

15 March 2008

IMPACT OF CLOSING SCHOOLS MUST BE STUDIED MORE CLOSELY

The impact that closing a school has on a community and the Welsh language must be studied more closely, says Preseli Pembrokeshire AM Paul Davies.

Mr Davies, who is shadow minister for culture and Welsh language, has called on the Welsh Assembly Government to conduct independent Welsh language impact assessments before consultation on any school closure.

“Closing a small rural school, particularly in Welsh-speaking areas, is like ripping the heart out of a community,” he told the Senedd.

“When a decision is taken to close a school, that decision is usually made on an educational basis only.”

He told assembly members that in communities where Welsh is an essential language, the closure of a Welsh-language school can have a calamitous effect.

“Currently, there is no need for an independent impact assessment on the effect that closing a school can have on the Welsh language in a community,” he added.

“I want to see a full independent impact assessment. We cannot accept the current process, where a community school can close, without assessing the possible impact on the community as a whole.”

Unfortunately, Mr Davies’ motion to introduce the measure was voted down by the Labour – Plaid Cymru coalition.