

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

(1) Question from Councillor Elin Hywel

Mam, Dad a Magu

I sincerely congratulate officers for creating such a valuable, useful and laudable resource as the *Mam, Dad a Magu* podcast.

I'm glad to hear that user opinions are sought regularly.

I note that concern has been raised regarding the appropriateness of the 'Mam, Dad a Magu' title on several occasions. I accept the reasoning that we need to increase engagement with fathers. We know that fathers, like mothers, successfully maintain families that do not follow the traditional, heteronormative pattern suggested by the title, and they are worthy of our support and are to be celebrated.

Nevertheless, the concern that the podcast's title conveys a heteronormative message remains, and that it could be read as prohibitive. The result of this would be a failure to be inclusive of the diversity of families that exist in our society.

I note that the failure of the title is not a reflection of the success of the content and the hard work of our officers.

Gwynedd schools have been talking about "the family" for a long time. They do this to ensure that they are inclusive. Will Cyngor Gwynedd follow this example, which has been shown to be effective, and change the title to mention *Magu teulu* (*Raising a family*)?

Answer – Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families, Councillor Menna Trenholme

Thank you for the question, Elin, and thank you for taking an interest in the work of the Children's Department and specifically in the work of the Early Years service. I'm also very pleased with the praise for the good work that is ongoing, and it's great to be able to state that the podcast has received a lot of positive attention and good feedback. Gwynedd's Early Years service is leading nationally in developing this kind of exciting podcast, and it's wonderful that we have the opportunity to celebrate that.

In the context of the question, it's worth confirming that here in Cyngor Gwynedd we welcome and provide services to all kinds of families, not just traditional, heteronormative ones, and we believe that diversity and a welcoming society are essential parts of the county and the Council's work. There is absolutely no intention to promote heteronormative ideas in the title—only an intention to ensure that fathers are included, as well as mothers.

There was considerable discussion with focus groups of service users about the discussion topics, the whole idea of the podcast, and the name in general. Through that, a variety of topics came to the fore, such as breastfeeding, sleep, and preparing children for school. One important topic, according to these focus groups, was the connection of fathers with parenting and fathers' mental health issues, and so on. The original name that was agreed upon was "Mam a dad a magu" (Mum and dad and nurturing).

The issue of the name has already been raised, bringing up similar concerns to those you raise today. As a result, there was further discussion with user groups, and it was agreed that changing the name slightly would be appropriate—by removing the “a” and changing it from “Mam a dad a magu” to “Mam, dad a magu.” A small change, but one that allowed for broader inclusion. Since then, no one from the public or users has raised the name again, apart from a few fathers who welcomed the fact that dads were being included.

As part of our further work with fathers, it was realised that all of our family support officers are women, and as a result, we are about to appoint a Fathers’ Officer to support the work with fathers’ groups in our county.

This podcast series (six episodes) is about to conclude, and it is too late to change the title for this series. However, I give this assurance to my fellow councillors—that we will discuss this again with the user groups before starting a second series and take the opportunity to consider a new name. There is no certainty that there will be a second series, as the costs are significant, but if there is, we will ensure a thorough review of the name.

(2) Question from Councillor Beca Roberts

In light of the recent rise in international tensions and the United Kingdom Government’s attitude towards increased militarisation, and given the fact that nuclear sites are considered prime targets in any military conflict – including sites such as Trawsfynydd – what assurance do the people of Gwynedd have that the Council is taking action to ensure that there will be no further nuclear-related development at the Trawsfynydd site, and that the site be decommissioned immediately in order to protect the area for the future?

Answer – Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

Decommissioning work continues at the Trawsfynydd site. All of the high-level radioactive waste was transported from the Trawsfynydd site for treatment and re-processing at Sellafield in Cumbria over twenty years ago. The site has been focusing on the processing of intermediate radioactive waste since then and they are almost at the end of the journey by processing the waste residues from the cells within the ponds building and transporting them to the dedicated on-site storage. This waste will be safely stored on site until the UK’s radioactive waste repository is built over the next few decades. Low-level radiation remains in the fabric of the reactor structure, and there is a work programme in place to treat and dispose of this waste in order to achieve the goal of leaving the site safe for the public and the environment. Decommissioning work has been programmed on site up to 2060 according to the latest plans from NRS.

Cyngor Gwynedd is part of a Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) where NRS, which manages the site on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, reports on the decommissioning work; and site safety is the priority in every discussion. Here’s a statement from NRS:

‘The health and safety of our workforce, the public and the environment are fundamental to our business at NRS. All operations at the Trawsfynydd site are carried out to the highest safety standards and are overseen by the UK’s independent nuclear safety

regulator, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). All radioactive discharges into the environment are managed to reduce radiation using best available techniques and are supervised by Wales' independent environmental regulator, Natural Resources Wales.

All operations and facilities at the Trawsfynydd site have an associated nuclear safety case to ensure that control measures are adopted to minimise the risk to our workforce, the public and the environment from any reasonably foreseeable radiation-related incidents, including acts of terrorism or attacks by hostile parties.

The decades-long safety record of the Trawsfynydd site is recognised domestically and internationally across the nuclear industry and is a direct result of the hard work and continued dedication of our highly skilled workforce and supply chain.'

I would be very happy to facilitate a site visit to Trawsfynydd for any Councillor who is keen to see the work in progress and to meet the team who are doing the work.

190 are currently employed directly by NRS at the Trawsfynydd site. An additional 100 are employed through contracts. Around 120 additional workers are expected to be on site over the next three years while the height of the reactor building is lowered. 93% of those who work for NRS on Trawsfynydd site live in either Gwynedd, Anglesey, or Conwy County. Alternative employment opportunities for these workers are very scarce in Gwynedd.

The specialist skills and techniques that have been developed at the Trawsfynydd site have received Lead and Learn Site recognition for Nuclear Decommissioning work across Britain. Although the workforce specialises in the field of nuclear decommissioning, many of the skills are considered transferable to various jobs within engineering, technology, science, construction and management. Due to the uncertainty about the future of the site and the jobs, I am pleased to say that Cyngor Gwynedd is currently working with partners to try to establish a science park on site that would ensure that quality work continues in the Meirionnydd area for generations. The intention is to develop an Innovation Centre outside the boundary of the licensed site, which would include opportunities for working and learning with the intention of triggering new ideas and job opportunities for the future. While the business case will focus on maximising the opportunities arising from the decommissioning work in the short term, interest from different sectors, keen to make use of the site's special skills and infrastructure, has already been declared, such as an AI Centre, Data Centre and an Occupational Skills Centre to support significant investments in the region.

It would not be Cyngor Gwynedd's role to make a decision if new nuclear activity takes place at the Trawsfynydd site in the future. There is considerable uncertainty about the direction of Government's policy, funding and priorities means that it is highly unlikely that the Trawsfynydd site will be considered by the Government and the private sector for new nuclear development in the near future. This is why having plans for alternative work opportunities, which would be within our control for the future is key.

(3) Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen

Is it possible to get an update on any discussions the Council has had with the Government regarding the Llanbedr Bypass?

Answer – Leader of the Council, Councillor Nia Jeffreys

I would like to thank Councillor Gwynfor Owen very much for presenting the question. We fully understand and acknowledge the significant interest in this long-standing issue which Cyngor Gwynedd has been actively seeking to take forward over an extended period.

Officers from the Council continue to lead and play a key role in the multi-agency working group which includes Welsh Government officials to identify a transport solution to alleviate Llanbedr's traffic problems.

There are monthly meetings of the working group which oversees and monitors the work and progress on the project as it progresses through the WelTAG process in line with Welsh Government requirements. WelTAG being the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance which is used in the development and appraise transport proposals promoted or funded by the Welsh Government. The two primary purposes of WelTAG are to enable the most beneficial scheme to be identified and to allow the comparison of schemes on a like-for-like basis.

As part of the application for Welsh Government funding to continue with this work in Llanbedr for this year, a funding profile for the costs of the whole scheme were noted. If a new road would be the solution after following the WelTAG process, it is estimated that the cost would be around £32 million. As yet, this funding has not been confirmed.

As part of the ongoing engagement work, events are being held with local stakeholders in Llanbedr as the WelTAG process progresses. The next one is anticipated to be in September to report on the results of the WelTAG 2 recommendations. Information is also shared with the local community in Llanbedr through a regular newsletter. Information is also published and shared on a dedicated webpage on the Council's website. [Llanbedr: Improving transport](#)

The Chief Executive and I, along with Mabon ap Gwynfor MS, met on Tuesday morning, 17 June with Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport to discuss the scheme and more specifically the financial position to fund it. Following this, a letter has been sent jointly from the Chief Executive and myself to the Cabinet Secretary and you have been provided with a copy.

The letter expresses a general concern that the level of Welsh Government investment in transport schemes in rural areas such as Gwynedd is completely inadequate and unfair. This in no way meets the expectations or requirements of our local communities nor indeed the aspirations set out by the Welsh Government itself in strategic documents such as Llwybr Newydd. In particular, the question has been asked, what is the situation in terms of the availability of funding and the route to deliver the Llanbedr transport project.

I will of course ensure you are updated when a response is received.

(4) Question from Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

Child-friendly Gwynedd

I would appreciate an answer from the two most relevant cabinet members, Councillor Menna Trenholme and Councillor Dewi Jones, to reflect the spirit of the question.

I'm aware that Cardiff Council is a child-friendly city. Several other councils have now reached that goal or are working towards it. Obviously being age-friendly is important to Gwynedd, and I've taken every opportunity over the years to call for us to be truly age-friendly – that is, friendly to all ages.

In the spirit of the question, all departments need to collaborate and prioritise children's rights when making decisions, policies and strategies.

Where does Gwynedd stand on that journey?

Answer – Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

Thank you very much for the valuable question that raises fundamental issues about the role of children's rights in public life in Gwynedd.

As Cabinet Member for Education I fully recognise the importance of ensuring that children's rights are realised in all aspects of the Council's work. This is not just about status or label, but about a culture of listening, including and respecting children as fully-fledged citizens. I believe that Gwynedd is on a positive journey towards becoming a truly age-friendly county, and one that puts the rights of children and young people at the heart of everything it does.

We are already seeing positive examples of these principles in action. We include children and young people in the decision-making process through the Young People's Voice forums. These forums have now been set up across the county, giving young people a platform to voice their opinions, share their experiences and influence decisions that affect them. The forums include representatives from schools, youth groups and partners, and meet regularly to discuss local and key issues, such as mental health, transport, community safety and the environment. The information gathered through these forums has already led to real action, including planning specific activities in communities, influencing the content of youth strategies, and expanding partnerships with other services such as health and the third sector.

We fully agree with the principle that it is the responsibility of each department to ensure that children's rights are taken into account in policy-making, decision-making and service delivery. This is an integral part of our vision for a truly child-friendly Gwynedd – and for people of all ages.

Answer – Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families, Councillor Menna Trenholme

Thank you to Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones for her question and her interest in this important area. I saw the response from my fellow Cabinet member, Dewi Jones, and I fully agree with him. UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities initiative is one that carries excellent principles, many of which we already uphold. Of course, putting these principles into practice can be more challenging, and I'm pleased to say that youth forum plans have already begun here in Gwynedd and that we are currently prioritising this work. While the UNICEF initiative is specifically aimed at cities and boroughs, local government can embrace the same values and act in the same way, and it is a privilege to have the

constructive opportunity to do so. Thank you to the Councillor for giving us the opportunity to highlight this work.

(5) Question from Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn

The Welsh Government has recently been discussing the creation of a public transport system linking buses and trains across Wales, but the reality is that there are problems and concerns linked to this. For example, on many residents in my ward have come to me over the last few months concerned about various issues relating to buses coming (or that used to come) to Blaenau. This includes a change in service to the T22, where there are no buses to the Cwm pub, and this means a further journey for residents (especially older residents) to get to the bus stop near the stations. A change in bus arrangements that used to run from Blaenau to Manod from Ysgol y Moelwyn in addition to the T22 changes has also raised parents' concerns, and there was also a major blow to the town's people when the T19 bus service linking Blaenau to Llandudno was discontinued back in February 2023 - although there is a train service here, it does not deliver what the bus was capable of, and is seen as unsuitable for local needs.

Despite all the talk from the Government of a revolutionary change with buses and transport, things are worse for the people of Blaenau.

Is it possible to discuss solutions further with the Cabinet Member on how we can address and find solutions to these concerns please?

Answer – Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Craig ab Iago

I would like to thank Councillor ap Elwyn very much for his question and for the regular contact with me and the Department's officers on behalf of his constituents regarding transport issues in his ward.

Working in partnership with Transport for Wales, Gwynedd's local bus network has been the subject of an extensive review over the past two years. The aim and output of the review was to provide the best and most attractive possible level of opportunities for bus travel while optimising the scarce resources available. This included the introduction of standard timetables and distance-based fares. This has now been successfully achieved on most of the network, and it's good to report that it has resulted in a positive and encouraging performance in terms of usage. This is in a context where bus usage in general has been steadily declining across Wales since the 1980s.

We continue in our efforts to provide and maintain the best possible level of public bus services across Gwynedd within the resources available to us. Taking into account the rural and extended nature of the County we consider that the opportunities to travel across Gwynedd compare well and favourably with other similar rural areas.

Blaenau is served by the innovative T22 electric bus service. The service between Caernarfon-Porthmadog-Blaenau Ffestiniog offers attractive, reliable quality travel opportunities with modern electric buses. The G25 bus service provides local travel opportunities within the town.

As well as the local buses, Blaenau is of course also served by the famous Conwy Valley Railway. This railway is recognised, as well as a mode of travel, as an attraction in itself

for visitors as well as local residents by being one of the most scenic train journeys anywhere in the world.

Unfortunately, as has already been shared, the available drivers and bus resource has been optimised with the T22 service. There is of course a limitation on what can be provided with the available resource and, having looked at the additional requests that have been made, these cannot be met at this time. We are always looking for opportunities to meet local wishes and aspirations but unfortunately and inevitably this will not be possible on all occasions.

With regards to the provision of local school transport, in accordance with the Education Transport Policy, a home address is required to be more than 3 miles from a secondary school to receive free transport. Unfortunately, the distance from Manod to Ysgol y Moelwyn is less than 3 miles and as such there is no requirement that the Authority arranges transport for this journey. It is possible to use the T22 bus to school in the mornings, but very few currently take advantage of this service.

This Council had no influence on the decision by a private company to end the commercial operation of the T19 service between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno. At the time, the company stated that the reason for ending the service was because it was not sustainable on a usage basis and this, unfortunately, had been declining.

As a Council, we continually make the case to the Welsh Government that the investment they are making in public transport, particularly in rural areas such as Gwynedd, needs to be much greater in order to come anywhere near to meeting and realising their vision and ambition. Unfortunately, strategies and plans such as Llwybr Newydd (2021), the national transport strategy, raise expectations but the burden of responding, explaining and justifying what could be provided with the money that the Welsh Government provides very often falls on local authorities.

The bus industry and how bus services in Wales are provided, maintained and managed is changing as Transport for Wales, on behalf of the Welsh Government, is looking to introduce a system that is maintained through a franchise model. The intention is to have a co-ordinated national network that is managed in its entirety. It is still unclear what effect or influence this will have in practice. The reality is that, as the level of investment by the Welsh Government is likely to be relative to current rates, the change, at least from the perspective of consumers and potential users, is not likely to be transformative. This Council will engage with a positive and hopeful approach to the change but also with realistic expectations as to what is likely to be achieved.

The nature of bus networks means that they are dynamic and subject to change. However, following a recent comprehensive review, there is no short-term intention or scope to consider or introduce significant changes to the network for which Cyngor Gwynedd is responsible. The unfortunate truth is that the extra money that would be needed to achieve this is not available.

An increase in usage is the most influential and positive basis to support business cases to maintain and improve provision. It is very difficult to make the case if the level of usage is low or very low. Bus services in this scenario are neither environmentally nor financially sustainable. In order to maintain the current level of service and look to improve it is

important to maximise the use of the services and travel opportunities that are provided. The saying *use it or lose it* is particularly true and relevant in this context.

Public transport networks depend on a critical level of usage on an ongoing basis. Where this does not exist, public transport is unlikely to be the appropriate solution. This is obviously a challenge in rural areas of course when, often, there isn't that critical demand of people who want to travel at the same time on the same routes. With this, while noting the positive factors in relation to the local bus network in Gwynedd we fully recognise that it will not be possible, nor probably appropriate, to meet individual and everyone's expectations, wishes and needs. But I would like to reassure and encourage you that we will continue to work with the other key stakeholders which include Transport for Wales, Welsh Government, neighbouring Local Authorities and the bus companies themselves to provide the best possible level of service.

I would be very happy to continue the conversation with Cllr. ap Elwyn but I hope that the above is of use in confirming the situation and sets the context, challenges and opportunities.

(6) Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

In terms of the wording of the new education language policy, to what extent does the Cabinet Member agree that:

Noting that it is up to the school to determine what is taught in English across the curriculum

Referring to a definition of Welsh-medium schools in accordance with the education bill rather than the non-statutory guidelines?

Expressing that the percentage of Welsh-medium education provision is for all pupils

Providing more detail of what is expected in Progress Plans

And Noting that all extra-curricular activities are in the medium of Welsh, would make the language policy more robust and clear?

Answer - The Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

I welcome the opportunity to confirm some key aspects of the draft Education Language Policy and to provide clarity regarding specific matters that have arisen.

Firstly, in terms of the inclusion of English across the curriculum, the policy clearly states that Welsh is the main medium of education in Gwynedd schools, with English being introduced intentionally and used appropriately in line with pupils' linguistic development.

Secondly, I am happy to confirm that the policy specifically refers to the intentions of the forthcoming Welsh Education Bill, preparing the way for the Authority to fully comply with the new statutory system of categorising schools when it comes into force.

Thirdly, the policy clearly expresses the percentages for Welsh-medium education provision, including the aim to ensure at least 80% of school activities through the medium of Welsh at primary level, and at least 70% at secondary level. We will work towards any statutory requirements in accordance with the content of the Welsh Language Bill, which may take up to 5 years to come into effect.

In terms of Progress Plans, the document already sets out the expectations for individual schools and their clusters to develop clear, agreed plans with the Authority, including transitional periods and success measures. This ensures transparency and accountability.

Finally, I acknowledge that the policy places strong emphasis on ensuring that school activities, including extracurricular activities, are available through the medium of Welsh. In line with the Language Charter, extracurricular activities will be delivered in Welsh.

I will continue to support the work of strengthening the Education Language Policy, ensuring a balance between linguistic ambition, practical flexibility, and support for our schools as they implement the policy successfully.

(7) Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfaï

I understand that a not insignificant change is underway to the Social Housing Registration Form, which means that prospective tenants will not be able to indicate where they wish to live. What are the implications of the change? Does this mean turning our backs on the right of vulnerable people to choose a place to live, and does it reverse Gwynedd's 'local' policy?

Answer – The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

There is no intention to change the application form in such a way that means that prospective tenants will not be able to indicate where they wish to live. While a minor amendment was recently made to the application form asking individuals to tick the location(s) where they wish to live (rather than number them), there are no further changes in progress. The form can be seen on the Council's website, and you will see that question 15 asks prospective tenants to note where they would like to live. The housing allocations policy can also be found on the website, and it has not changed at all.