

Fforwm Ysgolion Cynradd Primary Schools Forum

Sir
Gâr



Ymgyrchu i ddiogelu a datblygu ein hysgolion pentrefol - Campaigning to safeguard and develop our village schools

What the Council did NOT tell you about their education plans...

Many will have seen Carmarthenshire County Council's recent twelve page, full-colour newspaper insert (costing unknown thousands of pounds) giving their one-sided view of their ten year Modernising Education Provision scheme (MEP).

They claim that their scheme (including plans to build larger area primary schools and close approximately forty community primary schools) costing over £100M, has been received with "Delight" by parents, teachers, children and governors across Carmarthenshire.



What they do **NOT** tell you is that there is much condemnation of the scheme. So-much-so, that a county-wide **Primary Schools Forum** has been established to unite in voicing dissatisfaction with the unjustified closure of so many small schools, which are educationally effective, vibrant and are highly valued by their communities. If the County Council were confident that the scheme **would** be welcomed with "delight", why did they fail to inform or involve teachers, headteachers and school governors in the preparation of the MEP?

Although given many opportunities, the Council have failed to produce any educational evidence to show that large town-

based area schools provide improved outcomes for pupils. Indeed, many educationalists now believe that the teaching of children **within** their local community is key to their stability & progress; and that small schools, with mixed age groups, stimulate innovative teaching techniques and produce compassionate and socially-responsible individuals.

The Council **claim** that full consultation will be carried out for every individual MEP proposal.

They do **NOT** tell you that their budget includes £10M generated from sales of assets (i.e. rural school sites); therefore the local consultation can **not** be considered as being truly open-minded as any decision taken not to close a school will inevitably result in creating a hole in their overall budget. They are also adamant that they will not enter into any consultation or discussion about the scheme as a whole.

They do **NOT** tell you that they have failed to allow for price inflation within their plan, and that some projects already commenced, (with the £40m allocated so far) are already indicating price over-runs. Do **you** know of any large public building project that has been completed within the initial budget?



They have also failed to include increased transport costs and staff redundancy in their initial budget forecasts.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith and the Primary Schools Forum have cooperated throughout the campaign.

Cymdeithas has challenged county councillors to allow the people of Carmarthenshire a chance to voice their opinions on the education Strategy, by supporting a motion calling for wider discussion on the 9th of November. In their letter to Councillors, Cymdeithas say that **there has been NO open and honest discussion to date about:**

- ❖ the possible closure of village schools. The MEP states only: 'there would initially be fewer schools'.
- ❖ alternatives such as co-operation or federating schools
- ❖ The update of the plan was adopted by officers in May 2004 without even referring the matter to Elected Councillors.
- ❖ The limited Statutory Consultations cannot be open and fair, the Council is in advance relying on closing and selling off many of the schools to partially pay for new centralised schools.

County-wide Meeting
Give Carmarthenshire people a chance to voice their opinion on the Education Strategy.

Ivy Bush Hotel

25th October at 7pm

Cymdeithas yr Iaith will announce at the meeting a list of the councillors that have agreed to such a proposal.

Contact your local Councillor to urge him/her to vote for the proposal, and let us know by telephone: 01559 384378 or by emailing Angharad.angharad.clwyd@cymdeithas.com

cymdeithas
yr IAITH gymraeg

www.cadwneinhysgolion.com

It is a genuine fear that the scheme will run out of steam (and funds) after a few years, leaving Carmarthenshire with a legacy of incomplete education provision, huge financial problems and a continuation of the make-do-and-mend school maintenance regime.

Has the MEP scheme ever been voted on by the **Full** County Council? – **NO**, only by the Executive Board.

In December 2004 the Full Council was told that every individual MEP proposal would be discussed and voted on by the **Full** Council; however, the LEA's published Consultation Processes (circulated to a small number of individuals) states that objections to proposals will be reported to the Executive Board only, who will then be asked to confirm the proposals or not : no mention is made about any consideration and vote by **Full** Council.



New-build does NOT mean long-life...

The Council claim that newly built schools will result in lower maintenance bills and increased flexibility. The evidence to crush this claim is contained within their own MEP draft document where Ysgol Dewi Sant (a large school, with buildings less than thirty years old) has been deemed "inadequate" and now requires a £4M total re-build! The fact that the buildings at Ysgol Dewi Sant are not flexible enough to be adapted or extended to serve the current pupil numbers, means that the original scheme was fundamentally flawed at the time of building : a mistake which looks set to be repeated county-wide.

Conversely, many of the vernacular Victorian school campuses have proved to be very adaptable over the generations; any current short-comings, mainly

being the result of inadequate maintenance and unimaginative development.

What about the environment? What about children's safety?

It is quite astonishing that the Council has failed to conduct any form of environmental impact assessment for their MEP scheme.

What about the benefits of a child being able to walk to school? – or the increased number of buses and cars on small rural roads taking children to the new area schools? - or the effect on very young children who will have to spend several hours a week on school buses? - or the expense and inconvenience to parents who are forced to make numerous car journeys, so their children can join in after-schools clubs? - or pupil safety on buses?

These are all questions that the Council have either failed to consider, or refuse to comment upon.

Community Development Tragedy...

If the Council continue to bludgeon their way through with the MEP, it will be responsible for ripping the heart out of many of Carmarthenshire's oldest rural communities and will make a mockery of any pretence of community development or "joined-up" government by the Council. Parental choice will be further restricted, to the point of ineffectualness.

The unique character of our county will be irretrievably obliterated and the educational needs of our children will be ill-served, unless there is a change in course taken by the Council.

The Primary Schools Forum

is open to anyone who shares our fears about the outcomes of the Council's policy, and to those who value the provision of quality primary education within Carmarthenshire's communities.

Public Meetings

The people of Carmarthenshire deserve nothing less than a full consultative process, regarding the impact of The County's policy on the future of our small schools and rural communities.

Because the Council will not hold any public consultation on the MEP as a whole, the Forum have arranged a series of meetings in the areas most affected, and will invite individual local councillors to attend, to hear their electors and to state their personal position.

Meetings will be held:-

October 6th
7.30pm
Castle Hotel
Llandovery

October 13th
7.30pm
Carway Village Hall
Carway

October 20th
7.30pm
Carmel Village Hall
Carmel

For more information, contact:-

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or visit our website
www.cadwneinhysgolion.com

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