

Objections to closing Ysgol Babanod Coedmawr and Ysgol Glanadda and building a new school for Ysgol y Garnedd by increasing the capacity to 420.

(4 September 2018 – 2 October 2018)

Comments		Response from Gwynedd Council
1	Traffic	
	<p>I would first of all like to draw your attention to the fact that the proposed changes do not improve the worrying and dangerous situation that exists along Penrhos Road during key times of the day. As I am sure you are aware, traffic is extremely heavy in the morning on this road as educational centres such as Coleg Menai, Ysgol Tryfan, Ysgol Cae Top, Ysgol Friars, Ysgol y Faenol and Ysgol y Garnedd (as it is at present) all attempt to get children and students to their centres in the morning.</p>	<p>Traffic surveys have been conducted on Penrhos Road and surveys of how pupils travel to the school have been completed. The design team has considered these in creating the designs, with the intention of mitigating traffic flow risks, for pedestrians and cyclists and creating safe routes to school. This is one of the main objectives of the project.</p> <p>The car parks and the children drop off areas have now been designed and the new development will contribute to improving the current traffic situation in two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It will provide over 30 parking spaces in addition to the existing availability. 2. A new loop system will enable vehicles to easily turn off Penrhos Road and await their turn within the site rather than on Penrhos Road which is the current situation. The design of the roads within the site will enable a significant number of cars to be removed from Penrhos Road at peak times. Parents will be able to drop their children off within a reasonable walking distance of the school entrance. <p>The two factors above should lead to an improvement not only for parents and staff of Ysgol y Garnedd, but for all individuals who use this part of Penrhos Road during peak hours.</p>
	<p>We believe that consideration should be given to reopening the way from Holyhead Road up Bryn Tawel Hill to give a choice of access to many of the education centres noted above. This would reduce the need for everyone to use Penrhos Road and therefore alleviate a great deal of the problem described above. As there is now a roundabout at the Nantporth football field entrance, it is suggested that passengers from the direction of the Antelope would go to this roundabout to make a U-turn then go up Bryn Tawel Hill</p>	<p>The ability to reopen the road is beyond the scope of the Project and there is no direct link with the site. The Transport Unit has confirmed that the road was initially closed because of the dangers of the junction/traffic crossing, the weight restrictions on the railway bridge and the impact on overall traffic flow in the Holyhead Road area.</p>

	safely without having to cross the flow of traffic. We ask that you give serious consideration to the above.	
2	Pupil safety / travelling to school	
	Although some effort has been made for the institutions to start at different times, it has not affected the situation much if at all, as the situation will worsen due to the increase in the number of pupils attending in this area. The situation will also get worse as there is an expectation that children from Coed Mawr and Glanadda will cross this road to gain access to the school.	The situation regarding the starting times of the schools could possibly be re-examined to gauge whether a further change would improve safety. Traffic surveys have been conducted on Penrhos Road and surveys of how pupils travel to the school have been completed. The design team will be working to mitigate traffic flow risks, for pedestrians and cyclists and creating safe routes to school.
3	Finance	
	Turning to the situation of the two schools which are recommended for closure, as you are aware, the schools have now again merged on the Glanadda site under the leadership of a new Head Teacher, Ms Caren Rowlands, who is on secondment from Ysgol Glancegin. This has provided a feeling of unity amongst staff, and pupils receive wider experiences in terms of curricular and extra-curricular activities. When the Cabinet considered the situation at the beginning of the summer of 2018, it was emphasised that both schools had an unacceptable number of vacancies and that the cost per head was much higher than in other schools in the city. By joining together at one site, this is no longer the case, with the number of surplus spaces similar, if not less, than many of the other schools in the county. Also, with staff restructuring, the cost per head is much closer to the norm. Therefore, the situation of the school is closer to many other schools within the county and, in terms of both headings, is surely viable.	Locating Ysgol Glanadda and Coedmawr on one site has contributed to a reduction in surplus spaces, however the schools continue to be separate legal entities and both schools continue to be financed separately in line with the Authority's primary education finance formula. As a consequence, there is no reduction in the cost per pupil and Ysgol Coedmawr continues to receive a minimum staffing protection of £32,520.
4	Facilities / Maintenance	
	I believe, contrary to the Cabinet's wish, that Ysgol Glanadda should be kept open, giving children in the area the choice of having a more local education and on a site that has facilities such as a football field and a building, which despite its age, is in a much better condition than many schools in Gwynedd. The County Council during Summer 2018 has spent on adapting the school to receive Foundation Phase children and this provision is working well. It would be a shame to see the investment being wasted in the short term in a climate where every penny counts.	There has been some expenditure during the summer holidays to adapt the building to admit Foundation Phase learners from the Coed Mawr site. The decision was taken to facilitate the move through the minimum amount of work to keep the costs as low as possible. The work done meets the needs in the short term, but if the facility needed to be in place for a few years, then a significant amount of work would need to be done to the building, e.g. the modification of toilets.

5	Admissions	
	I also understand from the beginning of the term that the school continues to receive applications for pupils transferring and therefore it is projected that numbers will continue to rise during the year. Therefore, the criteria put forward at the beginning of the summer as the basis for the debate over the closure of these two schools should be reconsidered.	As no final decisions been taken, the Council will continue to process applications for entry/transfer for the schools. This will have an impact on pupil numbers.
6	Ein Harglwyddes	
	In addition to the above, I believe that there are plans in the pipeline when the new tier of Welsh Government funding arrives to improve schools which includes relocating Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes. In the Council's discussions with all of the Bangor Catchment Area Schools, the condition and dangers of Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes were highlighted and a promise was made that a new school would be offered when the money was received from the Government. I understand that building a new school will not cost Gwynedd Council as the money received from the Government and the Catholic Church would bear the burden of the cost. By closing Ysgol Glanadda in two years, the site will become vacant and would therefore be a great place to establish the new school. On the face of it, this is a sensible theory.	There is an intention to consider a new building for Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes as part of the vision for the Bangor Catchment Area which addresses the safety and entrance to the school. However, no decision has been made regarding possible sites at this stage.
7	The Welsh Language	
	We must remember that Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes teaches and administrates in the English language which, contrary to basic principles of Gwynedd Council, is still being tolerated. The language element here appeals to a large percentage of the population in this part of Bangor. Our concern is if parents of the area were able to choose between the new Ysgol y Garnedd a Welsh medium school and the new Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes which will operate through the English language, they will choose the most local school which is the second choice. We therefore object the closure of Ysgol Glanadda on the principle that we see this as a huge step back in the effort to try to promote the Welsh language in the City and of course a negative step in the Welsh Government's efforts of obtaining a million Welsh speakers. If the Cabinet runs with the plan as it stands by closing Ysgol Glanadda, the Cabinet we believe are making a decision to promote education through the medium of English in this area of	Gwynedd Council has developed a Language Policy in order to ensure that the Council and Council Staff continue to promote the Welsh language. The Language Policy is the same for all Gwynedd primary schools, and it is expected to be implemented by all schools. It is expected that all education institutions in the County, reflect and reinforce the Language Policy in their administration, social life and pastoral arrangements as well as in their curricular provision. The Council has also developed the Language Charter as a specific scheme which operates in every primary school in Gwynedd to encourage the social use of Welsh by children and to promote awareness of the schools' Welsh language culture.

	Bangor and neither I nor the could favour doing so. Promises of strong efforts to change the language situation in Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes will not persuade us because it has not happened in the last 30 years despite valiant efforts	
8	Educational	
	<p>The schools have not had any extended period of stability in leadership with ten and more heads appointed. You will understand that this affects every aspect of the administration of the schools and, of course, makes parents lose confidence in the school without even talking about the school's reputation in the community. Over the period it is fair to say that quite critical reports have been issued by inspectors to do with leadership. Over the past year, the school has made concrete steps to improve the situation and the GwE monitoring reports are evidence of this and it is expected for this good work to continue into the future. We believe that the above comments are enough reasons to re-consider the decision to close the schools. We believe that no final decision on the fate of the schools should be taken without letting them operate for at least eighteen months without the threat of closure over their heads.</p>	<p>It is true to say that the school has found it hard to recruit and retain a permanent Headteacher, and this possibly could have had an impact on the standards. As a consequence, the Authority and GwE have planned intensive support for the schools with the support of the Governing Body, and the schools have made progress. However, the schools' current situation is dependant on continuing the high level of support.</p>