

Response from the Governing body of Dyffryn Banw primary school to the proposal being put forward to the Cabinet on Wednesday 18th July with regards to the future of education in the Banw Valley.

- The Banw site has a campus feel, the school and hall attached, surrounded by extensive lawns, playing fields, mature trees, a stone circle-Cerrig orsedd Eisteddfod Powys and orchard. The school is combined with a large community hall (they share a heating system) which is a vital social and community resource for the whole Banw Community, from Llanerfyl to the Foel. Regular social events are held in the Community Hall which attract clubs and societies from all three villages in the Banw Community and beyond, including Young Farmers Club, Banw Football Club, Theatr Maldwyn, Merched y Wawr, etc. It is also to host the Powys Eisteddfod in 2019.
- The Banw Community includes Llanerfyl, Llangadfan, and Foel. Banw School being in Llangadfan is therefore central of the 3 villages and this site is the most central for the whole area.
- The high proportion of English speaking parents at Banw School is an indicator that it is an attractive draw to non-welsh speaking parents, who have confidence in the school to provide their children with an excellent education. It is a beacon for welsh medium education in the area producing fluent welsh speakers that perform to the highest standard in the Urdd Eisteddfod, as evidenced by their presence at the National Eisteddfod year after year.
- Prospective parents visiting the school are always impressed by the appearance of the school, the quality of the teaching space, the outdoor areas, as well as the quality of the teaching staff, friendliness of staff and pupils. The classrooms are light and airy, colourful and tidy, and the outdoor spaces include a large playing field, garden with vegetable beds, and a playground with disabled access throughout. There is a large car park suitable for buses for easy and safe collection and drop off of children.
- Planning permission has recently been granted for 2 new family homes in Llangadfan, with the expected increase in children numbers. Local needs building plots are available around the village and have the potential to bring more children to the area. The identified drop in pupil numbers may not be clear cut - a new school needs to be mindful of this – it needs to be future proofed. Banw School has a good capacity to take such an increase in numbers, and has the ability to accommodate pre-school children.
- It is accepted that a new single school is needed in the Banw Community, and its vital that this is a school that is suitable in terms of condition and facilities to deliver the new curriculum, and continue to provide the excellent quality of welsh medium education currently being provided in Banw School.
- The current status of the Llanerfyl School being a Church in Wales School should not have a bearing on the choice of that site being selected for the new school. There is no reason why a new School on the Banw campus could not be a Church in Wales School.
- The proposal for the new school to be a Church in Wales school (or not) should be consulted upon as there are parents that do not want their children to attend a Church in Wales school (note that the consultation did identify that this was the case).

Given the independent building report provided by HOWPS identified the Llanerfyl site as being “C/D Poor / Bad” under their Suitability rating, how are Powys CC proposing to make the Llanerfyl Site suitable ?

£1M capital investment is proposed – where is that coming from ? Is that guaranteed / definite ? Parents would need certainty that this is going to be made or they can not be expected to send their children to a new school on that site with such a poor rating.

As Powys don't own the site at Llanerfyl for the substantial investment to take place would the site need to be purchased by Powys? Can Powys justify the investment on land not under their ownership?

Alternatively - the Banw Site has a Class B suitability rating – Generally Satisfactory – and does not require £1M investment to make it suitable – why is this not the recommended site ? Pupil numbers are generally the same (low) in both communities, Church in Wales status can be placed on either site. If the £1M investment is not forthcoming / guaranteed, then the new school would be poor/bad in terms of suitability criteria and would be failing the children and the future children of the Banw community.

Prospective parents are very mindful of that when choosing where to send their children to school. Incoming families/prospective parents would inevitably prefer a better school facility where children do not have to eat their meals at their desks, with full disabled access, a car park and playing fields. The next nearest school option after closing Banw would be Llanfair Caereinion where if they go in the English stream they will get free transport. If they go in the welsh stream they will not get free transport. There is therefore a high risk that by choosing the Llanerfyl site the recommendation will result in families sending their children into the English stream education. It would have a serious and devastating impact on welsh language being spoken in the area, the children will not learn it at school, with the far reaching repercussions on the community and welsh culture as a whole.

We believe strongly that the decision must be based on an objective review of the facilities available at both sites.