**GWERNYFED CLOSURE PLANS: HOW TO RESPOND**

Powys County Council is seeking views from the public on their plans to close Gwernyfed High. Their full Consultation Document is on the Powys website at [www.powys.gov.uk.](http://www.powys.gov.uk.)

***Anyone*** who thinks they may be affected, or who has a view on the likely effects of the closure, can respond in writing between now and May 23rd at 5pm. You don’t have to be a parent, or use any of Gwernyfed’s facilities, to have your say.

In addition, if you have expertise in education, child psychology & well being, or public health, please tell Powys how their plans will affect young learners, and the community.

Email [consultation@ors.org.uk](mailto:consultation@ors.org.uk), or send a letter to: Opinion Research Services, Freepost (SS1018), PO Box 530, Swansea SA1 1ZL.

**Also - come to the public consultation meeting, 6.30pm, on April 20th at Gwernyfed. Tell Powys how you feel on the night but also ASK QUESTIONS - they have to respond.**

Powys have made this a ticketed (but free) event for health and safety reasons. Book by phone (01597 826954) or online through the Powys website or this link: <http://bit.ly/1PUkOzg>

To contact the campaign group, email:<chairofgovernors@gwernyfed-hs.powys.sch.uk>

***To summarise, Powys is proposing:***

>>Closing Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High School in August 2017, and re-opening both as a dual site, single school with one administration, one head teacher and one governing body. They say this ‘interim’ solution will be for 2-3 years.

>>Closing 6th forms at both schools and handing post-16 provision to NPTC group of colleges.

>>Ending Welsh-medium secondary education in Brecon - it would instead be delivered at the Builth Wells site of the proposed new school in Mid Powys. (This involves two more school closures that have yet to be approved).

>>Eventually closing both Brecon and Gwernyfed sites, and replacing them with a new-build school in Brecon, around 2019/20. (Powys is hoping for funding from the Welsh Government for this - the Welsh Government has yet to make a decision on this).

When you respond to the consultation, it won’t be enough to simply say that you don’t like the closure proposal, or that it will be inconvenient. Give an honest and personal response that answers the proposal.

The School Organisation Code is handy (1st 10 pages are most relevant): <http://bit.ly/1S7QqZQ>

For now, we’ve listed below some things to think about when you respond. You don’t have to answer them directly, they’re just to give you some ideas. In brackets are the relevant pages in Powys Consultation Document.

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Please also CC responses to:

[chiefinspector@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:chiefinspector@estyn.gov) or by post to Chief Inspector, Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW.

[Catrin.Jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Catrin.Jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk), Head of Welsh in Education at the Welsh Government.

[enquiries.wales@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.wales@biglotteryfund.org.uk), for the attention of John Rose. Or by post to John Rose, Director (Wales), Big Lottery Fund, 10th Floor, Helmont House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2DY.

[Kathryn.Massey@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Kathryn.Massey@wales.gsi.gov.uk), who works at the Capital Funding Branch of Welsh Government and is involved with Powys’ application for funds to build the new school in Brecon.

[David.Weale@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:David.Weale@wales.gsi.gov.uk) of the Welsh Government’s Schools Management and Effectiveness Division.

***Pupils and future pupils***

Powys admits some of you might have to travel further to get to school, but ‘not more than hour’. They think this journey time is reasonable. Do you? (P20)

How does Gwernyfed benefit your education? What would change if you were forced to go to Brecon?

What about the ‘interim’ period, when Gwernyfed will share a headteacher, governing body and leadership team with a school that has struggled to meet educational standards (it is currently in special measures), and which has huge financial problems?

How do you think sharing a headteacher and leadership with Brecon will affect your education? (P26)

Would you be schooled in England if Gwernyfed closed? (P19)

Would your family move out of the area, or out of Wales, altogether? If so, would you miss learning Welsh or being taught in Welsh?

Powys admits attending after-school activities and clubs will be difficult. (P25). How do you feel about that?

What about post 16 education? This would be provided by NPTC group of colleges, they could pull out at any time if there is insufficient interest in their courses. Would you go there or somewhere else?

Also, data from Powys shows NPTC’s A-level results aren’t as good as Gwernyfed’s. (P54). Last year, 50.2% at NPTC got A\*-B grades, compared with 67.6% at Gwernyfed.

Powys say they want to improve your learning outcomes - does the data above support this?

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***Parents***

You will have your own views on the points above - please make them heard.

Many of you have said you would school your children in England or move away altogether - tell Powys the same.

How do you think educational standards will be affected by the ‘interim’ solution of operating a dual site school, with Gwernyfed sharing leadership and administration teams with a school that is struggling? (P26)

Powys say (P26) ‘the new leadership team should be at least as good as the current leadership’. Ask yourself - at least as good as Gwernyfed, or Brecon? Is that good enough?

They also say (P27) ‘learning experiences, teaching, care support & guidance would be at least as good as that currently provided by both schools.’ Again, is that good enough?

Will going to school in Brecon affect your child’s participation in after school clubs? (P25).

How would this affect your child’s engagement with Welsh language and Welsh culture?

***Users of sports facilities & other community groups***

Powys is vague in the consultation document about what would happen to the sports facilities - and the other community groups such as Glasbury Arts who use the school, **but we can be sure they do not have any ideas about how to keep them open.**

They say (P47) it is ‘unclear’ where else sports activities could take and admit clubs might close, affecting the health & wellbeing of local people.

In fact, the consultation document says (P20) Powys will consider in September ‘any Proposals from the community for continued use of the community facilities located at Gwernyfed High School.’

But The School Organisation Code says: ‘proposals should show....how any community facilities currently provided by the school could be maintained.’

If Gwernyfed’s closure means the end of your group or sports club, ask Powys what plans they have to ensure it is able to continue.

Tell them how your group’s closure would affect your health and wellbeing, or your children’s.

If you use the sports facilities, remember to copy in the Big Lottery on your response at the address above.

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***Business owners***

Powys admits (P46) the closure would negatively affect the housing market and make the area less attractive to newcomers. They say rural businesses will be affected by a loss of trade and social interaction of pupils will become Brecon-centred.

Is trade from pupils, their parents, or staff Gwernyfed important to your business?

How would the school closing affect it?  Would you have to close? Would jobs be lost?

Do you farm? How would having your children schooled in Brecon affect farm life?

What would happen to your business and its workers if you had to move away for the sake of your children’s education?

If you can, try to give figures.

How would Gwernyfed closing affect the local economy as a whole?

If you were thinking of moving to the area, would you still want to?

***Welsh speakers***

Data we’ve gathered around Clyro & Hay shows that an overwhelming majority of parents (75%) would seek to send their children over the border into England to be educated, or move out of the area altogether.

What does this say about Powys’ commitment to Welsh language and culture?

School organisation is meant to follow the Welsh Government’s Welsh Language Strategy, which aims to have ‘children and young people using more Welsh’ and ‘more use of Welsh within communities across Wales’.

Is Powys’ proposal supporting these aims?

ENDS