

**P-06-1261 Invest to ensure all schools have high quality, effective internet infrastructure and connectivity, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 05.04.22**

Dear Committee Members,

Answers, to help inform your decision making:

**What are your thoughts on the attached document?**

To the lay person, the letter seems to address the issues, until you start to drill down to the facts!

Yes, Welsh Government have invested millions in Superfast Broadband (24 Mbps), which is barely sufficient for a single household (with multiple devices) in the 21st Century, not alone an entire school. Not something I would be boasting about when it comes to the education of our children (in schools) here in Wales, where pupils work with multiple devices within a learning environment who share the same bandwidth, staff and pupils alike.

**Does it adequately address the issues that you raised?**

No, while Welsh Government empower schools and local authorities to embrace better connectivity and future proof their infrastructure, only 177 out of 1500 schools have actually seen the benefit of a Gigabit connection. What is the distribution of these schools (this would be revealing in itself) to see who have taken up this connection? Where is the equality for ALL pupils within Wales's education system?

*"Latest intelligence indicates, based on current usage profiles, that very few primary schools require a 1Gbps service"*

Is this intelligence based on fact? Where is the evidence to back this statement up, have individual schools been surveyed?

*"A move away from a demand led informed model of provision would need to carefully consider the associated costs and benefits."* I would like to see equality when it comes to broadband connectivity, until this approach is taken, schools, pupils and teachers will not know what could or is possible in the new digital age. Yes, this will involve a financial cost!

**Do you have further questions in response?**

Does Wales want to be an educational leader in a digital world? Where pupils and staff can benefit and enjoy the latest IT without the barriers associated with poor broadband. However you portray Super Fast Cymru it is still limited to 24Mbps for the entire school.

**Is there anything additional that you would like the Committee to know at this stage, either in response to this document or as an update to the Committee?**

While Welsh Government have worked with local authorities and schools to develop Educational Digital Standards (I note the word SHOULD future-proof their digital environment), so a nice get out clause for Welsh Government.

Does the committee know that here in Ceredigion the local authority employs 1 Digital Development Officer (working across education, business and residential) for the entire county! I can't comment on all 22 local authorities and their approaches to broadband. But I feel unless Welsh Government improve their approach to digital inclusivity in education, pupils will be failed, as local authorities either don't understand the importance of decent broadband or just don't have the time or funds to support schools in any meaningful way.

#### **Update 05/04/2022**

Parent Evening at my son's school:

Had a quick discussion with the Head Teacher of Ysgol Cymraeg Aberystwyth (Primary school 300-400 pupils), told him of my sons petition for 1 Gigabit Broadband for all schools in Wales (my 9-year-old son came up with the idea, after complaining of poor broadband in school), was to be discussed by the petitions committee. To be fair, I think Head Teachers have more important things to worry about (as this, in their minds falls under the local authority), as he didn't really pick up on what I was saying.

While a teacher who over heard the discussion, plus my son's teacher both said, it's difficult to teach some lessons with continuing buffering problems (or as I like to call it, the wheel of death), and that a Gigabit connection work make a big difference in the classroom.

How many times is this situation replicated in schools across Wales? My intelligence would suggest this problem is more common than not.

If you have any further questions, please let me know.