

LGF (S20) 19

Bil Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru)

Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan: Unigolion

Response from: Individual

I am writing to the Welsh Government to raise my strongest objections to Clause 20 of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill.

How can any sane minister even be considering such a move is simply beyond me. If public notices are removed from newspapers the Welsh Government is dooming the most digitally detached population in western Europe to the dark ages. Powys, for example, has more people aged 60 and over than any other part of Britain. Do you really think these people are now, after a lifetime of accessing information through newspapers, will be going online?

The answer is no, of course not.

Some hyperlocal news websites have claimed such notices should go on their sites, Again, this does not solve the problem that people who depend on public notices are newspaper buyers and will not be accessing websites for information. If that was the case then you could just post such information on the Welsh Government website and be done with it.

The reason this is not done is thankfully someone in the Welsh Government is sensible enough to know nobody looks on government websites for such information any more than anyone would look on a hyperlocal news site with less viewers than a personal Facebook page.

There is a genuine fear that this is the first move by the Welsh Government to take all public notices away from the public and therefore deprive the tax payer of the right to public forum information which must be shared with the largest possible audience.

I would further stress that this bill, if approved, would likely result in the demise of hundreds of local newspapers and the resulting mass unemployment of journalists who would have no other choice than leave Wales to remain in the newspaper industry.

Thus, the Welsh Government would be helping speed the brain drain from Wales and leave the country without regional newspapers to hold power to account.

If this is the long game of the Welsh Government and killing an entire industry which holds the WG to account then I am sure everyone will look back to this Bill as the moment the Welsh Labour campaign to destroy Welsh journalism and remove an arbiter of power truly began.