

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

22 JUNE 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME: BRIDGEND WEST SCHOOLS MODERNISATION PROPOSAL – DRAFT OBJECTIONS REPORT

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- inform Cabinet of the statutory objections received by the local authority during the objections period in respect of the proposal;
- seek Cabinet's approval to publish the draft 'Objections Report' on BCBC's website (Appendix A); and to
- request that Cabinet determines the proposal.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

3.1 On 3 March 2015, Cabinet approval was received for the Council to adopt revised principles as a framework for school organisation in Bridgend. Five key principles were set out to inform the organisation and modernisation of our schools. These are:

- commitment to high standards and excellence in provision;
- equality of opportunity, so that all pupils can access quality learning opportunities, regardless of which school they attend;
- inclusive schools, which cater for the learning needs of all their pupils;
- community-focused schools, where the school actively engages with its local community; and
- value for money.

3.2 The Policy and Planning Framework sets out 17 areas where these principles should be applied in practice. The principles which are particularly relevant in the context of Band B are:

- the size of primary schools (to ensure that “all Bridgend’s primary schools are large enough to make the full range of necessary provision”); and
- value for money, efficiency and effectiveness (“narrowing the gap between the most and the least expensive provision currently”).

3.3 As Cabinet will be aware, the Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) was submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in July 2017, for which Cabinet approval was subsequently sought in October 2017. Cabinet was presented with a report detailing the outcome of the Band B review and the revised SOP submission and gave approval to discontinue the original Band B schemes identified in the November 2010 Cabinet report, and approved the revised the following Band B schemes:

- Bridgend North East (primary);
- Bridgend South East (primary) - subsequently substituted by Mynydd Cynfig Primary;
- Bridgend West – Welsh-medium (primary);
- Bridgend West – English-medium (primary); and
- Bridgend Special School.

3.4 Cabinet, in its meeting on 21 January 2020, gave approval for the Bridgend West schemes to be taken forward via the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) funding arrangement. The preferred way forward for the Bridgend West schemes is:

- preferred education option of provision of a new-build, two form entry English-medium school on 'a' site - suitable for Afon y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools combined) and;
- provision of a new-build, two form entry Welsh-medium school on 'a' site - suitable for an enlarged Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr

3.5 The preferred sites for the new schools were determined by Cabinet as the Valleys to Coast (V2C) owned Marlas Estate site and the existing Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr/Cornelly Integrated Children's Centre/Corneli Primary School site (new English-medium school on the Marlas site and new Welsh-medium school on the Corneli site).

- 3.6 Cabinet, in its meeting of 19 January 2021, gave permission to formally consult on the Bridgend West proposal.
- 3.7 In order to progress the proposal, consultation exercises were carried out between 25 January 2021 and 7 March 2021 in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code. A copy of the consultation document was made available during this time on the Council's website:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/equalities-and-engagement/consultations/closed-consultations/bridgend-west-primary-schools-consultation/>

- 3.8 The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. A summary of these views and opinions were then published in the form of a Consultation Report. The outcome of the consultation was reported to Cabinet on 6 April 2021 and it gave approval to issue a public notice.
- 3.9 A statutory notice outlining the proposals was subsequently published on 26 April for a period of 28 days and formal written objections were invited during this time.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Since a number of objections were received at this statutory notice stage, an objections report must now be published summarising the objections and the authority's response to the objections. Cabinet will need to consider the proposal in light of objections. Cabinet can then accept, reject or modify the proposal.
- 4.2 The attached objections report (Appendix A) sets out in detail a summary of the objections received and the local authority's responses to these.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the consultation stage and has been further informed by responses to the proposal consultation papers. The assessment has concluded that there is no disproportionate negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the service.

Long-term	Supports the statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places and promote the Welsh language.
Prevention	Councils have a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient supply of school places, and these schemes will safeguard the Council's position in terms of any potential legal challenge in this regard.
Integration	Providing sufficient places ensures that the curriculum can be delivered and meets social, environmental and cultural objectives.
Collaboration	The local authority works effectively with schools, Estyn and with the Central South Consortium (CSC), health, community councils and many internal and external partners to ensure that the building meets the short-term and future needs of the users and the community which it will serve.
Involvement	This area of work involves the engagement of all potential stakeholders including Cabinet, members, governors, staff, pupils, community, internal and external partners which will include third sector organisations.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 If the proposal does go ahead and is implemented, then the cost of the new schools will be funded via an annual charge to the revenue budget, over a 25-year period, which will need to be built into the MTFS as a budget pressure. Early estimates are that this could be in the region of £500k per annum, but this will be determined as the scheme progresses. The cost is based on a Welsh Government intervention rate for MIM schemes of 81%, with the authority funding 19% of the annual costs, plus 35% of any up-front capital investment for ICT and furniture and equipment.
- 8.2 The running costs of the new school would be met from within the Delegated Schools' Budget, as is currently the case. It is too early to say whether there will be efficiency savings or additional costs from the proposed new school, and future reports to Cabinet will outline the financial implications, as they are known, in more detail.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 Cabinet is therefore recommended to:
- note the statutory objections received as detailed in the attached draft objections report and appendices;
 - approve the draft objections report for publication; and
 - make a determination in respect of the proposal.

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Background documents:

All relevant documents are already in the public domain.

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME: BRIDGEND WEST PRIMARY SCHOOLS MODERNISATION PROPOSAL

(Proposal to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a new school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024)

DRAFT OBJECTIONS REPORT

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report is to inform of the statutory objections received by the local authority during the objections period in respect of the 'Bridgend West' schools modernisation proposal to to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a new school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 Cabinet, in its meeting of 19 January 2021, gave permission to formally consult on the Bridgend West proposal.
- 2.2 In order to progress the proposal, consultation exercises were carried out between 25 January 2021 and 7 March 2021 in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code. A copy of the consultation document was made available during this time on the Council's website:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/equalities-and-engagement/consultations/closed-consultations/bridgend-west-primary-schools-consultation/>

- 2.3 The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. A summary of these views and opinions were then published in the form of a Consultation Report. The outcome of the consultation was reported to Cabinet on 6 April and it gave approval to issue a public notice.
- 2.4 A statutory notice outlining the proposals was subsequently published on 26 April for a period of 28 days and formal written objections were invited during this time.

3. Summary of statutory objections

- 3.1 Since a number of objections were received at this statutory notice stage, an objections report must now be published summarising the objections and the local authority's response to the objections. Cabinet will need to consider the proposal in light of objections. Cabinet can then accept, reject or modify the proposal.

- 3.2 Where a local authority's proposals have received objections, and require determination under section 53 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) 2013 Act, the local authority is required to publish an Objections Report before the end of 7 days beginning with the day the determination decision is issued, which summarises the statutory objections. Appendix 1 of this report details objections raised. For ease of reference, the summary of statutory objections has been organised (below) by grouping the issues raised under broad subject category – the authority's response/clarifications are included beneath each issue raised:

Small school moving to a larger school concerns

The local authority does not agree with the view put forward in a number of objection letters relating to Afon Y Felin Primary School that moving from a smaller school to a larger school would have a negative impact on education standards or would result in a large school with less personalised experience for pupils (where teachers were unable to get to know the children and families) or reduced pastoral care. It is likely that, with the possible exception of a headteacher, all the existing staff (from both Corneli Primary School and Afon Y Felin Primary School) would transfer to the new school, so pupils would not likely have new teachers. Ultimately, a new school governing body would make all staffing decisions for the proposed new English-medium school.

Although the proposed new school would have a greater number of classes ie two forms per year group, the individual classes would not be any bigger capacity than they are presently (there would just be more of them). The local authority would seek to maintain the current small school 'ethos' in the new school and would support the management of all affected schools and arrange close collaboration between the staff of the existing schools far in advance of transfer in order to achieve this. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) is of the opinion that the current proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision for pupils in the area.

Site size/facilities concerns

The local authority does not agree with the view put forward in a number of objection letters in relation to the size of proposed site for the proposed new English-medium school being insufficient. Site 'test-fit' analysis undertaken by Welsh Government appointed project managers has demonstrated that the sites are large enough to accommodate the proposed new 21st century schools. Building Bulletin (Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects) recommended areas for new primary schools (including all types of space in primary schools eg teaching areas, circulation space, sports pitches, games courts, soft play areas, hard play areas and, importantly, habitat space) were compared to the land available on the sites to ensure that they are of sufficient size. Design of the proposed new schools would be in accordance with Building Bulletin design standards (and will take full account of eg aspect, fencing, planting, safety and security, privacy, environmental issues, energy, ventilation, acoustics and lighting).

Safety/security, parking, infrastructure concerns

The local authority does not agree with the views put forward in a number of objection letters regarding safety, security and traffic/access on the grounds that the proposed new schools would be built in full compliance with Building Regulations and would be built to Building Bulletin (Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects, which specifically references safety and security) design standards. In terms of privacy, the detailed design would take account of the proximity of houses and would orientate the facilities to maximise privacy and employ design solutions to aid privacy (such as screening, planting and fencing).

The schools would be designed to the 'secured by design' standard and would include, for example, full CCTV coverage, full sprinkler system coverage, and full perimeter fencing with secure access controls. Entrances and drop-off points would be determined at detailed design stage, and would be safe and would be informed by a full Transport Assessment (Transport Assessments consider the impact of the development on all transport modes, set out proposals to minimise the impact of the development on the transport network and promote measures to encourage sustainable and environmentally friendly transport). Any necessary transport network improvements (including crossing points, footpaths, cycle-ways) identified by the Transport Assessment would be provided to enable the proposed new build scheme.

As was explained in the published consultation document, the published consultation report and also in the 'frequently asked questions' published on the proposal web page - the proposed scheme is a revenue-funded Mutual Investment Model (MIM) scheme and as such, detailed design plans will not be worked up by WEPCo (ie the joint venture company established between a Private Sector Delivery Partner and a subsidiary of the Development Bank of Wales) until after the Stage 1 MIM submission has been made to Welsh Government. Should Cabinet determine to progress the proposal subsequent to consultation conclusion, it is anticipated that the Stage 1 submission would take place in June 2021. Consequently, detailed school designs do not exist at this stage.

The only plans that currently exist are red-line boundary and phasing plans used by Welsh Government's project managers to 'test-fit' the Building Bulletin recommended areas for schools against the land available on the sites. Since Welsh Government MIM regulations require that the statutory school organisation processes are completed *prior* to Stage 1 MIM submission being made, clearly, it would never be possible to provide detailed plans for any MIM scheme at consultation stage. The local authority can, however, explain at consultation stage the standards and regulations that the proposed new buildings would be designed to (as it has done) in order for stakeholders to come to a reasonably informed opinion regarding the proposal.

As already mentioned, entrances and drop-off points would be determined at detailed design stage, and would be informed by a full Transport Assessment.

Condition of the school building at Afon Y Felin

The local authority rejects the disagreement expressed in a number of objection letters regarding the condition of the school building at Afon Y Felin. The backlog maintenance figure of £525,450 was provided by professional surveyors appointed by BCBC's Corporate Landlord Department and the school's currently condition is graded category C+ (poor - exhibiting major defects and/ or not operating as intended).

Timing/process concerns

The local authority does not accept the criticism stated in a number of objection letters in relation to the timing of the consultation. The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure the required number of suitable pupil places in its area. The overall timescales involved in undertaking the necessary consultations in relation to school reorganisations, securing the necessary Welsh Government approvals, securing the necessary funding and designing and building new schools mean that in order to ensure the required number of suitable pupil places for when they become needed consultation had to be undertaken between January and March 2021. It was, nonetheless, unfortunate that the pandemic coincided with the consultation period.

It has been suggested that some people may not appreciate that the proposal relates to primary schools in Cornelly due to the proposal being referred to as 'Bridgend West Primary Schools'. The proposal, as outlined in the consultation document, explains the options analysis undertaken for the wider Bridgend West geographical area which has resulted in the proposal being put forward. The proposal is therefore necessarily entitled 'Bridgend West'. Additionally, the precise implications of the scheme have been articulated in full on each published document relating to it (eg that the proposal is to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a new school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024). The School Organisation Code defines the statutory stakeholders. These are set out on pages 41-42 of the consultation document, all of which have been made aware of the proposal. While the statutory stakeholders as defined by the Code were directly notified of the proposal (and public notices placed on display at the school gates), the council also undertook additional promotion of the public notice with a media release and via social media channels. The council also arranged a separate meeting to discuss the proposal with the Cornelly Community Council.

A number of objection letters received appear to indicate that the originators believe the statutory process is a simple voting exercise and that their responses have been given previously at consultation stage. The statutory process and the proposed timetable were explicitly set out on page 22-23 of the published consultation document, in particular, it was clearly stated,

“*Please note that responses to consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposals. Objections can only be registered during the public notice period.”

It is important to appreciate that the statutory process is not a simple voting exercise, rather, it is a highly prescriptive legal process. The public notice only asks for formal written objections to the proposal (ie it does not, conversely, ask for formal written support) and the consultation document solicits stakeholder views (not 'votes' of all stakeholders) on the proposal. Cabinet will consider the entirety of views received on the proposal at their June meeting and will subsequently make a determination.

Area housebuilding

The local authority rejects the views expressed in some objection letters received that the proposal is 'a money making exercise' and is driven by a desire to build more houses in the area. The proposal is, as outlined in the consultation document, driven entirely by the need to provide suitable and sufficient pupil places. The proposed land swap with Valleys to Coast Housing will not generate any income for the local authority (it is purely a means to secure the site required for the school development). Any future proposals for housebuilding that Valleys to Coast Housing may put forward for the Afon Y Felin Primary School site would be subject to the necessary planning approvals (which would consider, amongst other things, impacts on local infrastructure).

Alternate options

A number of alternate options have been put forward in the objections received (eg leave the schools as they are, locate the Welsh-medium elsewhere, leave Afon y Felin Primary School and Corneli Primary School as two separate schools but update the existing buildings, spend to modernise the schools we have, leave Afon y felin Primary School out of the move and just upgrade). As explained in the consultation document, all three existing schools involved in the proposal are nearing the end of their design life, are in poor condition (exhibiting major defects and/ or not operating as intended) and have very significant backlog maintenance requirements. The existing buildings, in addition to being in poor condition, were not designed to 21st century school standards and do not lend themselves to adaptation to such.

As stated in the consultation document, the option of leaving the existing schools as they are was discounted principally because this option is not sustainable, does not meet the strategy and aims of the authority and would disadvantage future generations of learners by not addressing the need for 21st century pupil places. It could potentially lead to a shortage in education places due to the anticipated future growth in housing in the area. Schools are currently in very poor condition and do not have appropriate facilities to maximally meet modern curriculum need. Any option variation which involves leaving a particular school out of the proposal would obviously disadvantage the pupils of that school for the reasons outlined above. Realistically, the only sites in the area large enough to accommodate the proposed schools (other than North Cornelly Playing Fields, which the authority would not wish to use due to the extensive community use) are the existing Corneli Primary School site and the Valleys to Coast owned land.

The local authority rejects the view expressed that the Bridgend West proposal has been proposed because the council has some obligation to develop a large Welsh-medium school in the area. The Bridgend West scheme as proposed is purely intended to meet the demand for pupil places (both English-medium and Welsh-medium) that would be created by potential future housing in the immediate area, to promote the Welsh language and to increase the numbers of non-maintained nursery children transitioning to Welsh-medium primary education. An entirely separate 'Porthcawl' area review has been undertaken and a future scheme for new Welsh-medium school in Porthcawl is being developed. Another entirely separate scheme for new Welsh-medium school in Brackla North East is also being developed.

Legacy items of furniture and equipment from the existing schools identified by the schools as needed would be transferred to the new schools should the proposal go ahead. Any expenditure made to date, eg on outdoor classrooms, should not be considered as wasted therefore.

The options for the Bridgend West area presented in the consultation document were the culmination of an analysis of education options and site options by BCBC educationalists and technical officers. The options were set out in the council's Strategic Outline Business Case submitted to Welsh Government, which has been approved.

APPENDIX 1

Direct correspondence received via email to edsu@bridgend.gov.uk:

Sent: 06 May 2021 14:31
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to say I am against the Bridgend West primary school merge with Afon y Felin Primary and Cornelly primary. My reasons being my daughter loves her school and all her teachers, I specifically chose AfonYFelin over Cornelly primary after meeting both headteachers, I like the fact that AfonYFelin is a small school, I don't want any of the teachers to loose their jobs, I think it'll interfere with and distupt children's learning.

Sent: 26 April 2021 19:14
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: Afon-y-felin school

I wish to strongly protest against the closure of afon-y-felin school and merger with North cornelly primary in order to make a new super school.

I'm extremely disappointed that this would happen and can't believe anyone would close afon-y-felin.

It is a fantastic school with amazing supportive staff. The head teacher is great she is fo engaging and knows every child and there parents by name she runs the school with greatest respect for all and its just a great small school which is why I chose it as a school for my children for all its quality's you wish to remove.

I myself went to two big primary and secondary schools and it damaged my education as I was a child who needed more teacher time, in these "super schools" you just get lost a small number in a huge class little fish big pond. I wanted different for my children which is why I picked afon-y-felin.

I'm extremely angry at the proposal as are all the other parents.

I don't know why you would want to take away such a valued school in our community.

I'm extremely against this and even more angry after a 56% majority vote against you are still pressing for more votes.

We all clearly don't want this to happen.

Please leave my children's school and education alone they have had enough change and disruption in the last year with the pandemic.

My son gets very upset at the thought of loosing his school.

Please leave afon-y-felin primary alone.

Kind regards

Sent: 14 May 2021 14:37

To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>

Subject: Bridgend West Modernisation Programme

Good afternoon,

I would like to make the following comments with reference to the Bridgend West Modernisation Programme please:-

I would like to object to this School Modernisation Programme.

Afon Y Felin is a hugely successful school, which has achieved very high standards in so many areas over the last few years. Closing this school would be a terrible loss, for the pupils, staff and community. I feel the suggestion that all the awards and achievements, that Afon Y Felin currently hold, will end and simply end up in a "Trophy cabinet" in a new reception area to be very disappointing.

I feel that the proposed site for the new school is not suitable, surrounded by back gardens on all sides with very poor road access. Afon Y Felin is in a far better location at present on a very beautiful site.

While I do not disagree that Ysgol Ferch O Sger and Cornelli Primary buildings may need to be modernised, I do not consider Afon Y Felin to be in the poor standard that is described in the report. I would suggest that any planned development could take place to modernise the other two schools and leave Afon Y Felin alone. Also, on reading the report and knowing Afon Y Felin so well, it seems to me that the report was written to sway the reader in favour of the programme. I really cannot imagine how they consider there to be £525,450 of essential work to be carried out at Afon Y Felin.

Many thanks

Sent: 21 May 2021 08:59

To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>

Subject: Afon-y-Felin school

Dear Sirs,

I would like to express my aversion for the school closure of Afon-y-Felin school.

It is my opinion that closing such a high achieving school with desirable Estyn reports will be at a disadvantage to the current and future pupils of Afon-Y-Felin.

Introducing larger classes by way of a super school will have an adverse affect on the pupils education where they currently have a niche and adept close contact correspondence between teacher pupil.

Please consider my vote against the school closure.

Do not hesitate to email me should you require additional information.

Yours faithfully

Sent: 20 May 2021 20:27

To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>

Subject: Afon-y-Felin

I am not happy with the plans for the new school build. My child loves her school, all the teachers and her friends and I don't want her being disrupted with moving to a new school. Afon-y-Felin is special to me and my child's dad and we'd like our daughter to grow up in the school that we both did. I love the small classrooms where the class isn't packed with children and the quiet kids get to have a chance to learn. Instead of building a school that the majority of parents aren't happy about and would consider moving their child to a small school just like the one they're currently in put the money to better use!

Sent: 18 May 2021 14:28
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: Afon-y-felin

To whom it may concern,

I wish to write to you to protest against the closure and planned merging of schools for afon-y-felin primary school.

I feel this would be damaging to the community and children attending the school. Afon-y-felin primary is an exemplary school, the teachers are amazing and have very high achievements at the school with a high Estyn report. I feel closing the school would leave a hole in the community and in children's education, children have had enough changes in the past 18 months due to the pandemic and I feel any closure of the school now and changes would be damaging.

I have friends of children that go here and the children are so happy at the school with the teachers and the resources there.

Therefore I strongly protest against this closure and hope you reconsider and leave afon-y-felin primary school as it is now.

Kind regards

Sent: 18 May 2021 11:01
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: Vote against demolition of Afon-Y-Felin

Please accept this email as a vote against the demolition of Afon-Y-Felin school. Our children have had enough upheaval with the pandemic without having to change/merge schools. The first proposal was already won in our favour so to have to go through this again is very disappointing. It is unfair on both the parents and the children. Had the vote gone the other way, we would not be in this situation again.

Sent: 01 May 2021 13:18
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: Keep Afon Y Felin

Good afternoon

Im emailing you because I am apposed to the closing of Afon Y Felin Primary School. I believe it should be left alone as it is a fantastic school. I chose it for my children because it was a small school. It's been part of our community for 45 years and myself and my sibilings also at tented. I feel the teachers really make time for our children and know their parents too. This won't happen in a larger school

Kind Regards

Sent: 15 May 2021 22:15
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: School Modernisation.

I am opposing the proposed merger of Corneli Primary with Afon~Y-Felin on the following grounds:
The intended site of the proposed enlarged 2FE English school is unsuitable and not fit for its intended purpose.
The consultation document did not reflect the true position of Afon-Y-Felin and was made to look as though all schools were performing the same is far from the truth.
No real traffic survey undertaken until the proposal is agreed yet all concern over Health and Safety not formally taken into consideration and therefore discounts where drug paraphernalia may be of concern.
Closure of an effective green school because without the land it occupies none of this can be undertaken.

Sent: 30 April 2021 14:31
To: EDSU <edsu@bridgend.gov.uk>
Subject: SAY NO TO SCHOOL CLOSURE - Afon Y Felin

Dear Sirs

I write in the hope you will reconsider the closing of Afon Y Felin School.

My eldest grandchildren attended this school and enjoyed their years here. They were extremely happy, content and comfortable with the staff and headteacher as well as having a fabulous education.

My youngest grandson now attends and is extremely happy in this small community school which has such a warm and friendly environment . All the children who attend love it here, as well as having a wonderful outdoor space for them and an excellent Estyn report. My grandson is a very shy child but has settled in well, I put it down to the hard work and friendliness of the staff and headteacher, Mrs Williams who treat every child with compassion. This would be totally LOST in a 'super school' - I feel this would be detrimental to the children and parents.

It will be my granddaughters turn to join Afon Y Felin next year, like her sibling and all I wish for, is for my two youngest grandchildren to enjoy the same experiences their cousins have had at this fantastic school with superb staff.

I feel Afon Y Felin is an important part of the community of North Cornelly and in my opinion the merger with another school would NOT be beneficial to the school, community and especially the children.

SAY NO TO SCHOOL CLOSURE.

Yours faithfully

'Bulk' objections received in a single pdf format email from Afon Y Felin Primary School following a letter written by a governor at the school which was sent out to all Governors/staff and parents on Friday 21 April (letters, many anonymous, were deposited in a box in the school reception area and subsequently collated by the school and emailed to edsu@bridgend.gov.uk on 21 May):

DEAN LINDSY,
AS A GOVERNOR TO AFON-Y-FELIN SCHOOL,
I AGREE WITH YOU NOT TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL.
THIS AS YOU KNOW IS A VERY SMALL SCHOOL.
JUST 150 CHILDREN - THIS IS A MUST TO
BE KEPT OPEN - THANK YOU!

WE WANT NO CHANGES
MADE TOWARDS

'AVON-Y-FELIN SCHOOL

IN CORNELLY.

WE WANT ALL THE

STAFF AND THE

SCHOOL TO STAY

WHERE IT, THEY ARE.

I wish to save
Afon-y-felin
Primary and STOP
any plans to
close this school
in order to
merge with Nant
Cynellty Primary.
this is a poor
idea.

Afon-y-felin is
by far a better
school and if
work needs doing
to the other schools
then do so with
OUT taking down
Afon-y-felin its
a brilliant school
and the staff
fantastic!

I Do NOT
support the
proposal to
Afon-y-felin alone.

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 4 5 2 0 0
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01/5/21

26.4.021

WE HEAR THE LOCAL SCHOOL
 (OUR CHILDRENS SCHOOL.) IN CORNELLY
 'AVON-Y-FELIN' IS ABOUT TO HAVE
 MANY CHANGES MADE TO IT (LIKE
 MOVING IT TO ANOTHER LOCATION)
 THIS WE ARE AGAINST, AS THE
 CHILDREN ARE HAPPY THERE, ITS BEEN
 THERE FOR MANY YEARS AND IS A VERY
 NICE SCHOOL WITH LOVELY PEOPLE
 WORKING THERE TEACHERS, CLEANERS,
 STAFF, KITCHEN STAFF. (THE LIST GOES ON)
 WE DON'T LIKE OR WANT ANY
CHANGES.
VERY UPSET!

30.10.21

I am against the merger of Afon-y-Belin Primary and Cornelli Primary, because in my opinion the school would be too big. I feel that the children would not get the same level of care and understanding that they receive now. Also the school will be overlooked by houses, and people will be able to see the children. At the moment both schools have got lovely cut out playing areas with loads of grass and outdoor teaching which I feel they would not have if schools merge together. At the moment the children all know one another and help one another if there is a problem they would not know everyone in a bigger school some children will find it hard to cope being so big. Even though you say that no one would lose their jobs there are some that would as there won't be 2 cots in the kitchen so one would lose for job there won't be 2 caretakers either.

yours faithfully

03/05/2021

I'm writing to you to let
you know that I'm against
the closure of the primary
school in the area (Afon-y-felin)
It is a great primary school in
the heart of our community.
The result of the vote (56%)
clearly showed that people do not
want this new school and even
less the shutting of the other school
in the area.

Pro forma - Proposal to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a 'new' school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024.

Name:

A. N. C.

Contact details:

—

Are you (please tick):

☐

School governor

☒

Parent/guardian

☐

School pupil

☐

School staff

☐

Other interested party (please specify)

Do you support the proposal:

Y/N

If you do not support the proposal – please state why:

Why change something that works..

Comment/suggestions/requests/questions:

If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals presented please give details:

Any other comments:



Are you (please tick):

☐ School governor

☒ Parent/guardian

☐ School pupil

☐ School staff

☐ Other interested party (please specify)

Do you support the proposal:

~~Y~~ ☒ NO

If you do not support the proposal – please state why:

~~The~~ Afon y Felin is perfect the way
it is. Children are Settled.

Comment/suggestions/requests/questions:

If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals
presented please give details:

Any other comments:

Children are settled at Afon y Felin. Why
upset them? I chose this school because
it was small and my children will get
the support they need.



Pro forma - Proposal to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a 'new' school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024.

Name:

Contact details:

Are you (please tick):

☐ School governor

☐ Parent/guardian

☒ School pupil

☐ School staff

☐ Other interested party (please specify)

Do you support the proposal: Y/N ☒

If you do not support the proposal – please state why:

Comment/suggestions/requests/questions:

If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals presented please give details:

Any other comments:



BUILD ON THIS LAND. A
NEW SCHOOL

NOT AMONG HOUSES

AND. DRUG HAVENS

26th April 2021,

To Whom It May Concern,

I write with regard to the proposed closure of Afch y Felin Primary School and my objections to it.

My nephew currently attends the school and my niece will hopefully be joining next year too. He has settled in very well since joining in September and this is thanks to the wonderful staff, headmistress and the lovely small community school it is. We all worry the children would get 'lost' at a big SuperSchool and smaller numbers and individuality of a personal touch would be gone.

Many thanks for your reconsideration.
Kind Regards,

To whom it may concern, firstly I am dissatisfied that no one at the school staff or parents etc were informed before any of these plans went through. Secondly I made my views clear when I completed the online survey but I am now logging it in written form. There are numerous reasons why I don't agree with the new school, one being that the location will be over looked by houses. Also Afon Y Felin just spent money on an outdoor classroom and I know how hard the PFA worked to help raise the funds for it and now it will just go to waste. Lastly I am having a lot of trouble getting my 5 year old to school and she is having a lot of behaviour and emotional problems, she is currently doing ELSA. I am worried that the change will affect her even more and that she won't want to go to school at all. Even though I think that a modern school may not be such a bad thing. I just think with the pandemic your timing is all wrong. Our children have been through enough just let them be happy.

Kind regards

Thank you for your letter requesting thoughts or objections on the Bridgend West School Modernisation Programme.

I would like to object to this School Modernisation Programme.

Afon Y Felin is a hugely successful school, which has achieved very high standards in so many areas over the last few years. Closing this school would be a terrible loss, for the pupils, staff and community. I feel the suggestion that all the awards and achievements, that Afon Y Felin currently hold, will end and simply end up in a "Trophy cabinet" in a new reception area to be appalling!

I feel that the proposed site for the new school is not suitable, surrounded by back gardens on all sides with very poor road access. Afon Y Felin is in a far better location at present on a very beautiful site.

While I do not disagree that Ysgol Ferch O Sger and Cornelli Primary buildings may need to be modernised, I do not consider Afon Y Felin to be in the poor standard that is described in the report. I would suggest that any planned development could take place to modernise the other two schools and leave our school alone.

Also, on reading the report and knowing Afon Y Felin so well, it seems to me that the report was written to sway the reader in favour of the programme. I really cannot imagine how they consider there to be £525,450 of essential work to be carried out at Afon Y Felin.

I could go on, but I am trying to keep this letter short!

Yours faithfully

Dear Sirs,

I would like you to reconsider closing Afon Y Felin Primary School in North Cornelly.

It is a lovely community school that my cousins currently love to attend. Everyone there is kind and friendly and it would be a shame to close and build a bigger Superschool instead. The money could be better spent on outdoor play for in the infants and sports equipment for the juniors at Afon y Felin.

Yours faithfully,

Afon y felin has been a part of our local community for 45 years. Always a friendly, wonderful school who care about their pupils wellbeing as well as their education.

I myself and my siblings attended this school and now so do our children.

We chose Afon y felin for our children because of its amazing success rates since Ms Williams took over, her herself is a massive asset to the school. She is a very hands on head teacher who takes time to know all the children and their parents.

There are many, many more reasons I do not wish this lovely little school to be closed down and merged with another school.

WE NEED TO KEEP AFON Y FELIN PRIMARY
SCHOOL FOR OUR LITTLE ONES

With regards to the PROPOSAL to DISCONTINUE
AFON y FELIN PRIMARY SCHOOL.

I AM 100% **NOT** supporting this idea.
I HAVE HUNDREDS of REASONS to be AGAIN
like the old saying: WHY CHANGE SOMETHING
that WORKS?
Our son absolutely loves his school, his teachers
and colleagues.

IT HAS BEEN PROVEN in many studies that
smaller groups have a greater impact in
children's education.

IF the COUNCIL HAS MONEY TO SPEND IT
SHOULD look into spending them better
into what already works.

We are very pleased with how things are
and we will NOT SUPPORT any PLANS
of CLOSING OUR LOVELY SCHOOL.

I DON'T LIKE THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND
YOU WILL NOT HAVE MY VOTE TO MOVE
FORWARD.

27.4.021.

TO WHOM IT WILL CONCERN.

I/we are NOT happy with the changes you at B.C.B.C. are either thinking about ~~or~~ going ahead with towards plans you have concerning our local school in Corrielly, the school is called 'Avon-y-Felin'. This school has a very good name and also its been here for our children (passed + present) for many years, we DON'T want any changes made towards this, our school. (WE WANT OUR SCHOOL TO STAY WHERE IT IS, NOW and in the future for many years to come.)

To whom it may concern:

I have over 12 years of experience in education. I have seen a lot of schools being shut to create a "Super School". To my knowledge it has always been a failure. Teachers are being made redundant, the numbers of students per class has increased. Teachers do not know each other.

The only reason for creating these big schools is for financial purposes. Absolutely not for the benefit of students or teaching staff.

This is why I am absolutely against the closure of Afon-y-felin Primary school.

My kid is enjoying a small structure with low student per classes with staff who work as a team.

Best Wishes.

→ ... / //

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to put forward my viewpoint in respect to the proposed development of a 'super school' in North Cornelly. Whilst myself as a professional can see the benefits of modernisation and regeneration of schools, in order to provide children with the best possible opportunities for education; I cannot say that the proposal of this 'super school' sits well with me for a number of factors that I would like to express below.

One of my main concerns currently is that I feel that North Cornelly as a community do not need one large school. One of the benefits of the area is that there are many great schools in local range that parents are able to choose to send their children to, each for its own merits and benefits. However, in creating this large 'super school' parents are being denied the choice and I fear, that many will simply choose to send their children to nearby schools including Pyle and Mynydd Cynffig.

Many parents have already voiced these concerns and are being denied the opportunity for their children to attend a school that they have chosen. Afon y Felin prides itself in being a small, community school where staff have worked tirelessly to achieve excellent standards of teaching, learning and nurture of pupils and whilst the council do say that they aim for the 'small school ethos' to be maintained in a larger, new school, this just will not be the case. I know working amongst a larger staff and higher volume of pupils will not achieve this, as relationships that we have developed in a smaller school will not be able to be maintained. We know our children inside out and the pupils are all respected as individuals and their needs are catered for fantastically in our current provision. I think the larger school will result in greater behaviour issues with pupils who may get overlooked and lost in the system without their needs being catered for correctly. I think other considerations have also been overlooked including mental health issues for staff who may feel 'lost' in a larger school and may feel to be considered 'just a number' and not a team member or part of a school family. Please remember, small schools are not 'bad' schools and large schools are not better! Our small school has the capacity and ability to expand, yet we are restricted in doing so. We are already turning down pupils due to allocated spaces. This 'super school' screams simply a money saving exercise to me and makes me consider whether BCBC really have the future of their learners at the heart of their plans?

Another major concern I have is that this proposal has been rushed through without much chance for the community to be fully aware of what the proposal entails for themselves. I also fear that Bridgend County Borough Council have some sort of obligation to create a large Welsh primary school in Bridgend and have previously failed to secure land in a proposed site in Brackla for such a school, due to local opposition and community backlash. I feel that this plan is now resulting in a move to North Cornelly (due to there already being a Welsh Primary school there) in order to achieve this goal. Due to the fierce opposition received in building a school in one of Brackla's green spaces, the council are now rushing through plans without much community consultation or awareness of the plans to avoid a repeat of this. The North Community council have only recently been made aware of the plans (finding out when staff did, through social media!) and so, if they have not had much input, then of course this means that the community who live here may also be slightly blind-sighted to the development and will only truly know the extent when it is too late. Have you sought the views of all residents who live within the perimeters of the proposed school site? I would imagine there are quite a few older residents who are unaware of this and the impact it could have on them and their homes.

I also find great issues with the proposed site of the new development. How the council have deemed this area as the best possible site is beyond my knowledge. The site is overlooked

by houses in all directions. I have great concern over child protection in such a tight space and wonder how this has been put forward as a good idea? Access for the school will also cause great disruption to the local area and possible traffic and congestion on the roads and streets around the proposed school.

Also, the school will be built on the only green space there, meaning that the grounds will all be built up and man-made. What sort of positive model is this presenting to our children, to our future generations that our environment can just be dug up and built on? The grounds at Afon y Felin primary are beautiful and have so much scope for learning about citizenship and the environment. If the 'super school' were to go ahead, then surely this would be a much better site to build on, as it is not overlooked (avoiding child protection/health and safety issues) as well as allowing children to still have access to nature, wildlife and the environment. Again, BCBC's great plans are not centrally driven by children and education, but money! The land of Afon y Felin is already lined up for housing, as this was mentioned by development officers to our pupil school council

The consultation also states that the schools are almost in disrepair and that the buildings are not suitable. This is not true of the Afon y Felin building and whilst the buildings of Ysgol y Farch o'r Sger and Cornelli may be deteriorating, I feel it is very unfair to include us in this observation. The school could itself be extended or modernised to create an even better school, without the need to knock it down and merge with another school.

Finally, whilst the planned development of the 'super school' hopes that all staff contracts will be honoured; you will be causing a great upheaval and causing a lot of uncertainty for those who work in the school until the school is finalised. In such an awful time economically anyway, you will be playing devil's advocate with people's professions and livelihoods whilst we wait for a decision from BCBC- which will only be made apparent in the later stages of development. Many staff are worried about their contracts, having to reapply for their jobs and also missing out or losing opportunities for career professional development, with there being more competition for job roles that they are already doing to a high standard. There are so many differing contracts already amongst the schools and effectively at least one member of staff (head teacher) will be losing their job to make way for this new merger school. I think very highly of my head teacher and the work she has put in place in supporting us to continue to raise standards and achieve excellence for pupils, whilst also raising morale of staff and our identities as valued professionals. I would hate for all of her hard work and dedication to be overlooked.

Please consider a more honest and open approach with the community of North Cornelli and those who will be affected by this unnecessary development. The views are already showing greater opposition than support, so don't destroy the good work that is already being done by the schools in the area. I would encourage BCBC to support modernisation of all schools involved without the unnecessary upheaval and destruction of schools who are already achieving fantastic standards for pupils and support for families. I feel BCBC should concentrate their interests on following through development of plans already in place of other schools within the cluster, rather than adding a new 'super school' plan into the mix.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will recognise why I have raised these concerns and that many other people will be feeling the same. Please don't unpick and destroy our school identity, hard work, dedication and successes in order to fulfil an unnecessary demand for a new school.

Kind regards,

Pro forma - Proposal to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a 'new' school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024.

Name:

Contact details:

Are you (please tick):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School governor | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent/guardian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School pupil | <input type="checkbox"/> School staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other interested party (please specify) | |

Do you support the proposal: Y/N

If you do not support the proposal – please state why:

Afon y Felin is great just as it is.

Comment/suggestions/requests/questions:

If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals presented please give details:

Instead of spending all that money why not share it between the schools for improvements

Any other comments:

Afon y Felin School is a perfect size for a primary school for our village. Great sized playing fields too



Pro forma

Pro forma - Proposal to discontinue Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School and establish a 'new' school with effect from 1 September 2023 and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024.

Name:

Contact details:

Are you (please tick):

☐ School governor

☒ Parent/guardian

☐ School pupil

☐ School staff

☐ Other interested party (please specify)

Do you support the proposal: Y/N

If you do not support the proposal – please state why:

AFON Y FELIN SHOULD STAY THE WAY
IT IS. OUR CHILDREN ARE HAPPY

Comment/suggestions/requests/questions:

If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals presented please give details:

Any other comments:

GREAT SMALL SCHOOL, PERFECT FOR
OUR VILLAGE. WHY CHANGE IT AFTER
45 YEARS



Firstly I apologise for how late this is and also the length. However, I felt that I needed to explain exactly how I felt about the planned merger of schools and our journey with Afon y Felin.

We moved to the area in 2009 and my eldest son started in Corneli Primary as it was recommended as the "best school", I won't go into great detail about his short time there but the experience was awful. Within a year I removed him and switched to Afon y Felin. In the short space of just 10 months my son went from a class of just a handful of children who had learning difficulties/emotional needs into a mainstream class. The staff were amazing and brought out the best in him in every possible way.

Over the years I've had a lot of children pass through the doors of Afon y Felin with 5 children currently there and 1 in pod. I have shared so many emotions with all the teachers and Iso's, they have been amazing with all my children. All the staff have known my children's names even before they have started there. Every teacher knows every child within the school. I know that this sadly will not be the case if the proposal goes ahead.

3 of my children have disabilities, the staff have always accommodated and cared for them in every way possible. Always encouraging them to keep fighting their pain and not to leave them out of things.

My 8 year old has learning difficulties and speech and language delay. His teachers, Mrs Hill and Miss Williams encourage him and help him in every way possible. He is currently dealing with massive anxiety due to lockdowns and it's a struggle to get him to school. Staff have again been so supportive, doing everything in their power to help. I'm so afraid if this school goes ahead, he will not attend at all. He can't cope with change and this will be huge for him.

I very much feel that the children aren't being thought about in all this, all they want is Afon y Felin to build houses and the £ signs are very much lit up. They're trying to dress it up with this wonderful new super school to fool people. Afon Y Felin is everything you could want and more in a school, I pray they don't take out brilliant school.

You see Afon Y Felin isn't just any old school, it's a wonderful safe place for our children and I trust each and every member of staff within the school with my children. They truly are an amazing team.

Kind Regards

I am writing this letter to say I'm against the new school project, it's location is very small, flats and houses all around the area so quite unfair to the residents that live so close as parking issues are already a problem with both schools now.

I think putting the money towards better children's activities is most important like play schemes and outdoor spaces instead of even more houses.

Yours sincerely

To whom it may concern,

I am against the new school project on Afon y felin and Cornelli primary merger.

I believe the land is too small to accommodate so many children, flats and houses situated so close i.e people's gardens. I feel the money would be better spent improving the schools we have now.

Afon y felin has done amazing work on their outdoor spaces and large field to play and run and have amazing staff and worked hard to get a green rating.

This would lead to job losses and having to re apply for positions. Increased bullying and money that could be spent improving children's areas and outdoor spaces in the area.

Yours sincerely

Dear Sirs,

I write in the hope you will reconsider the closing of Afon y felin School.

My eldest grandchildren attended this school and enjoyed their years here. They were extremely happy, content and comfortable with the staff and head as well as having a fabulous education.

My youngest grandson now attends and is extremely happy in this small community school which has such a warm and friendly environment. All the children who attend love it here as well as having an exceptional outdoor space. My grandson is a very shy child but has settled in well, I put this down to the hard work and friendliness of the staff and headteacher, Mrs Williams who treat every child with compassion. This would be lost in a 'Super School'. I feel this would be detrimental to the children and parents.

It will be my granddaughters turn to join Afon-y-felin next year like her sibling and all I wish for, is for my two youngest grandchildren to enjoy the same experiences their cousins have had at this wonderful school with superb staff.

I feel Afon y felin is an important part of the community of North Cornelly and in my opinion the

Merger with another school would not be beneficial to the school, community and especially the children.

Yours faithfully

.....

Comments recived from Cornelly Community Council:

Dear Mr Harvey

Proposals for Primary School Provision at Cornelly
Cornelly Community Council's Comments

The Community Council are grateful to the members and officers of BCBC for meeting with them on 12th May, to discuss proposals for primary school provision within Cornelly. The community council accepts there is a need for a new school in Cornelly and have no issue with the amalgamation of the two existing primary schools. The reasons for building a new school and the economics involved are also acknowledged. However, the community council continue to have grave reservations about the suitability of the proposed site for the new school and the adequacy of the public consultation undertaken in relation to the proposals. Members feel that the heading of the consultation was ambiguous and it did not adequately alert the residents of Cornelly to the importance of this consultation. The 'West Bridgend' heading was extremely misleading, despite the reasons given at the recent meeting for its use. The members feel it did not allow proper consultation and participation by interested members of the community. This failure to ensure proper consultation is likely to result in residents living in the direct locality of the proposed school not having the opportunity to comment on the disruption they will have to endure during the building process, as well as the ongoing congestion/traffic (both motorised and pedestrian) they will have to live with during school opening/closing times and noise issues throughout the day. Members are personally aware of a large number of residents who have confirmed they were not aware of the consultation.

Contd/.....

With regard the size of the site. The community council continue to have serious misgivings about the suitability of the site to accommodate a 'fit for purpose' 21st century primary school provision for Cornelly. Despite the information provided at the recent meeting.

BCBC's comments regarding the provision of green space at the proposed school site are acknowledged, however the community council continue to be concerned that the green area currently enjoyed by both schools will not be provided at the proposed site. The two schools currently sit on rural sites with extended green areas, the proposed site is in an area surrounded on all sides by houses within what could be considered an urban environment and may have a detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing. Despite the assurances that there is a £3million pound budget available to take forward any highway adaptations required to ensure safe and adequate access and egress at the school, the community council do not feel the infrastructure around the proposed site would lend itself to the adaptations that would be necessary. The streets leading to the site are extremely narrow and they would not allow the type of highway adaptations that would be needed to accommodate the rise in vehicles that inevitably accompany areas where schools are sited.

The community council would like to request information relating to the total acreage of the sites currently occupied by Corneli Primary School and Afon y Felin Primary School, along with the acreage of the site proposed for the new school. This information would allow the members to attempt a visualisation of the proposals, prior to a detailed plan becoming available.

Finally, members feel that until a detailed plan of the proposed school in situ is available, it is not possible to adequately address the concerns detailed above and hence come to an informed opinion regarding the proposals.

Regards