

PET(4)-08-12 : Tuesday 15 May 2012
P-04-376 Reorganise Education in Powys

3rd May 2012

Petitions committee- response for 15th May 2012 meeting

Sarah Wheeler on behalf of Builth Wells Supporting Education for All

Thank you for the copy of the letter from Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Education and Skills dated 21/3/12. Can I take this opportunity to clarify the petition statement?

‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to call in Powys County Council’s proposals to reorganise education in Powys, which would lead to Builth Wells’ **bilingual dual stream** English-medium sixth form becoming a Welsh designated sixth form.’

Regarding Leighton's first paragraph where he stated that there were 2 consultations one in November 2011, modernisation plans for education and a welsh education strategy consultation (WESP) in February 2012. The Minister needs to be aware that the secondary school and sixth form consultation options within the document **have no relation** to the proposals now sanctioned for the sixth form that was decided by Powys County Council education committee for Builth Wells High School. The proposals have been opposed by the majority of the Builth Wells Community, with a large petition(1180) submitted to the petitions committee; the social and economic effects of the closure of the thriving English medium sixth form would be devastating for the school and the community.

To date we are unaware of the outcome of the WESP and have been unable to source any current information regarding the strategy, welsh designated sixth form at Builth Wells High School is fundamental to the consulted document. At no point has there been an impact assessment released for this proposal in Builth Wells. As a community when the minister states these changes are not imminent, 2015 is imminent and having closure of the sixth form ‘hanging over the school’ compromises future intakes of students.

We as a community wonder what the minister means by 'no specific mechanism for the plans to be called in at present' if there is a statutory procedure for regulated change under the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.

We as a community do feel that the minister has clearly stated there will be a statutory procedure including consultation on proposals and the publication of

notices with the opportunity for objection. Builth Wells hope to be given the chance to comment and object; or would this be a closed consultation process?

Please find attached two letters that were forwarded to the Builth Wells Supporting Education for all, from the Education Portfolio Holder Cllr. Stephen Hayes on the 7th December 2011 and the local Councillor. The letters evidence that there is not the critical mass to have a viable welsh medium sixth form at Builth Wells High School:-

“the implementation of post 16 education solely through the medium of Welsh should be allowed to grow organically and at its own speed and not implemented until a) it was financially viable and b) that there were sufficient pupils seeking to be educated through the medium of Welsh at ‘A’ Level.

AND

“I also accept that the date mentioned in the report of 2015 for full change-over is likely to prove unrealistic, as the time necessary for cohorts of pupils to move through earlier stages of their education will require a lengthier transition period.”

With this statement in mind, why sanction the closure and demise of a large thriving, successful and viable English medium sixth form? The majority of the community oppose this decision and still remain proud of the bilingual dual stream 11-18 yrs. High School. All the members hope for is the welsh designation is changed back to Bilingual dual stream sixth form, to give the English medium A level students equality of opportunity which is an entitlement for all pupils regardless of the medium of education.

Yours sincerely

Builth Wells Supporting Education for All

And

Sarah Wheeler