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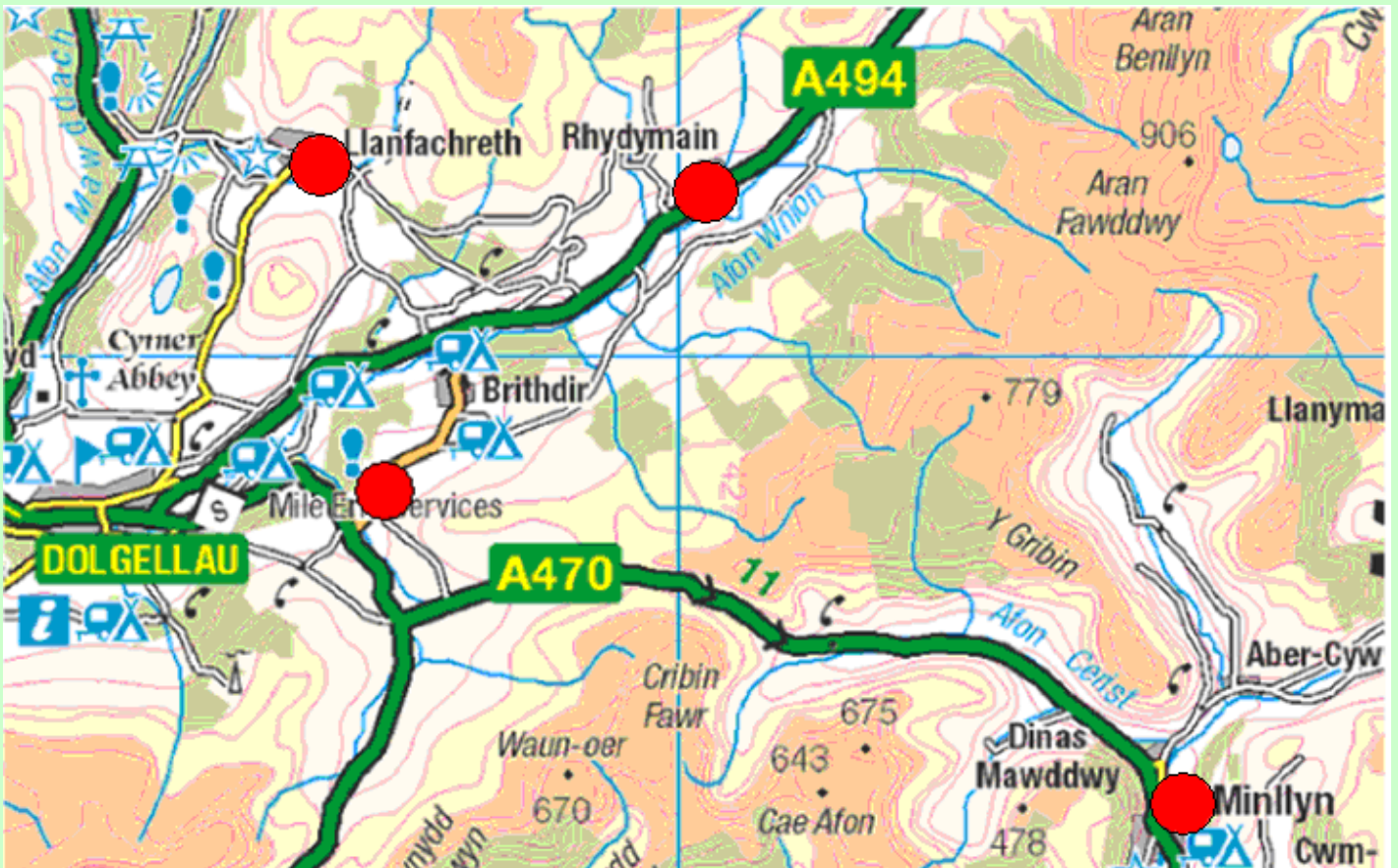
APPENDIX I

Statutory Consultation Document

Statutory Consultation

**Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy,
Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth Schools**

21 October - 25 November, 2011



www.gwynedd.gov.uk

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Pennaeth Addysg Head of Education

Dewi R. Jones



Gofynnwch am / Ask for:

**Swyddfa Ad-drefnu Ysgolion
Schools Re-organisation Office**

☎ (01286) 679247

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**Ad-drefnu Ysgolion
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21 October 2011

Dear Consultee,

During October 2011, there will be a period of statutory consultation on a proposal for the reorganisation of four schools in Y Gader catchment area. Following this we shall report on the findings of the consultation to the Council democratic process.

At its full meeting on 14 July 2011, Gwynedd Council resolved to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to close Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools on 31 August 2013.

It was resolved also to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 on a proposal to establish a multi-site Community Area School for 3 – 11 year olds to open on 1 September 2013 on the existing sites of Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy schools.

A statutory consultation will be held on this proposal which will serve the communities of Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools catchment area communities.

A consultation document is attached for your attention.

Please note that the timetable for the statutory meetings is given in the statutory consultation paper.

Copies of the statutory consultation document and other background papers are available on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk, and also at your local school and library. Should you require additional copies, you are welcome to contact us by phone on (01286) 679247 or by e-mail at schools.organisation@gwynedd.gov.uk

PLEASE NOTE – any comments on the statutory document should be sent to the Schools Reorganisation Project Office by **13:00 on 25 November 2011**. Relevant contact details are given at the end of the statutory consultation paper.

Sincerely,

**Dewi R. Jones
Head of Education**

GWYNEDD COUNTY COUNCIL

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BRITHDIR, DINAS MAWDDWY, IEUAN GWYNEDD AND MACHRETH SCHOOLS ON 31 AUGUST 2013 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 29 OF THE SCHOOL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK ACT 1998

and

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MULTI-SITE AREA SCHOOL ON THE CURRENT SITES OF BRITHDIR AND DINAS MAWDDWY SCHOOLS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 28 OF THE SCHOOL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK ACT 1998 ON

1 SEPTEMBER 2013

STATUTORY CONSULTATION PAPER



I. INTRODUCTION – CONSULTATION EXPLAINED

- 1.1. Gwynedd Council is considering the reorganisation of schools within the catchment areas of Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools.
- 1.2. At its full meeting on 14 July 2011, Gwynedd Council resolved to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 29 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 to close Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools on 31 August 2013.
- 1.3. It was resolved also to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 on the proposal to establish a multi-site Community Area School for 3 – 11 year olds to open on 1 September 2013 on the existing sites of Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy schools, to provide education for the catchment areas of the existing schools at Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd a Machreth.
- 1.4. Before taking any further steps with this proposal, Gwynedd Council would like to obtain your views so that your observations can be given consideration before any decision is taken.
- 1.5. This period of statutory consultation will be held between 21 October 2011 and 25 November 2011.
- 1.6. In relation to the proposal, the Council will consult with the following :
 - **Staff at the relevant schools**
 - **Governors of the relevant schools**
 - **Parents/guardians of pupils at the relevant schools**
 - **Pupils at the relevant schools**
 - **Other relevant agencies and consultees**
- 1.7. Meetings as follows will be held at the relevant schools:

School	Staff Meeting	Governors' Meeting	Parents' Meeting
Brithdir	02/11/11 - 4pm	02/11/11 - 5pm	02/11/11 - 6pm
Dinas Mawddwy	03/11/11 - 4pm	03/11/11 - 5pm	03/11/11 - 6pm
Machreth	07/10/11 - 4pm	07/10/11 - 5pm	07/10/11 - 6pm
Ieuan Gwynedd	09/10/11 - 4pm	09/10/11 - 5pm	09/10/11 - 6pm

Table 1: Statutory Consultation Meeting Timetable

- 1.8. Arrangements have also been made to obtain observations from children and young people.
- 1.9. Your observations will be given consideration before any decision regarding the next steps is taken by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2011 and by the Council Board on 13 December 2011. The Full Council will reach a decision on 15 December 2011, on whether or not Statutory Notices should be published.
- 1.10. As part of the consultation process, a background information pack is available at your local school, Dolgellau Library and on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk. The pack will include:
- Assembly Newsletter 021/2009 Proposals for Schools Reorganisation
 - Primary Education of the Best Quality for Gwynedd Children Strategy
 - Review of the operation of the Schools Reorganisation Strategy
 - Agenda and Minutes of Y Gader Review Panel Meetings - Statistics Pack
 - Possible Models
 - Newsletters
 - Language Impact Assessment Report
 - Community Impact Assessment Report
 - Economic Impact Assessment Report - Equality Assessment
 - Report to the Full Council 14 July 2011
 - Report to the Council Board 11 October 2011
- 1.11. Should you wish to receive this document in a different format, please contact the Schools Reorganisation Office on 01286 679247.
- 1.12. You are welcome to ask questions and make comments at the meeting or to present your written response using the response form attached with this document.
- 1.13. Comments on this proposal should be sent addressed for the attention of:
- Tony Bate,
Primary Schools Reorganisation Lead Manager,
Schools Reorganisation Office ,
Department of Education,
Gwynedd Council ,
Caernarfon,
Gwynedd.
LL55 1SH**

Comments should be received by **13:00 on 25 November 2011** at the latest. Any comments, by letter or by e-mail should reach the Council by this date and time.

2. BACKGROUND DETAILS

2.1 How Was This Proposal Developed?

- 2.1.1 In June 2008 the Council established an Improvement Working Group in order to develop a strategy to look at primary school organisation within the County.
- 2.1.2 The Improvement Working Group submitted a report – under the title “*Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd*”, to Gwynedd Council on 2 April 2009. The strategy outlined the aim of reviewing primary education in accordance with secondary school catchment areas, and criteria were established in order to prioritise the catchment areas which should be reviewed. The Strategy was unanimously approved by the Council.
- 2.1.3 This report was published following numerous discussions in Y Gader catchment area between April 2010 and June 2011, and including:
- 6 meetings of Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel (CRP)
 - a series of meetings with governors, staff and parents of all the primary schools within the catchment area.
 - a session for children and young people of the catchment area.
 - an assessment of the effects of the proposals on the language and on the communities.

2.2 Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel (CRP)

- 2.2.1 Y Gader CRP was established during April 2010. The first Panel meeting was held on 29 April 2010. Five further meetings were held on 13 May 2010, 25 May 2010, 6 July 2010, 25 May 2011 and 13 June 2011.
- 2.2.2 Representatives from each of the nine primary schools within the catchment area were invited – head teacher, chairperson of the governors and a parent governor. An invitation was extended also to the head teacher and chair of the governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader, local councillors, a representative of Bangor Diocese and a representative from Coleg Meirion Dwyfor.
- 2.2.3 A range of evidence was received and discussed by the Panel, including a pack of statistics relating to the area and agreed upon by the whole panel as a true and fair reflection. As the statistical information was prepared, the school representatives were asked to present their views, challenge the contents of the paper and ask for any further information as needed.
- 2.2.4 Also presented was information on the financial context, information regarding national developments including guidance from the Welsh Government on handling proposals for the reorganisation of schools, and new regulations on establishing patterns of collaboration between schools.
- 2.2.5 Also prepared was a full list of possible options for schools reorganisation in the area. The full list was reduced to 14 main models for further consideration. An analysis of the educational, managerial and financial implications of each proposal was received at the CRP meeting held on 25 May 2010, and the options were again

discussed in detail at the CRP meeting on 6 July 2010. A total of 14 models were discussed involving:

- Developing models of collaboration
- Models of rural area schools
- Learning Community or Lifelong School

2.3 Meetings at Individual Schools

2.3.1 At the start of the process, each school within the catchment area was visited by the Education Portfolio Holder and a representative of the County Advisory Panel (namely a selection of Councillors from every political party). The purpose of the visit was to meet head teachers and to see and understand the situation at each individual school.

2.3.2 In the course of the process, meetings were held with individual schools, during the period from 7 June - 23 June 2010. An open invitation was extended to staff, governors and parents to attend separate meetings. There was an opportunity to discuss general matters and also the specific models in question.

2.3.3 Thus, 30 individual meetings were held with representatives of individual schools over a period of 16 days.

2.4 Children and Young People

2.4.1 As the process developed, a session was held for children and young people in order to discover their views. The session on 5 July 2010 was co-ordinated by specialist officers from the Council.

2.4.2 A range of activities was held in order to gain the views of the children and young people on a number of subjects, including: class sizes; desirable resources for schools; age range within classes; language spoken by pupils outside the classroom and travelling distances to school.

2.4.3 At the end of the session, the children and young people were asked to suggest the kind of resources they would like to see at their school. In general, the children showed loyalty to their schools and teachers whilst also identifying a number of resources that they would like to see at their schools.

2.5 Input From Members

2.5.1 By unanimously approving "*Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd*" the Council gave its permission for the members of the Improvement Working Group to continue as a forum supporting the Education Portfolio Holder as she led reviews at each catchment area in turn. This was undertaken in their role as the *County Advisory Panel*.

2.5.2 During the discussion process in Y Gader catchment area, as part of the review of the operation of the Reorganisation Strategy, the County Advisory Panel was

replaced by an Improvement Working Group which is answerable to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

2.5.3 Also as part of the review, it was decided that Local Members should meet during the course of the catchment area reorganisation process.

2.5.4 Four meetings of the County Advisory Panel were held to discuss developments in Y Gader catchment area, on 24 February 2010, 24 March 2010, 8 July 2010 and 21 October 2010. In addition, a joint meeting was held between Local Members and the Working Group Members on 18 May 2011. The situation within the area was discussed and options were put forward regarding reorganisation of schools in the area, side by side with an analysis of models proposed by the CRP.

2.5.5 This proposal was approved by the Council on 14 July 2011 as a basis for the statutory consultation.

2.6 Written Communication

2.6.1 Newsletters were prepared and circulated to each school during the catchment area discussions. Paper copies were sent to the schools to be circulated to every parent and the newsletter was e-mailed to every school and also posted on the Council's website.

2.6.2 All the papers relating to Y Gader CRP can be viewed on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk

3. DETAILS OF THE SCHOOLS

3.1 Ysgol Brithdir

- 3.1.1 Ysgol Brithdir is a rural school, located on the outskirts of the village, which is two miles from the town of Dolgellau.
- 3.1.2 The area can be described as comparatively prosperous. In 2010/2011 fewer than 2.5% of the pupils could claim free dinners, a figure which is comparatively lower than the average figures for Gwynedd and for the whole of Wales (County at 12.9% and National at 18.9%).
- 3.1.3 Of the pupils, 60% come from the village and from nearby farms, whilst the remainder come from Dolgellau and neighbouring villages such as Machreth and Rhydyman.
- 3.1.4 The area served by the school is an agricultural area and, to a degree, continues to be a Welsh speaking area. 53% of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken as the main language.
- 3.1.5 Pupils are taken into the school on a part time basis in the September following their third birthday and as full time pupils in the September following their fourth birthday. In September 2011, there were 45 pupils on the register, including 8 pupils of nursery age. There are two classes at the school.

3.2 Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy

- 3.2.1 Ysgol Gynradd Dinas Mawddwy is located in the middle of the village of that name, close to the A470 to the south of the town of Dolgellau and almost on the boundary between Gwynedd and Powys. The school serves the village and a wide rural area.
- 3.2.2 Economically, the area is neither prosperous nor disadvantaged. At the school, there is no tradition of claiming free dinners and in 2010/11 only 12% were able to claim free dinners.
- 3.2.3 84% of the pupils live within the natural catchment area of the school. A number travel from a wide rural area to reach the school.
- 3.2.4 66% of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken as the first language. The remainder come from homes where English is the main family language.
- 3.2.5 The school accepts pupils aged from 3 to 11 years old. At the moment, there are 22 pupils on the register. The nursery class has one pupil. There are two classes at the school.

3.3 Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd

- 3.3.1 The school is located in the village of Rhydymain just off the main road from Bala to Dolgellau. The school serves an agricultural area which is not particularly prosperous but neither could it be termed as disadvantaged.
- 3.3.2 Up to 8% of the pupils qualified for free school meals in January 2010, and the figure reduced to 0% by 2011. These figures are substantially lower than the comparative figures for Gwynedd and for Wales (County at 12.9% and national at 18.9%).
- 3.3.3 In 2010/2011, 37% of the pupils came from outside the school's natural catchment area.
- 3.3.4 The language background of the area is soundly Welsh, and approximately 72% of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken as the first language.
- 3.3.5 At the moment, there are 16 pupils on the register, aged between 3 and 11 years, including three of nursery age, these pupils are accepted on a part time basis in the September following their third birthday and on full-time basis the following September.
- 3.3.6 The school has been adapted so that it can accept primary school age pupils with disabilities from within Y Gader catchment area also. In the past the Authority has earmarked autism specialist teachers for the school as an additional provision within the area.

3.4 Ysgol Machreth

- 3.4.1 Ysgol Machreth, which is a Church in Wales Controlled School, serves the Llanfachreth community and the surrounding rural area. The school is located approximately three and a half miles from the town of Dolgellau.
- 3.4.2 The catchment area is described as being neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. 17% of the pupils claim free school dinners, which is higher than the county average and lower than the national average. (County at 12.9% and National at 18.9%).
- 3.4.3 In 2010/2011, 59% of the pupils came from outside the school's natural catchment area.
- 3.4.3 71% of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language.
- 3.4.5 The school accepts nursery pupils on a part time basis in the September following their third birthday, and into the reception class on a full time basis in the September following their fourth birthday. There are 16 pupils on the register at the moment and there are two classes at the school.

3.5 Table of Background Information On The Schools

School	Brithdir	Dinas Mawddwy	Ieuan Gwynedd	Machreth
Capacity (based on National Assembly for Wales Newsletter No.09/06 – Schools Capacity in Wales Bill) Together with Nursery Places Where Relevant	38	69	45	46
Age Range	3 - 11	3 - 11	3 - 11	3 - 11
Numbers on Register - September 2011 (together with nursery places where relevant)	45	22	16	16
% Change in Numbers at the Schools Since 1975-2011	+114%	-42%	-48%	-6%
Number of Pupils Forecast During the Next Five Years	2012-2013 = 45 2013-2014 = 46 2014-2015 = 46 2015-2016 = 46	2012-2013 = 24 2013-2014 = 20 2014-2015 = 20 2015-2016 = 20	2012-2013 = 16 2013-2014 = 18 2014-2015 = 16 2015-2016 = 16	2012-2013 = 15 2013-2014 = 16 2014-2015 = 13 2015-2016 = 13
School Category (community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, established)	Community	Community	Community	Voluntary Controlled
Category according to Language Medium (based on National Assembly for Wales Document No. 023/2007 – Defining Schools According to Welsh Medium Provision) –PLASC DEFINITION	Welsh Medium Primary School	Welsh Medium Primary School	Welsh Medium Primary School	Welsh Medium Primary School
Designated Religious Character (where appropriate)	-	-	-	Church in Wales School
School Performance Data / Details of Estyn Inspection Reports	Inspection January 2008 3 x Grade 1 4 x Grade 2	Inspection May 2010 7 x Grade 2	Inspection February 2007 1 x Grade 1 6 x Grade 2	Inspection February 2010 5 x Grade 1 2 x Grade 2
Details of Any Additional Educational Needs Provision	-	-	Building adapted to take pupils with disabilities	-
Empty Places 2011- 2012	0% (0)	68% (47)	64% (29)	65% (30)
Cost per Head 2011/2012	£3,910	£6,868	£7,519	£6,861
Pupils From Outside the Catchment Area 2010-2011	40% (16)	16% (4)	37% (7)	59% (13)

Table 2: Background Information on the Schools

Key:

Estyn Grades –

Grade 1 = good with outstanding features

Grade 2 = good features and no important shortcomings

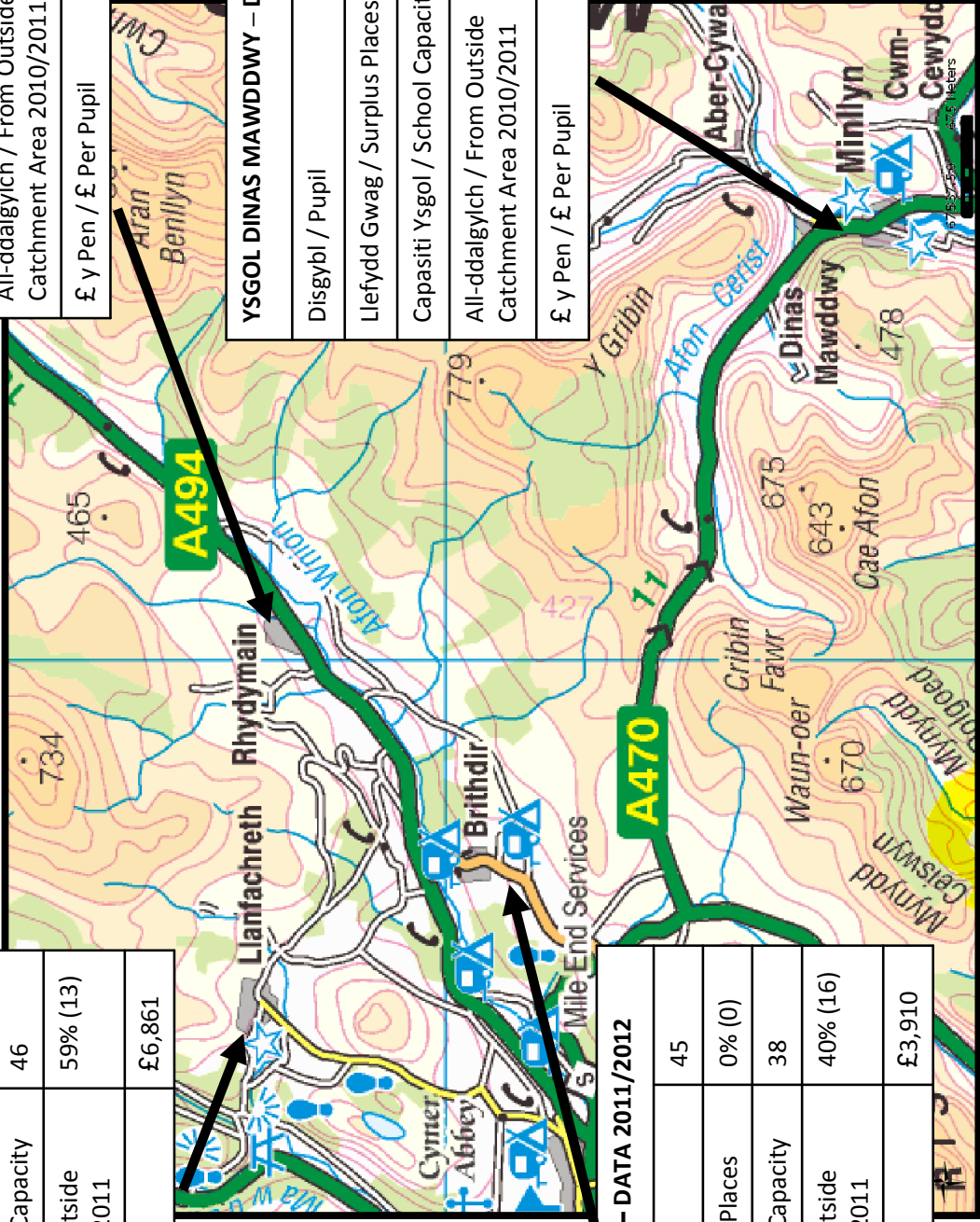
Grade 3 = good features outweigh shortcomings

Grade 4 = some good features but shortcomings in important areas

Grade 5 = many important shortcomings

3.6 Map Of The Area

YSGOL MACHRETH – DATA 2011/2012	
Disgybl / Pupil	16
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	65% (30)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	46
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment Area 2010/2011	59% (13)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£6,861



YSGOL IEUAN GWYNEDD – DATA 2011/2012	
Disgybl / Pupil	16
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	64% (29)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	45
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment Area 2010/2011	37% (7)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£7,519

YSGOL DINAS MAWDDWY – DATA 2011/2012	
Disgybl / Pupil	22
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	68% (47)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	69
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment Area 2010/2011	16% (4)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£6,868

YSGOL BRITHDIR – DATA 2011/2012	
Disgybl / Pupil	45
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	0% (0)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	38
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment Area 2010/2011	40% (16)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£3,910

Map 1: Map of Eastern Part of Y Gader Catchment Area



4. APPRAISAL OF DIFFERENT OPTIONS

4.2 A full list of possible options for the reorganisation of schools in the area was prepared. The full list was reduced to 14 main models for further consideration. An analysis of the educational, managerial and financial implications of each proposal was received at the Panel meeting held on 25 May 2010, and the options were again discussed in detail at the CRP meeting on 6 July 2010. A total of 14 models were discussed, and involved:

- Developing models of collaboration
- Models of schools in rural areas
- Learning Community or Lifelong School

4.2 During the process, one circle of meetings was held with individual schools; this took place between 7 June and 23 June 2010. An open invitation was extended to staff, governors and parents to attend separate meetings. There was an opportunity to discuss general matters and also the specific models in question.

4.3 In evaluating different models, a matrix developed within the Strategy “*Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd*” was used.

4.4 In accordance with this, therefore, up to 20 different options were evaluated at local discussion meetings with the CRP. The complete minutes and models can be viewed in full in the background information pack or on the Council’s website www.gwynedd.gov.uk

4.5 In considering the options for these schools, they were evaluated as models of collaboration; rural area schools, and as part of Lifelong learning Community schemes.

4.6 Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 note the advantages and disadvantages of the different kinds of models which became apparent during those CRP discussions.

4.7 Full consideration of these models can be viewed in the background pack along with the advantages and disadvantages of all the models discussed at the CRP meetings. Financial information is also included.

4.8 In addition, during the periods of engagement at the last two meetings it became apparent that a resolution had to be prioritised for these schools for the following reasons:

- Numbers forecast in three of the schools caused concern. The forecasts for 2014 are as follows:
 - Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd – 16 (**in September 2011 there are 16**)
 - Llanfachreth – 13 (**in September 2011 there are 16**)
 - Dinas Mawddwy – 20 (**in September 2011 there are 22**)
- **Number of empty places** (106 in number) - 54% within the four schools or 66% not counting the situation at Ysgol Brithdir. This means that, considering the empty places at Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools, **there are more empty places than there are pupils attending the schools**

- **Four schools within the area receive a sum in addition to the customary allocation** through the minimum staff protection policy. This additional sum totals £111,616 between the four schools
- **A total of £593,916 is allocated to the four schools** in this part of Y Gader catchment area for 2011/12. This corresponds to £5,883 per pupil on average. The cost per head range is as follows: Ysgol Brithdir at £3,910; Ysgol Machreth at £6,861; Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy at £6,868; and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd at £7,519. The average cost per head for the County for this period is **£3,352**
- At the time there was uncertainty regarding the **leadership situation** at 2 of the schools following staff turnover. Now the leadership situation at the schools is as follows: At Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy and Llanfachreth – there is a permanent Head teacher; at Ieuan Gwynedd, there is a temporary Head teacher
- **Ysgol Brithdir is overflowing** (There are 45 pupils in a school with capacity for 38)
- Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy **provides education for a wide area**

4.9 There was a feeling that it is impossible to delay action in this part of the catchment area on account of its vulnerable situation. Therefore this means that, whilst regretting the fact that a new school cannot be provided, steps must be taken towards developing an Area School. **At its meeting on 23 June 2011, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee confirmed this opinion, that steps must be taken towards a plan which will solve the problem in this area.** The matter was further discussed at the Council Board meeting on 5 July 2011 and at the Full Council meeting on 14 July 2011 where this view was further confirmed.

Table3: Developing Collaboration Models

Area	Features from the Gwynedd Reorganisation Strategy Matrix	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Child's Experiences	Total class number of 30 or fewer and 12 or more	Opportunities for sharing staff expertise (See Child's learning environment)	No change in class sizes – range of classes would continue. There is a range of class sizes within the catchment area. The small schools in the area also contain comparatively large classes, although the size of the classes in general are the same or slightly smaller than the county average.
Pupil Numbers	Changes in the number of pupils over time and forecast for the future. Ieuan Gwynedd, Dinas Mawddwy and Machreth schools have over 50% empty places	Some schools have experienced substantial growth over the last few years whilst others have experienced substantial reduction in pupil numbers. Since 1975, the numbers at Ysgol Brithdir have increased by 114% and the numbers at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd have reduced by 48%	Some schools have experienced a substantial growth over the last few years whilst others have experienced a substantial reduction in pupil numbers. Empty places would continue in 3 of the 4 schools.
Child's Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of repairs and making the schools suitable - space for teachers to work away from the classroom - head teacher's room - access to playing fields - suitable hall - buildings suitable for Foundation Phase and C2008 	Collaboration could mean sharing more resources (be they teachers and subject co-ordinators or teaching equipment namely access to physical education equipment, computers etc) Better access could be gained to playing fields and suitable hall and perhaps suitable locations for the Foundation Phase.	Condition and aptness of the buildings remain unchanged. Higher maintenance costs would continue. In order to maximise the sharing of resources, it could mean more travelling for teachers and also perhaps for the children. According to a review of the schools within the catchment area, a number of schools are in need of basic amenities.
Leadership	Difficulties in appointing - Headteacher over 55 years old - Temporary headteacher - Headteacher eligible for retirement	In order to reduce the cost per pupil at these schools it would be an option to federalise them and have fewer head teachers in the area.	The model does not indeed tackle the problem of recruiting Headteachers.
The Community	Pupils from outside the catchment area Movement from other catchment areas Movement to other catchment areas COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT	*** Community Impact Report *** Depending on the collaboration arrangements, the effect would be neutral, since the pupils would remain in their communities.	40% of the primary population in the catchment area attend one school. The large number of children who attend a school outside their catchment area affect empty places numbers. *** Community Impact Report ***
Language	LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT	*** Community Impact Report *** Depending on the collaboration arrangements, the effect would be neutral, since the pupils would remain in their communities.	*** Community Impact Report ***
Geographical Factors	Pupils to travel less than 30 minutes to school	No change - pupils would not have to attend any different school. This would depend on the type of collaboration formed locally.	Perhaps more travelling from one site to another depending on the collaboration arrangements decided upon locally.
Financial Resources	Cost per pupil % empty places	The catchment area can foresee a small increase in pupil numbers over a period up to 2013. The catchment area schools could accommodate this increase and it would slightly reduce the existing number of empty places.	All types of collaboration would not be likely to reduce the percentage of empty places.

Table4: Developing Area School Models

Area	Features from the Gwynedd Reorganisation Strategy Matrix	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Child's Experiences	Total class number of 30 or fewer and 12 or more	The model would be a better means of reaching towards the strategy targets than the existing situation.	Existing pupils at the schools could take time to adapt to being in a larger school after being used to a smaller school.
Pupil Numbers	Changes in the number of pupils over time and forecast for the future. Ieuan Gwynedd, Dinas Mawddwy and Machreth schools have over 50% empty places	The schools would be rationalised and consideration given to forecast changes in population – the new school would be suitable for the foreseen numbers	It will be necessary to consider the numbers in the remaining schools outside the Area School model – it is not possible to leave a school within a catchment area without considering pupil numbers in the future.
Child's Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of repairs and making the schools fit - space for teachers to work away from the classroom - head teacher's room - access to playing fields - suitable hall - buildings suitable for Foundation Phase and C2008 	The schools would be rationalised and consideration given to forecast changes in population – the new school would be suitable for the foreseen numbers	Consideration would have to be given to how schools outside the Area School model could ensure a learning environment which is as good as that in the new area school.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties in appointing - Headteacher over 55 years old - Temporary headteacher - Headteacher eligible for retirement 	There would be an opportunity to improve the condition and suitability of the building when developing a site for an Area School	It would mean the need for fewer headteachers and teachers to educate the children. There would also be a reduction in the number of teaching staff and other staff needed in order to teach and provide services for the schools.
The Community	Pupils from outside the catchment area Movement from other catchment areas Movement to other catchment areas	This model would improve the situation with regard to appointment of staff. ** Community Impact Report **	Closing a school would have a negative effect on the community. Alleviating measures would have to be introduced to reduce this negative effect. ** **Community Impact Report **
Language	COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT	** Language Impact Report**	** Language Impact Report **
Geographical Factors	Pupils to travel less than 30 minutes to school	Depending on the location of pupils' homes, it would be unlikely that pupils would have to travel more than 45 minutes (Welsh Assembly Regulations) or possibly more than 30 minutes (Gwynedd Strategy), depending on the location of any new school.	It is possible that some pupils would have to travel further than they do at present to get to school. Location would be important in order to discover the effect on local transport.
Financial Resources	Cost per pupil % empty places	The schools would be rationalised and the number of empty places would be under 2.5% at the new school. This would also reduce the cost per pupil	It is possible that transport costs for pupils would rise since more children would live further away from school. .

Table 5: Community Models / Lifelong School

Area	Features from the Gwynedd Reorganisation Strategy Matrix	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Child's Experiences	Total class number of 30 or fewer and 12 or more	A new school would reach the strategy targets better than the present situation	Existing pupils at the schools could take time to adapt to being in a larger school with many more pupils after being used to a smaller school. It would be necessary to ensure fair continuity for pupils who progress at 11 years from satellite schools to the Lifelong School.
Pupil Numbers	Changes in the number of pupils over time and forecast for the future. leuan Gwynedd, Dinas Mawddwy and Machreth schools have over 50% empty places	The schools would be rationalised and consideration given to forecast changes in population – the new school would be suitable for the foreseen numbers	It would be necessary to consider how the schools outside the Lifelong School model would ensure a learning environment of the same quality as that in the new school. A scheme would have to be established so that the satellites could remain viable.
Child's Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of repairs and making the schools fit space for teachers to work away from the classroom head teacher's room access to playing fields suitable hall buildings suitable for Foundation Phase and C2008 	There would be an opportunity to improve the condition and suitability of the building when developing a site for an Area School.	Satellite schools – condition and suitability of the buildings remain unchanged. Higher maintenance costs remain.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties in appointing Headteacher over 55 years old Temporary headteacher Headteacher eligible for retirement 	This model would improve the situation with regard to appointment of staff.	It would mean a need for fewer headteachers and teachers to educate the children. There would also be a reduction in the number of teaching staff and other staff needed in order to teach and to provide services for the schools.
The Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils from outside the catchment area Movement from other catchment areas Movement to other catchment areas <p>COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT</p>	* Community Impact Report*	Community Impact Report – The effect would be more negative than an Area School since more establishments would close.
Language	LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT	*** Language Impact Report – see report by Dylan Bryn ***	*** Language Impact Report *** There would be a negative language impact if a rural provision closed and services were centralised.
Geographical Factors	Pupils to travel less than 30 minutes to school	Depending on the location of pupils' homes, it would be unlikely that pupils would have to travel more than 45 minutes (Assembly Regulations) or possibly more than 30 minutes (Gwynedd Strategy), depending on the location of any new school.	It is possible that some pupils would have to travel further to school than they do at present. Location would be important and the effect on local transport.
Financial Resources	Cost per pupil % empty places	Schools would be rationalised and the number of empty places would therefore be under 25% in the new school. This also reduces the cost per pupil.	Schools that were not rationalised would continue with their present % empty places (some higher than 25% empty places) In order to reduce the cost per pupil in these schools it would be an option to federalise them and reduce the number of headteachers.

4.10 Summary of the models considered

4.10.1 The various models were considered and the following conclusions reached:

4.10.2 Collaboration Model

Discussion took place on how this model could be developed in more than one form. Informal collaboration could be established between the schools and more formal collaboration through a federal arrangement.

The advantages of this type of model would be to ensure that educational provision remained on every site where education is provided at the moment. There would be an opportunity to share expertise and to share good practice and a limited opportunity to make savings if a federal model and arrangement was favoured.

On the other hand, there would also be disadvantages for this type of model. It would not solve the problem of a reduction in numbers or the high number of empty places in individual schools. Also, high maintenance costs for the same number of buildings would remain and the substantial investment needed to upgrade every individual building cannot be ensured.

4.10.3 Lifelong Model

The lifelong model in several forms was discussed at the catchment area meetings. In this context – it would involve closing the rural schools and offer educational provision for the pupils on a central site.

The advantages of this model would be to centralise the educational provision at one location. This model could lead to substantial savings. In order to fulfil this model a substantial investment would have to be made in order to ensure that there would be a building of sufficient size. Background work by the Council's Property Services showed that developing one site in the area would be very difficult due to severe technical problems.

This model would involve abolishing much of the rural educational provision within the catchment area. The community and language impact assessments note the negative effect that the model would have on the communities.

4.10.4 Developing an Area School Model

This model is assessed in full in the remainder of the document as the model which is favoured for this part of the Dolgellau catchment area.

5. THE PROPOSAL

5.0.1 The proposal which is presented here is relevant to:

- Ysgol Brithdir
- Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy
- Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain
- Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Llanfachreth)

5.1 The Proposal For The Schools

5.1.1 At its full meeting on 14 July 2011, Gwynedd Council resolved to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 on the proposal to close Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools on 31 August 2013.

5.1.2 It was resolved also to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 on the proposal to establish a multi-site Area Community School for 3 – 11 year olds to open on 1 September 2013 and to provide education for the catchment areas of Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools.

5.2 What A ‘Multi-Site Area School’ Means

5.2.1 What is meant by Multi-site Area School is that one school will be established but on two sites. It is recommended that one site should be on the existing Ysgol Brithdir site where the building will be extended and upgraded. The second site for the Area School will be on the existing site of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy. The reasons why there is a need for a second site in Dinas Mawddwy are given in paragraph 5.12.3

5.2.2 The main features of an Area School are as follows:

- Statutorily the school will have one legal entity
- The school will have one Head teacher, with manager(s) on other sites
- One budget
- One governing body
- The two sites will receive Estyn inspections at the same time – as one school.

5.3 Why Recommend An Area School?

5.3.1 Establishing an Area School in this part of the catchment area is recommended after considering a number of factors, including:

- Class sizes
- Pupil numbers
- Learning environment and quality

- Leadership and Staffing
- The Community
- The Welsh Language
- Financial Resources
- Legal Status
- Geographical Factors
- Suitability of Buildings

These factors – among others – will be considered in the remainder of the document.

5.4 Class Sizes

5.4.1 Today the size of classes at the four schools on average is 12, and there is a range of between 4 and 27 in class numbers. It is noted that Ysgol Brithdir is above its capacity and the other 3 schools have a number of empty places (Ysgol Machreth = 65% [30], Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd = 64% [29], Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy = 68% [47] therefore the total = 66% [106]).

5.4.2 Each of these four schools has two classes at the moment – and the pupils are distributed as follows **during the academic year 2010/11**:

SCHOOL	Class	Number	Class	Number	Total	Number of Classes	Average Classes Size
Brithdir	N	8	3	6	45	2	22.5
	R	5	4	4			
	I	5	5	3			
	2	9	6	5			
Dinas Mawddwy	N	1	3	0	22	2	11
	R	3	4	2			
	I	3	5	7			
	2	4	6	2			
Ieuan Gwynedd	N	3	3	2	16	2	8
	R	0	4	4			
	I	0	5	0			
	2	5	6	2			
Machreth	N	0	3	3	26	2	8
	R	2	4	5			
	I	0	5	1			
	2	2	6	3			

Table 6: Class Sizes

Source: Analysis by Gwynedd Education Department based on statements from individual schools, May 2011

5.4.3 A study of a range of evidence outlines the general opinion – supported in the Government’s policy – that classes of over 30 pupils are unacceptable for children under 7 years of age and undesirable for children between 7 and 11 years old.

5.4.4 Further, recent research suggests that classes can be too small. In his publication “The Class Size Debate: Is Small Better?” Peter Blatchford states “...it may also be worth considering that class sizes can be too small” and reports that teachers have suggested that “...the dynamics of the group could become flat and some children could dominate”.

5.4.5 The strategy adopted by the Council on 2 April 2009 notes an ambition to ensure classes of between 12 and 25 pupils.

5.4.6 By realising these recommendations, class sizes at the multi-site Area School on average will be around 20. It is foreseen that the average size of classes on the main site of the school will be 25, while the class sizes on the second site will be around 12.

5.5 Pupil Numbers

5.5.1 Primary school pupil numbers in this part of the catchment area has varied greatly since 1975. Looking at the figures up until 2011, it was noted that there was an increase in one school (a substantial increase – 114% in the numbers at Ysgol Brithdir) and a reduction in the 3 other schools. According to the figures received from individual schools, numbers are expected to fall during the next few years. Ysgol Brithdir is the only school that does not forecast a reduction.

School	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	1975-2010 (change)	1975-2010 (% change)	2011	1975-2011 (change)	1975-2011 (% change)
Brithdir	21	18	23	24	22	43	38	40	19	90%	45	24	114%
Dinas Mawddwy	38	43	38	52	44	37	34	25	-13	-34%	22	-16	-42%
Ieuan Gwynedd	31	31	32	28	24	17	26	19	-12	-39%	16	-15	-48%
Machreth	17	11	18	25	32	27	26	22	5	29%	16	-1	-16%
Y Gader Catchment Area	475	458	481	459	478	436	419	386	-89	-19%	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>
Meirionnydd	3,293	2,993	2,567	2,597	2,774	2,745	2,510	2,229	-1,064	-32%	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>
Gwynedd	12,084	11,104	9,505	9,516	10,321	10,679	10,150	9,703	-2,381	-20%	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>

Table 7: Numbers 1975-2011

5.5.2 Table 8 overleaf shows the change in numbers over the period from September 2008 up to the forecasts for August 2014. Through these figures it is possible to identify the trend over a comparatively shorter period. It seems that the tendency towards a reduction in the number of pupils in three of the schools is likely to continue (Ysgol Machreth, Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy). The tendency towards an increase in pupil numbers in Ysgol Brithdir is also likely to continue.

School	True nos. Sept. 2008	True nos. Sept 2009	True nos. Sept 2010	True nos. Sept 2011	Forecast September 2012	Forecast September 2013	Difference between Sept 2008 and Sept 2013	Difference %
Brithdir	37	37	40	45	45	46	+9	+24%
Dinas Mawddwy	27	24	25	22	24	20	-7	-26%
Ieuan Gwynedd	25	24	19	16	18	16	-9	-36%
Machreth	29	23	22	16	15	16	-13	-45%

Table 8: True numbers and forecasts until the end of August 2014

Source: Data based on true numbers according to the schools' annual September census . Head teachers' forecasts in September 2010 for the next 3 years.

5.5.3 Educational standards are of core importance to the proposals. Although there is a general presumption that the standard of education in small schools is higher than in larger establishments, there is no evidence to support this belief. Indeed, ESTYN report "*Small Primary Schools in Wales (2003)*" notes that there is no substantial difference between standards of education in small and large schools, but "...the smaller the school is, the more difficult the task for the teacher to adapt work to meet all pupils' educational needs". The report goes to note "...it can be more difficult for teachers in small school to adapt work to children's needs, since pupils in every class can differ greatly in age and development phases.. This is especially true of the smallest schools (with up to 30 pupils), where there is 28% unsatisfactory work in comparison with 8% unsatisfactory work in schools with over 210 pupils".

5.5.4 If the proposals were realised, the Area School would have approximately 98 pupils, with approximately 78 pupils on the main site and approximately 20 on the Dinas Mawddwy site. Although the numbers in Dinas Mawddwy are low, there are other factors (see paragraph 5.12.3) which explain why it is recommended to retain that site as part of the proposed Area School.

5.6 Learning Environment

- 5.6.1 Recent reports from Estyn note that these four schools provide education of good quality with no important shortcomings. No concerns or doubts were expressed regarding the standard of education at any one of the schools.

	Ysgol Brithdir	Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy	Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd	Ysgol Machreth
Date of the Inspection	January 2008	May 2010	February 2007	February 2010
Details of Inspection Reports	3 x Grade 1 4 x Grade 2	7 x Grade 2	1 x Grade 1 6 x Grade 2	5 x Grade 1 2 x Grade 2

Table 9: Results of latest Estyn inspections

Key:

- Estyn results – Grade 1 = good with outstanding features
Grade 2 = good features and no important shortcomings

5.7 Leadership and Staffing

- 5.7.1 The four schools today receive sufficient budget to fund 8 full time primary school teachers, of these, four are headteachers. But due to staff turnover, two of the schools have lately faced the situation of having to fill the Head teacher post.

- 5.7.2 If the proposal were implemented, and looking at the projected numbers at the schools, it is likely that there would be a budget for 5 primary teachers (full time) for the entire Area School. The exact nature of the collaboration and staff sharing between the two school sites is a matter to be further discussed and a matter which would need to be deliberated by the Area School Governing Body. The school will be a new entity, and therefore a new Governing Body will need to be established together with a instrument of governance following current guidelines and regulations. The new Governing Body will need to appoint the Head teacher and staff for the school.

- 5.7.3 Gwynedd Council developed a detailed staffing policy in conjunction with the Trade Unions and head teachers. The policy will be a basis for any redundancies which result from this proposal. Clear and open communication will be of core importance to the successful implementation of any proposals. The staffing structure will be a matter for the Area School Governing Body. however, the Council suggests that the Area School should try and earmark the posts which are derived from implementing the new system for teachers who work within the four schools in the first place, and then within other schools in Y Gader catchment area.

- 5.7.4 The four schools employ head teachers, teachers, ancillary staff, assistants, administrators, and also provision, cleaning and catering staff.

5.8 The Community

- 5.8.1 An analysis of the community use made of each school and also the contribution which the schools make to their communities was published in a comprehensive statistical package. Also listed were the resources (e.g. community centres, playing fields etc). The full document can be viewed on the Council website (www.gwynedd.gov.uk) and in the package of background documents at the schools and in Dolgellau library. Copies are also available by contacting the Schools Reorganisation Office.
- 5.8.2 Government guidelines (Circular 021/2009 Schools Organisation Proposals) on the reorganisation of schools note factors which need to be considered when proposals for schools reorganisation are put forward. As part of the process of developing the proposals, a study was commissioned from independent consultants on the possible effects of the various options on the community. Also, an assessment of the economic impact was commissioned to coincide with the community study. The reports can be viewed on the Council website and copies are also available from the Schools Reorganisation Office.
- 5.8.3 Looking at the assessment carried out of the possible impact of some of the initial models considered, the community and economic assessments both note the impact of different types of models. In short, it was noted that under any model, school closure in a rural area would have a negative impact – this means that any area school model would have a similar impact. The only model which would not have a negative impact - neutral impact - would be a model of collaboration which in effect would mean no change in school presence within individual villages.
- 5.8.4 As specific models were developed - the assessment for the Area School models were fine-tuned. It has been noted that closing schools in order to establish an Area School will have a negative impact on the communities and on the economy within those communities where schools are closed. The assessment acknowledges that keeping the Dinas Mawddwy site open means that the model is less detrimental than would be the case if the site were closed.
- 5.8.5 In the case of those communities where the school is closed, the report suggests some measures which the Council can consider in order to alleviate the negative impact, for example:
- Ensure support for communities where schools close in order to try and retain the situation within those communities.
 - Offer support to those communities so that they can discuss the best use that can be made of the school building after closure.
 - Ensure that the Area School includes the villages within the school catchment area in its activities and holds occasional activities in those villages.
 - Offer transport provision in order to ensure that children are transported effectively and safely to and from the communities.

- Try and restrict children’s travelling time to the Area School to the County target (30 minutes) and assess parent and pupil satisfaction with the travelling arrangements with regard to punctuality and safety

5.8.6 These alleviating measures will be considered for inclusion in the work programme should the recommendations be accepted for implementation in the area.

5.9 The Welsh Language

5.9.1 When this proposal was being developed, an assessment was commissioned regarding the impact of the various models considered for the area. This was carried out in accordance with Assembly Government requirements in Circular Letter 021/2009. The full report is posted on the Council website. Paper copies can also be obtained by contacting the Schools Reorganisation Office. With regard to this proposal to establish an Area School, the Language Assessment notes that establishing this model would have a **positive impact** on the Welsh language.

5.9.2 The conclusion of the assessment for a rural Area School on one site (Brithdir, Machreth and Ieuan Gwynedd catchment areas) and Dinas Mawddwy pupils on the other is +6 Positive. It is noted that there is healthy community use of the Welsh language in each one of the schools – especially the three schools which will unite on the Brithdir site. **The assessment reaches the conclusion that an Area School would be a “means of strengthening the Welsh language and that in a larger establishment which could develop into a positive language powerhouse”.**

5.10 Financial Resources

5.10.1A total sum of £593,916 is allocated to the four schools in this part of Y Gader catchment area for 2011/12. On average, this corresponds to £5,883 per pupil. The cost per head varies from school to school - Brithdir at £3,910; Ysgol Machreth at £6,861; Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy at £6,868; and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd at £7,519. The average County cost per pupil in this period is **£3,352**.

School	Total Number Pupils	Total fte Pupil Number (nursery = 0.44)	Allocation 2011/12	£ Per Pupil	Minimum Staffing Protection
Clogau	36	34.32	£146,662	£4,273	£9,607
Brithdir	40	37.76	£147,642	£3,910	£6,109
Dinas Mawddwy	25	23.32	£160,153	£6,868	£29,678
Ganllwyd	22	22.00	£143,720	£6,533	£33,527
Llanelltyd	40	38.32	£151,206	£3,946	£5,121
Ieuan Gwynedd	19	19.00	£142,860	£7,519	£39,908
Friog	33	30.76	£146,100	£4,750	£16,280
Machreth	22	20.88	£143,261	£6,861	£35,921
Dolgellau	149	139.48	£443,145	£3,177	£ DIM
Y Gader Catchment Area	386	365.84	£1,624,749	£4,441	£176,151

Table 10: Primary School Allocation 2011/12

5.10.2 The total allocation sum under the recommended organisation for the area – based on the current allocation – would be £413,803. In terms of revenue costs, establishing the new system would save £180,000 less additional transport cost (calculated as £48,000), and would therefore save **£132,000** per year.

5.10.3 The 4 schools in the area receive a sum in addition to the customary allocation through the minimum staffing protection which guarantees at least a headteacher and teacher in every school and a headteacher and assistant in schools with fewer than 15 pupils. This additional sum totals £111,616. In comparison, if the proposal is implemented, there will be an additional sum of £69,069 as a multi-site allowance on top of the customary allocation.

5.10.4 If the proposals are accepted, the Council has a policy to retain 20% of any savings within the catchment area throughout the reorganisation process across the County in order to meet the aims of the county strategy.

5.11 Legal Status

- 5.11.1 Ysgol Machreth has the status of a Voluntary Controlled (Church) School. Closing the school would have implications regarding the Church provision. The Church owns the main site at Ysgol Machreth, and other parts of its land are under covenant.
- 5.11.2 Currently, Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau also gives Church education provision in the catchment area. This means that alternative Church education provision is available in the area, should pupils/parents want to choose a faith education.
- 5.11.3 The current Ysgol Machreth area will become part of the new Area School catchment area if the proposal is approved.

5.12 Geographical Factors

- 5.12.1 The aim is to restrict travel wherever possible. The proposal put forward meets with the Assembly Government guidelines in *Circular 021/2009*, namely that proposals should not require primary age pupils to travel more than 45 minutes each way to school. The requirement of Gwynedd Council Strategy "*Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd*" is to restrict travelling time to no more than 30 minutes each way. This proposal fully meets with these requirements.
- 5.12.2 In developing the proposals, it was considered that Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is already an Area School and provides education for a wide area, where some children already travel some distance to school. Also, consideration was given to the fact that the existing location of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is a fair distance from the other locations, over 8 miles from the nearest location. Travelling time for some Dinas Mawddwy pupils from their homes to school was also considered since some travel for up to 25 minutes to this school already. Therefore it is recommended that educational provision needs to continue on this site.

5.13 Suitability Of Buildings

- 5.13.1 The strategy which was unanimously approved by the Council in April 2009 notes that learning and teaching environment are of core importance to the provision of best quality education.
- 5.13.2 ESTYN report "*Appraisal of the performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or property which has been renovated*" (2007) confirms the opinion quoted above. The report notes that schools which had seen their buildings being renovated had experienced an improvement in their pupils' attainment and achievement. We note that Estyn individual school reports show that the quality of the teaching had improved, that staff morale had been raised, that attendance had been maintained and that behaviour had

improved and that buildings which have been renovated offer more choice and better educational provision within the school and for before and after school activities.

- 5.13.3 If the proposal is not implemented, it is estimated that approximately £2.3m would need to be spent on repairs and renovation work in the schools at Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy leuan Gwynedd and Machreth in order to improve the condition and suitability of the buildings. By implementing this proposal and closing the sites at Machreth and leuan Gwynedd the cost would be reduced and an investment secured for the site developed as the main site for the Area School at Brithdir.

6. CHOICE OF SITE FOR THE AREA SCHOOL

6.1 In developing this proposal and discussing options in the Catchment Area Review Panel (CRP), it was estimated that developing a new school building would cost around £3.8m. This option was considered but for the following reasons it was decided to develop one of the existing school sites:

- The situation at the schools is vulnerable and requires attention
- It is estimated that developing a new school on a new site would cost around £3.8m. Due to the size of the sum the Council would have to apply for funding from the Welsh Government's Twenty First Century Schools Programme
- From the information held by the Council at present, the initial bid for funding could not be submitted to Welsh Government for funding from the Twenty First Century Schools Programme until 2016/17 at the earliest. This means that the school would not be ready until at least 2018 in light of the building work involved

6.2 Due to its vulnerable situation, action in this part of the catchment area cannot be delayed. This means that, whilst regretting that developing a new school is not possible, it is necessary to move ahead and develop an Area School. At its meeting on 23 June 2011, the Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee confirmed this view, that steps must be taken towards a plan which will offer a solution for the area without delay. The matter was further discussed at the Council Board meeting on 5 July 2011 and in the Full Council meeting on 14 July 2011 where that view was also confirmed.

6.3 Following this, consideration was given to the existing sites of schools in the area.

6.4 Initial consideration was given to the existing sites of Ysgol Machreth and Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, but concern was expressed on account of their viability in view of their geographical location and the nature of the road network leading to them. The existing sites of Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain were looked at as possible locations for the Area School main site – due to their geographical location within the area and the road network leading to them. It was decided to locate one site for the school in Dinas Mawddwy for the reasons noted in 5.12.3

6.5 The Council Board discussed the matter of the location of the main site at its meeting on October 11 2011, giving special attention to both the existing site at Ysgol Brithdir and the existing site at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd. Having balanced carefully all the technical factors; other factors relevant to developing an Area School; the observations of the CRP and the observations of Local Members, it was recommended that consultation should take place on the proposal to establish one site for the Area School on the existing site of Ysgol Brithdir for the following reasons:

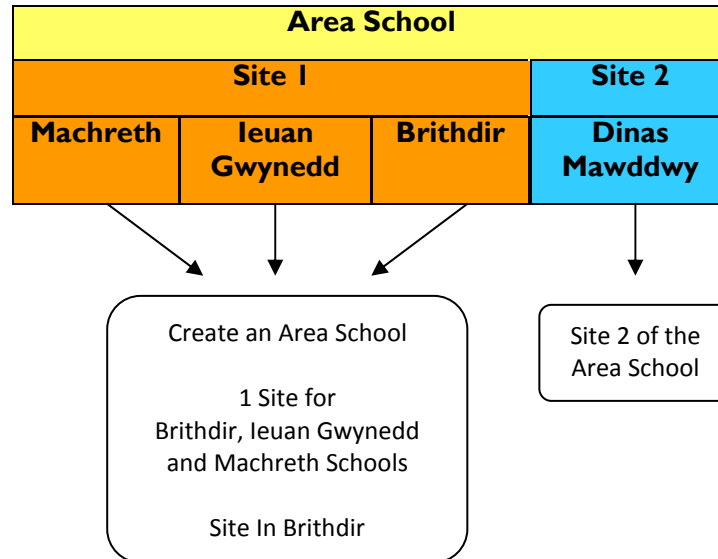
- Geographical location in terms of accessibility for pupils within the Area School catchment area. As 84% of the children live closer to the Ysgol Brithdir site than to the Ieuan Gwynedd site.
- Distance from the Dinas Mawddwy site in terms of travelling time for pupils and staff.
- Contact with nursery provision at Brithdir
- The viability of the school in the future. Over the years a tendency has appeared for an increase in numbers at Ysgol Brithdir, whilst the numbers at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd have fallen over the same period. A number of factors could have caused this but location of the site seems to be the most obvious.

6.6 It was recommended that development in Brithdir offers the best opportunity to ensure a sustainable and viable school for the future, safeguarding rural education in this part of the Dolgellau catchment area.

6.7 Therefore it is recommended to locate the main site of the Area School on the existing site of Ysgol Brithdir and the second site at Dinas Mawddwy.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

7.1 This proposal means that four schools will close and that one new school will be developed but on two sites.



7.2 This involves:

- **Closing** Ysgol Brithdir, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and Ysgol Machreth
- **Establishing** one Area School with one site in Brithdir and one in Dinas Mawddwy
- There will therefore be no site in Llanfachreth (Ysgol Machreth) or in Rhydymain (Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd)

7.3 Considerations on the closure of Ysgol Machreth

7.3.1 Initial consideration was given to the existing site at Ysgol Machreth as an option for the Area School, but for the following reasons it was decided not to recommend the site for further consideration;

- The Machreth site is the furthest in terms of time from Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy (approx. 25 minutes)
- In the year 2010/11 only a small number of pupils lived within its natural catchment area – only 7 pupils lived within its natural catchment area. The school has the highest number of pupils from outside the catchment area (59% - 13 pupils). Locating the Area School on this site would mean the highest disruption, in terms of child numbers
- Around 75% of Ysgol Machreth pupils lived closer to another school
- Geographically, this site is the least favourable in terms of where children live.

7.3.2 The community and economic impact reports note concerns regarding the effect that the closure of Ysgol Machreth will have on the community. It will

have to be ensured that the measures recommended in the assessments are given consideration in order to alleviate the effect on the community.

7.3.3 The Council realises that closing Ysgol Machreth involves closing Church Provision in this part of Y Gader catchment area. An alternative choice for pupils is noted in 5.11.2.

7.4 Considerations on the Closure of Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain

7.4.1 Detailed consideration was given to developing the proposed Area School on the existing site at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd in Rhydymain. A detailed analysis was carried out of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of locating the area school on this site. Views of CRP members and elected members were sought. Whilst acknowledging that technical merits can be seen on the Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd site, it was decided that other matters outweighed these in favour of the site at Ysgol Brithdir, for example:

- Location of pupils' homes – only 16% of the children who attended the 3 schools in 2010 lived closer to Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd
- 14 of the pupils lived within the school catchment area.
- The average travelling time to Ysgol Brithdir is less than to Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd
- The fact that nursery provision is close to the site of the school in Brithdir
- Viability of the site in terms of attracting pupils. There has been a reduction of 48% in numbers at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd since 1975, whilst there has been a substantial increase in Brithdir (+114%)
- The fact that the Ieuan Gwynedd site is further from the other Area School site at Dinas Mawddwy

7.4.2 The community and economic impact reports note concerns regarding the impact of the closure of Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd on the local community. It will have to be ensured that the measures recommended in these assessments are given consideration in order to alleviate the impact on those communities.

7.4.3 Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd has been adapted so that primary pupils with disabilities within Y Gader catchment area can be accepted. In the past the authority has also earmarked specialist autism teachers for the school as an additional provision within the area. As a result of the proposal to close Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, this provision will be offered at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

7.5 Staffing Considerations

7.5.1 If the proposal is approved there would be staffing implications which could lead to uncertainty and redundancies. As part of the present consultation, discussions are being carried out mainly with staff and Union leaders. Gwynedd Council has developed a detailed staffing policy in conjunction with the Trade Unions and headteachers. Any redundancies resulting from this proposal will

have to conform with this policy. Clear and open communication will play a core part in implementing any proposal.

7.5.2 In establishing the school, the Governing Body will be expected to appoint staff for the school. With regard to this process, the Council Personnel Service will be available to give help and support to the Governing Body and the staff.

7.6 Future Use of Sites and Support for Communities

7.6.1 As part of the steps to alleviate any impact that school closure will have on the area – if there is local desire - the Council will ask its Regeneration Officers to support the community when considering future use of land and buildings released as a result of reorganisation. This will be carried out in accordance with the policies and protocols that the Council has already adopted back in 2010.

7.7 One School With Two Sites

7.7.1 In order to establish the Area School, consideration was given to the best way to do this legally and constitutionally. It is recommended that the schools in question will have to be closed (Brithdir, Dinas Mawddwy, Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth), and a site reopened at Dinas Mawddwy and at Brithdir in order to establish a Multi-Site Area School.

7.7.2 The implications of establishing a single school entity has already been explained in terms of;

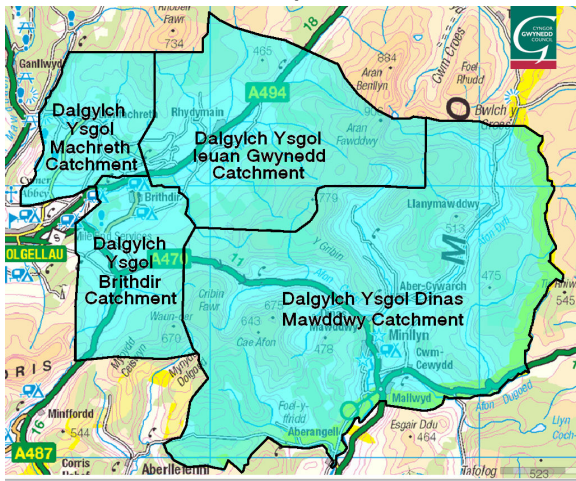
- Leadership (one Headteacher)
- Governing Body (one)
- Budget (one budget)

7.7.3 When the new Area School is established it will be necessary to establish a new Governing Body, school constitution and appoint staff. The staffing structure will be a matter for the school's Governing Body. However, the Council suggests that the Area School should earmark the posts which emerge from implementing the new system, in the first place for teachers who work within the four schools, and then those at other schools within Y Gader catchment area.

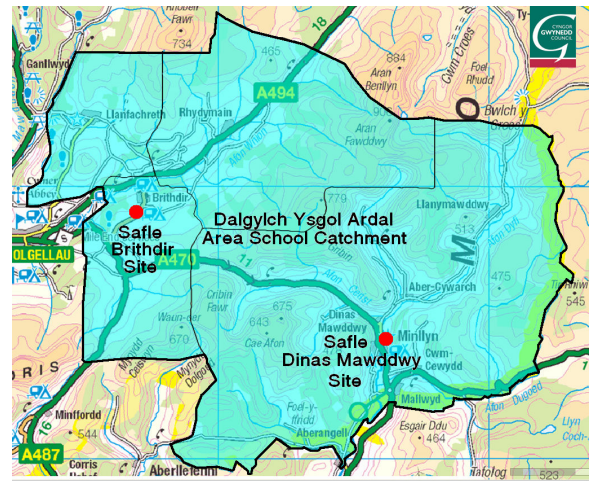
7.7.4 By implementing this proposal comes into force, the catchment areas of the existing schools will be adapted. See the catchment areas of the four existing schools in map 2. Catchment areas are used in order to identify the location of the nearest school for parents/children depending on where they live. This is how it is possible to implement the Council's Transport and Access Policy and to identify which pupils are entitled to free transport (in short, if they live more than 2 miles from their nearest primary catchment area school).

7.7.5 Map 3 shows the catchment area of the new Area School. The Authority's Transport and Access Policy will apply as at present. Therefore any application for access to the new Area School will be considered as an application to the

whole school. Control over access to the different sites will become part of the school policies.



Map 2 – Present Catchment Areas of the Schools



Map 3 – Catchment Area of the Area School

7.7.6 In terms of transport, in accordance with the authority’s policy, there will be free transport for pupils who live more than 2 miles from their nearest site.

7.7.7 The budget will be based on the number of pupils who attend the school in accordance with the schools funding formula. Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy will become part of the Area School with a multi-site allowance as a means of maintaining the Area School on two sites.

7.8 In Summary

7.8.1 It is therefore proposed that an Area School be established in this part of the Dolgellau catchment area. The proposal involves the closure of the four schools and the development of a multi-site Area School on the existing sites at Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy.

8. TIMETABLE FOR THE STATUTORY PROCESS AND THE NEXT STEPS

- 21 October 2011** Start the Statutory Consultation Period
- 2-9 November 2011** Consultation Meetings with Staff, Governors and Parents
- 25 November 2011** Closing Date for Receiving Observations on the Proposal
- 15 December 2011** The Council Decides Whether to Issue Statutory Notices or Not

