

LGF (S20) 23

Bil Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru)

Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan: Mick O'Reilly, Golygydd Rhanbarthol Gorllewin Cymru, Cambrian News a Tenby Observer

Response from: Mick O'Reilly, West Wales Regional Editor, Cambrian News and Tenby Observer

Cambrian News Ltd

TINDLE HOUSE

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9 January, 2024

The Cambrian News and the Tenby Observer report in detail on a geographical area that covers one-quarter of Wales – an area rural in nature and diverse in economy – but united through in the strong sense of community . For the people who live in the hamlets, villages and towns of mid and west Wales, knowing what's happening, when, and why is vital. And our print editions reach those sparse and diverse communities each week. The Cambrian News and Tenby Observer remain the papers of record.

While our online presence is growing from strength to strength, our print editions are still vibrant and vital buys each week. Unless the content is tangible, in print, in readers' hands, it might be 'fake'. If it's in print and in "the Cambrian", it is true. That's one reason why we are proud the Cambrian News has been named recently as the Best Weekly Newspaper in Wales.

We report what happens in our communities. And why. And Public Notices remain a vital source of that information for all our readers. The details are studied in minutia – parsed by each sentence, either in English or Welsh – and are discussed and mentioned in shops, meetings, halls and churches – where ever those taxpayers and residents, voters and volunteers meet.

Those public notices, where officials have to explain the whens and whys of policies, of decisions taken and how they will change the lives of everyone across the region, how much they pay, how their incomes are affected, are a vital and invaluable means of communicating with all.

While our digital presence is strong, our print editions reach a demographic – the elderly, the economically vulnerable, the isolated – that digital products do not.

That's why I am deeply concerned that Clause 20 of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill which would remove the statutory requirement for councils to publish council tax changes in printed local newspapers such as the Cambrian News and Tenby Observer. Failure to continue with those printed notices would essentially disenfranchise and exclude a key section the population of rural Wales.

As a paper that is a vital vehicle for MS's to communicate with their constituents, is that a path the Welsh Government would wish to follow?

I urge you in the strongest terms possible not to proceed with Clause 20, and acknowledge the importance of vibrant and strong newspaper presence across an area of Wales that requires it most.

Mick O'Reilly
West Wales Regional Editor
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