtown schools and pupils. What is the plan to achieve equality of provision?

4.Is there a plan B to address the uncertainty of what would happen if the wellbeing campus does not go-ahead e.g.Welsh Governmanet funding not secured

5. I firmly believe that the best way out of deprivation is a good education and that this is best delivered in the area of deprivation rather than ripping the heart out of the community against their wishes. Treowen school will lose its unique identity and its education provision would no longer be linked to the community.

In light of the above comments, I would ask cabinet to look again at this proposal and to be absolutely certain that this is the best outcome for the pupils, staff, schools, and Newtown as a whole in terms of improving educational standards across the community.

Cllr Joy Jones:

It is very disappointing that the consultation has resulted in bringing this result forward.

There are a lot of families very upset by the thought of the closure of the school. Many families have made their voices known of their disappointment and upset regarding losing the school which is central to the community and the estate.

With all the development and future of the town this appears very short sighted as there will be need for more school spaces not less. By restricting the amount of places available in Newtown there will be an effect of future plans for development and growth of the town and the estate

Please consider that there are many families that don't like large schools and want to bring their child up in a smaller environment. Not only do some children have issues being in a large, highly populated school but there are many parents who can't face being around a lot of people and the amount of noise that comes with a lot of children and adults in one place.

Please consider not only the importance of the school but the estate having an empty building left in the centre of this estate. The school is the hub for Treowen estate and is used by many in the Community and is an important meeting point.

Many families take their children there as they know that the quality of education is excellent.

The school is short of a headteacher, sadly this came about due to the former head leaving due to ill health and the PCC telling the governors not to employ another as they obviously had this closure in the pipeline.

The estate is up on a hill and for children to walk to the new school they will have to cross main, very dangerously busy, roads. All children will have to be accompanied to the new school unlike on the estate, where children are able to access school safely without crossing any

main road. The estate road has a zebra crossing and there is a lollypop person who helps them across if their parent is unable to be there. There will be children who will miss school if they cannot be accompanied due to parents being ill, siblings being ill, or if the road is not gritted in bad weather as the road is up on the hill and is steep and slippery. It is extremely slippery to walk due to how steep it is and parents are telling me they won't be taking their children.

Please do not devastate this estate and close community. Please listen to the parents and the voice of the people. Keep Treowen school open.

9. Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 24th of October 2023.
- 9.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, and a Community Impact Assessment.
- 9.3 These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.
- 9.4 The Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment is as follows:

'This impact assessment suggests that the impact is generally positive with some negative aspects, such as the requirement for some pupils to travel further than they currently do to school, and loss of provision in Treowen. Whilst the intention is to close Treowen C.P. School and initially extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the current Treowen site, the intention is that the school would move to a new building. This would provide much improved buildings and facilities for pupils compared with the current poor condition buildings, ensuring that future pupils would be taught in facilities that are fit-for-purpose, improving their learner entitlement and experience. The new facilities would be fully DDA compliant, supporting learners with disabilities.'

10. Recommendation

- i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen and Treowen C.P. School.
- ii) To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing the following:

Phase 1:

- To close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1st September 2025.

Phase 2:

- Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

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