

## EDUCATION DIRECTORATE BLAENAU GWENT

### Consultation events: Welsh-medium 210 place primary in Tredegar Sirhowy area with childcare provision

#### JCC Meeting via Teams Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 9:30am via Microsoft Teams

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1	Will the new build be part of the WG procurement route?	The Council follows the SEWSCAP framework arrangements, as it is a required duty, the team work closely with Regeneration, Community Services and contractors.
2.	Will there be opportunities for staff facing redundancies to apply for posts in the new Welsh-medium school?	It was made abundantly clear that the council follow the employment principals. Should staff who find themselves in this situation and have the relevant skill set would be offered an interview. Governing bodies are the interviewee panel.

#### Ebbw Vale Headteachers Cluster meeting Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 9:30am via Microsoft Teams

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1	Schools have some worries about the falling numbers of pupils due to the proposal, what is being done about this?	The Council realise the proposal will displace some learners in Tredegar over time, this is being mitigated by the seedling/growth model. This option means a slow and steady implementation. There are no plans by the council to carrying out any school reorganisation proposals.
2.	Is Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg full? What was it built for?	Initially Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg was built for a 360 place school and capacity has decreased over the last few years. However, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg numbers are growing slowly and will have sufficiency issues meaning the admission number will increase moving forward. There has also been growth of Welsh-medium childcare provision in the county borough, A Ty a Fi has been established again in Tredegar and there are plans to open a new Clych Meithrin.
3.	The new school Build is for a 210 place why not build it as big as possible?	It would be forward thinking to build a bigger school. However, the council has a duty to ensure there is enough demand for provision in both English and Welsh-medium provision via planning of school places.
4.	You mentioned the preferred site option where will it be on the site?	The plan is that the school will be build towards the bottom of the land on the left as you come off Sirhowy Road
5.	What impact will the growth in primary provision mean on secondary provision?	Each neighboring authority are looking to grow their welsh-medium primary opportunities via the Welsh Medium Grant, this also means a regional solution for

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		secondary provision will also need to be planned. This is being looked at via the Planning of School Places (POSP) Regional group which Claire Gardner chairs for the Greater Gwent region.

**Tredegar Headteacher Cluster meeting Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via teams**

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Has any work been done around the demand for the Welsh Medium School?	<p>Parental demand surveys have been undertaken across the County Borough over the last couple of years. The largest amount of unmet demand has been within the Tredegar area, because of geographical consideration.</p> <p>As part of the Welsh in Education Forum, a sub group around communication &amp; engagement has been established, working with parents to understand what they perceive to be the barriers to accessing welsh medium education, along with understanding their preferences etc.</p>
2.	Does the demand being calculated meet the capacity of the school for 210 pupils, from Tredegar and Ebbw Vale?	<p>From the surveys undertaken, the school would be in a position to look at around half the entry of learners with a view to the school growing to full capacity over time. In the past, Trend has demonstrated that it can take up to 10 years for a school to be fully populated. The team has worked alongside other local Authorities to look at their growth models, which is one of the reasons as to why they sought to look at a seedling or growth model. In the first instance, the Council are looking to provide accessible options to parents and secondly look to provide sustainable support.</p> <p>Pupil projections are undertaken within the welsh medium sector and accuracy is relatively high. The Council look at growth in line with the current demand. Being realistic we see around only 10-12 learners in reception and nursery in the first year not the full 24.</p> <p>From a school organisation perspective, they Council not looking to make any changes to the school estate other than the addition of the proposed primary school. The outcome is determined by the consultation responses.</p>
3.	Will there be a problem of accessibility on leaving primary school moving on to secondary.	Initial discussions are taking place with the Regional Welsh Planning of School Places Group. Moving forward in the Greater Gwent area, there could be demand for additional secondary provision. Regional conversations will go ahead, when there

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
		is increased provision across primary. Working closely with Monmouthshire, Merthyr Tydfil and Powys. Transition rates for Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllwyd are between 98% - 100% from primary to secondary.
4.	Has there been any work done on potential birth rates in the area?	Two sets of projections are undertaken on an annual basis. Within those projections, they have the live birth data where they work closely with the NHS, to plot and monitor for pupil place planning. Trend data is also used. Planning obligations are looked at also, with regard to housing development and S106 contributions. Reports are taken into Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee, where they look at pupil population and surplus places.
5.	Will there be any school closures in the Tredegar Valley? Concerns about the impact on numbers in their schools?	There are no plans for school re-Organisation proposals in Tredegar. This proposal there is a commitment to work with English-medium schools along with the Welsh-medium there is no hidden agenda to close schools from a School Organisation Code perspective.

**Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Staff - Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via Microsoft Teams**

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Has there been any feedback from the general public/Tredegar parents from Chartist Way?	The Welsh Education Forum has undertaken extensive consultations throughout the Local Authority. There is also a Communications and Engagement Sub Group. A detailed parent and engagement programme has been undertaken over the last few years. Events have been throughout the Ebbw Fawr valley and the Tredegar Sirhowy valley. Parents that were consulted at the time were extremely supportive. Close working with Partner Organisation's such as Myddiad Meithrin to look at their engagement with parent's views. Again very much in support overall.
2	Who actually gets the final say on the proposal?	Through a political process, the Local Authority's Executive Committee will make the decision.

**Scrutiny Group Monday 18th January 2021 9:00am via Microsoft Teams**

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Is there any indication of impact on local schools?	Similar sessions have been held with Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar Headteacher clusters last week, some key questions were raised around impact on pupil numbers, but the answer is there will be minimal impact. The Council is not planning

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
	any school re-organisation proposal for Tredegar, but work together to provide English and Welsh Medium education opportunities. The Council is mindful of the impact on the school estate, this proposal will be a gradual growth model coming to full capacity in 10 years-time, Blaenau Gwent is the only authority to have Welsh-Medium School.
2. Can you tell us more about the impact on the home to school transport cost estimate savings?	This will not happen immediately but over time, when the school fills up, however it is estimated that there will be approximately £60,000 savings for primary school. This doesn't take into account the secondary numbers which will increase.
3. What was the rationale behind the Tredegar site? Why don't the Council use the Bro Helyg site?	Parents have commented via the demand surveys and engagement sessions held that they are put off sending their child to Welsh-medium education because the Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg is so far away and a barrier. Research has been undertaken to look at dual stream schools, emersion in other LA's. There is a demand for provision in Tredegar/Ebbw Fawr North. The Council has evidence which is published in the consultation document, it is the accessibility of the provision being on their doorstep.
4. Understand that there could be savings to the transport costs at primary, and in time more costs to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllwyd. However, why don't you make the new school in Tredegar a 3-16? If the region is looking for a site in the Heads of Valley area use Tredegar.	Claire Gardner chairs the regional POSP group for Welsh-medium education in the Greater Gwent area, other LA's are looking to develop secondary provision in the Heads of Valley's region, and will be considered in the medium term plan. A key consideration currently is the number of pupils accessing secondary provision and the number of pupils in primary wouldn't warrant a 3-16 growth model. To mitigate impact at secondary a regional solution with options is being created.
5. Secondly Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg has 40% capacity so why are we to increase provision?	The 40% surplus capacity was from 2 years ago, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg numbers are growing, and the surplus capacity has decreased. The majority of pupils attending the school are from the Ebbw Fach and Ebbw Fawr South Valley. Numbers from the Tredegar area and Ebbw Fawr North areas have dropped so the development of the new school will not increase the capacity of the school at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.
6. There is also a concern about the catchment area as the proposed site is so close to Glanhowy and the school could lose pupils having a detrimental affect.	There is a key point to be made, which is the growth of Welsh-medium education in the Tredegar/Sirhowy area. There is evidence to support this growth, a Ti a Fi group has already been set up, along with the development of a Clych Meithrin which will sustain the demand for school places.
7. Should secondary be part of this proposal? Could we work closer to Caerphilly for the Bargoed secondary School?	Secondary School provision for Welsh-medium learners is part of a regional arrangement, there will be more demand for Welsh-medium secondary school places as LA's offer more primary opportunities. Further discussions are to take

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		place and are regularly discussed at the SEWC meetings. Transition rates from Primary to Secondary remain at between 98% to 100%
8.	Clarification on a point, does this mean people from outside the area can apply for a place at the school? Such as Rhymney	The simple answer is yes, people could apply if this site is nearer their own Welsh-medium primary site.
9.	Should schools lose pupil numbers what cost are we looking at?	The revenue costs associated with each learner would be in the region of £2,500 per pupil.
10.	Who is paying the revenue difference?	The revenue implications have been part of the financial modelling exercise as part of the Council's Medium Term Strategy. This would have to be secured via the ISB prior to the consultation proposal concluding. The Council cannot preempt this proposal, should this proceed it will be circa £350k when the school is fully established. And around £200k in the first year followed by £150k in the second year.
11.	What if the Council's Executive Committee and Corporate Leadership team don't accept the proposal and financial implications?	Before we can spend any Welsh Government Capital funding, we have to have assurance to proceed with the revenue costs.
12.	There are strong links in Merthyr Tydfil with the childcare and early years. What is Blaenau Gwent's links?	<p>One of the Clych Meithrin are on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg site and have close working relations with the school. The other Welsh-medium childcare groups such as Mydiadd Meithrin and Cmraeg y Blant are key partners in the WEF and work closely with the Council to support the delivery of Childcare and early years' opportunities.</p> <p>There are plans for Welsh-medium co-located childcare provision in the new 210 place primary school in Tredegar along with meeting demand in the Ebbw Fawr area there will be a Welsh-medium childcare provision there.</p>

### Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Governing Body Meeting Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	What areas would Bro Helyg be covering? What area would the new Welsh Medium cover?	Catchment areas would need to be considered. Largely, pupil population is within the Ebbw Fach valley, anticipating that this would continue. The new school would have a catchment area that would cover the Tredegar/ Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr North valley. Detail arrangements will be discussed at a later point in time with the Governing body.

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
2.	Would teachers and school based staff etc. have an input in relation to the design and requirements of the school?	The 21 <sup>st</sup> Century School team have a proven track record engaging school staff over recent projects and will continue to promote this a good practice.  Project Implementation groups are established to oversee developments. These consist of Education Transformation team, Community Services (architectural), school representatives, finance and various other key stakeholders.
3.	How does this fair with Secondary Education going forward?.	There is a Regional Planning of School Places Group, which Blaenau Gwent chairs allowing neighboring authorities to focus on the demand, development and promotion of Welsh Medium Education.  In line with the growth of primary comes the requirement and growth of secondary provision. The Group are looking across the region at a potential option, such as a development of a Secondary school possibly within the Heads of the Valley Corridor, This takes into account the approved proposal of Ysgol Gyfn Gwynllw, becoming a 3-16 school resulting in less spaces to accommodate Blaenau Gwent learners from 2027 onwards.  Welsh Government are aware that with growth of Welsh-medium primary provision there will be a need for Secondary provision and have indicated that there is likely to be potential future funding stream in the form of a welsh medium grant to look at secondary provision.
4.	If there is potential funding from Welsh Government, would Blaenau Gwent actively be looking to have a Secondary Welsh Medium school?	Blaenau Gwent working in isolation does not have sufficient demand to have its own secondary school. It would have to take a regional and joint working approach with the Northern area of Monmouthshire, Southern area of Powys, Torfaen and Merthyr Tydfil. Looking at a regional approach, Blaenau Gwent is well placed in terms of the Heads of the Valley. This would be subject to the availability of suitable land and discussions with other Local Authorities.
5.	You mentioned new learners and displacement of learners where does this link in with the plans for the Authority for the English and Welsh Medium Schools?	In relation to displacements, the APWU has calculated that for every primary age pupil the cost is £2,500. Schools will be looking initially have less of an impact in the early stages if pupils choose WM over EM education.  Through engagement of English-medium schools it has been made clear as part of this consultation that it is all about doing their best by all their learners. Evidence base suggests that it can take up to 10 years for a new Welsh-medium primary school to reach its full capacity via the seedling growth model. There is no intention

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
		of any English-medium school closure via the school re-Organisation programme within the Tredegar Sirhowy valley/
6.	How would this effect School Governance arrangements?	There would be close collaboration with Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the new school which is a form part of the consultation at a later stage. Stakeholder views would be welcome.

**Tredegar Town Council Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via Microsoft Teams**

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	What materials are being used for the outside building?	As part of the Planning requirements, materials/design will be very sympathetic to the surroundings. Having robust materials that can withstand the weather conditions is absolutely paramount. The Council's Community Services Department will make sure that this is considered in the detailed design process.
2.	Have Head Teachers been consulted on the proposal?	Consultations have been undertaken with Head Teachers in the Tredegar and Ebbw Fawr school clusters. Assurance was provided around the impact upon the English medium Sector within the Tredegar area. The Local Authority has no intention to undertake school re-organisation within the English medium Sector and no intention to close any schools. There may be some displacement of learners into the Welsh medium sector should it proceed. The proposal is a growth model and looking at possibly 10-12 learners per year group.  Within the catchment area of the new school there is likely to be quite a significant level of housing developments taking place over the next couple of years.
3.	Who is going to be responsible for the redundancies of staff members when the numbers decrease in other primary schools?	Assurances can't be given as to whether there will be redundancies, although it is usual for schools to have redundancy arrangements based upon the pupil population. The Council work with the schools to share redundancy costs. They are looking at a growth model which will probably take 10/12 years to be fully operational.
4.	Is the site suitable for development?	All sites options were explored, the preferred site was the best option for this proposal, a topographical survey has been undertaken and it has some constraints but less than any of the other options put forward.
5.	Did the Headteachers perceive and agree that there was a gap in Welsh provision within Blaenau Gwent?	There was acceptance on the demand surveys undertaken, that there is unmet demand in the Tredegar area. Primary consideration was around what impact it

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
		would have on the English Medium Sector. Assurances were given that impact would be minimal and manageable.
6.	What is the current trend within Blaenau Gwent as far as primary school pupil numbers are concerned?	<p>A report is taken to Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. Projections are based upon trend over the last few years with 99/100% accuracy and is relatively a stable population. Anticipating further increase based upon housing development coming forward.</p> <p>They have also seen an increase in terms of inward migration in line with the in-year transfer processes associated with school admissions over the last couple of years. Last year, over 200 pupils came into to the Borough, therefore there this is a positive impact on pupil population within Blaenau Gwent.</p>
7.	What is the current capacity and number of spare places within Bro – Helyg?	<p>The current capacity for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg is 267 learners for the full school. Capacity doesn't have a significant level of surplus places and demand for places is increasing.</p> <p>The vast majority of learners who attend Bro Helyg are from the Ebbw Fach valley. The distance and travelling time is a key barrier to parents selecting Welsh Medium Primary provision. There is a significant level of demand identified within the early year's provision moving through the system. Capacity calculations are reviewed on an annual basis in line with pupil numbers, pupil projections along with the requirements of the school in terms of usage.</p> <p>They fully accept that the demand surveys are not foolproof. Welsh Government have removed from the current regulations, the requirement to undertake demand surveys and have therefore suggested, as an alternative, to focus on the promotion of Welsh Medium Education language.</p>
8.	What is the viability of schools in Tredegar?	The revenue estimate is around £350k and based on full occupation, this would feature in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. This has been shared via Corporate Leadership Team, and the Executive Committee has also been briefed. The vast majority of costs would feature as a growth request into the Council's resources, as opposed to the displacement against existing school budgets.
9.	Why was Tredegar the preferred option?	Across Wales and not unique to Blaenau Gwent, there are challenges around demand surveys. The levels of uptake on demand surveys across the region tend to be relatively small, but a strong indicator that demand exists within the Tredegar area.

**Welsh in Education Forum 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via Microsoft Teams**

	<b><u>Question</u></b>	<b><u>Answer</u></b>
1.	Its good news from a Welsh Government perspective, supporting the Welsh Language strategy. Have English-medium schools been apprised of the Consultation.	Prior to the consultation process starting, the team met with Tredegar Cluster headteachers. In general, it was greeted positively the justification, rational and hard evidence supported the development of Welsh-medium education opportunities.
2.	Have to applaud all the work being carried out to support and encourage the development by the team. It is not about Welsh-medium having advantage over English-medium schools its about parity	Again assurances have been given to English-medium schools of no school closures