

Objections to the Proposal to Close Ysgol Rhewl

Under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections ("the Objections Report")

Number of objections received: 60

	Points Raised	Local Authority Response	Number of Written Responses Raising Point	% of Responses Raising the Point
1	<p>The impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language at the school and in the County have not been appropriately addressed either in the recent cabinet report or in discussions at the consultation meetings.</p> <p>a) The current Welsh language offer could not be replicated if children moved to either of the new schools.</p>	<p>a) Section 1.4 of the School Organisation Code 2013 states that: "In all cases, existing pupils at a school where provision is being reduced or removed must be able to continue receiving education that provides at least equivalent standards and opportunities for progression in their current language medium." The school organisation code clearly states that when proposing closure, it is the duty of the authority to ensure that the current language opportunities would be provided for pupils in alternative provision. Currently pupils receiving education at Ysgol Rhewl are identified as either Welsh medium or English medium. If the opportunities for progression are provided then the impact on the Welsh language would be neutral. If the proposal is implemented, parents will be able to choose three types of settings that would be available within the area – English medium, Welsh medium and dual stream. Details of alternative provision was explained in section 9 of the formal consultation document. Parents will be able to choose alternative provision subject to the admission process. Pupils will be able to transfer to alternative provision and maintain their current language medium. The authority has identified areas where</p>	6	10%

	<p>b) In the process of the Ruthin school review the classification of schools was not thought to be important, however since the decision to close Ysgol Rhewl went to scrutiny it came back in the report that the classification is important and should be considered. Ysgol Rhewl has responded to demonstrate that it is meeting the above requirements. We realise that there is work to do to ensure these are both fully met, and are assessed effectively, and have detailed the ways we will take these requirements forward. We have also had an assessment of our provision by GWE who have not registered any concerns.</p> <p>c) You state: “Pupils who choose the Welsh medium stream in Category 2 have the same opportunities to go onto Welsh medium secondary education as those who attend a Category 1 school.” You also state rather distastefully and without evidence, “We have to be honest and transparent; Ysgol Llanfair is delivering to the Category, but Ysgol</p>	<p>tailored support will be available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for pupils in the English stream of a dual stream setting to access an enhanced level of incidental Welsh will be sustained by working with each child’s destination school. Pupils who are assessed as more able and talented in Welsh will be supported in accordance to the destination school’s more able and talented policy. • The language development provision at Ysgol Bro Elwern will be available to support any pupil currently assessed as Welsh 2nd language who wants to access Welsh medium provision (Welsh 1st language). <p>As a result, implementing the proposal will have a neutral effect on the language offer in the area.</p> <p>b) The authority has stated consistently during the consultation process that closure is proposed as a result of surplus places, proximity of the new development at Glasdir and the condition of the building. It has not been proposed due to delivering / not delivering its Category 2 designation. Standards at Ysgol Rhewl are good and this has been consistently reported by the authority. By bringing forward this proposal, the authority is not commenting on the educational offer at Ysgol Rhewl.</p> <p>c) Based on the data used in the consultation document (2010 – 2014) 38 pupils transferred to the Welsh medium stream and 20 pupils transferred to the English medium or ‘N’ Stream (Welsh 2nd Language) from Ysgol Llanfair. This is clear factual evidence that the Ysgol Llanfair is delivering dual stream outcomes. In comparison over the same time period no pupils from Ysgol Rhewl transferred to the Welsh Stream.</p>		
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	<p>Rhewl is not.”</p> <p>d) Of the pupils who have gone through the Welsh learning stream at Ysgol Rhewl, have any of them failed to reach their expected outcome?</p> <p>e) You state: “It’s not about the number, it’s more about the offer and how it works.”</p>	<p>d) By bringing forward this proposal, the authority is not commenting on the educational offer at Ysgol Rhewl.</p> <p>e) Data shows that in 2014 –15 academic year 21 pupils at Ysgol Rhewl, resided in the village of Rhewl. 12 children also living in Rhewl attended alternative provision with 9 pupils opting for Welsh medium education in the proposed alternative provision at Ysgol Pen Barras. It is true that the offer and how it works is important, but the offer requires use to be viable and effective.</p>		
2	<p>The loss of bilingual provision at Ysgol Rhewl is at odds with the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic plan 2014 -2017.</p>	<p>This statement is incorrect. The Welsh in Education Strategic plan is focussed around the provision of school places and not school buildings. It has been demonstrated that there is sufficient places at alternative provision to support the outcomes of the plan. Closing Ysgol Rhewl changes the learning environment for pupils but does not affect the availability of provision across the area.</p>	2	3%
3	<p>Concerned regarding the feasibility of the Glasdir site. The total capacity of the site is insufficient to meet demand and future growth.</p> <p>You have stated that the Glasdir site owned by the council does not meet the BB99 recommended area for a 420 capacity school. Yet you are proposing a 450 capacity.</p> <p>How do you propose to increase the sites area to meet BB99 recommendations for a 450 capacity given that it does not meet the size recommended for 420 capacity?</p> <p>Do you require the land swap with the Welsh Government in order to achieve the sites capacity to meet the BB99 recommendations for a 450 capacity site? The proposed site is on a flood plain and has flooded on previous occasions. What measures would be put in place to prevent this?</p>	<p>The new schools to be built on the Glasdir site would be designed to accommodate 450 full time pupils, this compares to 422 full time pupils who attend the school at present (January 2015).</p> <p>Excess capacity is limited to ensure that the new site does not create surplus places in other schools.</p> <p>The feasibility study has identified there is sufficient land available to build two schools to meet BB99 guidelines. This requires land to be transferred between Denbighshire County Council and Welsh Government.</p> <p>A flood consequence assessment has been undertaken. This allows the schools to be designed to mitigate against future flooding.</p>	9	15%

4	The issue of the amount of traffic that will be generated by the Glasdir site and the potential danger to children who need to walk to the new schools from Rhewl have not been addressed. The route from Rhewl to Glasdir is potentially dangerous and presents a risk to children and parents who have to walk along it to get to the new school.	At present the route from the Glasdir site to the village of Rhewl has not been deemed hazardous. Should the proposal be implemented the pupils currently attending Ysgol Rhewl, and not travelling past Glasdir already, would be included in the traffic impact assessment for the new Glasdir site. Access to the site will be designed according to the recommendations of Highway engineers and Road Safety Officers.	57	95%
5	It was reported at the Cabinet meeting that no alternative arrangements had been proposed, but this is not the case. The School Governing Body stated there was a clear need to discuss alternative to the closure proposals.	The authority considers the consultation period itself as an opportunity to discuss alternative options. During the consultation process respondents were invited to present their views on the proposal and present alternative proposals. Section 15 of the consultation document identifies all options considered by the Authority. In addition a supplement was published to explain the rationale for discounting the option of federation prior to the start of the formal consultation. No alternative proposals were presented during the consultation period.	2	3%
6	Case law has established that the consultation process should be undertaken when proposals are still at a formative stage, including sufficient reasons and information for particular proposals to enable intelligent consideration and response; provide adequate time for consideration and response; and ensure that the product of consultation is conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken. No response to these concerns is included in the Cabinet report which makes reference to the length of consultation process only.	<p>The Formal Consultation report provides the Local Authorities response to the concerns raised regarding the consultation process.</p> <p><i>"The consultation follows the process set out in the School Organisation Code 2013. The School Organisation Code is made under Sections 38 and 39 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The code provides guidance on the contents of the formal consultation document, the length of the consultation period (42 days) and the recipients of the document."</i></p> <p>Elected members at the Cabinet meeting on the 2nd June carefully considered the responses from the formal consultation process before deciding to proceed towards publishing the statutory notice for closure.</p> <p>Elected members subsequently called in</p>	3	5%

		the Cabinet decision for scrutiny and having considered the reasons given for requesting a review of the Cabinet's decision, and the information provided at the meeting, determined that there was not sufficient evidence to ask Cabinet to reconsider its decision of 2 nd June to publish a statutory notice to close Ysgol Rhewl.		
7	In the event of delays due to planning and other objections that may slow down the planning of the new schools at Glasdir, I'm concerned regarding the pupils stability at Ysgol Rhewl with this notice to close by August 2017 when there is no guarantee that the new schools can be built by September 2017 to accommodate the new pupils.	The proposal has clearly explained that Ysgol Rhewl would remain open until the new Glasdir site has been built. Delays can take place during the lifecycle of a project and this risk has been factored into the project plan. With any construction project there is a risk of unforeseen delay but currently there is no reason to assume that the schools will not be ready on time. If the proposal is implemented the Council will work with the school and parents to maintain stability in advance of the closure of the school during 2017.	2	3%
8	We do not wish to send our children to a large 'town' school and it is very important to us that they are taught in a bi-lingual environment. We are English speakers and feel that it is extremely important for our children to learn Welsh as it will help them to integrate with the local community.	Denbighshire County Council Cabinet has approved an overarching vision for the Ruthin area which retains a mix of both rural and town schools. The Council cannot retain every school but is proposing retaining Welsh medium, English medium and Faith primary provision within the area in a mix of rural and town schools to ensure sufficient school places for the Ruthin area.	5	8%
9	That the proposals to move children to the new school at Glasdir, Ruthin do not provide a level of bilingual education that is the same or better than that which they receive at the moment and so the proposal does not meet the requirements of the Welsh Government code.	The School Organisation Code 2013 states: "In all cases, existing pupils at a school where provision is being reduced or removed must be able to continue receiving an education that provides at least equivalent standards and opportunities for progression in their current language medium. Specific transition arrangements may be necessary in order to achieve this." The proposed alternative provision at Ysgol Pen Barras (Welsh medium) and Rhos Street School (English medium) meets this requirement.	54	90%

10	<p>The Council has not proved that the proposed school at Glasdir will have sufficient capacity to accommodate the children from Ysgol Rhewl as well as the other schools involved, particularly in view of the levels of traffic that such a large school would need to generate. You state the new facilities will have a capacity of 450 pupils overall, can you confirm 450 pupils will be the overall capacity, including surplus places, of the new facilities on the Glasdir site?</p>	<p>The combined capacity of the two schools will be for approximate 450 full time pupils. The design of the schools for Rhos Street and Pen Barras will be finalised following the outcome of this statutory notice. This is to ensure that the development will not create excessive surplus places in other schools within the area.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken to identify the transport requirements of the new development and how this can be accommodated on the site. In addition safe pedestrian routes to school have also been identified and will form part of a transport plan for the site. The transport plan will be one of the documents submitted in the Planning Application.</p>	54	90%
11	<p>That the impact on the local and school communities would be excessive and has not been assessed properly.</p>	<p>The Authority acknowledges people have a strong emotional attachment to their current or former school. 'Community' is open to interpretation especially as to the geographical extent which can change according to context of discussion. Discussion of impact of school closures in smaller villages for example may refer to a 'local rural community'; people may refer to a wider geographical area as their 'community' in other contexts.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that a school's primary function is to provide pupils with the best educational experience. This is always the overriding issue to be considered in considering the viability of a school rather than the community use of the school buildings and the wider impact that the school has within its community. This is acknowledged in Denbighshire's Policy Framework for Modernising Education. . A Community Impact assessment has been undertaken which has identified activities which would be affected by the closure. Should the proposal be implemented work would be undertaken to mitigate the effect by assisting users to find alternative accommodation.</p>	52	87%

12	The information that is provided in the consultation document presents a false impression of the educational standards at the school; we challenge the amber classification.	<p>The information on educational standards in the consultation document is the current published data for the school. The data to be used is set out in the School Organisation Code 2013 and the Council is required to use the latest published data.</p> <p>The amber classification refers to the Welsh Government School Categorisation information published in the autumn of 2014. The information contained in the consultation document reflects the classification provided by the Welsh Government.</p>	2	3%
13	The information relating to the numbers of surplus places in the school does not reflect accurately the possibility of reducing this number given the additional housing development in the village.	The pupil projections in the consultation document are based on current pupil numbers and admissions to the school. The consultation document also refers to the number of houses likely to be built and based on the standard formula which is used to calculate pupil numbers from housing development to ensure a consistent approach across the council, that the number of primary age pupils would not be significant.	2	3%
14	The information relating to the costs of retaining and/or developing the Ysgol Rhewl site is not based on a factual assessment of what would be needed to satisfy the appropriate standards, and so the costs that are shown are misleading.	The information relating to the costs and / or developing the Ysgol Rhewl site is an estimate provided by qualified quantity surveyors. This approach is consistent to the approach used to determine the condition and cost of maintaining buildings across the Council's estate.	2	3%
15	The proposal to move the children to the Glasdir school does not meet the parental preference that their children be taught in a category 2 dual stream school;	<p>The School Organisation Code 2013 states: "In all cases, existing pupils at a school where provision is being reduced or removed must be able to continue receiving an education that provides at least equivalent standards and opportunities for progression in their current language medium."</p> <p>A dual stream provision should provide Welsh medium provision and English medium provision within the same school. Parents have to opt for one medium of provision for assessment at the end of each key stage.</p> <p>Parents may prefer to access a dual stream school, but the Authority is not</p>	3	5%

		required to provide dual stream schools.		
16	If parents decide to take their children to Glasdir by car it is unlikely that the site will be able to accommodate the number of vehicles safely.	During the design phase, architects are working in partnership with highways officers to develop an onsite traffic management system. Alongside this, a travel plan will be developed in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the onsite traffic management provision meets the need of the both schools. This information will be included as part of the planning application.	1	2%
17	The decisions that you have made have not been looked into correctly you have used poor analysis and data, and do not give justification for your reasons to close Ysgol Rhewl.	The data used in the consultation document was the latest data available regarding school performance and pupil numbers and is considered to be correct. The School Organisation Code also prescribes the types of data to be used. In considering whether to proceed with proposals to close the school the Cabinet considered the issues within the consultation report and the responses received before determining whether to publish statutory notices. Elected members called in the Cabinet decision for scrutiny and having considered the reasons given for requesting a review of Cabinet's decision, and the information provided at the meeting, determined that there was not sufficient reason to ask Cabinet to reconsider its decision of 2 nd June to publish a statutory notice to close Ysgol Rhewl. In particular this review examined the quality of data used.	1	2%
18	Welsh government have said that if we are to close a primary school we should be offering equal if not better facilities.	The proposed new schools for Rhos Street and Pen Barras will be new modern purpose built schools that will meet all building requirements. Pupils will have better facilities than what currently exists at Ysgol Rhewl.	1	2%
19	Have you previously found any impact upon existing schools due to proximity of new facilities within Denbighshire County? Did you undertake an assessment which	It is very difficult to predict the decisions that parents will make in future when selecting a primary school for their children. The evidence of the impact on existing schools of new school buildings	1	2%

	<p>specifically looked at the impact of the new facilities upon Ysgol Rhewl due to the proximity of the school to the Glasdir site?</p> <p>What did your assessment specifically in relation to the impact of the new facilities upon Ysgol Rhewl (due to proximity to the Glasdir site) find?</p> <p>Why does the consultation document contain no evidence of ‘impact of new facilities upon Ysgol Rhewl’?</p> <p>If no impact was found during the assessment why has this not been clearly stated within the consultation document?</p> <p>Why, if there is an impact upon existing schools specifically in relation to proximity of new facilities do you feel Ysgol Borthyn would be and remain to be unaffected by this?</p> <p>Did the consultation document mislead or lie about an impact due to proximity?</p> <p>Did your officer lie or mislead the public and scrutiny committee in relation to there being found no previous impact upon existing schools due to proximity of new facilities?</p>	<p>in Denbighshire is limited due to the fact that most new schools have been either been built recently or have replaced a number of existing schools. Within the example of Prestatyn following the opening of a new school at Ysgol Clawdd Offa in 2008, initially parents retained links with existing schools with the school growing mainly through new admissions. However where existing schools have improved facilities there is often additional demand arising.</p> <p>The informal consultation for the Ruthin Review asked parents to comment on what impacted upon their choice of schools. Out of the 8 factors within the question the quality of school buildings was ranked 7th.</p> <p>This suggests that the quality of school buildings, whilst very important to allow a school to provide a modern curriculum, may not be the overriding impact in a parents decision regarding school admissions and would be part of a range of factors.</p> <p>It is fair to assess the impact of the proximity of a new Glasdir development on Ysgol Rhewl considering that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the village of Rhewl is nearer to Glasdir than parts of Ruthin town such as Bro Deg and Castle Park, • Over 50% of the current pupils of Ysgol Rhewl pass Glasdir on their way to school, • Schools with new facilities are attractive to some parents. <p>Ysgol Borthyn is the largest Church in Wales primary school in Denbighshire. Retaining Ysgol Borthyn supports faith education provision within the Ruthin area. The admission number for the new Rhos Street School building will be set to ensure that excessive capacity does not occur which would impact on Ysgol Borthyn.</p>		
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20	<p>Is BB99 statutory? Consultation document 13.9 states,...“did not meet the required BB99 recommendations”. Are recommendations required? You seem confused also in your use of words. Are BB99 recommendations or regulations?</p> <p>Why do you mislead by saying they are regulations (to which you must adhere) when they are only recommendations? Can you categorically confirm that you will be strictly adhering to BB99 in building the new Glasdir facilities as you have been strict in applying BB99 to existing school sites?</p>	<p>Building Bulletin 99 (BB99) sets out non-statutory guidance on planning and designing accommodation for new and existing primary schools.</p> <p>The Authority considers compliance with this guidance important to ensure that the school estate is fit for purpose. BB99 guidance was referred to in section 13.9 of the consultation document as recommendations and in section 15.3 as regulations. This is clarified in the formal consultation report (page 31) as recommendations.</p> <p>Facilities on the new Glasdir site will seek to adhere to BB99 recommendations in accordance with the priorities of the schools.</p>	1	2%
21	<p>If you need the land owned by the Welsh Government for the new school facilities site in order for it to meet BB99, then the whole proposal is deeply flawed. Do you intend to change the Local Development Plan allocation of housing on the land beyond the eastern boundary of that owned by Denbighshire County Council (as of May 2013) on the Glasdir site? Is it true that this seems to indicate a willingness to change the local plan for one proposal and being unable to change it or be unwilling to change it for another proposal.</p>	<p>The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the proposals and policies for future development and use of land in Denbighshire. Our LDP was adopted in June 2013. The LDP determines where new development will take place, taking into account amongst others, the need for employment land, housing, shops and leisure facilities. Schools form part of the infrastructure.</p> <p>The Glasdir site requires the exchange of land between Welsh Government and Denbighshire County Council. This will allow for better use of the land available. The Authority believes it is logical to use available land in the best way to ensure that essential infrastructure such as schools can work effectively.</p>	1	2%
22	<p>Ysgol Rhewl is a classic village school providing one to one pastoral care to the children. Children feel more secured and loved, provide a rounded development and instils confidence. It is always about quality and not volume. The teachers and staff are an excellent bunch. The new school will not be able to offer the same level of individual care as the smaller more intimate school environment that a village school provides.</p>	<p>The authority has recognised the contribution of the staff of Ysgol Rhewl to creating a good school. The authority has emphasised during the consultation that the proposal is about the provision of school places (proximity, condition and surplus) and not a judgement on educational outcomes.</p> <p>An “Inquiry into the re-organisation of Schools in Rural Wales (Nov 2008)” by the Rural Development Sub-Committee of the Welsh Government stated “Other than anecdotal evidence from parents who suggested that small schools were</p>	2	3%

		better and that children were happier in them, the Committee received little quantifiable evidence on the detrimental effect on pupils resulting from school reorganisation”.		
23	How many redundancies would be made due to the merger of schools involved?	No schools are being merged in this proposal as it relates to the closure of Ysgol Rhewl. Should the proposal be implemented, the staff of Ysgol Rhewl will be supported by the human resources department of Denbighshire County Council. In other school closures, some staff have been redeployed, some have taken retirement and others have been made redundant. Redundancy is possible but not a certainty.	5	8%
24	I am greatly concerned about the proposed class sizes.	Class sizes at both alternative schools are currently significantly below the recommended maximum pupil number of 30. Class sizes will vary according to pupil numbers. The majority of funding for schools is derived according to pupil numbers. Should pupil numbers increase the pupil teacher ratio will increase up to a point when additional teaching staff can be funded. It is acknowledged in the consultation document that the current pupil teacher ratio for Ysgol Rhewl is marginally less than the proposed alternatives.	2	3%