

Lonlas Boys and Girls Club Response from Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales

Re- Protection of Existing Community Facilities



Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales
Clybiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru

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1 - Introduction

This document is a response in regards to the SC2 policy (Protection of Existing Community Facilities). As an Organisation we believe that the proposals which would result in the loss of a community facility are necessary as the existing use is no longer viable and has not been viable for the past 20 years since the building ceased to be used.

2 - About Lonlas Boys and Girls club

Lonlas Boys and Girls Club was an active youth club and recreational sport facility for young people until its closure around 20 years ago. The club was instrumental in nurturing young football talent with its most influential player being John Hartson who went on to play for Wales as well as Huw Jenkins who was the former owner of Swansea City FC.

The club provided an opportunity for young people to meet in a safe place, chat with volunteer youth workers and play a variety of sports. This included pool, snooker, table tennis, darts and a variety of sports in the sports hall which included football.

The club had a very successful football team that trained in the small sports hall and played matches on the local council run pitches at Tenant Park in Skewen.

The club was run by local volunteers who believed in providing the best for young people. These supported the club in the evenings and coached the football teams on the weekend.



3 - Closure and current condition

The club closed almost 20 years ago because of a variety of reasons. The building was in a bad state of repair and needed investment whilst many of the volunteers who had spent many years supporting the club were ready to retire and there were no new volunteers to support them. Also at this time, the club was not well used by young people with numbers attending being very small.

At this time the club was only running a small number of football teams at older age groups and the club building was too small for their needs.

Once these teams reached the age of 16 the club no longer had any football teams and this meant the club which had been successful for over 50 years ceased to exist.

Since the closure the club, the building has been left to decay even further and needs to be knocked down. This was indicated in a survey that was conducted around 3 years ago which showed that the building was in a poor state of repair with structural issues and asbestos.

4 - Meetings with Neath Port Talbot Youth Service

As a youth work organisation, we are disappointed to see one of our clubs cease to exist. We want to have an organisation that provides opportunities in all areas of Wales. As such we have met with the Neath Port Talbot youth service to discuss the youth work offer throughout the NPT area and in the area of Lonlas. These meetings are ongoing, but we will be working on a project with the youth service to provide activities and opportunities for young people at risk of disengagement and causing anti-social behaviour. This work will be based in Neath which is less than 3 miles away.



5 - Development of football facilities since closure

Lonlas Boys and Girls Club was not fit for purpose when it closed some 20 years ago, however, since this date football facilities have improved significantly. The introduction of 3G all-weather pitches within the area has significantly changed how football clubs train and play their matches. Old facilities such as the concrete floor sports hall of Lonlas Boys and Girls Club are not used by football teams due to the new 3G facilities being much safer and more readily available.

Within the area there are five 3G pitches for teams to use, these include:

- **Llandarcy Indoor and Outdoor 3G (1.5 miles)**
- **Neath Sports Centre (1.9 miles)**
- **Cefn Saeson (4.3 miles)**
- **Ysgol Bae Baglan (5 miles away)**
- **Ysgol Bro Dir (5 miles away)**

These facilities are excellent and are supporting grassroots and academy teams within the area.

6 - Conclusion

Sadly, to provide a Youth Work facility in Lonlas would require consultation with the community, a business plan and a significant investment of over £1.5m. Sadly this is not forthcoming and has not been forthcoming over the past few years. However, as an organisation our current work in the areas of Neath in partnership with the council will help young people take part in worthwhile activities.

Unfortunately, the building is no longer viable and has not been viable for the past 20 years since the building ceased to be used. The only option the organisation has is to move forward with this project and use any funds raised from the asset to support local clubs and additional youth work provision within the Neath Port Talbot area.





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