STATUTORY CONSULTATION

YSGOL ARBENNIG MEIRION DWYFOR

23rd June – 5th August 2014

www.gwynedd.gov.uk
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Dear Consultee,

We are holding a period of statutory consultation between 23rd June – 5th August 2014 on a proposal to reorganise special education provision in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor. Following this we shall submit a report on the findings of the consultation to the Cabinet of Gwynedd Council.

At its meeting of 10th June 2014, the Cabinet of Gwynedd Council resolved to undertake the process of statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act (Wales) 2013 on the proposal to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to a new site in Penrhyndeudraeth on 1st September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential element to the provision.

The statutory consultation is held on this proposal to serve the communities in the Meirionnydd and Dwyfor areas of Gwynedd.

Enclosed for your attention is a statutory consultation document.

Please note that the timetable for the statutory meetings are included in this statutory consultation document.

A copy of this document and other background papers are available on the Council website: www.gwynedd.gov.uk/schoolorganisation, at Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran, Dolgellau Primary School, the libraries in Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Penrhyndeudraeth, Porthmadog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Y Bala and Tywyn and in Gwynedd Council Offices at Dolgellau, Pwllheli and Caernarfon. If you require additional copies, you are welcome to contact us by phone on (01286) 679648 or by e-mail to ysgolarbennigmeiriondwyfor@gwynedd.gov.uk

NOTE – any observations on the statutory document should be sent to the Ysgol Arbennig Meirion Dwyfor Project Office by 13:00 on Tuesday, 5th August 2014. The relevant contact details are given at the end of this statutory consultation paper.

Sincerely,

Dewi R. Jones
Head of Education
GWYNEDD COUNTY COUNCIL

PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE YSGOL HAFOD LON AND TY ARAN UNIT TO A NEW LOCATION IN PENRHYNDEUDRAETH ON 1st SEPTEMBER 2016, TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE SCHOOL AND ADD A RESIDENTIAL ELEMENT TO THE PROVISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 48 OF THE SCHOOL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK ACT (WALES) 2013.

STATUTORY CONSULTATION PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION – REASONS FOR THE CONSULTATION

1.1 Gwynedd Council is considering the reorganisation of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in the Meirionnydd and Dwyfor areas of Gwynedd.

1.2 At its meeting of 10th June 2014, the Cabinet of Gwynedd Council resolved to undertake the process of statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act (Wales) 2013 on the proposal to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to a new site in Penrhyndeudraeth on 1st September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential element to the provision.

Before moving ahead with the proposal, Gwynedd Council is keen to obtain your views so that these can be considered before a decision is taken.

1.3 This period of statutory consultation will be held between 23rd June – 5th August 2014.

1.4 The Council will consult with the following on the proposal:

- The staff of the relevant special education schools and units
- Governors of the relevant schools
- Parents/carers of pupils at the relevant schools and units
- Pupils at the relevant schools and units
- Other relevant agencies and consultees
1.5 As part of the statutory consultation, meetings will be held as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ysgol Hafod Lon - staff</td>
<td>23/06/14 - 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ysgol Hafod Lon - governors</td>
<td>23/06/14 – 17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uned Tŷ Aran - staff</td>
<td>26/06/14 - 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open day at:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pwllheli –Dwyfor Leisure Centre</td>
<td>07/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolgellau –Glan Wnion Leisure Centre</td>
<td>08/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penrhyngeudaeth – Memorial Hall</td>
<td>09/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.6 Arrangements have also been made to discover the views of the children and young people who attend Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran.

1.7 Your views will be considered before a decision regarding the next steps is reached by the Cabinet in September 2014. It is then that the Council Cabinet will decide whether to issue Statutory Notices or not.

1.8 As part of the consultation process, an information pack is available at the relevant schools, at local libraries, Gwynedd Council area offices and on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk/schoolorganisation

The pack will contain:

- The School Organisation Code 006/2013
- Priorities Plan – Field of Education Provision Organisation
- Newsletters
- Welsh Language Impact Assessment
- Community Impact Assessment
- Equality Assessment
- Site Assessment
- Cabinet Report 10th June 2014
- Cabinet Resolution Leaflet 10th June 2014

1.9 If you wish to receive this document in a different format, please contact the Ysgol Arbennig Meirion Dwyfor Project Team on 01286 679648.

1.10 You are welcome to ask questions and present your views at the meetings and during the open days or to submit your written response using the response form appended to this document.
1.11 Observations regarding this proposal should be sent via e-mail to ysgolarbennigmeiriondwyfor@gwynedd.gov.uk or by post to:

Ysgol Arbennig Meirion Dwyfor Project,
Education Department,
Gwynedd Council,
Headquarters,
Caernarfon,
Gwynedd.
LL55 1SH

1.12 Observations should be sent by 13:00 on 5th August 2014 at the latest. Any observations, by letter or by e-mail, should reach the Council by this time and date.

1.13 LIST OF CONSULTEES
This consultation document has been distributed to the following, in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 006/2013:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Organisation Code 006/2013</th>
<th>Distributed to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining authority or proposed maintaining authority of any school which the proposal is likely to affect.</td>
<td>Gwynedd Council which presents the proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other local authority which the proposal is likely to affect – including, in the case of a specified SEN provision, any authority which places, or is likely to place, pupils with statement within it.</td>
<td>Councils of Ynys Môn, Conwy, Denbigh, Wrexham, Flint, Powys and Ceredigion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diocesan Authority of the Church in Wales and the Catholic Church for the area where any school which the proposal is likely to affect is located.</td>
<td>The Church in Wales, Bangor Diocesan Authority, The Church in Wales St Asaph Diocesan Authority The Catholic Diocesan Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The governing body of any school which is the subject of proposals and the governing bodies of other schools which the proposal is likely to affect, including those which could accept any pupils who have been displaced.</td>
<td>Ysgol Hafod Lon Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau Ysgol y Gader Other schools in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents (and prospective parents, where possible), carers and guardians, and the staff of those schools.</td>
<td>Parents, carers, guardians and staff of Uned Ty Aran, Dolgellau, Ysgol Hafod Lon and other schools in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Ministers.</td>
<td>The Right Honourable Carwyn Jones AM, Jeff Cuthbert, Alun Davies AM, Mark Drakeford AM, John Griffiths AM, Lesley Grithths AM, Edwina Hart MBE CStJ A, Jane Hutt AM, Huw Lewis AM, Carl Sargeant AM, Theodore Huckle CF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament</td>
<td>Dwyfor-Meirionnydd Constituency AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (MPs) who represent areas served by any school which is the subject of proposals. | Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas  
Dwyfor-Meirionnydd Constituency MP  
Elfyn Llwyd |
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estyn.</td>
<td>Anne Keane – Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Unions and the relevant unions of staff who represent schools and other staff in any school which is the subject of proposals.</td>
<td>Representatives of ASCL, ATL, UCAC, GMB, NUT, NAHT, UNSAIN, NASUWT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The relevant Regional Education Consortium | Huw Foster-Evans – GwE Principal Officer  
Anwen Williams - North Wales Consortium Coordinator |
| The relevant Regional Transport Consortium | Taith (North Wales Regional Transport Consortium) |
| The Police and Crime Commissioner for the area served, or may be served by any school which is subject to proposals. | Winston Roddick – North Wales Police Commissioner |
| • Any community or town council for the area served, or may be served by any school which is subject to proposals. | Meirionnydd and Dwyfor Community Councils |
| In the case of proposals which affect SEN education, any relevant health body or third sector body with interest in the proposals; | Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board  
SNAP  
Cyd-bwylggor AAA  
DERWEN  
Mantell Gwynedd  
Barnados  
Autism Wales |
| In the case of proposals which affect secondary provision, any further education establishments which serve the area where the school is located. | Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor |
| Other | Meri Huws – Welsh Language Commissioner  
Keith Towler – Children’s Commissioner Wales  
Gwynedd Council Local Members  
Bangor University Psychology Department etc |
2 BACKGROUND OF THE PROPOSAL
At its meeting of 9th October 2012, the Council Cabinet agreed on the ‘Priorities Plan – Area of School Organisation’ which included the aim of the Council to adapt its Special Educational Needs provision.

In the report it was noted that the Council wanted to ‘amend its Special Education provision because the capacity of the existing provision at Ysgol Hafod Lon is insufficient and in need of being modernised and extended.’

Also, it was noted that ‘there is appropriate and suitable provision for the northern part of the county at Ysgol Pendalar, Caernarfon, and that this development will aim at ensuring a similar provision, in a central location, for the remainder of the county. The existing provision is not centrally located for the area which it serves, neither do the facilities meet with modern educational requirements.’

3 WHY DO WE RECOMMEND CHANGE?
There are a number of factors why a change is needed in the special needs education provision in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor. Some are listed below:

3.1 Location
Unfortunately the present location of Ysgol Hafod Lon, and its distance from the southern part of Meirionnydd makes it impractical for many SEN pupils, who are disabled or who have complex needs, to attend the school since the travelling distance is too far, especially for pupils who have difficulties with their own proprioception, or pupils with complex medical needs.

Locating the school in the Penrhyneddraeth would mean that SEN pupils from Meirionnydd and Dwyfor would travel similar distances for their education.

Of the present pupils, approximately 26 live within 10 miles of the new site in Penrhyneddraeth, which is closer than the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon site. In addition to this, there are another 12 pupils living to the south of the new provision, and therefore, once again, it would be closer than the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon site.

3.2 Facilities and resources
Gwynedd’s long-term strategy has been to offer modern SEN facilities and resources for the north and south of the county. There has been modern resources in the north of the county since 2007 when a new Ysgol Pendalar was built in Caernarfon which has specialist facilities and resources.
Neither Ysgol Hafod Lon nor Uned Tŷ Aran as they stand have hydrotherapy, sensory therapy or rebound therapy resources.

Approximately £12.4m would be spent on the new school. Not only would this mean a new and modern building, outdoor play space and therapeutic learning environments, gardening and small business equipment, but it would also include the amenities which one would expect in a modern SEN school – for example a hydrotherapy pool and sensory rooms and specialist rebound therapy rooms.

3.3 Capacity
At present, 54 pupils attend Ysgol Hafod Lon, constructed originally to accommodate 28 pupils. There is a constant increase in the number of children who qualify for education at a SEN School.
Number of pupils who attend Ysgol Hafod Lon

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existing SEN school cannot cope with the constant increase in the number of pupils (from 24 in 2008-9 to the present level of 54) and despite adaptations and extensive construction work and the addition of a mobile classroom on the Ysgol Hafod Lon site, satellite centres/units have had to be established in mainstream schools to serve the needs of pupils reaching the criteria for special school placements and some pupils have had to be sent out-of-county for their education.

The new school can provide placements for up to 100 children reaching the criteria for special school provision, including those with more complex and profound needs, and also autism.

3.4 Suitability of buildings and sites

Following a report on the standards in terms of space and capacity at Ysgol Hafod Lon and the existing special units which serve the Meirionnydd and Dwyfor areas, using the most recent design guide for special schools capacity, provided by the Building Bulletin 102 (BB 102) the following conclusions were reached:

a) Each of the three provisions is far below the specified floor area guidelines, specialist amenities to support a wider curriculum and sensory therapy are restricted on each site, and key amenities cannot be provided.

b) It would be reasonable to expect Ysgol Hafod Lon, as an individual special school for 49-50 pupils, to have a floor space three times its present size, and on a larger site.

c) Uned Tŷ Aran and Uned Tŷ Meirion, although located close to a mainstream primary and secondary school, should be at least twice their present size in terms of floor space, with better routes – accessible and under cover – to the main buildings.

d) The possibility of improving capacity and carrying out exterior work on each of the three sites is very restricted on account of the topography, the space available and also the problem of attempting to carry out work on restricted premises while the schools are still in operation.

Developing a school which would reach 21st Century Schools standard, the highest curriculum standard, and having the necessary resources such as a hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms, rebound therapy rooms, therapeutic external teaching environment, and horticultural and small business facilities would mean securing sufficient space and the best resources for the children of Meirionnydd and Dwyfor.

3.5 Quality of education

From what was noted in Estyn inspections about the units at Tŷ Aran (as part of the inspection of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau) and Tŷ Meirion (as part of the inspection of Ysgol y Gadair) the education has been good. As they haven’t inspected the units at Tŷ Aran or Tŷ Meirion independently of the schools on who’s sites they are located the reports are not detailed.

In Ysgol Hafod Lon’s last inspection it was noted that Hafod Lon is a good school because of the:

- headteacher’s vision and sound leadership;
good progress being achieved by the learners;
• good quality of the teaching, together with effective collaboration between the teachers and assistants;
• learners’ good behaviour; and
• high quality of the care and support.

As we will be relocating Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Ty Aran to the new provision in Penrhynodeudraeth the staff will also be relocating thus ensuring that their experience and expertise will continue ensuring education will at least be as good as that which already exists.

In addition to this, as the new school will offer a better learning environment for the children and young people attending the new provision it is envisaged that this will result in better education for the children. A report by Estyn titled ‘An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises’ noted:

‘In nearly all schools with new or refurbished buildings that we surveyed, pupils’ attainment and achievement have improved.’

‘Most schools offer pupils more choices than in their previous buildings because they have more space and better facilities. Also, the provision the school makes for before-school and after-school activities significantly improves.’

It is predicted that the specialist resources which will be installed in the new school will substantially add to the experiences and services available to the pupils and staff and that this will result in greatly improved quality of education for the pupils.

### 3.6 Residential and short term provision

Gwynedd is the only county in North Wales that does not have a short break and residential unit, which means that Gwynedd Council is dependent on sending children to locations far from their families and which is costly - £519,577 at the moment but as high as £1,402,681 in 2011/12.

As is seen from the table below, expenditure on residential placings outside the county for children with profound and complex needs has in general been high over the last few years. The numbers have varied over the years, with a maximum number of 9 children needing residential care outside the county in 2011/12 at a cost for the county of £1,402,681:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children from Gwynedd receiving residential provision outside the county</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the children had to go outside the county and receive non-Welsh provision.
Developing a residential/short term unit would mean that sending some children outside the county could be avoided, and that this would lead to substantial savings and also provide Welsh medium provision for the children.

It is foreseen that the provision would provide short term respite for more children and their families where there is a great need for this, and that as a result it would avoid family upheavals and the resulting need for a longer term respite for the children, which would be costly. At present, there are 14 children receiving short term respite through foster care, but there are another 16 on the waiting list and have been for a long time. It is predicted that the call for short term respite will increase in the future and that establishing a short term unit is necessary.

Developing a specialist bilingual and Welsh medium residential and short term provision for Gwynedd, located on the site of the new school, would allow some children who would have to attend provision outside the county under current circumstances to receive their education in Gwynedd.

3.7 Collaboration between agencies

Although some agencies and partners are already working very well in collaboration with Ysgol Pendalar and Ysgol Hafod Lon, the structure of this multiagency collaboration cannot be formalised fully and equally across the county. The existing building at Ysgol Hafod Lon is totally inadequate, and cannot even provide places for all its pupils on a full time basis, not to mention providing room for other agencies to work there. At the moment it is impossible to find working space and office space for multiprofessional practitioners as is required for Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Language and Speech Therapy teams and Post-graduate research students from the Psychology Department of Bangor University.

The new school will provide professional working space so that key workers can communicate regularly and confidentially with parents, teaching staff and support staff.

3.8 Running costs

Based on the present cost of providing for the children who would be eligible to attend the new SEN school, the annual cost per pupil varies considerably, from £16,611 in Ysgol Hafod Lon, £34,347 in Uned Tŷ Aran and £216,000 for out-of-county residential provision. The average cost per pupil is £20,642.

Budget/allocation in 2013/14 for SEN Education provision in Meirion Dwyfor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Budget / allocation / cost</th>
<th>Cost per pupil (average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ysgol Hafod Lon</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>£764,122</td>
<td>£16,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uned Tŷ Meirion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>£240,000</td>
<td>£24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uned Tŷ Aran</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>£103,040</td>
<td>£34,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC observation unit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>£73,178</td>
<td>£9,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-county day students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£130,050</td>
<td>£26,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(who could attend the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-county residential</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placements (who could</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£72,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The annual allocation predicted for the new school to accommodate 100 pupils is £1,639,860, which is equivalent to an average cost of £16,399 per pupil.

The residential provision at the new school will avoid sending so many children out of Gwynedd to receive their education. This will mean considerable savings because the cost of this service at the moment is very high at an average cost of £216,000 for the Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Authority.

4. **DEVELOPING OPTIONS AND AGREEING ON THE WAY FORWARD**

In order to identify and assess possible options for the provision of SEN education in the future in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor, it was decided to establish a Working Group. Group members included Gwynedd Council officers from the Education Department and the Social Services Department, Local Councillors with an interest in SEN education, chairman of Ysgol Hafod Lon Governing Body, head teacher of Ysgol Hafod Lon and the person responsible for Uned Tŷ Aran, head teacher of Ysgol y Gader, Dolgellau, Scope Cymru Family and Young People Officer and the Community Child Health Officer from the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

During the numerous Working Group meetings, discussions were held on the need for the change, SEN needs within the area in the future, possible locations and agreement on possible options which would meet those needs.

Following the discussions the Working Group agreed on a long list of possible options to be evaluated against the priorities agreed upon in terms of investment.

This led to an agreement on a short list of four options, including the favoured way forward. The 4 options are shown below along with the reasons for not choosing 3 as the favoured option and the reason for choosing the option favoured by us.

4.1 **Option 1: no change**

This option would mean that we continue with the present provision.

**Conclusion**

It was considered that this option would bring very little real advantage to the future of SEN education in the area, and that it would lead to a number of disadvantages, such as insufficient SEN school places, resources continuing to be unfit for purpose, the location of the SEN school not being central for Meirionnydd and Dwyfor and some children still having to go outside the county for their education, which is very costly, or to allow short break provision for families.

4.2 **Option 2:** Develop a new SEN Centre located in Penrhyndeudraeth, to include a school for up to 100 children, a 6 bed residential/short break provision, and relocating Ysgol Hafod Lon, Uned Tŷ Aran and Uned Tŷ Meirion.
Conclusion

The advantages of this option would be the provision of sufficient SEN school places; modern facilities and specialist resources, centrally located for Meirionnydd and Dwyfor; fewer children having to go outside the county leading to financial savings; residential and short term provision for Gwynedd families; centre for multiagency working and lower costs.

The main disadvantage would be doing away with the SEN provision in the southern part of the county at Uned Tŷ Meirion which enables children to be part of mainstream secondary education within reasonable travelling distance from their homes.

4.3 **Option 3:** Develop a new SEN centre located in Penrhyneddraeth, to include a school for up to 100 children, a 6 bed residential/short break provision, and relocating Ysgol Hafod Lon but retaining the existing provision at Uned Tŷ Aran and Uned Tŷ Meirion.

Conclusion

The advantages of this option would be the provision of sufficient SEN school places; modern amenities with specialist resources, centrally located for Meirionnydd and Dwyfor; fewer children having to go outside the county leading to financial savings; residential and short term provision for Gwynedd families; centre for multiagency working; retaining the existing provision at Uned Tŷ Meirion which enables children to be part of mainstream secondary education within reasonable travelling distance from their homes.

The main disadvantage would be higher revenue costs as a result of retaining the SEN Units in Dolgellau and also the children who would continue to attend these units would only have restricted use of the modern specialist resources. It would also involve continuing with the costly, under-used, provision (per head) at Uned Tŷ Aran.

4.4 **Option 4:** Develop a new SEN centre located in Penrhyneddraeth, to include a school for up to 100 children, a 6 bed residential/short break provision, and relocating Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran but retaining the existing provision at Uned Tŷ Meirion.

Conclusion

The advantages of this option would be the provision of sufficient SEN school places; modern amenities with specialist resources, centrally located for Meirionnydd and Dwyfor; fewer children having to go outside the county leading to financial savings; residential and short term provision for Gwynedd families; centre for multiagency working; retaining the existing provision at Uned Tŷ Meirion which enables children from the southern part of the county to be part of mainstream secondary education within reasonable travelling distance from their homes.

The main disadvantage would be higher revenue costs as a result of retaining Uned Tŷ Meirion in Dolgellau and also the children who continue to attend this unit would only have restricted use of the modern specialist SEN resources.

This option would respond to all the strategic requirements and business requirements and would also involve doing away with the expensive provision (per head) which is under used at Uned Tŷ Aran. It would also involve retaining Uned Tŷ Meirion and would enable children from the southern part of the county to be part of mainstream secondary education within reasonable travelling distance from their homes.
Reasons for retaining Uned Tŷ Meirion

a) The case for retaining Uned Tŷ Meirion in Dolgellau is extremely relevant for those pupils who have to travel far in order to obtain specialist education. The pupil population at present includes pupils who cannot travel very far on account of complex medical needs and/or because they are severely disabled, and/or because they have a high level of intolerance in terms of proprioceptive activities (they cannot cope with being in a vehicle, or find it to be a very painful experience). On average, it takes 90 minutes for them to follow their morning routine before starting off for school, and those who need physiotherapy take even longer to get ready. At the moment, they travel for around 30 minutes to Uned Tŷ Meirion, which means that their days start as early as 6.30am if they are to reach school by 9.00am. The additional 30 minutes’ travel to the site of the new school at Penrhynedduraeth (which is half way between the two ends of Meirionnydd and Dwyfor) is unreasonable for some of these pupils. In Dwyfor, it would be possible for pupils with similar problems, and who live in Aberdaron / Abersoch / Botwnnog to use Uned y Traeth. In contrast to the Meirionnydd area, there are no PMLD (Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties) or PMED (Physical and Medical Difficulties) pupils with medical/proprioceptive difficulties in rural Dwyfor at present. Since the travelling distances to the other two nearest secondary schools in the southern part of the county is 30 minutes (schools that are not as yet fully adapted for disabled access), retaining Tŷ Meirion would ensure access for disabled pupils (who are suitable for mainstream curriculum) to a mainstream secondary school in Meirionnydd.

b) In addition to reducing travelling time for complex PMED pupils in south Meirionnydd, Uned Tŷ Meirion continues to be an integral part of the Strategic Equality Plan (Adaptations for Access for the Disabled to Mainstream Schools) of the Education Department, since it provides the opportunity for pupils to be integrated to mainstream secondary classes on a daily basis. At the moment the secondary pupils at Ysgol y Gader and Tŷ Meirion share curricular experiences such as music, art, design and technology, school assembly, innovation and PSE, social activities and competitions and Yr Urdd and other ex-curricular activities. Those pupils from Tŷ Meirion who are able to sit GCSE, BAC Wales and entrance level qualifications can do so side by side with their peers in the mainstream school.

c) The new SEN school for Meirion Dwyfor will provide mainly for pupils who have learning disabilities, and those pupils who have no learning difficulties but who suffer physical disabilities will continue to receive education in mainstream locations as far as possible, for example the provision available at Uned Tŷ Meirion.

d) This integration was seen as a strength according to the Estyn inspection at Ysgol y Gader in 2010, and all the recent consultation data shows that the parents, governors and the local community would like to see this provision continue. The last Estyn inspection took place at Ysgol y Gader, Dolgellau in December 2010. The report makes the following reference to Tŷ Meirion:

‘The pupils at Uned Tŷ Meirion are integrated into the life and work of the school in an excellent manner. The school monitors the pupils’ educational and social development very effectively using innovative methods.’

e) As there are alternative options at primary schools for SEN children in the south of the county it is not envisaged that the loss of Uned Tŷ Aran will be a problem for children with needs that could have problems with longer journeys.

5. THE OPTION FAVOURED FOR CONSULTATION

We recommend consultation on the model to develop a new SEN provision located in Penrhyndeudraeth, to include a school for a maximum number of 100 children, provision of 6 residential / short term beds, Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to be relocated and the existing provision at Uned Tŷ Meirion to be retained.
This option would mean that we would:

a) Develop a new school in a central location for children living in the Meirionnydd and Dwyfor areas of Gwynedd. The aim is to open the new provision in Penrhynceiriart which will mean that SEN pupils from Meirionnydd and Dwyfor will have to travel similar distances to receive their education.

b) Increase the SEN school places in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor to offer provision for up to 100 children including those with more profound and complex educational needs such as autism.

c) Develop a school which reaches 21st Century Schools standards, the highest curricular standard, with therapeutic resources and alternative resources which meet the needs of those children with profound and complex educational needs, including autism.

d) Develop a school with the necessary resources to reach the standards aimed at for this model, namely a hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms, rebound therapy rooms, therapeutic external teaching environments, horticulture and small business resources.

e) Provide 6 residential/short term beds for children and young people with SEN from Gwynedd, and possibly from other Local Authorities as well.

f) Develop a resource which will serve as a centre providing professional working space where key workers can regularly meet and hold discussions with parents, specialist teaching staff and support staff.

g) Continue with the existing provision at Tŷ Meirion which will allow access to mainstream secondary education for those pupils who would find it hard to travel from the southern part of the county to the new school.

By implementing this option, we predict the following benefits for children with SEN:

- Increasing the number of school places will make it possible for more children to attend a SEN school.
- There would be less need for children to attend SEN provision outside the county and this would lead to financial savings.
- More children could live at home.
- Better learning environment for the children and young people attending the new school. The report by Estyn ‘Appraisal of the performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or a property which has been substantially renovated’ notes as follows:

> ‘at almost every school with a new building that we inspected, pupils’ attainment and achievement levels have improved.’

> ‘the majority of schools offer more choices for pupils than in their former accommodation because they have more room and better facilities. Also, the provision made by the school for before-school and after-school activities have substantially improved’

- More space and better play provision on the school site.
- More space and better provision for teaching young people life skills and vocational skills.
• Specialist provision and specialist resources such as a hydrotherapy pool and therapy rooms available on the new school site.
• Opportunity for children to use the specialist resources outside school hours.
• Based on the present transport contracts, the majority of the children would travel shorter distances to the new provision.
• More children would receive their education through the medium of Welsh by not having to attend SEN schools outside Gwynedd.
• Short term provision for use by children from all parts of Gwynedd which could mean less family upheaval and thus less need for some long term placements for children from these families.
• Continuing with the existing provision in Tŷ Meirion will allow access to mainstream secondary education for those children who would find it difficult to travel to the new school from the southern part of the county.
• Children will be given equal opportunity no matter where they live within the county.

In addition to the benefits for the children, we foresee the following benefits:
• An opportunity to invest £12.4m in a new SEN provision.
• Better working environment for staff.
• The new facility would reach the modern standards expected for SEN children.
• Specialist provision and specialist equipment available on the new centre site.
• Residential care available.
• Possibility of creating an income by offering school places and residential care for children from other counties needing Welsh language medium provision.
• Option for people to use the specialist facilities outside school hours.
• Option for the parents to send their children to a specialist SEN school or to integrate their children in a mainstream secondary school with a SEN unit in the southern part of the county.
• Some reduction in maintenance costs by doing away with one unit and the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon.

6. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY, THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND EQUALITY
In accordance with the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code 006/2013, we have assessed the impact that change in the provision would have on the community, on the Welsh language and on equality. No negative impact is foreseen on the areas served by the existing provision or on the children attending them and it is believed that the new provision will create positive opportunities for the future.

6.1 Community
Following an analysis of the use made of the existing provision by the community and the contribution the provision makes to the community, an assessment was made of the impact the new provision would have. A full assessment can be seen on the Council website: www.gwynedd.gov.uk/schoolorganisation, at Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran, Dolgellau Primary School, the libraries in Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Penrhyndeudraeth, Porthmadog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Y Bala and Tywyn and in Gwynedd Council Offices at Dolgellau, Pwllheli and Caernarfon.
As a result of the assessment we reached the conclusion that there would be no negative impact on the areas served by the existing provision or the children who attend that provision and that the new provision would create positive opportunities for the future.

By implementing the proposal of establishing the new school, the aim is to further promote community use by the wider community, especially by people with special needs, in order to make full use of the new provision and the specialist facilities.

6.2 The Welsh language
It does not appear that any change to the existing provision would have a negative impact on the use of the Welsh language at the school/unit where they would be located or on the local community since the majority of the children travel from numerous scattered locations to receive their education.

The feeling is that establishing the new school would create more opportunities to strengthen the use of the Welsh language especially for those attending Uned Ty Aran since they would be able to mix with more Welsh speaking children. Attending the new school will also enable the children who have to travel out-of-county at the moment (to a non-Welsh provision), to be educated through the medium of Welsh and to communicate in Welsh with other children.

6.3 Equality
A full equality assessment was undertaken and as a result we are confident that arrangements will be in place to ensure that the proposal conforms with any relevant policies which positively promote equal opportunities and that measures are in place to ensure that no discrimination takes place. We need to emphasise that it is a SEN school that is under discussion therefore equality for people with special needs is a key part of all considerations and that the aim is to improve the service to SEN pupils.

It is foreseen that the new provision will meet the core aims of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children as stated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Aim of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be given a fair start in life</td>
<td>Following the change there will be better provision and resources which will mean equality and fairness for every child across the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be given a comprehensive diversity of education and learning opportunities</td>
<td>The new provision will have modern specialist resources which will mean a comprehensive diversity of education and learning opportunities for the children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enjoy the best possible health and not to be abused, victimised or exploited</td>
<td>Policies and systems will be in place to ensure this. Multi-agency collaboration will also support this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have access to play, leisure, sport and cultural activities</td>
<td>The new provision will ensure play and leisure space and facilities which are modern and much better for the pupils than what they have at present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be heard, treated with respect and their culture, race and identity recognised.</td>
<td>Policies and systems will be in place to ensure this. A school council will be established with pupil representation in order to give them a forum to discuss their needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional welfare.
The atmosphere and environment of the school will contribute to the wider community which supports the physical and social welfare of the school’s children and young people.

Not to be placed under disadvantage on account of poverty.
There will be a meaningful and fair admission process which will ensure that children and young people at the school will not be excluded from the best education and care on the basis of financial or emotional poverty.

7. **CHOOSING A NEW LOCATION**

7.1 As stated in the Cabinet report on 9th October 2012 the existing provision is not centrally located for the area it serves, and the facilities do not reach modern educational requirements.

7.2 In addition to this it was stated in an assessment report on the existing provision that Ysgol Hafod Lon is totally unsuitable for any development on account of the size of the site. It would be reasonably expected for Ysgol Hafod Lon, as an individual special school for 49-50 pupils, to have a floor space three times its size, and on a larger site.

7.3 Therefore it was recognised that a new school would need to be constructed on a new site to meet the increasing demand in the area and if a decision was taken to develop a new school, it was agreed that an appropriate site should be identified.

7.4 It was recognised that any new provision would have to be centrally located to serve Meirionnydd and Dwyfor and as a result it was decided to look for suitable sites in the Porthmadog and Penrhynedraeth areas.

7.5 Several sites were identified and an appraisal carried out; as a result the decision was reached that the best option would be the Parc Eryri site in Penrhynedraeth.

8. **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL**

8.1 This proposal involves the closure of the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran, Dolgellau and their relocation as a new SEN school in Parc Eryri, Penrhynedraeth.

The new school will receive children and young people between 3 - 19 years of age with a statement due to a recognised condition in terms of educational / medical needs e.g. autism, which is sufficiently serious in the opinion of the Statements Moderation Panel (which includes the head teachers of Ysgol Hafod Lon and Ysgol Pendalar) to receive their education at a special school.

The school will not accept children with emotional and behavioural difficulties unless they also have educational/medical needs.

The school will have the following facilities:

- Hydrotherapy pool
- Sensory rooms
- General therapy rooms
- ‘Rebound therapy’ room
- Hall with stage
- Kitchen, dining area and café
- Classrooms with the necessary equipment
- Stimulating and sensory outdoor environment
• Outdoor resources for developing entrepreneurship (gardens etc)
• All weather games court
• Suitable play area (including football pitch)

8.2 Community matters
Having held an assessment of the impact on the community, the language and equality, no impact is foreseen as a result of moving the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon or Uned Tŷ Aran.

8.3 However, in order to alleviate the effect of closing a school within any area, at present, if there is local interest in developing these sites for the benefit of the community, the Council will ask the Regeneration Officer to assist the community in developing any suggestions for use of the land and buildings which become vacant as a result of school reorganisation. This is conducted in accordance with the policy and protocol adopted by the Council in 2010.

8.4 Staffing matters
Since we will be moving the existing school / unit to a new site the existing staff will also be offered the opportunity of moving. We are already in consultation with staff members and unions and will continue to do so during the statutory consultation period and after any decisions that result from this process.

8.5 Establishing a new school
During the process of establishing the new school, the existing Governing Body of Ysgol Hafod Lon will be responsible for agreeing on a constitution for the school, the staffing structure and any additional recruitment which will be necessary.

The budget for the school will be based on the number of pupils attending the school in accordance with the schools funding formula which conforms with Section 52 of the School Framework and Standards Act 2013.

With regard to opening the residential / short term unit, the Children and Family Support Department will be responsible for the preparatory work for opening, including the staffing structure and any necessary recruitment.

8.6 Pupil admission arrangements
The new school will receive children with statement due to an acknowledged condition in terms of educational/medical needs, e.g. autism, which would be severe enough in the opinion of specialists and the Statements Moderation Panel (which includes the head teachers of Ysgol Hafod Lon and Pendalar) to gain entrance to a SEN school.

The SEN school will not accept children with emotional and behavioural difficulties unless there is an educational/medical needs condition as well.

8.7 Transport
In accordance with the recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee all pupils with additional learning needs or disabilities have the right to free transport to school. Therefore transport will be provided for every pupil who qualifies, in accordance with the present procedure.
9. **NEXT STEPS**

9.1 Following the statutory consultation period a further report will be submitted to the Council Cabinet, giving details of the consultation. The Cabinet will have to discuss the consultation and any observations resulting from it.

9.2 Depending on the recommendation by the Cabinet, it will have to be decided whether a Statutory Notice should be issued on implementing the proposal. If a Statutory Notice is issued, a period of 28 days is allowed for any objections to be submitted.

9.3 Following these steps, a report will be submitted to the relevant Council committee for a final decision.

**PLEASE NOTE** – the purpose of a statutory consultation period is to obtain people’s views and observations on the proposal and any person who wishes to submit a formal objection to the proposal will need to submit their written objection during the statutory notice period, which is a separate step from the statutory consultation period.
10. TIMETABLE FOR THE STATUTORY PROCESS AND THE NEXT STEPS

23rd June 2014  
Start of the Statutory Consultation Period

23rd June – 18 July 2014  
Consultation Meetings with Staff, Governors and Children

7th – 9th July 2014  
Open days

13:00 on 5th August 2014  
Closing date for receiving observations on the proposal

September 2014  
Following a report on the consultation, the Cabinet to decide whether to issue Statutory Notices or not

Yes  
No

October 2014  
Issue Statutory Notice  
Refuse the Proposal

Period of 28 days

November 2014  
End of the Formal Objection Period

The relevant Council committee to decide whether to confirm the implementation of the proposal

Objection

If it is necessary for the Welsh Minister to decide on the proposal – submit an objection report and any objections to the Welsh Government

No – Refuse the proposal

No objection

Cabinet Meeting or Full Council

Period of 28 days

Refer the Proposal  
Confirm the Proposal

Yes

Implement the proposal by 1st September 2016

No – Refuse the proposal
GWYNEDD COUNTY COUNCIL

PROPOSAL FOR THE RELOCATION OF YSGOL HAFOD LON AND UNED TY ARAN TO A NEW SITE IN PENRHYNDEUDRAETH ON 1st SEPTEMBER 2016, INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE SCHOOL AND ADD A RESIDENTIAL ELEMENT TO THE PROVISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 48 of the SCHOOL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK ACT (WALES) 2013.

RESPONSE FORM
(Enclose this form with your full response)

Please supply the following information:

1. Name: __________________________

2. Address: __________________________

3. I am responding as (please note below):

   Parent  Governor  Staff  Pupil  Other
   (please note)

Other:

Please state below if you agree to the Council publishing your response. Attach this page to the front of your response to the statutory consultation. With your permission, we shall reproduce responses, in full or after removing personal details such as names and addresses, in a report to the Cabinet on the statutory consultation.

In accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 we have to inform you of the following. Gwynedd Council is seeking your views on this proposal as part of a statutory consultation process. Your personal information will be used for this purpose only and the information may only be shared with other agencies which are part of the consultation in order to respond to specific matters raised by you (e.g. the Welsh Government). We shall continue to consider your observations no matter which option is chosen.

Yes, I agree to the Council publishing my full response
Yes, I agree to the Council publishing my response after removing personal information
No, the Council should not publish my response

Please send responses to: Ysgol Arbennig Meirion Dwyfor Project, Education Department, Gwynedd Council, Headquarters, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 1SH or ysgolarbennigmeiriondwyfor@gwynedd.gov.uk

Closing Date: 13:00 on 5th August 2014