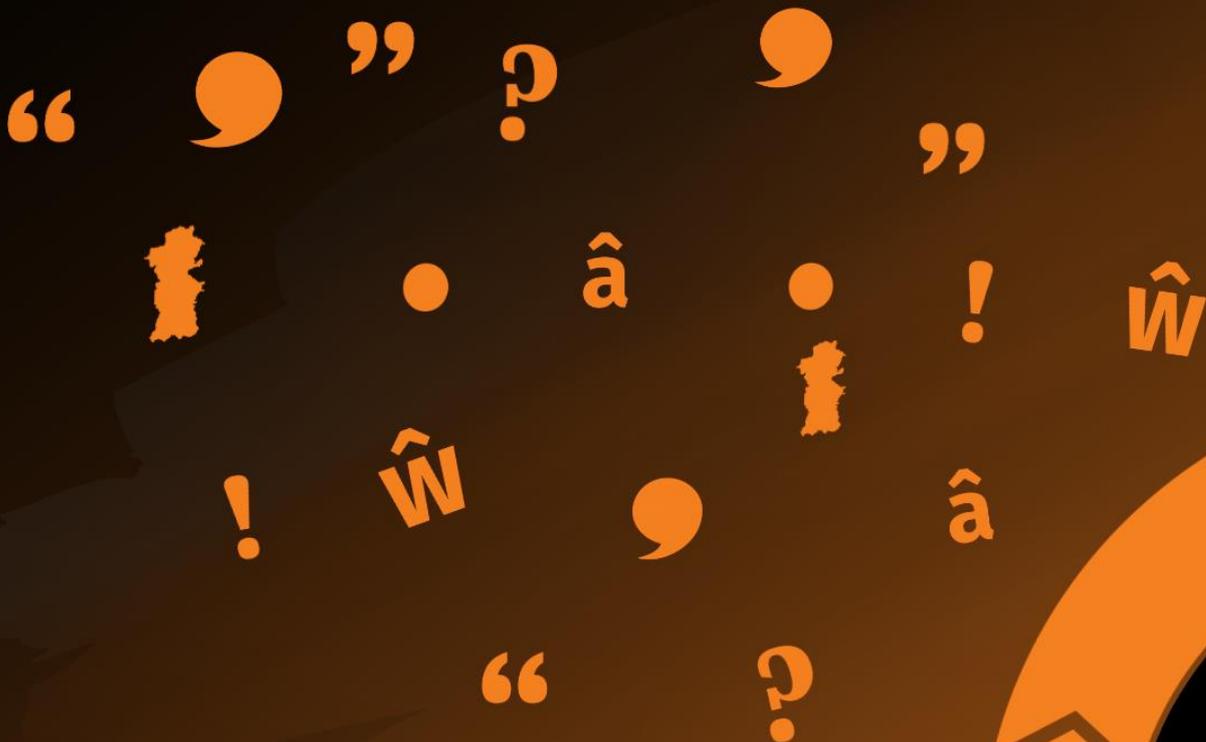




Changing the language category of Ysgol
Dyffryn Trannon
Objection Report



**Proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn
Trannon**

Objection Report

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Consultation on changing the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

Objection Report

1. BACKGROUND

Powys County Council consulted on proposals to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon from Dual Stream to Welsh-medium. The consultation took place from the 25th February 2021 to the 15th April 2021. The Council published a consultation report outlining the findings of the consultation exercise.

On 22nd June 2021, the Council's Cabinet agreed to proceed with the proposal, and a Statutory Notice was published from the 24th June 2021 to the 22nd July 2021.

The proposals were as follows:

From 31 August 2022:

- i) To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, Trefeglwys, Powys, SY17 5PH from Dual Stream to Welsh-medium.
- ii) This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

The proposal would be introduced on a phased basis as the pupils joining the school's Reception class in September 2022 move through the school. The phasing of the implementation for each year group would be as follows:

Reception – September 2022

Year 1 – September 2023

Year 2 – September 2024

Year 3 – September 2025

Year 4 – September 2026

Year 5 – September 2027

Year 6 – September 2028

2. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

2 objections were received during the statutory objection period. Objections were received from the following:

- Trefeglwys Community Council
- Member of the community

The objections received are outlined on the following pages, along with the Council's response.

3. ISSUES RAISED DURING THE OBJECTION PERIOD

The objections received are outlined below, along with the local authority's response to the issues raised.

Objection 1

(Duplication of a response submitted during the consultation period.)

Issue	Points raised	Council response
1.1	We were disappointed when the proposal was first announced and feel that it takes away choice from people living locally who do not wish to send their children through Welsh Medium and will therefore have to travel out of the area to reach an English Medium school.	<p>Comments noted. However, the majority of people attending Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon choose Welsh-medium provision, and the proposal to change the school's language category to Welsh-medium reflects this choice.</p> <p>Pupils/parents are entitled to apply for a place in any school they choose. Should the Council proceed with the proposal to change Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon's language category, pupils / parents would be able to apply for a place in an alternative school which offers English-medium provision, should that be their preference. Whilst it is acknowledged that this would require additional travel for any pupils choosing to travel to alternative schools, there are three English-medium schools located within a few miles of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, therefore the additional travel distance would be minimal.</p>
1.2	The timing of this consultation is not helpful as offering more meetings and face to face Q & A's would have been beneficial to Powys County Council (PCC) during their consultation and more local residents would have been reached in order to share the details of the proposal.	The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. Whilst acknowledging that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global

	More effort should have been made by PCC to ensure that parents of pupils currently at the school and local residents were made aware of the consultation and given as much opportunity as possible to provide their views.	pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.
1.3	Lack of engagement with the local community and school community to provide information of the consultation and encourage views from as many people as possible.	The consultation has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. 80 responses were received to the consultation exercise, which the Council considers to be a reasonable level of responses considering the nature of the proposal. In addition, virtual consultation meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils at the school.
1.4	The numbers have been low in the English Medium for some time but there is no evidence that either PCC or the school have attempted to promote or publicise the English Medium route at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon. Current figures, taken from the consultation document, are 97 in Welsh Medium and 12 in English Medium. Promotion of the English Medium availability may have encouraged more parents to choose this option and prevent the current proposal;	Promoting the English-medium stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is not part of the Council's role. As outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys and to contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the Council's priority is to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision, to increase the number of Powys pupils that are fully bilingual in Welsh and English.
1.5	How has the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act' been met within this proposal?	The requirements of the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act' have been considered in the impact assessment which has been prepared as part of this process. An initial draft impact assessment was considered by Cabinet when determining whether or not to carry out consultation and was published with the consultation documentation. This was updated to reflect feedback received during the consultation period, and the updated version was considered by Cabinet when determining whether to

		<p>proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice. The impact assessment will be further updated to reflect feedback received during the Objection Period, and the updated version will be considered by Cabinet when determining whether to proceed with implementation of the proposal.</p>
1.6	<p>'Community cohesion' is not present here as children living within the village that wish to access English Medium will not be able to walk to their local school and instead have to travel out of the area;</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that the proposal could cause some tensions within the local community in the short term, however in the long term the Council would hope that the proposal would improve community cohesion, as all pupils would attend the same provision.</p> <p>As indicated in the Integrated Impact Assessment published as part of the consultation documentation:</p> <p><i>'In the short term, it is possible that the proposal to change the school's language category could lead to tensions and disagreement within the local community, in particular whilst consultation processes are ongoing. However only around 10% of the pupils currently attending Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon currently attend the English stream, and there are no pupils currently in the English stream in Reception or year 1. Eventually, it is expected that any community tensions would diminish, and in the longer term as the change in language category is implemented, it is expected that the proposal would help to improve community cohesion, as all pupils in the area would be fluent in both Welsh and English.'</i></p>

1.7	Local families being forced out of area to access English Medium education will have a negative impact on the carbon footprint for the area;	<p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, the Council would hope that pupils living in Trefeglwys would access Welsh-medium provision at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, therefore no additional travel would be required.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that some pupils may choose to access alternative provision, which would require some additional travel. This is acknowledged in the updated impact assessment which was considered by Cabinet on the 22nd June 2021, which states:</p> <p>‘It is acknowledged, however, that some pupils may choose to access alternative English-medium provision, instead of accessing Welsh-medium provision at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, which could have an environmental impact following an increase in transport, and could impact on the ability of parents / pupils living in Trefeglwys to walk/cycle to school.’</p>
1.8	There is an alarmingly high number of accounts and allegations that previous and current Head Teachers of the school have actively dissuaded parents of prospective pupils of the English Medium from sending their child/ren through the English Medium route and as a result has lost pupils to other local schools altogether;	<p>As outlined in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys and to contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Government’s Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the Council’s priority is to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision, to increase the number of Powys pupils that are fully bilingual in Welsh and English.</p> <p>The Council would expect all schools that offer Welsh-medium education to share information with parents about the benefits of Welsh-medium education, with the aim of encouraging parents to choose Welsh-medium education.</p>

		<p>The Council's Admissions information has stated that Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is a dual stream school, and any parent could have applied for a place at the school's English stream. Applications for places at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon are processed centrally by the Council. Any applications for places in the English-medium stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon would have been processed in accordance with the Council's admissions process.</p>
1.9	<p>We have heard that some parents have removed their children from Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon from both English and Welsh Mediums to move to a different school due to the views and conduct of the management of the school in relation to the Welsh and English Mediums;</p>	<p>Pupils/parents are entitled to apply for a place in any school they choose. Any parents that have wished their children to attend schools other than Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, or to transfer from Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon to other schools are entitled to apply for a place in the school of their choice.</p>
1.10	<p>We have been told that families have moved into the area on the understanding that Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon was a dual stream school and now feel that they have been lied to;</p>	<p>Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon currently is a dual stream school. The Council is currently proposing to change the school's language category on a phased basis, starting with Reception in September 2022. The consultation exercise carried out provided an opportunity for all stakeholders, including any families that believed they had been 'lied to', to raise these concerns. All issues raised during the consultation were considered by the Council's Cabinet as they determined whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>The Objection Period provided a further opportunity for any parents that felt they had been 'lied to' to raise these concerns. No objections were received from parents stating they felt they had been 'lied to'.</p>

1.11	<p>There are a number of accounts of a previous Head Teacher having actively and overtly dissuaded parents away from the English Medium at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon. It seems that this has had the effect of gradually lowering the numbers accessing the English Medium over a number of years. If this is the case then the numbers as detailed within the consultation document, although a true representation of the actual numbers on roll, are not a true reflection of the number of local families who would be accessing the English Medium had they not been pushed away from that route. It appears there is a strong possibility that the English stream had been discriminated against and there appears to be evidence that could substantiate this. If this is the case, this is a very serious matter and could be deemed unlawful and should not be overlooked;</p>	<p>The proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is based on the small number of pupils currently accessing the English-medium stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon.</p> <p>As outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys and to contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the Council's priority is to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision, to increase the number of Powys pupils that are fully bilingual in Welsh and English.</p> <p>The Council would expect all schools that offer Welsh-medium education to share information with parents about the benefits of Welsh-medium education, with the aim of encouraging parents to choose Welsh-medium education.</p> <p>The Council does not agree that the 'English stream has been discriminated against'. Parents are entitled to apply for a place in whichever school they choose, and this choice will be accommodated in accordance with the Council's Admissions Policy where there are places available.</p>
1.12	<p>The cost of transporting children to schools should also be a consideration. The current costs of children that are being brought to the school from Caersws, Llanidloes and other local areas, noting that not all the current numbers attending the school come from the village and local area. This proposal will increase the cost of transportation as there will be local people who wish to use English</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that a number of current pupils at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon are transported to the school from areas such as Caersws and Llanidloes in order to access Welsh-medium provision.</p> <p>Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is the only provider of Welsh-medium primary provision in the Llanidloes catchment, therefore pupils from across the catchment area travel to</p>

	<p>Medium education and will be required to send their child to a different school;</p>	<p>the school to access this provision. This is in-line with many other Welsh-medium providers across Powys and Wales, which operate as providers of Welsh-medium education for whole catchment areas.</p> <p>Should the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon be implemented, the Council would hope that pupils living in Trefeglwys would access Welsh-medium provision at the school. However, should pupils choose to attend alternative English-medium provision, access to free home to school transport would be in accordance with the home to school transport policy which is in operation at the time. The policy which is due to be introduced in September 2021 would not provide transport for pupils living in Trefeglwys to access their closest English-medium provider, therefore there would be no additional transport costs to the Council following implementation of the proposal.</p>
1.13	<p>How does Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon fits into the ‘Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030’ along with other local schools such as the newly built school in Carno?</p>	<p>The Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30 includes a Strategic Aim ‘To improve access to Welsh-medium provision’ and the following four Strategic Objectives:</p> <p>S.O.3.1 - Move schools along the language continuum S.O.3.2 - Develop new primary and secondary provision S.O.3.3 - Work with Mudiad Meithrin to establish new early years provision S.O.3.4 - Develop immersion opportunities</p> <p>The current proposal for to Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon relates to Strategic Objective S.O.3.1</p>

		<p>Ysgol Carno is a Welsh-medium school. Following a review of schools in the Machynlleth/Llanidloes area a few years ago, it was agreed to formally federate the three Welsh-medium primary schools in that area, and an extension was provided to the community centre in Carno to replace the ageing demountable that the school had been using for years.</p>
1.14	<p>We have been told that schools with under 90 pupils are classed as 'small schools' and are therefore at risk of closure should their numbers not increase over 90. The proposal will therefore put Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon into this category or very close to it, this is of obvious concern as local residents do not want to face the possible closure of the local school. In addition to this point, is it not the case that two of the closest schools with English Medium provision, Llandinam and Caersws, are both well under 90 pupils and therefore could be at threat of closure therefore? Not only this, but the other nearby option for English Medium education is Ysgol Gynradd Llanidloes which is close to capacity. These surely are valid reasons to keep the English Medium option available in Trefeglwys and whole heartedly promote it to increase numbers?</p>	<p>The Welsh Government's definition of a small school is schools that have less than 91 pupils. The Council's Strategy for Transforming Education has identified that there are too many small schools in the county, but this does not mean that all schools below 91 are planned to close.</p> <p>The Council is not currently proposing any changes to any other schools in the Llanidloes catchment. Should the Council wish to take forward any proposals relating to any of these schools in the future, the Council would need to follow the process outlined in the School Organisation Code, which would provide an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any concerns.</p>
1.15	<p>We have received information from a local parent who has recently moved her child from Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon to Ysgol Gynradd Llanidloes. We have learned that as far back as 2017 parents of children in the school had concerns over the future of the English Medium within the school and attempted to make strides to turn the</p>	<p>As outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys and to contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the Council's priority is to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision, to increase the number of Powys pupils that are fully bilingual in Welsh and English.</p>

	<p>prospects of the English Medium around and promote it fully to encourage more parents to utilise it. These attempts were fruitless and never acted upon despite the offer of time and expertise from a number of passionate parents who were willing to help the school make the changes required;</p>	<p>The Council notes the concerns that the school has not done enough to promote the English-medium provision at the school, however as indicated above, the Council's priority is to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision. The Council would expect all schools that offer Welsh-medium education to share information with parents about the benefits of Welsh-medium education, with the aim of encouraging parents to choose Welsh-medium education.</p>
1.16	<p>In light of the potential closure of more small schools, what would happen if more local small schools close to the pupils who attend them if they require English medium education as this would no longer be available at Trefeglwys and Llanidloes primary school is almost at capacity already?</p>	<p>The Council is not currently proposing any changes to any other schools in the Llanidloes catchment. Should the Council wish to take forward any proposals relating to any of these schools in the future, the Council would need to follow the process outlined in the School Organisation Code, which would provide an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any concerns.</p>
1.17	<p>The above points are of great concern and we feel that PCC should delay this consultation to investigate the above points as the numbers it is basing this proposal on are misleading. Information should be requested from local families who have experienced bias away from the English Medium and ascertain what the number would actually be had parents not been turned away.</p>	<p>The Council does not agree that the proposal is based on 'misleading' numbers. The proposal is based on the small number of pupils currently accessing the English-medium stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon.</p> <p>Parents who felt that they have 'experienced bias away from the English Medium' have had the opportunity to provide their views on the proposal during the consultation period. The comments received are summarised in section 9.3 of the consultation report produced in respect of this proposal, as well as the Council's response to the comments. These were considered by the Council's</p>

		<p>Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>There was a further opportunity for any parents to raise these concerns during the Objection Period, however no comments were received from parents which referred to experiencing bias away from the English Medium.</p>
1.18	We are deeply concerned about the impact should this proposal go through and are strongly opposed to it.	<p>Comment noted. As outlined in the consultation document issued in respect of this proposal, the numbers currently accessing the English stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon are very low, and also means that not all pupils attending the school have the opportunity become fully bilingual in Welsh and English.</p> <p>All issues raised in the consultation responses received were considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal. Having considered these comments, the Cabinet's decision was to proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice. The Cabinet will consider this Objection Report in order to determine whether to proceed with implementation of the proposal.</p>
1.19	We feel that the option of keeping the school as it is at present would provide PCC more time to investigate the allegations mentioned and create a full picture of the true situation as to whether there is a need for the English Medium in the area. Also to look into how the English Medium can be maintained at the school alongside the Welsh Medium so as not to discriminate against or misrepresent the local community.	<p>Retaining the status quo at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon was suggested in the consultation responses received, the comments received are outlined in section 24.1 of the Consultation Report.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, 'the number of pupils accessing English-medium provision at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon are currently low, and the model does not provide</p>

		the opportunity for all pupils attending the school to become bilingual in Welsh and English.’
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Objection 2

Issue	Points raised	Council response
2.1	PCC presented a number of options and a clearly identified preferred option but the options did not include consideration of assessing provision on a cluster basis, which would be logical given the number of small schools and surplus places within close proximity and so are also covered by their Transforming Education Strategy, whilst the consultation presented a number of options they were not sensible.	<p>The Council does not agree that the options considered in the consultation document ‘were not sensible’. The focus of the proposal in respect of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon was the school’s language category, and a number of options were considered relating to the school’s language category.</p> <p>Following approval of the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in April 2020, the Council is currently taking forward a wide range of proposals affecting a number of schools. This include some proposals which affect individual schools, some proposals which affect groups of schools, and others which are the outcome of strategic reviews of catchment areas.</p> <p>A review of the Llanidloes catchment area will take place in Wave 2 of the Transformation Programme. However, the Council’s view is that the current model of delivery in Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is unsustainable due to the small number or pupils currently accessing English-medium provision at the school.and requires addressing sooner. Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is in a unique position within the Llanidloes cluster as the only provider of Welsh-medium primary education.</p>

		Should the Council wish to take forward any proposals relating to any other schools in the catchment area in the future, the Council would need to follow the process outlined in the School Organisation Code, which would provide an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any concerns. The current proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon does not mean that the school may not be affected by other proposals in the future.
2.2	There is a comment in the consultation report from one respondent stating that the Portfolio Holder for Education had pre-determined themselves. Why did this not raise red flags on process within the authority? What level of discussion did this specific point have within the scrutiny committee and cabinet?	<p>As stated in the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal, 'The outcome of this process has not been pre-determined.'</p> <p>The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 22nd June 2021 when the Consultation Report in respect of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon was considered states that 'County Councillor Phyl Davies declared a personal interest in the report on Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon as a governor of the school and as having a pre-determined position.'</p> <p>The paper was presented by the Leader, not the Portfolio Holder for Education, and the Portfolio Holder for Education did not take part in the Cabinet's vote on whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
2.3	Responses within the Consultation must be conscientiously taken into account and decision makers have to be able to prove that they have done this. In my view there is no evidence of that within the consultation report but just a series of statements defending the authority's stance and telling respondents they were wrong.	The Council does not agree with this statement. The Consultation Report is an extensive document of 142 pages which summarises the issues raised during the consultation period and provide the Council's responses to these issues. It is not the case that the responses provided are 'just a series of statements defending the authority's stance and telling respondents they were wrong.'

		<p>The Consultation Report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 22nd June – the minutes of the Cabinet meeting state that ‘Cabinet considered responses to the proposal to make a regulated alternation to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon...’, and the first recommendation agreed by Cabinet was ‘To receive the Consultation Report in respect of changing the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon.’</p> <p>The Consultation Report was also considered by the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on the 16th June 2021, and their comments were also considered by Cabinet.</p>
2.4	What evidence is there those members have had a chance to look at the consultation responses in full.	Members considered the Consultation Report produced in respect of the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal. The Consultation Report is a lengthy 142 page document which provides a detailed summary of the issues raised in the consultation responses received, along with the Council’s response to these issues raised. The full minutes of the Consultation Meetings held during the consultation period were also included with the papers considered by Cabinet.
2.5	What records from scrutiny committee and cabinet show the level of conscientious consideration?	Recordings of the meeting of the Learning and Skills Committee held on the 16 th June 2021 and of the Cabinet meeting held on the 22 nd June 2021 are available on the Council’s website, as well as the minutes of these meetings.

