

28 November 2016

Dear Stakeholder

Welsh Medium Consultation – 21 November to 9 January

Following the publication of the consultation document by Powys County Council this week we wanted to share some thoughts that you should be aware of in regards to the content of the consultation document.

The Governing Body is clear that they wish to see the continuation of a Welsh Medium stream at Brecon High School. They recognise that this has to be one that is financially viable and so there must be growth for Welsh Medium education in the catchment area of the school.

There are a number of points raised in the consultation document, on more than one occasion, which should be considered carefully;

Numbers in the Welsh Stream – The reduction in numbers in the Welsh Stream is cited on a number of occasions as a factor in favour of removing the Welsh Stream from the school. The reduction in numbers is directly related to the two previous consultations which have been held. Without these consultations it is reasonable to expect that the numbers would have been at least similar to previous years. This is only acknowledged at one point in the consultation document.

The Welsh Medium Curriculum – Given the reduction in numbers and the resultant impact on school income, the curriculum for the Welsh Stream in Key Stage 3 had to be reduced to make it more financially viable. With small numbers entering KS4 it is inevitable that there would be a reduction in the curriculum, especially around option subjects. An increase in the numbers will lead to developing the breadth of the curriculum once again.

Post 16 Welsh Medium Options – It has been stated that we do not offer A-levels through the medium of Welsh. Through the agreement of the South Powys Post 16 Consortium this provision is centred on Builth Wells High School, so it was never the case that Brecon High School would be offering these courses. This is not a failing of the school. The South Powys Consortium helps to maintain access to A-levels through the medium of Welsh for learners from Brecon.

Impact on Ysgol-y-Bannau - There is recognition of an impact on the pupil numbers at Ysgol-y-Bannau, should the proposal go ahead. There is mention of support for the school to help ensure that numbers can be at least maintained, if not grow, to help numbers transferring to Builth Wells. Why can there not be the same support for Ysgol-y-Bannau in supporting a Welsh Medium stream at Brecon High School?

Numbers of pupils transferring to Brecon High School's Welsh Medium Stream at the end of Year 6

– The numbers transferring to Brecon High School have been very low for the last two years. This is directly due to the uncertainty caused by the previous consultations. Parents are very clear, they need to have certainty; they have not had this, which has led to parents making difficult decisions which has affected the numbers at Brecon High School.

The Impact on Transport – The commitment to one Welsh Medium stream in the South/Mid Powys area will also mean a long term commitment to the additional transport costs for providing access to this provision. These costs will only rise over time. The current costs are at least £100,000 per year.

The decision to remove the Welsh Medium Stream could not be reversed - With the school now in a position where it should be able to move into new premises from September 2019 the planning for these new premises could be completed in the knowledge there would be no Welsh Medium stream. This makes it very difficult to provide a Welsh Medium stream in the future, in a school that potentially is only planned for English Medium. Welsh Medium pupils will miss out on the opportunity to attend a new school, with all the new facilities it will have.

We would draw your attention to the consultation report, which was published at the end of August. A copy of this can be found on the Powys County Council website - <http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/corporate/find-out-about-consultations-in-powys/past-consultations/brecon-and-gwernyfed-high-schools/>. The document is called "consultation analysis". This summarised the points raised in the previous consultation and acts as a good reminder of the many valid points which were raised previously.

We hope this is useful to you as you make a written response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely



David Meredith
Chair of Governors



Rob Broadbridge
Headteacher