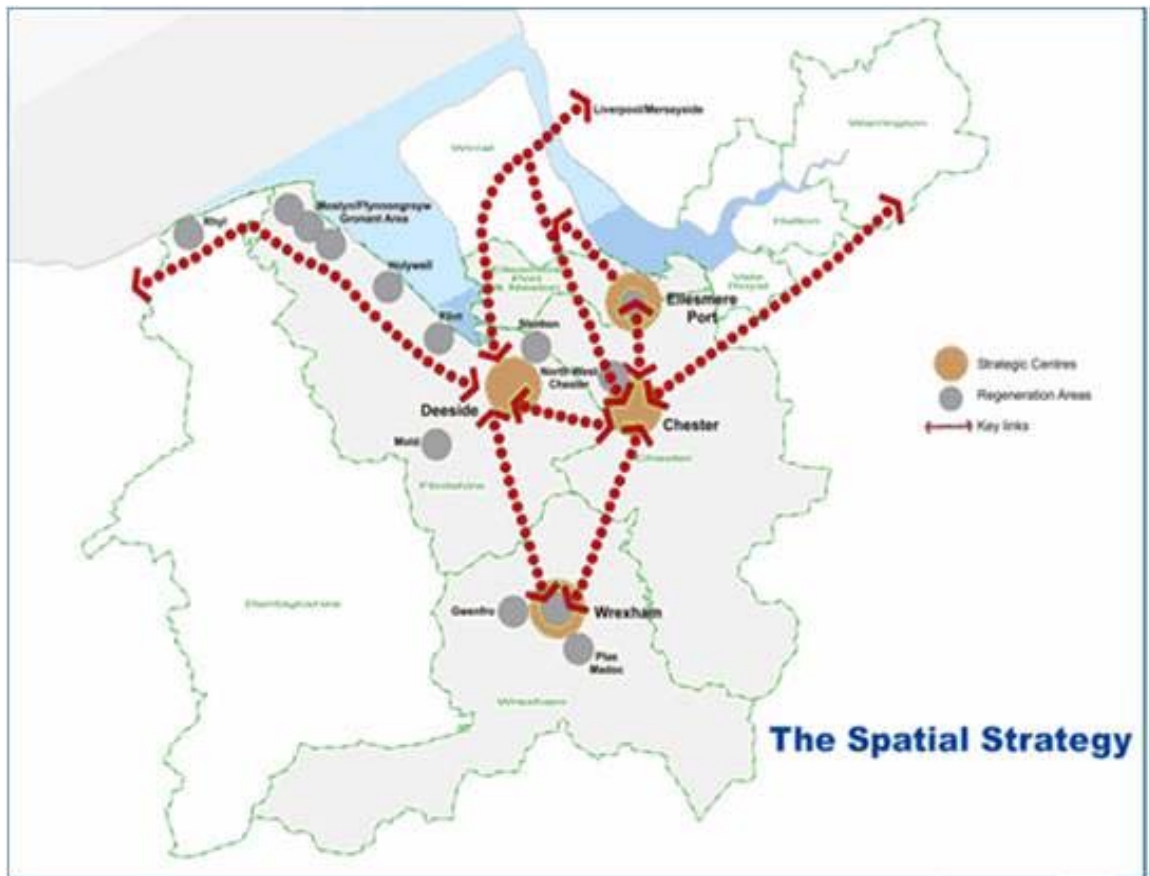


Contents Paper 1A

Item	Title	Page
1	Additional information regarding Withdraw from the West Cheshire / North East Wales Sub-Regional Strategy	2
2	Additional information regarding Inclusion of leaving home information and education in the National Curriculum	25

Cyngor Pobl Gogledd Cymru

The People's Council of North Wales



Tachwedd/November 2009

ADRODDIAD I/ REPORT TO : Assembly Petitions Committee

DYDDIAD/ DATE : 30th November 2009

CYSYLLTU/CONTACT: Pol Wong

PWNC/ SUBJECT: Assembly Petition:

Tynnu'n ôl yn ffurfiol o'r strategaeth is-ranbarthol Gorllewin Caer - Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru

Rydym yn galw ar Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru i annog Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru i dynnu nôl yn ffurfiol o'r strategaeth is-ranbarthol Gorllewin Caer - Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru.

Rydym ni, yr isod, yn dadlau fod strategaeth is-ranbarthol Gorllewin Caer/Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru yn gynllun di-feddwl, hynod niweidiol a thywyllodrus. Mae'r oblygiadau'n enfawr, gan effeithio ar nifer fawr o agweddau o fywyd yng Ngogledd Cymru:

- Hunaniaeth a hawliau dynol (yn nhermau identiti Cymreig, iaith, diwyllaint, cymeriad a mynegiant)
- Amgylcheddol (yn nhermau cynaladwyedd, ecoleg, yr amgylchedd a'r amgylchedd adeiladol) a
- Cynaladwyedd cymdeithasol (yn nhermau demograffeg, economeg, gwleidyddiaeth a chymunedau).

Does dim ymgynghoriad o gwbl wedi bod â phobl Gogledd Cymru a dim ymgynghoriad go iawn gyda'n cynrychiolwyr etholedig ar level lleol a chenedlaethol. Yn sicr does dim mandad go iawn i'r cynllun. Nid yw'r cynllun yn statudol ond mae wedi dod yn statudol wrth gael ei fabwysiadu fel rhan o gynlluniau datblygu lleol a Chynllun Gofodol Cymru. Mae'r ffordd y mae'r cynllun wedi ei fabwysiadu wedi codi problemau sylfaenol mewn llywodraeth leol a chenedlaethol. Mae wedi dangos diffyg cynhwysedd a chlaerdeb, diffyg democratiaeth, adnabyddiaeth dewisiol o bolisi, atgyfnerthu ystrydebau ac hyrwyddo diwylliant o ffafriaeth.

Mae amrediad eang y strategaeth yn golygu na fyddai tynnu nôl o'r cynllun ar y funud yn ateb llawer o'r materion sy'n ein pryderu ynglyn â'r cynllun a'r meddylfryd y tu cefn iddo. Rydym yn datgan fod strategaeth is-ranbarthol Gorllewin Caer/Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru nid yn unig yn tansilio Cytundeb Cymru'n Un ond hefyd rôl y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol ei hun.

Felly, rydym yn deisebu'r Cynulliad ar ran pobl Gogledd Cymru er mwyn sefydlu corff/pwyllgor i drafod y pryderon yma gyda Phwyllgor Pobl Gogledd Cymru. Gofynnwn i'r Cynulliad ystyried ein tystiolaeth, ein barn a'n hymchwil gyda'r bwriad o dynnu o'r strategaeth er mwyn rhoi stop ar y niwed mae'n creu a symud ymlaen gyda datblygiadau positif yn unol â Chytundeb Cymru'n Un.

Withdraw from the West Cheshire / North East Wales sub-regional strategy.

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to formally withdraw from the West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-regional strategy.

We the undersigned view the West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-regional strategy as ill thought out, extremely damaging and a subversive plan. The implications are huge, affecting many aspects of life in North Wales

- Identity and human rights (in terms of welsh identity, language, culture, character and expression);
- Environmentally (in terms of sustainability, ecology, natural habitat and the built environment); and
- Societal sustainability (in terms of demographics, economics, politics and communities).

There has been no consultation with the people of North Wales and very limited consultation with our elected representatives, at both a local and National level, there has certainly been no genuine mandate. The plan is non- statutory but has become statutory as it has been adopted in Local Development plans and the Wales Spatial plan. The way in which the plan has been adopted has highlighted significant problems in both local and national government. It has shown a lack of inclusion and transparency, lack of democracy, selective recognition of policy, a reinforcing of stereotypes and the promotion of a culture of discrimination.

The range of implications of this strategy mean that simply withdrawing from the plan at this stage would not address the many issues that concern us about this strategy and the thinking behind it. We declare that the West Cheshire sub regional strategy not only undermines the One Wales agreement but also undermines the role of the Welsh Assembly itself.

We therefore petition the Assembly on behalf of the people of North Wales, to set up a body/committee to discuss these concerns with the People's Council of North Wales. We ask the Assembly to consider our evidence, views and research, with a view to withdrawing from the strategy in order to halt the damage being done, and to move forward with positive developments in line with the One Wales agreement.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To enable members to consider the petition submitted by Cyngor Pobl Gogledd Cymru / The People's Council of North Wales.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The West Cheshire/North East Wales sub regional strategy was formally adopted by Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire councils, along with the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006. The strategy spans the period 2006 – 2021.

2.2 The strategies main aim was the creation of a new sub-region between North East Wales and the North West of England. It sets out policies on cross border working, covering issues such as housing, transport, employment, economic development, tourism and leisure.

2.3 It is the view of The People's Council of North Wales, along with over 15,000 people, that the Welsh Assembly Government should formally withdraw from the West Cheshire North East Wales sub-regional strategy. This view is based on the damage being caused across North East Wales, both by the strategy itself and the Welsh planning system. It is our view that a culture of discrimination has been allowed to develop over recent decades, and further more that this culture is now firmly embedded in our governmental processes. The result is potentially irreversible damage to our quality of life in North East Wales, in terms of Welsh identity, Welsh language, the environment and our communities.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That the Welsh Assembly Government formally withdraw from the West Cheshire/ North East Wales sub-regional strategy.

3.2 That the Welsh Assembly Government further our research into the wide ranging social and environmental impacts of the West Cheshire plan and the use of population projections to predict future housing growth, and to make relevant and appropriate policy and actions to address these issues.

3.3 That the Welsh Assembly Government form a joint body/committee to discuss the concerns outlined above with a view to :

i - Consider the research and views of the People's Council of North Wales.

ii- Discuss methods to halt the damage being done and to move forward with positive improvements in line with the One Wales Agreement.

iii- That body/committee meetings be broadcast.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the Welsh Assembly Government to preserve and enhance Welsh identity and language in North East Wales. To repair damage done to the Welsh identity and language through inappropriate plans like the West Cheshire sub-regional strategy, and to enable Welsh people to attain a state of demographic sustainability. To repair the damage done to the level of trust between the people of North Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. To prevent further environmental and social damage. To promote genuine equality, transparency and engagement with local people in the democratic process.

EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT

Assembly Petition, total signatures collected in 3 months: **15,220**.

Facebook Group, supporters: **4,484**.

Members of Cyngor Pobl Gogledd Cymru: **236**.

4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-regional strategy

In 2002 the Mersey Belt study was published by the North West Development Agency in England. The study recognised a shortage of land supply for employment and housing, particularly in the 'Southern Crescent' (I.e. Chester, Ellesmere Port). The study recommended the formation of a new sub-region between the North West of England and North East Wales to “address land supply issues”. The study states:

“Recognising the limited availability around Chester and its important role as an attractive location to the target sectors, an alternative option would be to identify a suitable site for knowledge based industries just over the border in Wales. With close proximity to the Chester Business Park that could be perceived by investors as a Chester location. This study has not sought to identify any specific sites in North Wales. We recommend that the NWDA, local authorities and their partners in the North East Wales/ West Cheshire sub-region should undertake a co-ordinated appraisal of the Cross-Border economic needs and opportunities. This could explore a range of options for FUTURE LAND SUPPLY and would accord with the approach beginning to emerge out of the RPG process.”

4.2 In July 2001, there was also reference to the desire for the creation of a new sub-region resulting from the public examination into North West Regional Planning Guidance. The panel recommended a “joint study by the authorities on either side of the border with a view to securing compatibility between policies in the interest of the sub-region as a whole”. This recommendation was accepted by the UK Government and the Leaders and Chief Executives of local authorities in West Cheshire and North East Wales, who subsequently agreed to support the principle of a sub-regional study.

4.3 Following various draft studies, the West Cheshire North East Wales sub-regional strategy was published in 2004 and subsequently adopted by authorities in England and Wales in 2006.

4.4 The Liverpool City Region plan was also being developed in tandem with the West Cheshire North East Wales sub-regional strategy. It stated that:

“The City Region consists of thirteen local authorities, inclusive of the New Heartlands HMRI Pathfinder area. It incorporates the local authorities of Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral, Halton, Ellesmere Port and Neston, West Lancashire, Chester, part of Vale Royal, and the Welsh authorities of Wrexham and Flintshire.”

It defines the Southern market area as including North East Wales:

“Market pressures have driven up house prices fuelling affordability issues across the area. The Southern Market Area records the highest affordability ratios within the City Region and includes a significant area in which it is very difficult to locate affordable Housing.”

“Overall the Southern Market Area offers unrivalled quality in its neighbourhoods and quality of life. This has fuelled high demand for property in the area, although as noted capacity issues regarding available land and the location of services and infrastructure limit the options for continued growth. Joint working between authorities will be increasingly important in the future if the Southern Market is going to effectively supply the level of housing required to sustain its economic development and wider contribution to the City Region.”

4.5 The West Cheshire sub-regional strategy is non statutory but is a material planning consideration in the preparation of Local Development Plans in Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire.

The broad spatial planning vision for the Sub-Region was as follows:

“The West Cheshire and North East Wales sub-region will be an area able to compete successfully in the regional, national and global marketplace, where the area’s special characteristics for growth are pursued to the benefit of both the sub-region and the Liverpool city-region.”

One of the plans main aims was to “**Create a distinct identity for the sub-region**”. This was amended in later drafts to include the **addition “and to safeguard the distinctive characteristics within it”**.

The West Cheshire strategy sets out housing figures up to 2021 and states that provision should be made for 30,000 – 35,000 new dwellings. In Wales, these figures are largely based on previous in migration trends from the North West of England. For the three Welsh authorities, the housing figures are as follows:

Wrexham: **6,000 – 7,000**

Denbighshire: **4,500 – 5,500**

Flintshire: **6,500 – 7,500**

4.6 The plan identifies eleven 'regeneration areas' for the new sub-region where new development will be targeted. Nine of the regeneration areas are located in Wales. It promotes the idea of strategic mixed use sites, where new housing and employment developments will be located together.

4.7 The plan repeatedly acknowledges that in migration from the North West of England into Wales will lead to the loss of Welsh identity:

“Continuing trend of net in-migration in Flintshire, Wrexham (from English authorities) and Denbighshire leads to loss of local identity.”

The damaging effects of the plan in terms of Welsh culture and language are described in more detail in the Sustainability Appraisal which accompanies the plan:

“ Population growth more rapidly in North East Wales than for North West and the UK average. Flintshire and Wrexham and Denbighshire experiencing in-migration, largely from England – potential loss of identity and knock on effects in relation to Welsh language and culture - Opportunities and implications for sub regional strategy -Improve/maintain cross-border social relations”

“ In terms of protection and enhancement of the Welsh language and cultural resources, economic growth and investment does have the potential to improve the provision of Welsh cultural facilities, although the extent of this will largely depend upon implementation through the local development plans. Conversely, economic growth may bring with it an influx of national businesses and chain retail services which could dilute existing Welsh culture. Furthermore, patterns of migration and commuting across the English-Welsh border between the principal strategic centres (e.g. Wrexham-Chester improvements, Wrexham-Bidston rail improvements) may also lead to a dilution of Welsh speaking. Increased housing development along North Wales coast may also result in similar effects.”

4.8 THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

In addition to the above statements included within the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the plan, there are also many other references relating to the environmental damage expected.

The Sustainability Appraisal uses a set of guiding principles to assess the West Cheshire plan. These include 11 Environmental guidelines, 8 social objective guidelines and 8 economic objectives. These principles essentially rate the plan in terms of the damage the strategy will do to:

- a) The environment (i.e. climate change, air quality, carbon emissions, landfill rates, water quality, green space, built heritage etc.)
- b) Socially (i.e. community cohesion, inequalities, reduce crime, access to quality affordable housing, protection of Welsh identity, language and culture etc.)
- c) Economically (i.e. economic performance, sustainable economic growth, marketing the sub-regions image).

The conclusions of the Appraisal raise very serious concerns, too many to list in their entirety in this report. We would recommend that panel members read this document in conjunction with the West Cheshire plan itself (references listed at the end of the report). To give a flavour of the conclusions reached, please see the examples below:

“adverse environmental impacts are anticipated with the level of growth envisaged, and particular mitigation measures will need to be imposed locally to counter these.”

“Increased landtake, noise and pollution resulting from transportation improvements could decrease biodiversity. Development pressures resulting from economic and population growth could affect biodiversity and increase ecological footprint”

“Commuting issues through traffic and increased number of vehicles in region can lead to congestion and capacity issues.”

“Cumulative health impacts as a result of poor air quality, social stresses and poor provision of health services”

“Increased efficiency of transport links and therefore higher volumes of vehicles on roads could lead to increased air pollution, which in turn can contribute to adverse implications to human health and can indirectly affect the quality of biodiversity and habitats, the landscape/townscape and the setting of cultural heritage features”

“Increased industrialisation can lead to increased emissions and resources use. Increased transport emissions of greenhouse gases. Potential sea-level rise, increased incidence of flooding on the coast and in low lying areas and increased periodicity of rainfall. Potential impact on finite natural resources, for example water”

4.9 THE WALES SPATIAL PLAN

The justification for the adoption of the West Cheshire plan is frequently referenced as the statutory Wales Spatial Plan. The plan was originally adopted in 2004 and later updated in 2008. For North East Wales the vision is:

“ An area harnessing the economic drivers on both sides of the border, reducing inequalities and improving the quality of its natural and physical assets.”

One of the key elements listed to realise the 'vision' is as follows:

16.3 “ For Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire, the cross border linkages to the wider area of Chester and West Cheshire are crucial. The opportunity in this border area of North East Wales is about harnessing its special characteristics to benefit not only North East Wales but the wider geography, east and west. It will be a place where the strengths of prosperous areas are enhanced and the benefits of economic growth are maximised through linking areas of opportunity with areas of need of regeneration. Working towards this vision, the Mersey Dee Alliance will play a key role in delivering the spatial strategy through close collaboration and continued partnership working across North East Wales, West Cheshire and the Wirral.”

The spatial plan aims to realise this vision by focusing development to the strategic hubs identified and improving east west transport links to these hubs, in order to:

“maintain economic growth and provide development opportunities to the West.”

The 'benefits' to North East Wales are unclear.

4.10 THE MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE

The Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) is the organisation set up to implement the West Cheshire North East Wales sub-regional strategy. It was formed in 2007 and is made up of the local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester, Denbighshire, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Flintshire, Wirral, Wrexham, The Welsh Assembly government and Mersey Travel. The Partnership aims to work on strategic interests across the sub region including identifying development sites, transport and place marketing. The accountable body for the MDA is Cheshire County Council. Local authorities nominate 3 elected members to represent them on the board, the organisation is currently chaired by Wrexham Council leader Aled Roberts.

This body appears to be aiming to override local and national (Welsh) planning policy. One of it's stated aims is:

“.....ensure through our close collaboration, that we help to bring forward the most appropriate sites for development, based on their merits, rather than having regard to administrative boundaries and to local allocation targets.”

4.11 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Future household projections and population growth figures are currently provided to local authorities in Wales via Cardiff. These figures are intended to be represented in the Local Development Plans for each authority. Although WAG guidance states that local authorities can deviate from the figures should they be able to provide a sound evidence base, several Welsh authorities have clearly stated that they are being pressurised to use the higher growth rates put forward by WAG. Wrexham, Denbighshire and Conwy County Councils have all expressed the same concerns. Authorities have also expressed a fear to challenge the figures, due to the fact that their emerging LDP's would likely be deemed 'un sound' by the Planning Inspectorate at deposit stage.

The use of household projection figures was originally devised by a group of North Wales officers and it is only in recent years that this aspect of planning has been produced directly by Cardiff. There was never a directive from WAG

to use these figures, there has been no scrutiny of the formula being used and there is no research available as regards the impacts.

As an example, 50 % of the population projections for Wrexham are based on in migration trends. The remaining 50% are calculated on a ratio between birth and death rates, although issues such as affordability are not taken into account.

The projections take a 'snap shot' of previous years growth and use this base to predict what levels of growth will be in future years. A flaw in this methodology is that growth is not based on local need, a period of extremely high growth and in migration can heavily skew the figures. This subsequently puts a demand on a local authority to plan for unnaturally high levels of development in their Local Development Plans.

As an example, reports looking at housing growth in Wrexham have established that the authority has provided an over provision of housing and therefore encouraged further in migration into the county. In other words, rather than providing for local need and natural migration, the use of these figures has resulted in the creation of a housing market and an unnatural planned demographic change.

The in migration rate in Wrexham between 1991 and 2008 was three and a half times the Welsh average, and house prices rose by a staggering 60% between July 2004 and July 2008. Wrexham's current LDP makes the following statement about local opinion regarding these changes:

“ Local communities largely in the Western Villages and Wrexham perceive that their local distinctiveness, community identity and community pride have been detrimentally affected by development.”

4.12 FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

The cost of preparing the initial sub-regional studies and West Cheshire plan were covered by the participating local Authorities, it is unknown at this stage to what extent the WAG have contributed financially to this process. Participating local authorities also make a financial contribution for their membership of the Mersey Dee Alliance.

In addition to the use of this public money ,it is also believed that monies given to Wales via WEFO have also been used in line with cross border aims identified in both the sub-regional strategy and Wales Spatial Plan, we are yet to learn to what extent.

4.13 CONSULTATION

There has been no consultation what so ever with the people of North East Wales about the adoption of the West Cheshire sub-regional strategy or about the three Welsh authorities involved becoming part of the new 'sub- region. The only consultation to have taken place has been with 'key stakeholders'.

5 CONCLUSIONS

There are many documents listing in detail the aims and objectives of the West Cheshire sub-regional strategy and also the general 'vision' the Assembly has for North East Wales. In this conclusion we aim to outline what the effects of this vision have been in reality and the direct impact they have had on the local population in the North East. We feel justified to make these observations both due to various public documents confirming the situation and also as local people who are living through this process.

5.1 HOUSING

One of the central issues in terms of negative impact is that of housing and the use of population projections to calculate future provision. During the period these figures have been used we have seen dramatic changes to both our landscape, our communities and our identity. We acknowledge that this process has been on going for many years prior to the adoption of the West Cheshire plan and view the strategy itself as the culmination of a succession of discriminatory policy. The strategy is significant in that it outlines in black and white a process of social engineering that has, over the years, become the 'norm' and part of our planning process.

We have endeavoured to find research into the wide ranging social effects of employing such a policy but to date have found none. The un naturally high levels of in migration are acknowledged in several public documents but apart from the observed house price rises, other effects have not been monitored.

To again use Wrexham as an example, over 6000 houses have been built in the county since 1996, a further 3000 are either under construction or have valid planning permission. An extremely small percentage of these have been affordable for local people, a total of 64 units or 1% of the over all figures. The vast majority of local people cannot afford to purchase general market housing. Where a large concentration of houses have been built, the local communities in those areas have been told the development is for the purpose of 'regeneration'. In reality regeneration has meant re population, with the existing community experiencing no benefit at all.

Inevitably the houses have, in the main, been purchased by those moving into the area with a financial advantage over the local population. The impact of this demographic change has been a dramatic increase in house prices in the local area. Additionally, many of those moving in are commuters, who very often spend the majority of both their working and leisure time in the North West of England. The effect of this change is a breakdown of community cohesion, with the numbers moving in being so large there is no opportunity for integration and instead the community splits. There is also a very tangible change to the

identity of these villages, with Welsh identity and language being continually eroded purely due to development. Even markers such as local accent are disappearing.

To demonstrate this, the labour force survey (2001) looked at the amount of people in Wales who identified with being 'Welsh'. In the North East the results of this survey are very disturbing. In Flintshire, those who identified with being Welsh showed a continual decline, with 2001 figures showing that only just over 40% identified with being Welsh. 2001 census figures for Flintshire also confirm that those born in Wales had decreased to the 50% mark, there can be no doubt that by the next census Welsh people in Flintshire will be a minority.

The figures for Denbighshire show a similar story, with those identifying with being Welsh again under the 50% mark and those born in Wales at a similar level.

The figures for Wrexham were a little more positive, with those identifying with being Welsh sitting at the 70% mark, again this more or less tallies with the amount of people listed as being born in Wales. However, in several wards in the county these levels drop below the 50% mark and unfortunately the figures generally also show a downward spiral. Given the amount of development in this County over recent years, there are serious concerns as regards what these figures will show in 2011.

The above gives a picture spanning the North East counties and the impact of large scale development across the area. We feel it is fair to conclude that before too long, Welsh people will be a minority in North East Wales, as a direct result of Welsh planning policy. These changes have occurred over a relatively short period of time, natural migration is of course part of organic demographic change, however, what we have experienced in the North East is anything but natural. It has in fact been part of a planned process, seated in a governmental desire for further economic growth from both sides of the border.

Of course, along with the negative impacts on Welsh identity come the negative impacts on the environment. We have seen huge traffic increases across the North East, with development promoting unsustainable commuting patterns and

subsequently increases in carbon emissions. There is more pressure on service provision such as doctors, dentists and hospital waiting lists. There is also more pressure on fundamental provision such as water, with the environment agency warning areas like Wrexham that the supply cannot cope with the continuing rate of growth. With such an increase in population comes an increased demand for landfill space etc etc.

All these impacts combine to have a direct impact on our quality of life. These impacts have not been researched or studied, yet our local authorities and the Assembly Government are committed to furthering this process to yet more devastating levels. We view this attitude as completely irresponsible, especially because the small amount of evidence that is available clearly states that these will be the effects of strategies such as the West Cheshire Plan.

5.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Both the Wales Spatial Plan and the West Cheshire sub-regional strategy place further economic development as a key priority for North East Wales. This development will be focused on the strategic centres identified in the plan and also via mixed use housing and economic development targeted at the regeneration areas. The implications of such development on Welsh culture, language and identity have already been discussed previously and are outlined in detail in the Sustainability Appraisal which accompanies the plan.

However, after enquiries from the People's Council thus far, no economic benefits to the people of North Wales have been identified. In fact, our view is that this plan further stifles prospects and opportunity for real sustainable economic development for Welsh people

5.3 TRANSPORT

The One Wales Agreement clearly states that transport links between North and South Wales will be strengthened. The West Cheshire sub-regional strategy and Wales Spatial Plan outline a completely contradictory aim, with transport

improvements planned between the North West of England and North East Wales.

One of the main examples of such an improvement repeatedly referenced is the electrification on the Wrexham to Bidston railway line. The aim of this project is apparently to improve access to jobs in Deeside. It is the view of the People's Council that as Deeside is in Wales, if any improvements are needed, they are needed between Wrexham and Deeside, there is no explanation offered either in the West Cheshire Plan or by the MDA as to why the electrification of the line should go to Bidston. However, The following memorandum submitted by Wirral Council does shed some light on the subject:

“ The developments at Northern Gateway in Deeside and other employment projects across North Wales provide opportunities for the residents of Wirral to access employment opportunities but travel from the North Eastern conurbations is difficult and provides a significant barrier to individuals looking to return to the labour market. Several solutions have been put in place but with journey times from Birkenhead (Wirral) to Deeside Industrial Estate (Flintshire) that are in excess of 60 minutes each way, access to employment opportunities in NE Wales has been extremely difficult and take up of the jobs has been low”

“ Wirral has been working with partners in Flintshire and Wrexham as well as with Network Rail and Merseytravel with regards to developing a feasibility study to electrify the Wrexham to Bidston (Borderlands) rail line. The delivery of this scheme is seen as a high priority for the Council and would be particularly beneficial in improving linkages between Deeside Development Zone with areas of the Wirral with relatively high levels of unemployment.”

5.4 BRANDING/PLACE MARKETING

The sub regional strategy consistently states that one of its main aims is to create a clear identity for the sub region. The aim is to forge and enhance closer cultural cross border links between North East Wales and the North West of England to create this distinct identity. The Mersey Dee Alliance is responsibly for implementing these aims, it outlines the following in its business plan:

“ To jointly agree and outline the sub-region’s unique selling points to ensure its attractiveness as a place to invest, work, live and play”

“Review current and potential opportunities for joint marketing of the regional offer to a range of audiences including tourists and inward investors, seeking to improve links and synergies between bordering initiatives”

The links that they are attempting to create are artificial but there is a clear agenda behind this thinking. In order to market places like Wrexham as a retail centre and as a ‘Cheshire location’ for potential new residents and those who want to set up business, the sub regional strategy and the Mersey Dee Alliance have identified a need to change perceptions of North East Wales. This change of perception essentially revolves around reinventing the image of strategic sites identified in the plan (Wrexham being one and the example we will discuss here).

In November 2008, Wrexham Councillors were presented with a branding project, commissioned by their economic development department and undertaken by a consultancy firm called 'Thinking Place'.

The aim of the branding exercise was to import businesses and people into Wrexham from the North West of England, rather than to create business opportunities for local people or to even address local needs. The tag lines to front the strategy were ‘no borders’ and ‘no compromise’. The strategy proposed changing the identity of Wrexham in order to make it more acceptable for investment by a middle class business culture.

To use an example from the presentation itself, it firstly sets out the justification for its commissioning:

“Research was commissioned to understand current perceptions of Wrexham, with a view towards formulating a brand identity for Wrexham that will drive economic development of the area.”

The presentation ‘personified’ Wrexham with the following description:

Male

Middle aged

Dressed for comfort rather than for style

Working class

Friendly and gregarious

Laid back

For entertainment, goes to the pub or does outdoor activities

But lacks refinement, sophistication, and dynamism
Not interested in cultural pursuits
A little stuck in his ways

To use some more quotes from the presentation itself, the aim of the new branding exercise is described as follows:

To ‘Improve the image, reputation and experience of Wrexham’. It identified ‘a need to raise aspirations’, ‘raise expectations’ and to ‘raise quality and standards’.

In the presentation Thinking Place state that “Wrexham could be either English or Welsh, it is sometimes Welsh, sometimes English“. As stated earlier, one of the key tag lines for the strategy was ‘no borders’. Thinking Place go on to explain the reasoning for their choice “No borders - about our nationality, our geography, our reach’.

Two local councillors present at the meeting made their views on Wrexham's new vision very clear at the time:

“ We have much to be proud of in Wrexham but this presentation was completely negative, I’m extremely concerned about it. This ‘vision’ actually divorces the people from the place and cannot be seen as the way forward. At some points in the presentation I could not believe what I was hearing. They need a major shift in attitude to turn this vision into something positive for Wrexham. As a local person I was quite offended by the whole thing. If we’re going to have a vision for Wrexham it needs to be based on local aspirations. After being presented with this strategy, I have to wonder where we as the local people of Wrexham fit into the equation”

Councillor Keith Gregory, October 2008

“ Many councillors who attended the presentation called ‘Wrexham the Place’ were extremely offended by the conclusions of this consultancy firm. They stated that Wrexham could be either English or Welsh and that there was no ‘consistency’ with the name of the place, I assume that to be because many of us choose to spell it the Welsh way. They also claimed that Wrexham had no identity, culture or character and were extremely negative about the town and its people. In my view, the message from the strategy was that what we are is not good enough. When we voiced our concerns, one officer even demanded to know what ‘all this welsh stuff’ was about. The whole thing was a complete disgrace, even more so when you consider the amount of public money spent on it.”

Councillor Carrie Harper, October 2008

Point 5.4 is an example of how the West Cheshire Plan is being implemented on local level and clearly shows the discriminatory way of thinking behind the entire plan. Although subsequently scrapped due to objections by local Councillors, the 'branding' exercise in Wrexham cost £26,000 of public money.

5.5 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Examples:

Article 2

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

Article 6

Every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality

Article 8

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:

(a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;

(b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;

(c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;

(d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;

(e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

Article 26

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned

Article 40

Indigenous peoples have the right to access to and prompt decision through just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with States or other parties, as well as to effective remedies for all infringements of their individual and collective rights. Such a decision shall give due consideration to the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned and international human rights

5.6 It is an accepted part of Human Rights legislation that individuals have a right to their national identity, language and culture. The Convention on the Rights of the Child also includes express protections of the rights of indigenous children to their own cultures, religions and languages.

It is the view of The Peoples Council of North Wales that these basic Human Rights are clearly being breached through the adoption of the West Cheshire sub-regional strategy and the use of population projections by the Welsh

Assembly Government and local authorities in North East Wales. It is also our view that strategies such as the West Cheshire Plan directly undermine our Welsh Assembly Government, in terms of setting a precedent as regards 'fuzzy boundaries' in relation to jurisdiction over Welsh planning policy.

6 SUMMARY

We the Peoples Council of North Wales are following the democratic due process. Members of our committee have followed these processes in the recent past with campaigns associated with the sub-regional strategy. The experience has left a deep rooted and high level of dis trust of the democratic process, within local and national government. In going through this process via the petitions committee, in good faith, we appeal to our Assembly to address the concerns of the people of North Wales. In essence, we appeal to the Assembly to re focus its attention onto the needs and aspirations of our Nation.

REFEERENCES:

West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-regional strategy:

<http://wales.gov.uk/dpsp/wspatialplan/documents/northeastwales/newstrategy/newstrategye.pdf;jsessionid=M9wcLTvZpTCG8Ttxt5YKYdHjy9nvTGCppWyxvJTzK2BQCsGgQdyty!81960802?lang=en>

West Cheshire/North East Wales Sustainability Appraisal:

<http://www.adjudicationpanelwales.org.uk/consultation/dpsp/spatialplan/appendix7.pdf;jsessionid=7WwwK7SQsWNSXfn9R2CjcvmpJGPZNYhs2LcrnV1p8zpz6jrb93W5!2085885828?cr=7&lang=en&ts=3>

Mersey Belt Study:

<http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/MERSEY%20BELT%20STUDY%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>

North East Wales Housing Market Assessment:

http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/housing/documents/new_hma.pdf

The Liverpool City Region Housing strategy:

<http://www.merseyside.org.uk/dbimsgs/LCRHS%202nd%20Draft%200702.pdf>

Memorandum submitted by Wirral Council:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmwelaf/memo/ucprovision/ucm6002.htm>

Apportionment of North Wales Regional Population, household and Dwellings projections:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmwelaf/memo/ucprovision/ucm6002.htm>

The MDA Business Plan:

http://www.merseydealliance.org.uk/docs/MDA_business_plan_NEW_V2_16_Dec_08.pdf

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html>

Convention on the Rights of a Child:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>

Supporting document for petition:

“We ask the National Assembly for Wales to apply pressure on the Welsh Assembly Government to include leaving home information and education in the national curriculum”

Context

This petition has been developed by young people currently taking part in Shelter Cymru volunteering projects (Foot in the Door and Peer Learning), the Power of the Voice movement in Cardiff (The Gathering) and with support from Barnardo's BAYS project, Llamau and Cardiff Youth Services. Shelter Cymru's Education Service is coordinating this campaign.

We all believe learning about the importance of housing and the impact of homelessness should be an integral part of every young person's education and personal development.

Homelessness is included, albeit very briefly, in the Key Stage 4 PSE framework (introduced in 2008). We do not believe that this goes far enough in ensuring that young people learn about the implications of living independently and this is why we feel a bolder move is necessary, by calling for leaving home education to be included as a curriculum topic in its own right.

Leaving Home education and information – what does it involve?

This type of education should not be regarded as concentrating solely on homelessness and the more negative aspects associated with leaving home. All areas of leaving home and preparing to leave are considered. This includes financial capabilities, independent living skills in their entirety, where and how to access accommodation as well as managing tenancies and utilities. An awareness of how family mediation works with young people to build bridges with families is also a key component of leaving home education. Heightened community awareness and an element of good citizenship is also included as it is useful in helping young people integrate into communities to sustain tenancies. Leaving home education also involves looking at nutrition and healthy meal planning as well as more general topics such as self esteem and confidence building.

Current approaches and resources

This type of preventative work is currently being carried out in secondary schools across different areas in Wales. Local projects, run by third sector organisations or in collaboration with Local Authority departments, and generic teaching resources are delivered and promoted in schools. The Welsh Assembly Government funded Housemate teaching materials (www.housemate.org.uk) were distributed to PSE Coordinators in all secondary schools in Wales between September 2008 – October 2009. An evaluation of where and how the pack, DVD and website are being used is due in 2010.

Shelter Cymru's Education Service also coordinates and offers support to local partners wishing to develop localised or targeted projects, which link into the Housemate materials.

Shelter Cymru and the various local projects have built up an expertise in the delivery of leaving home education and would be very well-placed to offer training to teachers to ensure sustainability and to maintain consistency and quality of information disseminated to young people.

Young people's views

Young homeless people have been key in developing this petition and feel very strongly that they would have benefitted from more structured information and education on leaving home. They have also considered how leaving home education should be delivered in schools if it were included on the national curriculum. They have expressed views on when and how the information should be delivered, including the need for providing local information and making sure the right level of information is passed on.

Strategic links

We believe that information and education on leaving home has many strategic links, including:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 13, 17 and 29 in particular)
- Local Authority Children and Young People's Plans
- 10 year Homelessness Plan and Supporting People Plan

Further information

We will present the petition at a conference that highlights the importance of leaving home education and information and provides current examples of good practice.

'Leaving Home: what everyone needs to know' takes place at the Urdd City Sleepover on December 3rd.