

Request: All correspondence, documents or other communications relating to a request for funding of a new school for Godre'r Graig Primary School.

From: NPT Official 1

Sent: 01 December 2023 11:44

To: Cymunedau Dysgu Cynaliadwy / Sustainable Communities for Learning

Cc: WG Official 1 (SCfL); NPT Official 2; NPT Official 3

Subject: variation request

Bore da,

Please find attached SOP Revision Template for your consideration. The financial matrix will follow early next week as we need to just confirm some details before sending.

Please let me know if there is anything else required.

Many thanks

NPT Official 1

Attachment - ATISN Doc-1

From: NPT Official 2

Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 3:57 PM

To: WG Official 1 (SCfL)

Cc: NPT Official 1

Subject: FW: variation request

Pnawn da WG Official 1 (SCfL),

Apologies for the delay but please find attached the project profile spend request financial matrix to accompany the variation request that was sent on the 1st of December.

Sorry to be a nag but do we have an estimates time for when the variations will be approved/ rejected?

Also, do we have an estimated time for when we will have confirmation of the FSM grant increase?

Once again, apologies for all the questions and thank you for your assistance.

Regards

NPT Official 2

Attachment – ATISN Doc-2

From: Andrew Thomas
Sent: 31 January 2025 17:42
To: Harries, Emyr
Cc: WG Official 2 (SCfL); NPT Official 1; Cymunedau Dysgu Cynaliadwy / Sustainable Communities for Learning
Subject: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Good Afternoon,

In response to your letter of 19th January 2024 where further information was requested in relation to the proposed new build replacement school for Godre'rgraig Primary, please find attached a Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the Swansea Valley area.

To clarify, this will be a replacement English-medium school in the same community, not a new English-medium school. As you will be aware from the original variation submission, a replacement Godre'rgraig Primary in the village of Godre'rgraig will be a much-needed community resource and has the potential to provide support for local families which is currently not available in the village.

I would be grateful if you would consider the information provided and confirm that the scheme will now be included in our Strategic Outline Programme, as part of our 9-year rolling programme, as noted in your letter.

Could you also advise me of the processes which will now be followed and when I can expect to receive a response from you regarding this proposal for the new build replacement Godre'rgraig Primary School.

Regards Andrew

Andrew Thomas

Attachment – ATISN 24503 Doc-7

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Sent: 03 February 2025 12:48
To: WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 4 (SCfL); WG Official 5 (SCfL)

P'nawn da WG Official 3 (SCfL)

It has made me smile that this email has come in just after WG Official 1 (SCfL) has left the team – our letter to them was sent in January 2024, it's not a typo! However, I was expecting a response at some point.

It's an interesting one WG Official 3 (SCfL) and we can discuss/I'll fill you in once I've had an opportunity to read and digest the report in full. We've had a lot of involvement from the Cymraeg 2050 team and School Organisation. The response will be from Emyr.

Diolch

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

Attachment – ATISN 24503 Doc-7

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 05 February 2025 16:44
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Subject: FW: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Helo WG Official 2 (SCfL),

Gobeithio dy fod ti'n iawn.

I see you have also been included in the email below regarding the attached impact assessment from NPT. Could you please remind me of what we set out in the letter to them and also what we now need to do in relation to this? I presume we'll need a view from Cymraeg 2050 team on the assessment.

Many thanks,

Emyr

Attachment – ATISN 24503 Doc-7

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Sent: 06 February 2025 15:11
To: Harries, Emyr
Cc: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

P'nawn da Emyr

This is an interesting one. In your letter (iShare attachment) you have specifically requested that the WLIA considers provision across the Swansea Valley area with mitigation for any negative impacts identified. I have discussed with Cymraeg 2050 and will respond to you directly next week once we have compiled some information together. For convenience, the recommendations are pasted below.

Recommendations

1. Discussion with the community in Godre'r Graig and Llangiwg

When discussing the situation of Godre'r Graig Primary School with residents and people who work in the area, one of the recurring themes was the need for further

discussions to be held locally regarding the future of the school. Considerable doubts were raised about the exact position of the mountain behind the school and about the Council's plans regarding the future of the school itself. Doubts were also raised as to why the Council intends to build a school for 210 children where the school, even back in 2019/20 had a total of 153 pupils. It would be beneficial in this connection to continue to pursue a process of engagement with the local community. In this ongoing discussion it would be possible to discuss the current data regarding the numbers of children in the school and in neighbouring schools, and to discuss possible options. It would also be possible to discuss the potential difficulty of persuading the Welsh Government to agree to the scheme in the context of declining pupil numbers and the financial austerity that the Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot Council are currently facing.

2. Area of linguistic significance

Careful thought should be given before proceeding with the construction of a new building for an English medium primary school in Godre'r Graig in an area considered to be of linguistic significance by the Council itself. There is little doubt that such a development would affect the provision of Welsh language education in this area where the Welsh language is clearly in a vulnerable position. Therefore, in terms of this study of assessing the impact on the Welsh language of this potential development, this development is likely to have a negative impact on the development of the Welsh language in this area. It could also go against current Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot Council policies in promoting the growth and development of the Welsh language.

3. Creating an area school

Within a mile of each other are the site of the old Godre'r Graig Primary School and the present Llangiwg Primary School, two English-medium schools serving an area stretching from Pontardawe to Godre'r Graig, an area where pupil numbers according to the data are in decline. There is an argument here for rationalising the provision and creating one viable school.

Llawer o ddiolch

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

Attachment 1 - ATISN 24503 Doc-6

Attachment 2 – ATISN 24503 Doc-7

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 10 February 2025 11:41
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgrraig Primary School

Diolch WG Official 2 (SCfL), helpful to see the letter we sent and I agree with you that we clearly asked for the mitigations of any negative impacts to be provided. I can see the impact assessment raises significant concerns across a few factors so thank you for picking this up with the Cymraeg 2050 team, so we can then consider the next steps on this.

Happy to talk this through once you've had your initial conversations with colleagues.

Emyr

Oddi wrth: WG Official 2 (SCfL)

Anfonwyd: 10 February 2025 14:17

At: WG Official 7 (Cymraeg 2050); WG Official 8 (Cymraeg 2050); WG Official 3 (SCfL)

Pwnc: Godre'rgraig

Bore da

Please see below draft email to Emyr. Please let me know your thoughts.

Further to the email from Andrew Thomas at NPT I have read the attached email and the WLIA and discussed with Cymraeg 2050 colleagues. In your letter of 19 January 2024 it was stated that in order for the inclusion of a new build Godre'rgraig to be considered within the SOP a WLIA would need to be undertaken that would include mitigations for a negative impact on the Welsh Language. It is clear from the attached WLIA that a new build Godre'rgraig would have a negative impact on the Welsh Language in the area and would likely exacerbate the decline in Welsh spoken. This is not only due to the "draw" of a new school but the increase in EM places in the area.

Although it is not for us to dictate to the LA how to prioritise their educational estate, we do have a responsibility to ensure that their plans are supported by our policy areas. The building of a new 210 place school for 114 pupils would either have a significant impact other local provision or would be severely under capacity and I would not expect it to be supported at BCSG nor EIP.

Both Godre'r Graig and Llangiwg have seen a decline in numbers, due to an aging population and lack of new housing, and therefore the report concludes that *It must therefore be concluded that the numbers at the current site of Godre'r Graig Primary School are roughly equivalent to the numbers that would be at the school if the school continued at Godre'r Graig itself.*

Additionally, whilst the final recommendation at the bottom of the paper is to combine Godre'r Graig and Llangiwg. It is stated in the report "*There was also agreement regarding the impact of establishing a new school in a new building which would combine Godre'r Graig and Llangiwg primary schools. The strong view was that the establishment of a new school combining the two schools would have a negative*

impact on Welsh language education in the area by drawing pupils from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera (primary) schools."

As a conclusion of reading the WLIA and discussions with Cymraeg 2050 colleagues continued housing of Godre'r graig in temporary accommodation is not a long-term solution and the preferred approach to reducing impact on the Welsh Language in an area of linguistic sensitivity and ensuring the viability of existing schools would be to relocate learners from the temporary Godre'rgraig primary school to another established school within the area.

Andrew has specifically asked for the process of adding a proposal to their SOP. Whilst we are able to advice LA colleagues, I think it would be the decision of BCSG, EIP and ultimately the Cabinet Secretary as to whether a project can be included within a SOP and that of the LA as to whether they would like to submit a revision for approval or otherwise. If you think it would be useful to discuss, shall I pop something in our calendars.

Diolch

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

From: WG Official 8 (Cymraeg 2050)

Sent: 10 February 2025 14:57

To: WG Official 2 (SCfL); WG Official 7 (Cymraeg 2050); WG Official 3 (SCfL)

Subject: ATB/RE: Godre'rgraig

Diolch WG Official 2 (SCfL),

I think that the below is an accurate reflection of the discussion that we had with you recently and of our view of the issue.

In particular, despite the report concluding that a new build Godre'r Graig would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, we cannot see that any possible mitigations have been outlined, and it is in fact unclear to us what mitigations might be offered. Additionally, the point that you make by drawing attention to the view quoted in the report that a new build combining Llangiwig and Godre'r Graig primary schools would also have a negative impact on Welsh-language education in the area is a salient one.

Diolch a chofion

WG Official 8 (Cymraeg 2050)

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)

Sent: 10 February 2025 15:02

To: Harries, Emyr

Cc: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)

Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Diolch Emyr

Further to the email from Andrew Thomas at NPT I have read the attached email and the WLIA and discussed with Cymraeg 2050 colleagues. In your letter of January 2024 it was stated that in order for the inclusion of a new build Godre'rgraig to be considered within the SOP a WLIA would need to be undertaken that would include mitigations for a negative impact on the Welsh Language. Whilst it is unclear what mitigations may be offered it is clear from the attached WLIA that a new build Godre'rgraig would have a negative impact on the Welsh Language in the area and would likely exacerbate the decline in Welsh spoken. This is not only due to the "draw" of a new school but the increase in EM places in the area.

Although it is not for us to dictate to the LA how to prioritise their educational estate, we do have a responsibility to ensure that their plans are supported by our policy areas. The building of a new 210 place school for 114 pupils would either have a significant impact on other local provision or would be severely under capacity and I would not expect it to be supported at BCSG nor EIP.

Both Godre'r Graig and Llangiwig have seen a decline in numbers, due to an aging population and lack of new housing, and therefore the report concludes that *It must therefore be concluded that the numbers at the current site of Godre'r Graig Primary School are roughly equivalent to the numbers that would be at the school if the school continued at Godre'r Graig itself.*

Additionally, whilst the final recommendation at the bottom of the paper is to combine Godre'r Graig and Llangiwig. It is stated in the report *"There was also agreement regarding the impact of establishing a new school in a new building which would combine Godre'r Graig and Llangiwig primary schools. The strong view was that the establishment of a new school combining the two schools would have a negative impact on Welsh language education in the area by drawing pupils from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera (primary) schools."*

As a conclusion of reading the WLIA and discussions with Cymraeg 2050 colleagues continued housing of Godre'r graig in temporary accommodation is not a long-term solution and the preferred approach to reducing impact on the Welsh Language in an area of linguistic sensitivity and ensuring the viability of existing schools would be to relocate learners from the temporary Godre'rgraig primary school to another established school within the area.

Andrew has specifically asked for the process of adding a proposal to their SOP. Whilst we are able to advise LA colleagues, I think it would be the decision of BCSG, EIP and ultimately the Cabinet Secretary as to whether a project can be included within a SOP and that of the LA as to whether they would like to submit a revision for approval or otherwise. If you think it would be useful to discuss, shall I pop something in our calendars?

Diolch yn fawr

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 10 February 2025 15:24
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Diolch WG Official 2 (SCfL), that's a very helpful assessment.

Yes please, a catch up on it would be great so we can discuss further and agree next steps for responding to NPT.

Diolch,

Emyr

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Sent: 12 February 2025 14:44
To: WG Official 3 (SCfL); WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

WG Official 6 (SCfL) / WG Official 3 (SCfL)

Draft for Emyr – if you have any comments please let me know
WG Official 2 (SCfL)

Dear Andrew

Thank you for the below email and attached WLIA which I have read. Whilst I appreciate that the school is a replacement rather than a new school the WLIA raises concerns for me, and I feel I should advise you that it is unlikely to be approved during the assessment process. During the process, my colleagues will consider the case for inclusion of the project in your SOP and assess for consistency with Welsh Government policy areas, the ability to deliver, a robust economic case, commercial strategy and affordability. In general, there is a falling birth rate across Wales which is leading to the rationalisation of places in many local authorities rather than the creation of more places, particularly in an English medium setting. The WLIA and our records indicate that there are around 115 learners in the current Godre'rgraig school which in a one form entry (1FE) would then provide 95 or 45% surplus places.

Additionally in my previous letter I requested that mitigations be provided for any negative impacts identified. Unfortunately, they were not apparent.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if it would be useful to discuss in more detail.

Kind regards

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

From: WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Sent: 13 February 2025 12:19
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Hi both

I have tweaked a bit – added text is in red.

Feel free to tweak further/add to/change.....

Diolch

WG Official 6 (SCfL)

Thank you for the below email and attached WLIA which I have **now considered**. Whilst I appreciate that the school is a replacement rather than a new school the WLIA **does** raises concerns **for the Welsh Language to which your response does not appear to address**. As such, you should be aware that the **proposal you outline** is unlikely to be approved **through the Welsh Government's business case appraisal framework**.

During the **evaluation** process, **Welsh Government policy** colleagues will consider the case for inclusion of the project in your SOP, and assess policy **alignment against the SCfL Programme's published Business Case Guidance**. In its current format, your proposal is unlikely to be supported across a number of the Programme's key delivery requirements, including addressing Welsh Language commitments as well as those relating to surplus school places and affordability.

In general, birth rates **are in decline** across Wales which is leading to the rationalisation of places in many local authorities rather than the creation of more places, particularly in an English medium setting. The WLIA, **as well as available data**, indicate that there are around 115 learners in the current Godre'rgraig school which in a one form entry (1FE) would then provide 95 or 45% surplus places.

In summary, and as set out within my letter to you, your current proposal does not appear to address the necessary mitigations that have now been amplified within the WLIA undertaken by your authority.

I appreciate this is not the response you are seeking, but we must work collaboratively in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the delivery of both local and national priorities for Wales.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if it would be useful to discuss **this** in more detail.

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Sent: 13 February 2025 12:32
To: Harries, Emyr
Cc: WG Official 6 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: FW: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Emyr – Ymdduheuriadau am yr oedi. Draft response is agreed with WG Official 6 (SCfL) and WG Official 3 (SCfL).

Dear Andrew

Thank you for the below email and attached WLIA which I have now considered. Whilst I appreciate that the school is a replacement rather than a new school the WLIA does raise concerns for the Welsh Language to which your response does not appear to address. As such, you should be aware that the proposal you outline is unlikely to be approved through the Welsh Government's business case appraisal framework.

During the evaluation process, Welsh Government policy colleagues will consider the case for inclusion of the project in your SOP and assess policy alignment against the SCfL Programme's published Business Case Guidance. In its current format, your proposal is unlikely to be supported across a number of the Programme's key delivery requirements, including addressing Welsh Language commitments as well as those relating to surplus school places and affordability.

In general, birth rates are in decline across Wales which is leading to the rationalisation of places in many local authorities rather than the creation of more places, particularly in an English medium setting. The WLIA, as well as available data, indicate that there are around 115 learners in the current Godre'rgraig school which in a one form entry (1FE) would then provide approximately 95 or 45% surplus places.

In summary, and as set out within my letter to you, your current proposal does not appear to address the necessary mitigations that have now been amplified within the WLIA undertaken by your authority.

I appreciate this is not the response you are seeking, but we must work collaboratively in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the delivery of both local and national priorities for Wales.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if it would be useful to discuss this in more detail.

Kind regards

Emyr

WG Official 2 (SCfL)

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 14 February 2025 17:38
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 6 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Diolch WG Official 2 (SCfL) , appreciate you pulling this together. I've updated it as follows to play back the main findings from the report, be clear on the letter we sent that asked for mitigation and then the concerns about alignment with the programme objectives.

Any concerns with how it's now drafted? Please do let me know so we can position this in the best way. I'll then speak to Andrew early next week before it's sent.
Emyr

Dear Andrew

Thank you for the below email and attached WLIA which we have now considered. Whilst I appreciate that the school is a replacement rather than a new school, the WLIA does make some significant conclusions, such as:

- *'.... it must be concluded that reopening Godre'r Graig Primary School in a new building would negatively affect the viability and development of Welsh in the Swansea Valley.'*
- *'.... the financial and strategic rationale for reopening the school in a new building warrants serious scrutiny.'*

In my letter to you (also attached) where we relayed the Education investment Panel's concerns about the potential impact the proposal could have on the Welsh Language, and where we requested a full WLIA in order to consider the proposal further, we required the WLIA to consider the provision across the Swansea Valley area, with mitigation for any negative impacts identified. We can see that the WLIA has identified the negative impacts, but it is not clear to us what the mitigation would be to address them, in order for us to consider the proposal further.

As it currently stands, when considering your proposal for alignment with the SCfL Programme's published Business Case guidance, the findings of the WLIA are a concern with regard to the impact on the Welsh Language, as well as those relating to surplus school places and affordability. In general, birth rates are in decline across Wales which is leading to the rationalisation of places in many local authorities rather than the creation of more places, particularly in an English medium setting. The WLIA, as well as available data, indicate that there are around 115 learners in the current Godre'rgraig school which, in a one form entry (1FE), would then provide approximately 95 or 45% surplus places.

In summary, given the findings of the WLIA and in the absence of mitigation to address the findings, your proposal in its current format doesn't seem to align with a number of the Programme's key delivery requirements and objectives.

I appreciate this is not the response you are seeking, but we must work collaboratively in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the delivery of both local and national priorities for Wales.

Please do get in touch if it would be useful to discuss this in more detail.

Best wishes,

From: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Sent: 17 February 2025 09:59
To: Harries, Emyr
Cc: WG Official 6 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Diolch Emyr – edrych yn gret.

Please let me know if you require anything further from me. We've the NPT quarterly meeting on Thursday so if there is an update to share before then that would be good – strangely AT has indicated that he is going to attend, and I've never met him previously. I'm going to have to check there isn't a mistake!

Diolch
WG Official 2 (SCfL)

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 17 February 2025 14:22
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL)
Cc: WG Official 6 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Diolch WG Official 2 (SCfL), I've left a voicemail with Andrew so hopefully I'll get to speak to him soon and then can follow up with the email.
Emyr

From: Harries, Emyr
Sent: 17 February 2025 16:55
To: Andrew Thomas
Cc: WG Official 2 (SCfL); NPT Official 1; Cymunedau Dysgu Cynaliadwy / Sustainable Communities for Learning; WG Official 6 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: RE: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Dear Andrew,

Further to our discussion just now, thank you for your email below and attached WLIA which we have now considered. Whilst I appreciate that the school is a replacement rather than a new school, the WLIA does make some significant conclusions, such as:

- *‘.... it must be concluded that reopening Godre'r Graig Primary School in a new building would negatively affect the viability and development of Welsh in the Swansea Valley.’*
- *‘.... the financial and strategic rationale for reopening the school in a new building warrants serious scrutiny.’*

In my letter to you (also attached) where we relayed the Education investment Panel's concerns about the potential impact the proposal could have on the Welsh Language, and where we requested a full WLIA in order to consider the proposal further, we required the WLIA to consider the provision across the Swansea Valley area, with mitigation for any negative impacts identified. We can see that the WLIA has identified the negative impacts, but it is not clear to us what the mitigation would be to address them, in order for us to consider the proposal further.

As it currently stands, when considering your proposal for alignment with the SCfL Programme's published Business Case guidance, the findings of the WLIA are a concern with regard to the impact on the Welsh Language, as well as those relating to surplus school places and affordability. In general, birth rates are in decline across Wales which is leading to the rationalisation of places in many local authorities rather than the creation of more places, particularly in an English medium setting. The WLIA, as well as available data, indicate that there are around 115 learners in the current Godre'rgrraig school which, in a one form entry (1FE), would then provide approximately 95 or 45% surplus places.

In summary, given the findings of the WLIA and in the absence of mitigation to address the findings, your proposal in its current format doesn't seem to align with a number of the Programme's key delivery requirements and objectives.

I appreciate this is not the response you are seeking, but we must work collaboratively in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the delivery of both local and national priorities for Wales.

Please do get in touch if it would be useful to discuss this in more detail and I believe our teams are meeting later this week.

Best wishes,

Emyr
Attachment 1 - ATISN 24503 Doc-6

Attachment 2 – ATISN 24503 Doc-7

From: WG Official 6 (SCfL)
Sent: 17 February 2025 22:15
To: WG Official 2 (SCfL); WG Official 3 (SCfL)
Subject: FW: Godre'rgraig Primary School

Hi both

I'm sure you're already on the case..., can we ensure we save the exchanges in this subject WG Official 1 (SCfL) in the appropriate place on ishare please?

Diolch

WG Official 6 (SCfL)

Attachment 1 - ATISN 24503 Doc-6

Attachment 2 – ATISN 24503 Doc-7
