

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Community Impact Assessment

Amalgamation of Dyffryn School (upper and lower schools) with Groes Primary school to create a new, 3-16 school, *Ysgol Newydd Margam*, on one site

1. Context

In preparing statutory proposals involving a school a Local Authority is required to assess the impact that the proposals may have on local families and the local community through the preparation of a Community Impact Assessment (CIA).

The Community Impact Assessment has been conducted in line with the guidance set out in Welsh Government's Circular No: 006/2013: 'School Organisation Code'.

2. The Assessment Process

The Community Impact Assessment has been informed by:-

- A review of existing school/community interaction ¹
- Evidence from earlier school consultation events
- A composite audit of community facilities ²
- Dialogue with partner Organisations to better understand current gaps in provision and their work in the community.
- Desktop study of secondary data ^{3,4}
- A Scoping Study embracing the Electoral Wards of Port Talbot, Taibach and Margam.

Interviews have been held with Head teachers, school Bursars, Governors and Council Elected Members associated with each of the schools concerned. The findings from the interviews have been used to interpret the extent, type, frequency and duration of community activity on each of the school sites.

3. The proposal

The Council proposes to establish an 'all through' 3 -16, English – medium school on the existing Dyffryn (upper) School/Groes

Primary site. The existing schools will continue to operate from the current buildings on the Dyffryn (upper) School, Dyffryn (lower) and Groes Primary until the new build facilities are available at the Dyffryn (upper) School/Groes Primary site in September 2018

Subject to the outcome of consultation and subsequent Member approval, *Ysgol Newydd Margam* will open on the 1st September 2018, with Dyffryn School and Groes Primary school closing on the 31st August 2018.

4. **The Schools**

The schools under review are located within the eastern extremity of Port Talbot and the eastern extremity of Margam.

The Wards of Port Talbot and Taibach are largely urbanised and industrialised with many amenities within easy walking distance.

The Ward of Margam is less populated with vast open countryside and woodland extending into Margam Country Park.

Groes Primary school is an English medium, community school providing education for pupils aged 3 – 11 years in the Ward of Margam. The school occupies a single site [shared with Dyffryn (upper) School] laid out as hard surfaced area playground with modest landscaping. As at January 2015, the school had 167 pupils on roll. Virtually all pupils transfer to Dyffryn school.

Dyffryn School is an English medium, community school providing education for pupils, aged 11 -16 years. It occupies two sites - the lower school at Talcennau Road, Port Talbot and the upper school at Bertha Road, Margam. The Lower school site is land locked with hard surfaced areas and no green open spaces. The upper school has generous grassland, open spaces and areas laid out for sports (these include a floodlit Artificial Turf Pitch, dedicated Tennis Courts and Netball Courts).

As at January 2015 the school had 790 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils attending the school are from the immediate catchment of Port Talbot, Taibach and Margam which has pockets of deprivation mixed with various degrees of affluence.

5. The degree to which the school buildings are used now as a community resource

In Groes Primary school the pupils enjoy a range of school based extra curricular activity and after school Clubs. The school offers a varied and inclusive programme of extra-curricular sport, a school based Play Group (attended also by pupils from other Primary schools and S.N.A.C), and a Homework Club. The school stages PTA Discos, a Fete and a Christmas Fayre.

In Dyffryn (lower and upper) School the pupils enjoy extra-curricular activity, a Homework Club and after school Clubs that feature an extensive range of sport, Drama, History and Music. There is extended use of the library in the upper school.

Due to the lack of suitable accommodation and outdoor facilities at Dyffryn (lower) School and Groes Primary school (predominantly hard standing) there is little in the way of community use. The school buildings and on site facilities are not used by the community as opportunities are limiting. These limitations require the pupils at Dyffryn (lower) School to be transported to Baglan Boys & Girls Club Sports Hall and to 'The Plough' playing field in order to partake in indoor and outdoor sports.

Dyffryn (upper) School can boast a 60 x 50 metre floodlit Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) which receives weekly hires from football and rugby teams operating in the Porthcawl, Coed Hirwaun, Taibach, Aberafan, Port Talbot, Cwmavon and Goytre areas. There is also a floodlit training area on the grassed area adjacent to the ATP and this is used occasionally by those booking the synthetic training surface. Zumba classes were trialled in the school but have now ceased. There is no other form of community use in the school.

6. Extent of community facilities within easy reach of the existing schools

The area surrounding Dyffryn (lower) School is heavily urbanised and boasts many amenities including retail shops, Churches and Chapels, a park with an equipped play area, a playing field and within easy walking distance a library and the Princess Royal Theatre. The Wards of Port Talbot and Taibach is well served by public transport, has good access to the M4 and many community facilities are on easy walking routes.

The area surrounding the Dyffryn (upper) School and Groes Primary is less urbanised but boasts its share of retail shops, places of worship, a college campus, a range of Community Centre settings, Margam Country Park, Multi Use Games Areas and a raft of indoor and outdoor sporting venues.

The community facilities within easy reach of the schools include:-

- The Bertha Road Community Centre managed by a voluntary Committee. It hosts 'Age Connects' advice surgeries, Wood turners, 'Slimming World', Zumba classes, the Stroke Group, Coffee Mornings, Old Age Pensioners Club and the occasional school concert and children's party.
- The Margam Youth Centre (Boys & Girls Club) which provides a Youth Club setting for under 14 year olds. Activities include football, indoor sports, computer games, table tennis, pool and badminton.
- Tata Sports & Social Club offering Senior and Junior Football, Rugby, Cricket, Golf and Bowls on one complex. Tata Steel Sailing Club operates from the Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir.
- Margam Country Park – 340 hectares of historically important landscape offering activities which include canoeing, mountain biking, coarse fishing, archery, cricket, guided Walks and archaeology.
- Retail stores at Tollgate ('Co – operative', etc.) which are used by the Primary school to further understanding in literacy and numeracy.

Those community facilities that are further afield (between 1.5 and 2.0 km from the Dyffryn (upper) School site) include:-

- The Taibach Community Education Centre (C.E.C) which has a rich and varied mix of community activities which incorporates 'Little Dragons After School Club, Adult literacy/numeracy classes, '2 Fit 2 Quit' Fitness, Arts & Crafts (sugar craft, pottery, cookery, etc.),the Youth Club, the Spartans Boxing

Club and the Afan Nedd Archers. The C.E.C also plays host to the NPT Works Unit (Housing).

- The Taibach Community Centre (Duke Street) is currently managed by NPTCBC and offers a full range of community activities including quilting, Bridge, bobbing lace, Elderly persons Club, arts classes and Bingo. The Centre also houses the Swansea University Welsh Classes, Flying Start Play Group, the Port Talbot Wheelers Cycling Club and Tamil Arts and Cultural Association (TACA).
- Port Talbot YMCA offering the ‘Bouldering Club’ (on three climbing walls), Martial Arts (Aikido and Jujutsu), Yoga, Judo in a bespoke dojo. I.T. Suite, Band Rehearsal hall and Meeting/Training Room

The proposal to relocate the aforementioned schools can be seen as an opportunity, with funding, to further enhance the local community provision by growing the type and extent of community based activity both on and off the school site. There will be no adverse impact upon the local community facilities if Dyffryn School and Groes Primary School were to amalgamate to establish the *Ysgol Newydd Margam* on the Bertha Road site.

7. Adverse impact of school amalgamation upon the community

The after school Clubs and the rich menu of extra curricular activity currently provided at Dyffryn (lower) School, Groes Primary and Dyffryn (upper) School sites is to be preserved under amalgamation.

During the construction of *Ysgol Newydd Margam* the schools and their wider community will be temporarily denied the use of the Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and part of the land currently laid out as sports fields. It is proposed to use that footprint for the school new build. The pupils and community users will be displaced to Ysgol Bae Baglan 3G Pitches and Taibach Barn to facilitate training on synthetic surfaces and for training indoors. The loss of sports fields at the Dyffryn (upper) School site will be compensated for by the possible use of Longlands Playing Fields at Heol Caer Bont.

The amalgamation of Dyffryn School and Groes Primary school and the development of a new management regime is an

opportunity to devise a model for enhanced community use and an enriched programme of extended school use.

There will be no adverse affect upon community activity at the schools that form part of this appraisal following amalgamation.

8. Plans to mitigate impact if community provision is lost from the schools

No mitigation Plan has been prepared as there is no community provision being lost.

9. Opportunities for enhancing existing school and community facilities to receive additional Out of School Hours activity.

Under the proposal to amalgamate Dyffryn School and Groes Primary, opportunities exist to enhance school based and community based activities and facilities. The amalgamation is also seen as an opportunity to further enhance transition between the schools.

There is a willingness within the schools to use the amalgamation process to work together, to further develop community use and interaction with a wider audience. The ‘After school Clubs’ will be strengthened as a result of joint initiatives involving parents from each of the individual schools that are involved in this proposal.

Strong opportunities also exist to provide new, additional and improved extended use of the *Ysgol Newydd Margam* for the wider community once established. The Ward of Margam benefits uniquely from Funds made available from Wind Farms (Mynydd Brombil and Newlands), a Solar Farm (Cae Garw) and a Biomass Plant (‘Margam Green Energy Ltd’) and these extra voluntary contributions can be used to grow the community focus of the new school. The Community amenities and activities provided by the voluntary sector that serve the Margam area can also benefit from the above sources of grant aid. The existing amenities provided by the Third Sector can be adapted, modernised and enriched by this grant aid in such a way as to receive additional out of school hour’s activity that may not otherwise be accommodated within a school setting.

10. Conclusion

The Community Impact Assessment recognises the importance of both Dyffryn School and Groes Primary in providing a venue for school based events and extra curricular activity. Following evaluation, it has been shown that under this proposal it is essential that existing community/school interaction is retained, preserved and enhanced as appropriate with no loss of amenity to the wider community. Community provision and activities that have been developed for the wider community will not be lost from either of the schools in the amalgamation and hence there are no plans to mitigate the loss. The existing modest community use of the Dyffryn (upper) School site needs to be further developed. There is a welcome and general acceptance of the amalgamation proposal within the community of Margam. With the amalgamations of the schools all indigenous school/community facilities and activities are to be enhanced as part of the proposal. There is no adverse effect upon community provision if Dyffryn (upper and lower) School and the Groes Primary school were to amalgamate.

Sources/References:-

(1)Interviews:-

- Head and the Bursar of Dyffryn (upper /lower) School (10.10.16)
- Head and Bursar of Groes Primary School (12.10.16)
- County Councillors for the Wards of Port Talbot, Taibach and Margam (07.10.16 to 14.10.16)
- Management of the Port Talbot YMCA (10.10.16)
- NPTCBC Community Development Unit as managers of the Taibach Community Centre (12.10.16)
- Manager of the Taibach Community Education Centre (12.10.16)
- Management of the Bertha Road Community Centre, Margam (10.10.16)
- Secretary of the Margam Youth Centre (Boys & Girls Club) 11.10.16)
- Voluntary Sector providers including Margam Youth Centre, Tata Sports & Social and Margam Cricket Club (21.10.16)

- Management Team of the Margam Country Park
(24.10.16)

(2)NPTCBC Local Development Plan (September 2011) identifying all community provision within the spatial area.

(3)Audit of community provision in the Wards of Port Talbot, Taibach and Margam.

(4)NPTCBC Neighbourhood Profile for Port Talbot, Taibach and Margam.

(5)Welsh Government School Organisation Code: Circular No: 006/2013

(6)Scoping Study (25.10.16)