

# Bridgend County Borough Council



# Learner Travel Review

## Consultation report

**Date of issue: 28 January 2015**



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## 1. Overview

A public consultation reviewing Bridgend County Borough Council's home to school transport policy was undertaken over a twelve week period from 29 September 2014 and 22 December 2014. The consultation received 725 responses from a combination of the consultation survey and seven community workshops held across the county borough. This report details the analysis associated with the consultation.

## 2. Introduction

A public survey inviting views on the proposed reforms for home to school transport was conducted between 29 September 2014 and 22 December 2014. The local authority outlined three independent proposals based upon school pupil's travel to and from school and how any suggested changes to the current policy will affect residents of the county borough. These proposals will affect all mainstream pupils from the age of five upwards.

The survey was made up of three sections, section one asked five questions regarding the respondent to understand their demographic, section two included five qualitative questions regarding the proposals and their potential impact if implemented and section three featured the standard equalities questions suggested by Welsh Government. All questions asked in the survey were optional and all survey respondents had the opportunity to remain anonymous.

The survey was made available to complete electronically in either English or Welsh via a link on the current consultations page of the council's website. Click [here](#)<sup>1</sup> to view the content of the now archived webpage, which still includes an active link to the survey. Paper copies of the consultation document and the accompanying surveys were made available at all local libraries throughout the county borough.

Comments were also invited via letter, email and phone call. Contact details were also provided for anyone wishing to receive a paper copy directly or any alternative formats of the survey.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www1.bridgend.gov.uk/services/consultation/hub/learner-travel-review.aspx>

### 3. Promotional tools and engagement methods

Details of the consultation received promotion within the council through a 'message of the day' notification. Emails were also sent to the following stakeholders: councillors, regional AMs, local MPs, the First Minister, town and community councils, neighbouring councils, Estyn, governors, the Church in Wales, head teachers and all Local Service Board members including the Police. All school pupils received physical letters to read and share with their parents/guardians, secondary heads were also encouraged to use the texting service to inform the pupils' parents, use 'Moodle' to directly message its pupils a link to the online survey, arrange the subject at school council meetings, and place a link to the survey on their websites. The consultation was also referenced as agenda items at the Bridgend Association of Secondary Head teachers' meeting (BASH), the Federation of Primary Head teachers' meeting. The Bridgend Admissions Forum, Bridgend Equalities Forum (BEF) and Bridgend County Borough Youth Council were also asked to cover the topic as an agenda item. A separate meeting was also offered to all Parent Governors however, alternative arrangements were made following low levels of interest.

The screens in the Civic Offices also promoted a bi-lingual message regarding the consultation and events.

#### 3.1 Consultation document and survey

A consultation document was created to provide respondents with information on the consultation itself and included a link to the consultation questionnaire. Contact details were also provided to offer additional support or guidance if necessary. Both documents were written in plain English to maximise potential inclusion and translated into Welsh.

#### 3.2 Social media

The council tweeted its 4900 @BridgendCBC followers and posted to the 560 users who have liked our Facebook page about the consultation on several occasions during the consultation period to help raise awareness of the consultation and the associated seven customer engagement workshops.

#### 3.3 Local press

The consultation also received publicity on the front page of the Glamorgan Gazette<sup>2</sup> on 2 October 2014 and on the council website ([www.bridgend.gov.uk](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk)). The topic overall has received high levels of publicity across Wales.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/parents-face-paying-756-school-7865894>

### 3.4 Community engagement workshops

Six community engagement workshops were proposed based upon the geographical nature of the county borough. Bridgend College, Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School, Porthcawl Comprehensive, Pencoed Comprehensive, Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen and Maesteg Comprehensive were selected to represent the county borough including any associated feeder primary schools. The events were open for all residents of the county borough to attend between 4pm and 7pm. The events were designed to offer support to complete the questionnaire and answer any questions attendees may have had. An additional seventh community engagement workshop was arranged due to demand at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd.

Venue	Date	Attendees
Pencoed Comprehensive	13 October 2014	0
Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	15 October 2014	34
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	16 October 2014	1
Porthcawl Comprehensive	20 October 2014	1
Maesteg Comprehensive	22 October 2014	3
Bridgend College	23 October 2014	5
YGG Llangynwyd	25 November 2014	32
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>

## 4. Response rate

725 responses to the survey were received in total by the closing date of Monday 22 December 2014. Of the responses received 694 were in English and 32 were in Welsh.

The responses were made up of:

Format	English	Welsh	Total
Paper	552	1	553
Online	131	31	162
Email	7	0	7
Letter	2	0	2
Report	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>725</b>

Two responses for the survey were received online after the closing date which unfortunately could not be included in the final report.

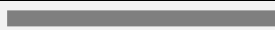




## 5. Headline figures

- 5.1 Proposal one was the most supported proposal. Over one in three (34 per cent) stated that there would be little to no impact if the proposal were to be introduced.
- 5.2 Of the respondents stating that they themselves or a family member used free transport – almost two in three (65 per cent) said that there would be little or no impact to themselves or their family members if proposal one were to be introduced.
- 5.3 Almost all (94 per cent) of the respondents used one of three commuting methods: by council provided school buses (55 per cent), driving by car (21 per cent) or by walking (18 per cent).
- 5.4 Only two per cent of respondents would be affected if proposal two was introduced however, the majority of respondents (35 per cent) stated that charging the actual cost was too expensive.
- 5.5 Exactly one in five believe introducing proposal three would have a negative impact on the community in the future.
- 5.6 Both Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and YGG Llangynwyd feel they would be disproportionately affected if proposal three were to be introduced due to their large catchment areas.

## 6. Questions and Analysis

Question one and question two related to personal information which would be used later in conjunction with the final question of the consultation regarding future contact on the outcome of the consultation, if the respondent invited further interaction.

### 6.1 Organisation / school

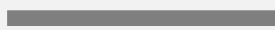





Organisation / school (Q3 + Q4)	#	%	
Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	564	75	 75%
YGG Llangynwyd	66	9	 9%
Y Dderwen Comprehensive	38	5	 5%
Bridgend College	10	1	 1%
Other	74	11	 11%

The question offered respondents to select multiple options, as such, the total responses of 752 is larger than the total number of respondents (725).

The majority of respondents were received in paper format from Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School as the school provided the questionnaires to all pupils. As such three in four respondents (75 per cent) were affiliated with the school.

YGG Llangynwyd and Coleg Y Dderwen Comprehensive totalled nine per cent and five per cent of respondents respectively. As predicted, these three schools are arguably the most affected schools due to their large catchment areas. Question four repeated question three for respondents with more than one affiliated schools, the results were combined into the table above to give an overall response.

### 6.2 Please tick the option(s) that best describes you as a respondent.

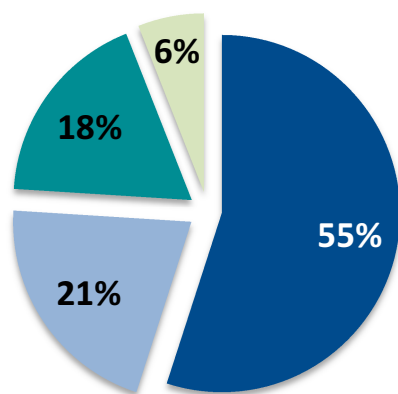
Demographic (Q5)	#	%	
Pupil (secondary)	551	75	 75%
Parent / carer	91	12	 12%
School worker	60	8	 8%
Student	12	2	 2%
School governor	12	2	 2%
Other	12	2	 2%

The question offered respondents to select more than one option, as a multi choice question the total of 738 is higher than the total amount of respondents (725).

Over seven in ten (75 per cent) of the respondents were secondary pupils aged between 11 and 18 years of age. The majority of these responses were received from Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School.

There were 91 responses from parents/carers totalling just over one in ten (12 per cent) of the respondents.

### 6.3 How do you or your child(ren) currently travel to school?

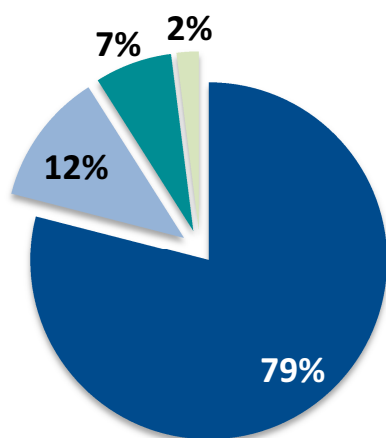


■ School bus (free) ■ Car ■ Walk ■ Other

A mode of transport question was asked to respondents on how either they themselves, or family members, commuted to school/college. The question was used to identify how the respondent and their family members commute to school/college. The highest form of response was on free school buses with over half of the respondents (55 per cent) identifying that they (or a family member) use council provided bus transportation.

Commuting by car and walking received 21 per cent and 18 per cent of responses respectively. These three forms of transport alone total 94 per cent of respondents commuting to and from school.

### 6.4 Please tick the option(s) that best describes you or your child(ren) as pupils/students



■ Secondary ■ Sixth form ■ Primary ■ Other

As part of understanding the demographic of responses received, respondents were asked to identify what level of study they or their family members were currently undertaking.

Nearly four in five (79 per cent) stated that either themselves or a family member were currently in secondary school (11-16 years of age), with a further one in ten (12 per cent) were in sixth form (17-18 years of age) within secondary school.



## 6.5 Proposal one

To increase the distance required for free transport between a pupil's home and their school, to match the distance required by law (including Welsh and religious schools).

Proposal one	#	%	
Policy will have little effect	258	34	34%
Cost on family	122	16	16%
Change from Welsh to English school	99	13	13%
Affect parent's working hours	43	6	6%
Worry regarding attendance	39	5	5%
Proposed distance too far to walk	39	5	5%
Safety of children worries	38	5	5%
Agreement with policy	35	5	5%
Disagreement with policy - general	35	5	5%
Other	58	8	8%

The most popular response to proposal one stated that there would be little to no impact if the proposal was introduced with over one in three (34 per cent) stating this. Of the respondents stating that they themselves or a family member used free transport – almost two in three (65 per cent) said that there would be little or no impact to themselves or their family members if proposal one were to be introduced.

Only two other topics received over ten per cent support with 16 per cent stating that there would be a cost on their family and 13 per cent mentioning that this may cause pupils to change from a Welsh speaking school to an English speaking school. More specifically for the latter point regarding Welsh speaking schools, due to the geographical location of YGG Llangynwyd an alteration to the free transport distance from two miles to three miles is likely to mean pupils/students living in Maesteg having to pay for a bus seat (which may not be guaranteed), whilst potentially living much closer to Maesteg Comprehensive. The cost and the risk of not being guaranteed a seat on the bus could encourage parents or pupils/students themselves to transfer to the English speaking comprehensive school as it could be more convenient for some pupils, with a cost saving for the family.

Other issues raised related to the safety of children. The increase in distance for children walking was mentioned as potentially dangerous particularly in the winter months. Also, the distance was deemed too far to walk by five per cent of respondents. A potential increase in traffic around the school from the current one in five cars transporting children to and from schools (judging on the data gathered from the modes of transport question within this questionnaire).

It is also important to mention that one parent referenced the fact they themselves could neither walk their child to school nor afford the payments for travel if proposal one was introduced due to their disability. Any amendment to the proposals must inform the parent/guardians of the support provided by the council in situations such as these.

## 6.6 Proposal two

**To charge the full cost of a school bus pass for pupils who do not receive free school transport.**

Proposal two	#	%	
Increase too expensive	228	35	35%
Little or no effect	151	23	23%
Change of lifestyle/working hours	83	13	13%
Change from WME* to mainstream	56	9	9%
Worry regarding attendance	33	5	5%
Proposed distance too far to walk	33	5	5%
Safety of children worries	30	5	5%
Agreement with policy	25	4	4%
Other	17	2	2%

\*Welsh Medium Education (FE)

The most popular response regarding proposal two was over one in three (35 per cent) stating that the introduction of the proposal was too expensive in comparison to the current price charged, while others stated that there would be little or no effect with one in five (23 per cent) mentioning this. The only other proposal to receive reference from over ten per cent of respondents was with 13 per cent stating that the proposal would cause a change of lifestyle for example through alterations to their current transport plans which may directly impact on the parent/guardians ability to attend work on time. Others have urged the council to introduce a subsidy to help with the increase in payment or by issuing the charges on a monthly basis.

However, further analysis into the data (mode of transport used by respondents) revealed that only 16 of the 725 respondents (two per cent) would be impacted by proposal two if introduced. At present there are 48 pupils currently paying Bridgend County Borough Council for transport.

Through the community engagement workshops, it was suggested that all pupils willing to pay for transport should be guaranteed a seat on the bus – currently due to the requirements of having to provide certain pupils with free transport, if a child in a position to receive free transport requests a place on the school bus, pupils paying for a place could be forced to lose their paid place.

## 6.7 Proposal three

## To stop providing free transport for learners aged 16 or over, who go to school or college.

Proposal three	#	%	
Negative future impact on the community	127	20	20%
Cost would impact FE* attendance	120	19	19%
Little or no impact	110	18	18%
Religious education could be impacted	81	13	13%
Welsh education could be impacted	56	9	9%
Quality of life would change	48	8	8%
Provide savings required elsewhere	38	6	6%
Introduce hardship fund or subsidy / increase EMA	13	2	2%
Current bus routes insufficient	10	2	2%
Other	23	3	3%

\*Further Education (FE)

The most popular answer received was referenced by exactly one in five (20 per cent), of which the respondents believed that proposal three would have a negative impact on the future of the community. Similarly just under one in five (19 per cent) stated that the cost would deter pupils from accessing further education. In direct contrast to this 18 per cent believed it would have little or no impact on themselves or their family.

13 per cent of respondents believed that religious schools could be impacted and nine per cent of respondents believed that Welsh education could be impacted by the introduction of proposal three. Both Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and YGG Llangynwyd as previously mentioned in this paper have large catchment areas unlike mainstream English speaking schools (with the debateable exception of Y Dderwen). Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and YGG Llangynwyd may have to compete much more with the accessibility of English medium comprehensives if the proposal was introduced.. Qualitative responses have mentioned that parents and pupils may choose to attend a mainstream comprehensive from the beginning of secondary school as opposed to obtaining their GCSE's and subsequently moving schools for further education. Respondents have stated this could in fact have an impact on the pupil's academic performance. At the community engagement workshop in YGG Llangynwyd, attendees also noted the additional difficulty of the language barrier if a pupil was to study their GCSE's at the Welsh comprehensive before looking for a closer location to home when enrolling onto further education.

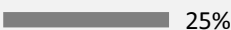

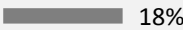






If the proposal was passed, one suggested alternative was to host certain lessons for YGG Llangynwyd sixth form at a more central location, particularly those that are currently conducted alongside Ysgol Llanhari. More generally for all further education establishments, a suggestion given within the consultation was to reform the classes for students to minimise the necessity of travel.

An area that will need addressing according to the respondents if proposal three does go ahead is the availability of bus routes for students in further education to sufficiently attend

their school of choice. At present, some pupils would have to catch multiple buses in order to reach their destination each day.

The consultation did reference the potential of a hardship fund which was also mentioned by two per cent of the respondents. Alternative suggestions to this was to increase EMA, despite the guidance regarding EMA being for transportation costs, many felt an increase to the financial support due to proposal three should be introduced.

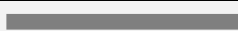

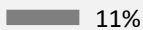




### 6.8 Are there any groups of learners aged 16 or over who you believe should continue to receive free transport?

Exceptions	#	%	
Disabled children	106	25	 25%
Every child	87	21	 21%
Children in care / care leavers	73	18	 18%
Households on low incomes or certain benefits	57	14	 14%
NEETs / those at risk	26	6	 6%
All of the above	25	6	 6%
Protect Welsh and Faith schools	20	5	 5%
Over 16s	10	2	 2%
Other	13	3	 3%

Exactly one in four respondents (25 per cent) suggested that disabled children should be entitled to continue to receive free transportation. Over one in five (21 per cent) believed that all children should be entitled to free transportation – which would oppose the introduction of proposal three. Children in care and care leavers received almost one in five (18 per cent) of respondents supporting the group having free transport.

The only other area to receive over a one in ten response rate was for households on low incomes or certain benefits with 14 per cent.

## 6.9 What changes could the council reasonably make to encourage pupils and students to walk or cycle more often to and from school or college?

Exceptions	#	%	
Safe routes	99	35	 35%
Better / new routes	67	24	 24%
Training schemes (improve awareness)	31	11	 11%
Better facilities for bikers (lock ups etc.)	31	11	 11%
Special bike deals / bike schemes	21	7	 7%
Adequate street lighting	15	5	 5%
Other	19	6	 6%

The majority of respondents (35 per cent) believed that introducing safe routes was the preferred way to encourage more pupils and students to walk or cycle more often. Respondents also believed that introducing better routes would help influence pupils and students with almost one in four (24 per cent) making reference to this suggestion. Alongside safer routes it was also suggested by 11 per cent of respondents that training schemes should be offered to improve awareness of the routes available and also teach those that require help. The same percentage (11 per cent) also wanted better facilities for cyclists, for instance bike racks and shower/changing facilities.

Other suggestions offered within the consultation were that schools should receive awards for being 'green' such as certificates and stickers for pupils/students. Alternatively one respondent suggested that by having a communal drop off point further from the school would ensure there is some degree of activity, this has been disputed by others within the consultation as the knowledge their child safely arriving at school is paramount.

## 7. Conclusion

Each proposal has been summarised below based upon the responses received during the consultation period.

### 7.1 Proposal one

The consultation has demonstrated that of the three proposals, proposal one was the most accepted by the majority as having a minimal affect. Comparatively, YGG Llangynwyd would be disproportionately affected by the introduction of proposal one in comparison to other schools within the county borough.

### 7.2 Proposal two

Proposal two will have an impact on a minority of pupils/students however, the majority believe that the introduction of charging the actual cost for a school seat is too expensive. Suggestions of offering a subsidy for those who do have to pay, and guaranteeing the place for the paying pupil were highlighted both in the questionnaire and the customer engagement workshops. At present 48 pupils/students currently pay for transport through Bridgend County Borough Council.

### 7.3 Proposal three

Proposal three is the most disputed amongst respondents. Concerns are centred on:

- ▶ the current infrastructure – specifically the current bus routes if those attending further education require to use the service;
- ▶ the financial costs the proposal would add to students and families attending further education and how the additional cost may increase the numbers of those currently not in education or training (NEETs); and,
- ▶ both Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and YGG Llangynwyd feel they are disproportionately affected if the proposal were to be introduced due to their large catchment areas.

## 8. Additional consultation data

A closed opt-in yes or no question on learner travel was asked in Bridgend County Borough Council's Budget Review 2015<sup>3</sup>. The results revealed that exactly half of the respondents (50 per cent) opted-in for a review of the current home to school transport with a potential cost savings of £550,000.

## 9. Appendices

Consultation responses	Appendix 1
EIA screening	Appendix 2

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www1.bridgend.gov.uk/services/consultation/hub/budget-review-2015.aspx>