

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet



Title of Item:	Review of the Ysgol Felinwnda Catchment Area
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Dewi Jones
Contact Officer:	Debbie Anne Williams Jones, Assistant Head: Corporate Services, Education
Date of meeting:	11 February 2025

1. Decision sought:

- 1.1 The Cabinet is requested to consider the responses received to the consultation on reviewing the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area, along with the options appraisal included in the report, and determine whether to approve the preferred option, namely:

'Option 2: Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Bontnewydd'

2. What is the reason why the Cabinet must make the decision:

- 2.1 As a result of implementing the decision to close Ysgol Felinwnda on 31 December 2023, a decision is required on the future of Ysgol Felinwnda's current catchment area to agree which school/schools will serve as a future catchment area school/schools for the children of the current catchment area of Ysgol Felinwnda.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1 Background / Introduction

Usually, the decision on the new catchment area school is completed as part of the statutory process of closing a school. In this case, in response to local concerns, the Cabinet decided, at its meeting on 11 July 2023, that a review of the catchment area should be carried out as a separate process, following the statutory process, if the final decision was to close Ysgol Felinwnda.

At its meeting on 7 November 2023, Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet approved the proposal to close Ysgol Felinwnda on 31 December 2023, as well as permitting a consultation on the future of the current catchment area of Ysgol Felinwnda to agree which school, or schools, will serve as a future catchment school for the children of Ysgol Felinwnda's current catchment area.

3.2 The Consultation

As part of the process of reviewing the future of the Felinwnda catchment area, a consultation on the future of the current catchment area was undertaken with the relevant consultees between 24 September and 22 October 2024. The original intention was to hold the consultation during the 2024 summer term but as a result of the election, the consultation had to be delayed until September.

The relevant consultees included:

- All residents of Ysgol Felinwnda's current catchment area
- Governing Bodies of Ysgol Llandwrog, Ysgol Bontnewydd, Ysgol Bro Llifon and Ysgol Rhostryfan
- Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda
- Llanwnda Community Council
- Llanwnda Ward Local Member
- Canolfan Bro Llanwnda, and
- The Church in Wales

On 20 September 2024 a letter was sent to every dwelling/household in the current Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area to notify them of the consultation, and to explain how to take part. A notification in the form of an e-mail was sent to the rest of the consultees listed above. The notification included a link to a specific page on Cyngor Gwynedd's website, where the documentation of the consultation was issued as well as the response form.

Then on 24 September, the consultation document, response form and associated impact assessments were published on the Cyngor Gwynedd website. The impact assessments included:

- Community impact assessment
- Welsh Language Impact Assessment
- Assessment of the impact on transport arrangements
- Impact Assessment on the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Equality Impact Assessment

The consultation sought the views of specific stakeholders regarding which school, or schools should serve the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area in the future, by seeking their views on the following options:

- **Option 1** - Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Llandwrog
- **Option 2** - Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Bontnewydd
- **Option 3** - Divide the Felinwnda catchment area according to the houses that are geographically closest to Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd
- **Option 4** - Alternative Option (An opportunity for respondents to offer an alternative option)

During the consultation period, Cyngor Gwynedd officers held "drop-in sessions" on 7 October 2024 at Canolfan Bro Llanwnda, to give stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions and get clarification on any aspect relevant to the consultation on the future of the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area. There was also an opportunity for those who attended to receive hard copies of any documentation relevant to the consultation. Six persons attended the drop-in session.

3.3 Results of the consultation

Eleven responses to the consultation were received including responses from residents in the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area, Governing Bodies as well as a response from representatives of a local nursery education and childcare providers.

Below is a summary of the comments received on the options proposed in the consultation document as well as any alternative options. Following this, the general themes that emerged from the responses received to the consultation are summarised.

A full analysis of the responses received can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Comments on the Options:

Support for Option 1 - Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Llandwrog

Option 1 received the most support, with five out of the 11 respondents noting this as the preferred option. The reasons for this included:

- It would "protect a small rural school by sending the children to Ysgol Llandwrog".
- The strong connection that has existed over the last few years between Ysgol Felinwnda and Ysgol Llandwrog.
- It would ensure that the connection and the natural progression between Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda (located in Canolfan Bro Llanwnda) and Ysgol Llandwrog will continue.
- It would bring two similar catchment areas together. Ysgol Felinwnda's current catchment area is a rural one, which would be similar to the ethos and nature of Ysgol Llandwrog catchment area.
- The option would favour and protect Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda and Canolfan Bro Llanwnda best.

Support for Option 2 - Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area

The option to transfer the entire catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area was favoured by two out of 11 responses. One respondent noted that the vast majority of the area's learners already attended Ysgol Bontnewydd and that was a pattern that had been established for many years. In the same response it was noted that as parents they would wish to see their child attending Ysgol Bontnewydd. Another respondent noted that they favoured option 2 as it would give the option for parents to choose a community school (such as Ysgol Bontnewydd), which was not school with a church status (as is the case with Ysgol Llandwrog).

Alternative options

Three out of 11 respondents noted the 'Other' option as the preferred option. The alternative options and their advantages, as noted by the respondents, are listed in the table below:

	Alternative Option	The advantages noted by the respondents
A	<i>"Set the entire Felinwnda catchment area within Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment areas"</i>	<i>"This option will ensure that the freedom to choose will remain, ensuring that the catchment area status will continue to impact Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd in an equal manner, and that the population of the Felinwnda catchment area will benefit from the stronger right for a place and the transport offer in relation to their chosen school. The comparatively small population of the Felinwnda catchment area, as well as the flexibility in terms of out-of-catchment area pupils' access to schools in Gwynedd, mean that there will not be a substantial impact in terms of being able to plan places where the Ysgol Bontnewydd and Llandwrog catchment areas overlap. There is no legislative barrier for catchment areas to overlap."</i>

B	"... Option 3 to be modified based on the area and the rural community"	"Any boundary drawn-up between the two areas should be visible and understandable to all - and sensible to the area and the community."
C	"... use a safe entrance to Lôn Las as the Bontnewydd catchment area boundary as an alternative way to think about the modern catchment area to comply with the objectives of the new school. Using the new A487 road as a boundary is a clear way to explain the catchment area boundaries. Following the road from afon Gwyrfai to Llanwnda Roundabout, the settlements to the east of the road (the villages of Dinas and Llanwnda) joining the Bontnewydd catchment area, with the rural area east of the road joining the Llandwrog catchment area."	"The analysis of the transport would be clearer, because most of the area will be able to follow a safe path to the school. It would ensure that one cylch meithrin is located within either catchment area. It would show Plaid Cymru's commitment to support rural schools. This option would approach 50% of dwellings transferring to either catchment area. Arranging transport would be clearer for the county, as there would not be a need to arrange buses to Bontnewydd and, by encouraging children of the rural area to use the transport to Ysgol Llandwrog, the county would show that they are taking positive steps to reduce the traffic levels in the village, thus improving community safety and reducing carbon levels."

3.5 General Themes:

Travel Arrangements

One respondent stated that they lived closer to Ysgol Bontnewydd, and that being included within the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area would mean that they could walk or cycle safely to school.

Some noted that they had not been convinced that Option 1 would have the most implications in terms of travelling costs in reality, and it was noted that the actual cost of any option would be dependent on *"the exact numbers and the location of pupils and their choice of school, and how many will travel to school outside the catchment area – whichever option is chosen."*

Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda

It was noted in response from representatives of the local education and childcare provision that the wish of Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda would to be included within the catchment area of Ysgol Llandwrog, as the only 'cylch' that feeds the school. It was noted that Option 2 (transfer the catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area) would not ensure the viability of the Cylch, because a Cylch Meithrin already existed on the Ysgol Bontnewydd site. The same concerns were noted about Option 3, as this would mean that Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda would be located within the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area. Concern was expressed that Option 3 would not ensure the Cylch's sustainability, and the financial and community side effect that this could have on the Ganolfan. The institution was also disappointed that no impact assessment of the Cylch had been included in the consultation documentation. One respondent noted that they were disappointed that the catchment area of the local cylch had not been considered as the Dinas and Llanwnda Cylch was *"an extremely important stream that feeds Ysgol Llandwrog"*.

Capacity of Ysgol Bontnewydd

Some of the respondents noted concern about lack of capacity in the new Ysgol Bontnewydd building to admit more learners. One of the respondents noted concern that implementing option 2 or 3 could mean that learners would transfer to a school that would be in a transitional building period of two years or more.

Historical Tendencies

In one response it was highlighted that a vast percentage of the population of the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area had been attending Ysgol Bontnewydd over the last five years.

"... The population of the Felinwnda Catchment Area have already for many years chosen which school to attend, with the vast majority choosing out-of-catchment-area schools. An average of 64% [of learners in the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area] over the last five years (3.1) have chosen Ysgol Bontnewydd with an average of a little over 12% having chosen Ysgol Llandwrog ..."

Protecting rural schools

Some responses were received that emphasised the need to protect rural schools such as Ysgol Llandwrog.

"Protect a small rural school by sending the children to Ysgol Llandwrog."

"The future of rural schools such as Llandwrog has to be ensured and this is an excellent opportunity to expand this school's area. Cluster villages with roots in the communities and the villages with a high level of Welsh speakers must be included in the Ysgol Llandwrog area to ensure that the language prospers and that nearby villages continue to be Welsh speaking."

3.6 Impact on the Welsh Language

In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards, which require the Authority to consider the effects of policy decisions it makes on the Welsh language, as part of the consultation, additional specific questions were asked relating to the impact on the Welsh language.

The responses received are noted in the tables below. The comments below contain a mixture of direct quotes and paraphrasing (where permission was not received to publish the responses). The paraphrased text has been **highlighted**.

D1: In your opinion, what effects, if any (positive or adverse) would the options have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language, or on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English
No difference in terms of impact. The designations of Bontnewydd and Llandwrog Schools are the same, and the profiles are very similar. It is anticipated that the impact on the Welsh language will be consistent across the 3 Options prior to the consultation document and the alternative Option proposed in this response.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>An adverse effect on the Cylch Meithrin could lead to the loss of Welsh-medium education provision in the area.</u>
With the language of a yard so easily changing to English, a Welsh school like Llandwrog can promote the language better with non-Welsh speaking pupils being immersed in the language

D2: In your opinion, would it be possible to draw up or modify the options to ensure that they have positive effects, or more positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language, or on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than the English

Prioritising Ysgol Llandwrog and ensure that rural villages serve a rural school

D3: In your opinion, would it be possible to draw up or modify the options to ensure that they do not have adverse effects, or have less adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language, or on not treating the Welsh language less favourable than English

[No response received.]

3.7 Reasoning and justification for recommending the decision

3.7.1. Appraising the options

Below is a list of the options considered for the future of the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area. Option 4 and Option 5 were proposed by stakeholders during the consultation.

Option 1	Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Llandwrog
Option 2	Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Bontnewydd
Option 3	Divide the Felinwnda catchment area according to the houses that are geographically closest to Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd
Option 4	<i>"Set the entire Felinwnda catchment area within Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment areas"</i>
Option 5	<i>"... use a safe entrance to Lôn Las as the Bontnewydd catchment area boundary as an alternative way to think about the modern catchment area to comply with the objectives of the new school. Using the new A487 road as a boundary is a clear way to explain the catchment area boundaries."</i>

The comments submitted by the consultees on the individual options have been summarised in **Appendix 2**.

Following the consideration of the comments received in the consultation, together with the results of the impact assessments, an appraisal of the above options was completed to summarise the best features of every option.

A copy of the full options appraisal has been included in **Appendix 3**.

3.7.2 The Preferred Option

Following the appraisal of all the options, the option recommended as the preferred option is:

"Option 2: Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Bontnewydd"

The following table summarises the reasons for favouring Option 2, and consequently rejecting every other option:

Option	Description	Reason for preferring / disregarding
Option 1	Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Llandwrog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher transport costs are anticipated (compared with Option 2 and 3). • Ysgol Llandwrog is not the nearest school to most of the homes in the catchment area (62% are closer to Ysgol Bontnewydd). • The option does not correspond with the current choice of most of the catchment area learners. 57% of learners in the Felinwnda catchment area have already chosen to attend Ysgol Bontnewydd. Only 25% of the learners choose to attend Ysgol Llandwrog.
Option 2 *The Preferred Option*	Transfer the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the catchment area of Ysgol Bontnewydd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option would enable all the Felinwnda catchment area learners to stay together. • This option would correspond with the current choice of most of the catchment area learners (57% of the Felinwnda catchment area learners already choose to attend Ysgol Bontnewydd). • Ysgol Bontnewydd is the nearest school to most of the homes in the catchment area (62% of catchment area homes are closer to Ysgol Bontnewydd). • It is anticipated that this option would offer lower transport costs than all the other options (with the exception of Option 3 - Transport costs of approximately £55,000 per year are anticipated with Option 3 as well).
Option 3	Divide the Felinwnda catchment area according to the houses that are geographically closest to Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to parents' choice, this option could lead to dividing the learners of the Felinwnda catchment area.
Option 4	<i>"Set the entire Felinwnda catchment area within Ysgol Llandwrog and Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment areas"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning transport provision in such a catchment area (dual catchment area) may lead to higher travel costs (compared to Option 2 and 3) as a transport provision will need to be provided to the catchment area learners to two different schools. • The Authority has a statutory duty to plan places for the catchment area children, and a dual catchment area can be more challenging in terms of clarity of numbers.
Option 5	<i>"... use a safe entrance to Lôn Las as the Bontnewydd catchment area boundary as an alternative way to think about the modern catchment area to comply with the objectives of the new school. Using the new A487 road as a boundary is a clear way to explain the catchment area boundaries."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is anticipated that there would be higher transport costs (compared with Option 2 and 3). • Subject to the parents' choice, this option may lead to dividing the learners of the Felinwnda catchment area.

3.7.3 Impact Assessments

Impact Assessments on the community, travel arrangements and the Welsh language were published as part of the consultation documentation. Following the consultation, a further assessment of all the options was conducted, including the additional alternative options (Option 4 and 5), taking into consideration any further information received as a result of the consultation.

A summary of the results of the impact assessments of the preferred option can be seen below, and the full assessments can be seen in **Appendix 4**.

Community Impact Assessment

The assessment of the likely impact on the community shows that the option of transferring the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area would not have a direct significant impact on the community. As a number of parents of children in the Felinwnda catchment area already chose to send their children to Ysgol Bontnewydd, it was not anticipated that families with young children would leave the community should the entire Felinwnda catchment area be transferred to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area. A Cylch Meithrin is located in Canolfan Bro Llanwnda and many other events are held at the Ganolfan. The assessment does not anticipate a direct negative impact on Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda stemming from the proposal to modify the primary school catchment area boundaries. We welcome the successful cooperation that already happens between Cylch Meithrin Dinas and Llanwnda and Ysgol Llandwrog, and the Authority does not wish for the adaptation of the primary school's catchment area boundaries to have an impact on this successful cooperation. As an Authority we will monitor the situation and the Cylch and the community will be able to call on Cyngor Gwynedd's services for support should any negative impact derives from the proposal, should the proposal be implemented.

Impact Assessment on travel arrangements

In accordance with the Cyngor Gwynedd transport policy, the authority would need to offer transport to children who live over two miles from the catchment area school or if it is considered that the pedestrian routes to the school are dangerous. Based on the primary learners of primary age who currently live in the Felinwnda catchment area (January 2025), and as a result of the fact that there is no suitable pedestrian route for the Felinwnda catchment area learners to reach Ysgol Bontnewydd, it is anticipated that transport costs of approximately £55,000 per year would derive from implementing this option. This means that there are lower transport costs associated with transferring the Felinwnda catchment area entirely to Ysgol Bontnewydd compared to the alternative options (with the exception of Option 3 – Transport costs of around £55,000 per year are anticipated with Option 3 as well).

Impact Assessment on the Welsh language

The assessment of the likely impact on the Welsh language shows that transferring the entire Felinwnda catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area is unlikely to have a negative impact on the language used by learners in formal contexts at the school as Ysgol Bontnewydd follows the 'Gwynedd Education Language Policy' like every other school. It is anticipated that there would be a neutral impact on the informal language used, as 90% of Ysgol Bontnewydd learners come from Welsh-speaking homes. Likewise, as in every primary school in Gwynedd (bar one), Ysgol Bontnewydd is a Category 3 Welsh medium school.

4. Further Considerations:

As well as the impact assessments noted above, the impact of the favoured option on equality characteristics, the Welsh language and the socio-economic disadvantage as well as its impact on the Well-being of Future Generations Act, was assessed. These assessments can be found in **Appendix 4**, and their conclusions are summarised below.

Impact assessment on the equality characteristics, the Welsh language and socio-economic disadvantage

The impact assessment on the equality characteristics, the Welsh language and the socio-economic disadvantage notes that all Gwynedd schools have relevant policies in place to protect individuals from any discrimination based on race, such as Equality, Inclusion and Anti-bullying Policies. As a result, it is not anticipated that implementing this option would have a negative impact on the equality characteristics such as race, gender, disability, language or belief and age. Should the proposal to transfer the entire Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area be implemented, then full consideration would be given to the needs of learners with Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion including accessibility and transport issues. As a result, it is not anticipated that this option will have a negative impact on these characteristics.

Well-being of Future Generations Act Assessment

Following consideration and an assessment in line with the requirements of the Well-being Act, the conclusion was reached that the proposal did satisfy the seven well-being goals within the Act, and the Council's well-being objectives. This proposal will allow the Council to respond to and meet the children's needs today, and also strengthen their future well-being.

5. Conclusion

Therefore, it is recommended that the preferred option is approved, namely to transfer the entire Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area. It is concluded that this option is the most appropriate proposal for the reasons noted in section 3.7.2 of this report.

The recommendation is to approve the preferred option following the consideration of a range of options that were fully evaluated by comparing the main advantages and disadvantages against specific factors. The evaluation of the full options can be seen in **Appendix 3**.

Following consideration of all the comments received during the consultation period (**Appendix 1**), it is considered that the preferred option continues to offer the best option for the future of the Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area.

6. Next Steps

Subject to the Cabinet's decision, these are the next steps of the process to review the catchment area together with an outline timetable:

Outline Timetable	Next Steps
February 2025	Share the decision with all relevant stakeholders.
1 March 2025	Implement the proposal to transfer the entire Ysgol Felinwnda catchment area to the Ysgol Bontnewydd catchment area.

7. Views of the Statutory Officers

Chief Finance Officer:

“There is no choice but to come do a decision on the catchment area and as highlighted in the Travel Effect Assessment there is a financial cost to all of them. I do not believe therefore that there are specific financial matters that need to be drawn to the Cabinet’s attention when weighing up the favoured option. The recommended option is among those with the lower financial costs.”

Monitoring Officer:

“The contents of this report has been the subject of advice by the Legal Service. No further comments regarding propriety.”

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - [Analysis of the responses to the consultation](#)

Appendix 2 - [Summary of the consultees’ observations on the individual options](#)

Appendix 3 - Options Appraisal

Appendix 4 - Impact Assessments

Appendix 5 – Local Member’s Comments

List of Background Documents:

Consultation documents - [Review of the Felinwnda Catchment Area](#)