

# CYNGOR TREF **BEAUMARIS** TOWN COUNCIL



**TOWN HALL/NEUADD Y DREF, CASTLE STREET/STRYD Y CASTELL,  
BEAUMARIS, ANGLESEY/YNYS MON LL58 8AP**  
**TEL/FFON : 01248 810317 e-mail/e-bost: beaumaristowncouncil@tiscali.co.uk**  
**TOWN CLERK/CLERC Y DREF: PROFESSOR T W ASHENDEN JP, BSc(Hons), PhD**

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Programme Manager (School Modernisation)  
Lifelong Learning Directorship  
Council Offices  
Llangefni  
Anglesey  
LL77 7TW.

## **SEIRIOL SCHOOLS CONSULTATION**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on plans for primary education in Seiriol ward. The Town Council have discussed your document and wish to make it clear that they oppose the closure of any of the three schools affected. Schools play a vital part in helping to create community cohesion and the council would not want to see that lost for any of the settlements affected.

Councillors wanted to make some specific points:

1. It is widely recognised that closing a school has a negative impact on a community. This is why in the Welsh Government's proposed revisions to the School Organisation Code has a presumption against closing rural schools. We appreciate that Beaumaris is not classed as a rural school by the proposed code however it is a school in a relatively small community which serves a rural hinterland. Under the new Joint Local Development Plan Beaumaris is identified as a Local Service Centre. Such centres are recognised by the plan as providing a range of facilities and services to meet the needs of their own populations and of their catchment areas. The implication of this designation is that development which enhances the ability of these centres to serve their catchment area should be encouraged. The corollary is that reducing services (i.e. closing the school in Beaumaris) would damage a local service centre's ability to serve its purpose and should therefore be discouraged. Plans to close Beaumaris school would fly in the face of the intentions of the local development plan and undermine its delivery.
2. Schools are an important part of what makes a community feel like a community and gives it value. The community of Beaumaris is under threat. Increasing numbers of holiday homes and holiday lets are pushing local people out of the town and away from their families and support networks. This puts the sense of community in the town under threat and risks undermining the year round vitality of the town. Closing the school would risk

accelerating this process and put at risk everything that underpins Beaumaris as a successful and sustainable tourist destination.

3. The cost of a new super school to serve the area is estimated to be £7 million. When completed the estimated revenue saving is just £53,000. With a pay back period of over 100 years this hardly looks like a good investment of public funds at a time when public spending is under pressure. An alternative approach of federating the three schools under a single head teacher combined with a reduction in the size of Beaumaris School (which would free up space for the proposed extra care facility) would save around £71,000. Considering that this would require limited capital outlay it represents considerably better value for money while not having a negative impact on the children of Beaumaris.
4. While accepting that the Welsh Government analysis does not classify Beaumaris school as rural, Beaumaris does sit in a rural area. Anglesey itself is a rural county. Applying criteria that suit an urban environment (compact areas with better public transport and smaller distances between existing schools) is not appropriate in Seiriol ward. It would be better to treat all three schools as if they were all rural schools.
5. Consideration has to be given to the impact of Wylfa B on the population of Anglesey. There is likely to be some inflow of people and while many will be based in the north of the island some will look to live in Beaumaris. Indeed the Joint Local Development Plan directs housing development towards Beaumaris (rather than the surrounding villages). These additional houses (or more particularly the families that will occupy them) will need education facilities.
6. The Town Council cautiously welcomes the possibility that the Extra Care Facility for Seiriol ward could be located in the town. However the whole school site is not needed for the facility. It is quite practical to retain the school, perhaps reduced in size and use surplus areas of the site for the new facility. Such an approach would fit well with the Joint Local Development Plan's strategic intention of supporting, developing and enhancing the role of Local Service Centres.
7. Any decision about the future of the school has to take into account the long term health and well being needs of the pupils. The town council is of the firm opinion that these needs are best met by a school in the town. The benefits of being able to walk to school plus integration of the school with the community are too good to lose. These benefits will be enhanced by the retention of three community schools in the ward, each firmly rooted in the communities they serve.

In summary the Town Council favours a solution that retains all three schools. Given the need to save costs a federated solution with a shared head and some shared resources (e.g. specialist teachers) would seem to offer a cost effective way of delivering good community based primary education. The benefits of such an approach will be seen both in the health and well being of pupils of Seiriol ward and in the health and well being of the communities served.

Yours sincerely



Professor T W Ashenden  
Town Clerk