

**Pembrokeshire County Council
Cyngor Sir Penfro**



EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

**Proposal for the Discontinuation of Ysgol
Clydau**

OBJECTION REPORT

**Steven Richards-Downes
Director of Education**

June 2026

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Foreword

Pembrokeshire County Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right places and ensuring that they are fit for the 21st century learner is considered central to this and is a challenge facing councils across Wales.

Meeting this challenge involves reviewing the number and type of school the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of these schools to deliver effective education to meet the needs and aspirations of learners in Pembrokeshire.

The Council reviews its provision on the basis of:

- Quality and future sustainability of educational provision
- Sufficiency and accessibility of school places
- The condition, suitability and standard of school buildings
- Value for money.

The Statutory Notice to discontinue Ysgol Clydau was published on 14th April 2026 and resulted in 126 objections.

This Objection Report is published under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 which states that proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections.

The Council acknowledges that Ysgol Clydau is designated as a rural school and that the proposal has been developed and considered with due regard to the presumption against the closure of rural schools, as set out in the School Organisation Code. In reaching its position, the Council carefully considered: the impact on quality and standards in education; the need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools; resourcing and other financial implications; other general factors, and specific factors relating to alternative options. It also considered: community impacts, including the impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language in the community and within the educational settings; Equality impacts, and the effect of different travelling arrangements.

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Director of Education

1. Introduction

Pembrokeshire County Council undertook a statutory consultation between 9 December 2025 and 23 January 2026, with a proposal to discontinue Ysgol Clydau.

Subsequently, the Consultation report was considered by the County Council at its meeting of 5 March 2026. The decision of Council was as follows;

That the Director of Education be authorised to publish a Statutory Notice to discontinue Ysgol Clydau.

A Statutory Notice was subsequently published on 14th April 2026 in accordance with the School Organisation Code. The statutory objection period for the notice ended on 11th May 2026. 126 objections were received.

This document represents the County Council's responsibility as part of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to publish an Objection Report and provides:

- A summary of the statutory objections received, and
- the Council's response to those objections

2. Distribution of Objection Report

The Governing Bodies, Parents/Carers/Guardians and Staff of:	
Ysgol Clydau	
The Governing Bodies of other schools which the proposer considers are likely to be affected by the proposals	
Ysgol Bro Preseli Ysgol Brynconin Ysgol Maenclochog Ysgol Eglwyswrw Ysgol Cilgerran Ysgol Llandudoch	Ysgol Y Ddwylan Ysgol Hafodwenog Ysgol Bro Brynach Ysgol Beca
Elected Members:	
• Paul Davies – MS Ceredigion Penfro • Claire Archibald - MS Ceredigion Penfro • Kerry Ferguson - MS Ceredigion Penfro • Rt.Hon. Elin Jones - MS Ceredigion Penfro • Paul Marr – MS Ceredigion Penfro • Anna Nicholl – MS Ceredigion Penfro • Ben Lake MP – Ceredigion Preseli	• Cllr Iwan Ward • Cllr Shon Rees • Cllr John Davies
Relevant Town and Community Councils:	
Clydau CC, Crymych CC, Boncath CC, Manordeifi CC	
Trades Unions:	
NEU, NASUWT, UCAC, NAHT, ASCLE, UNISON, UNITE, GMB	
Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority.	
St Davids	The United Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia
Local Authorities	
Carmarthenshire County Council	Ceredigion County Council
Others	
The Welsh Ministers, Estyn Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner	The Welsh Language Commissioner Partneriaeth – Regional Education Consortium Hywel Dda Health Board
Independent / Voluntary Early Years / Childcare Provider	
Playgroup Settings • Cylch Meithrin Hermon • Cylch Meithrin Bwlychygroes • Cylch Meithrin Crymych • Meithrinfa Playdays	Childminders • MG – Blaenffos • LP – Boncath

3. Objections Received and Council response

126 objections to the proposal were received during the statutory objection period, and these are included in full at **APPENDIX 1**.

This section of the report summarises the objections to the proposal and provides a Council response to them.

Comments have been categorised by theme with an indication of the number of respondents who objected to the proposal on these grounds:

No	Theme	No of responses
1	Impact on Community (Loss of Hub, identity, cohesion)	80 (64%)
2	Rural Sustainability (impact on families and long term sustainability)	75 (60%)
3	Travel, Transport and Accessibility (including eligibility /fairness)	51 (41%)
4	Welsh Language impact (education and community use)	44 (35%)
5	Quality of Education / Learning Environment (including ALN)	35 (28%)
6	Climate / Environmental concerns	35 (28%)
7	Financial concerns (savings, cost per pupil)	25 (20%)
8	Lack of investment in buildings	20 (16%)
9	Alternatives to closure not explored	19 (15%)
10	Concern regarding the consultation process	11 (9%)
11	Early Years, Childcare and Pupil Pathways	14 (11%)
12	Wider Strategic Issues (policy, demographics, capacity and long-term impacts)	30 (24%)

NB: More than one theme was raised in each objection, which means that the total number of responses exceeds the number of objections received.

The concerns raised are outlined in greater detail in the table below, together with the Council's responses.

Objection comments	Response
Impact on Community (Loss of Hub, identity, cohesion)	
A number of respondents felt that the loss of the school would weaken the community as it acts not only as a place of education but as a focal point for social interaction, events and community cohesion. Concerns were raised that closure would weaken community identify, reduce engagement and contribute to long term decline. There were concerns raised that the closure could contribute to population decline, reduced engagement and the loss of intergenerational community connections.	The Council acknowledges the strength of feeling regarding the role of Ysgol Clydau as part of the social and cultural fabric of the local community. Many respondents described the school as an important contributor to community identity and cohesion. Evidence presented in the Consultation Report and Community Impact Assessment indicates that, while the school is valued symbolically and socially, the majority of organised community activity is currently delivered through Canolfan Clydau, which will remain unaffected by the proposal. Whilst the Council recognises that the loss of the school building would represent a change for the community and may be perceived as significant locally, it does not consider that the proposal would result in a significant reduction in the availability of community activities overall, nor have a material impact on community cohesion. Furthermore, should the proposal go ahead, there is an opportunity for the school site to be repurposed for community use, dependent on interest received.
Rural Sustainability (impact on families and long term sustainability)	
Many respondents felt that the closure would make the area less attractive to young families wishing to move into the area. There was a fear that the proposal would risk creating a cycle of rural decline, with fewer families likely to remain in or relocate to the area and demographics changing which would reduce the long term sustainability of the area. Many respondents emphasised that the presence of a local school is a key factor influencing whether families chose to	According to the 2025 PLASC data, of the 40 pupils who live in the Clydau catchment, only 14 attended Ysgol Clydau (35%). 24 pupils in the catchment, attended Ysgol Bro Preseli (60%), while two other pupils living in the catchment, attended other schools. This data suggests that the mobility of families (their willingness and ability to choose a more distant school for their children to attend, and to make their own travel arrangements for them to attend it) is such that the concerns raised may not occur, or may occur to a much lesser extent than some believe will be the case.

Objection comments	Response
move or remain in rural areas and expressed concern that closure could actively accelerate demographic decline rather than simply reflect it.	For the same reason, it is considered unlikely that the closure of the school would encourage families with school-age children to leave the community. The Council recognises that Ysgol Clydau is designated as a rural school and that there is a presumption against the closure of rural schools as set out in the School Organisation Code. In developing this proposal, the Council has given careful consideration to this presumption and to the specific factors required under the Code, including the impact on quality and standards in education; the need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools; resourcing and other financial implications; other general factors, and specific factors relating to alternative options. It also considered: community impacts, including the impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language in the community and within the educational settings; Equality impacts, and the effect of different travelling arrangements.
Travel, Transport and Accessibility (including eligibility /fairness)	
Respondents raised concerns about the impact increased travel times would have on young children and that it would negatively impact on their wellbeing and learning. There was also issues of fairness raised where some pupils may not qualify for transport creating additional burdens for certain families.	There is only 4.3 miles by road between Ysgol Clydau and Ysgol Bro Preseli, with an approximate journey time of 10 minutes. Whilst 7 pupils (29%) will have less distance to travel to school, for the remainder of the pupils the increase in distance is generally modest and is not considered unreasonable given the rural nature of the area. Eligible pupils will receive free home-to-school transport in accordance with the Council's transport policy. Transport arrangements will prioritise safety and wellbeing, and appropriate transition support will be provided to minimise disruption.

Objection comments	Response
Welsh Language impact (education and community use)	
Respondents raised concerns that the proposal fails to consider Welsh as a community language and closure of the school could weaken Welsh use in the community and reduce family engagement with the language. A consistent theme was that Welsh is sustained through everyday social interaction within the community, not solely through formal education and disruption to these networks may have impacts that are difficult to quantify but potentially significant and irreversible. Furthermore, some respondents highlighted that a complaint had been made to the Welsh Language Commission, which is being investigated, in respect of whether the proposals properly considered the likely impact on the Welsh language in the community. There was a view amongst some that the process should be put on hold until the outcome is known. .	The Council recognises the importance of the Welsh Language, both from an educational and community perspective. It is the view of the Council that the Consultation Document conscientiously considered the impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language and that it has continued to do so as part of the consultation process, by actively seeking comments and suggestions from consultees on the matter, and updating the Community Impact Assessment in light of information received. The Welsh Language Commission has no powers to delay or stop the School Organisation Consultation process, and, given that, in the view of the Council, conscientious consideration has been given to Welsh language impacts, both educational and in the community, there is no reason to pause the process. From the evidence available, it is the view of the Council that there would be a neutral impact on the Welsh Language, should the proposal be implemented. The proposal would not reduce access to Welsh-medium education, as pupils would transfer from one Welsh-medium school to another Welsh-medium school. The Council considers that this maintains linguistic outcomes and aligns with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. With regard to the potential impact on the Welsh language in the community, there is little evidence available on the matter. The only research that the Council has been made aware of was commissioned by the Institute of Welsh Affairs, and is a 2007 study

Objection comments	Response
	by Reynolds and Jones, entitled - Small School Closure in Wales: New Evidence. Key findings from that study include: <i>...it is clear that apocalyptic predictions about the impact of small school closures on the Welsh language and on communities are not borne out by our sample.</i> <i>...in the key areas of the Welsh language and impact on the local communities, we found little support for those who fear the destructive effects of closure. Indeed, not a single adult or child (out of 48) thought that the Welsh language's situation had worsened since closure.</i>
Quality of Education /Learning Environment (including ALN)	
Respondents claimed that a small school environment allows for a nurturing environment and promotes strong relationships between staff and pupils. There is a belief that children receive more individual attention which may not be possible in a larger school, where some pupils may struggle to adapt to a larger more impersonal setting. A number of respondents provided detailed personal examples highlighting the role of the school in supporting pupils with additional learning needs or medical conditions, emphasising the perceived importance of small class sizes and close staff – pupil relationships.	The Council acknowledges the benefits often associated with small schools, including close relationships and individualised support. However, it also recognises many benefits associated with larger schools. Estyn has indicated that the proposal is likely to maintain standards of education. The receiving school, Ysgol Bro Preseli, offers access to a broader range of educational and social opportunities within a 3–19 setting. It also has appropriate arrangements in place to support all learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs. Transition arrangements, including specific pastoral support for individuals, will be prioritised to ensure that pupils are supported effectively

Objection comments	Response
Climate / Environmental concerns	
Respondents claim that the decision to close a local school contradicts Pembrokeshire County Councils climate emergency declaration and will increase car journeys and transport emissions.	The Council acknowledges concerns regarding climate change. While there may be a modest increase in transport-related emissions due to the very short distances involved, this should be considered alongside the reduction in emissions associated with no longer operating and maintaining a school with significant surplus capacity.
Financial concerns (savings, cost per pupil)	
Respondents raised concerns that the savings made may be overstated due to rising transport costs. There was also a view that rural areas receive less overall public investment than more urban areas, with opposition to using the 'cost per pupil' as a determining factor for closure.	Financial sustainability is only one of several factors considered when reviewing the long-term sustainability of a school. The Consultation Report acknowledges that transport costs are likely to increase; however, it concludes that the proposal still represents a more efficient use of resources overall. Schools with low pupil numbers incur significantly higher costs per pupil. Maintaining such provision limits the Council's ability to allocate resources equitably across the wider education system. Estyn have previously stated that: <i>where there is a higher than necessary level of school places, financial resources are not being used in the most efficient or effective way to improve the quality of education.</i> The proposal set out anticipated savings and costs. See page 28 and pages 63 to 65 of the consultation document.
Lack of investment in buildings	
There was concern that the council has not invested in the building since 2022 and is now using the condition of the building as an argument for closure. There are other school buildings which are in a similar condition but are not under threat from closure.	The proposal is not based solely on the condition of the building or recent investment levels. The condition of the premises is one of a number of factors considered as part of a wider strategic assessment, including pupil numbers, surplus capacity, educational sustainability and the efficient use of resources.

Objection comments	Response
	Whilst other schools may have similar building conditions, each is considered on its individual circumstances, and Ysgol Clydau is not the only school which is currently going through the formal process of consideration for discontinuation. In 2022, the school benefited from capital investment to support a redesign project, including the installation of a bespoke enclosed link walkway/corridor, along with thermal upgrades to adjoining flat roof areas and external cladding. Thermal improvements were also carried out to suspended ceilings within teaching spaces. Since then, the school has continued to benefit from its inclusion within the Service Level Agreement (SLA), which provides statutory testing and inspection of mechanical and electrical (M&E) systems across the buildings and wider site. Issues raised by both the school and Officers have been logged and addressed through the Responsive Repairs service, with minor works undertaken to a range of internal and external elements.
Alternatives to closure not explored	
Respondents felt that insufficient consideration had been given to exploring alternatives to closure such as federation or cross-border collaboration.	A full range of alternatives, including federation and collaboration with neighbouring schools, were carefully considered during the development of the proposal, (see page 30 and pages 54 to 70 of the consultation document) and again as part of the consultation report following consultation feedback. Analysis showed that these options would not resolve key issues such as surplus places, financial sustainability, or the long-term viability of education in the Preseli area. Federation, whether with Ysgol Bro Preseli or other nearby schools, was specifically assessed and found not to address the issues leading to the proposal and highlighted above.

Objection comments	Response
	On this basis, the Council is satisfied that all reasonable alternatives have been fully evaluated and that the proposal complies with the School Organisation Code.
Concern regarding the consultation process	
Respondents raised concerns that the Statutory process had not been in compliance with the School Organisation Code.	The Council is satisfied that the consultation and statutory processes have been carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code.
Respondents felt that the decision to close, so close to the end of the school year creates uncertainty for pupils, parents, and staff and leaves limited time for transition planning.	The Council recognises the sensitivity of timing. However, the statutory process dictates the timeline for decision-making. Should the proposal be implemented, comprehensive transition arrangements, including support for pupils and staff, will be implemented to ensure continuity and minimise disruption.
Concerns were raised about multiple reorganisation processes occurring simultaneously and the capacity of officers and members to give due consideration to each of the proposals.	The Council confirms that all processes have been undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements. Each proposal is considered on its own merits, with full consultation and reporting procedures followed. Appropriate governance arrangements ensure robust decision-making.
There was also concern that the consultation process had not sufficiently taken into account the views of the community, with respondents raising strong concerns regarding the perceived weight given to the high number of consultation responses opposing the closure.	The Council has spent considerable time reading and considering every response, both to the consultation document and to objections received following the publishing of a Statutory Notice. It has considered alternative proposals and updated key documents, such as the community impact assessment, in light of comments received.
Early Years, Childcare and Pupil Pathways	
Respondents raised concerns about the potential impact on local early years provision and the transition pathway into Welsh-medium education.	The Council acknowledges the importance of early years provision and its link to primary education. Early years providers will continue to operate independently, and access to Welsh-medium education will remain available through alternative schools.

Objection comments	Response
	The Council will continue to work with providers to support effective transition arrangements and ensure sufficient provision is maintained across the area.
Wider Strategic Issues (policy, demographics, capacity and long term impacts)	
The following issues were raised by respondents in combination with other concerns rather than standalone concerns. The extent to which the proposal aligns with national and local policy objectives, including Cymraeg 2050, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, and the Council's climate commitments. Concerns regarding the capacity of Ysgol Bro Preseli, including whether existing facilities, infrastructure, and resources are sufficient to accommodate additional pupils without impacting standards or pupil experience. Respondents requested that the decision to close is delayed until the new housing development opposite the school is complete as this may generate additional pupils to the school. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the permanence of closing the school, highlighting that once a rural school closes it is unlikely to reopen, and therefore decisions should be made cautiously where long-term impacts are uncertain.	The Council recognises that the proposal raises a number of wider strategic considerations which extend beyond the immediate educational impacts. In relation to policy alignment, the Council has considered the proposal in the context of relevant national and local policies and strategies, and the proposal is consistent within that strategic context. With regard to capacity, the Council has undertaken detailed pupil place planning and is satisfied that Ysgol Bro Preseli has sufficient capacity to accommodate pupils transferring from Ysgol Clydau. This includes consideration of current roll, projected numbers, and available accommodation. The Council does not consider that the proposal would adversely impact standards or access to facilities. The Council acknowledges concerns regarding long-term demographic trends and the sustainability of rural communities. However, such trends are influenced by a wide range of economic, social and housing factors, and cannot be attributed to a single school organisation proposal. Housing trajectories and pupil yield forecasts form part of the sufficiency planning. As highlighted in the consultation report, this amounts to approximately two pupils which would not represent a significant increase in pupils. Current data indicates that a significant proportion of families already choose to access education outside the catchment school, and therefore the Council considers that the proposal reflects existing patterns rather than fundamentally altering them.

Objection comments	Response
	The Council also recognises that school closure represents a significant and often permanent change. For this reason, proposals are subject to detailed consultation, impact assessment, and statutory processes, including a formal objection process which this report summarises the findings of. The decision, made by full Council, is made only after careful consideration of all relevant factors.