

COMMUNITY LEISURE AND CULTURE: ARTS AND SPORTS PROVISION

DUAL USE AND JOINT PROVISION

GWENT: 1950s – 1970s

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1. Gwent's dual-use story is of a progression from the mid 1950s. The first step was taken when the local education authority incorporated into the building of a new secondary school in Caldicot a youth/adult annexe which is modest in size by later standards but which served as the base for community use and involvement. Caldicot's success was such that it became local education authority policy to build a similar annexe at each new secondary school, and to develop, from the annexe and the school, a community college. It was not uncommon for upwards of 1500 people to join in the classes, clubs, societies and teams at a given community college.

2. The next step, co-operation with local councils, brought joint provision. This was a giant step because what could be provided was vastly greater in physical size and general scope than what existed on any given site before joint provision. The result of this stride forward may be seen in the 18 jointly-provided leisure centres on school sites, or in Ebbw Vale very near the school site, throughout most of Gwent.

3. The 1950s policy of school-based community use was not confined to secondary schools, although a secondary school has obvious advantages over a primary school - a bigger site and fields, chairs and tables more of adult size, more specialist sports areas. In one rapidly-developing part of Cwmbran, where there was in the 1950s a new local primary school but no new local secondary school, a very successful community college was set up at Pontnewydd Primary School. Most of what I write about premises refers to secondary schools, but the possibility of using and adapting primary schools ought not to be overlooked. After all, there are many more primary than secondary schools.

4. The newest jointly-provided leisure centre is in Risca, some four miles north of Newport. A new comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 - 16 would have been built in Risca in any event. The Newport and

NOTE: 'Gwent' is used throughout my paper, although in some places it would be more accurate to use 'Monmouthshire'. Gwent comprises most of the former County of Monmouthshire, the whole of former County Borough of Newport and part of the former County of Breconshire. Gwent County Council's policy regarding joint provision and dual use is based on the policy of the former Monmouthshire County Council.

Islwyn Borough Councils decided to co-operate with Gwent County Council to provide leisure facilities on the school site. Physically Risca differs from other Gwent jointly-provided leisure centres. In places built before Risca the leisure centre is in a building separate from the main school building, even though the separation is only a matter of a few yards. In Risca the whole thing is under one roof. There are three interconnected blocks: a teaching block, a craft block and a sports and social block. It is in a very real sense impossible to say where the school ends and the leisure centre begins and it could be claimed that the Caldicot original concept of integration is expressed anew on a grander scale. Some of the school's normal curriculum requirements are provided in what I have called the sports and social block. Some of the "leisure" requirements are in what I have called the craft block. Altogether the building, as well as containing the customary school rooms, special and general, big and small, has, indoors, a 25m swimming pool with a learner bay; a gymnasium; a sports hall of 120 ft. x 70 ft.; a drama-hall theatre with tiered seating for 200; a multi-purpose studio which can be used for theatrical productions, concerts and dances; a cafeteria and a licensed bar. Outside there are a floodlit all-weather pitch, 10 tennis courts, 5 netball courts, a soccer pitch, a hockey pitch and 3 rugby pitches.

5. A mile or so down the road from this Risca centre is an example of recent joint-provision on a primary school base, at Cefn Wood Primary School in Rogerstone. Here the emphasis is on sports, for adjacent to the school are football pitches, an extensive floodlit all-weather play area and bowling greens. As a result of the joint-provision-agreement the school hall is somewhat greater in area and height than the usual hall for a primary school, so it can be used for two badminton courts. Within the school building is the community accommodation, which has its own separate entrance in order to allow easy access, during school time, to the changing rooms and to the lounge-day-room and kitchen.

6. Authorities which agree on joint provision have three inter-related basics to decide: what to provide, what and how to share, and finance.

7. Deciding what to provide should start with an examination of every aspect of normal school provision and need and of every aspect of post-school leisure provision and need. Decision based on such examination could produce a result different from some existing joint-provision schemes.

8. Reference to a hypothetical but not untypical case will illustrate this. If a jointly-provided leisure centre costing about £ $\frac{1}{2}$ million has a 25 x 16m pool with a learner bay, the pool may well account for $\frac{1}{3}$ of

the total cost. Its running costs will greatly exceed those of any other part of the building and its users, out of school time, will be largely of school age. Now school workshops built and equipped to normal school specifications are not ideal for adult handicraft classes, still less for individual do-it-yourself enthusiasts, because there is not enough storage space, nor tools, nor maintenance for tools. A smaller pool, costing less, would free money for more craft storage space, tools and tool maintenance. What has to be decided is whether the teenage swimmers are so far ahead in the priorities that they must have the lion's share and the do-it-yourself enthusiasts next to nothing.

9. It may be that the partner authorities' representatives will decide that the swimmers are so far ahead in the priorities that they must have their big pool. If they so decide, well and good. My point is that at the earliest possible stage such questions - and I have posed only one of many - should be asked and that policy and planning should be based on the answers.

10. I appreciate that this comprehensive approach is realisable in its completest form only when joint-provision is agreed on, and in some detail as regards the principles of financing, well before building plans are drawn. I appreciate too that the manner in which central government control over local government capital spending is exercised can powerfully affect commitment and synchronisation. There are fewer advance-planning problems with a school building project that is not phased than with one that is phased. Again, negotiators can proceed much more confidently if notification to them of Non Key money (which includes their capital spending on leisure centres) coincides sufficiently with notification to the local education authority of Key money (which includes its capital spending on schools - but not, oddly enough, its spending on furniture for those schools).

11. The situation which causes maximum inconvenience occurs when joint-provision negotiation involving a new school building is begun too late or is protracted. New school building gets on a building programme only through dire need and school building cannot wait. A leisure centre jointly agreed on by a local education authority and another council will contain at least some element of school accommodation. The fact that it is physical education accommodation makes no difference; it is school accommodation and the time-table will show that it should house, at a given time, a class or classes. So, without it, the school does not merely lack a useful facility; the school actually lacks accommodation for a class or classes. If inter-council negotiations are not concluded

in time for the leisure facilities to be completed by the time the new school opens, the school has problems, which can extend over a whole school year or more. True, in the ultimate, belated joint agreement is better than no joint provision, but it is hard to wait patiently for the ultimate when the immediate clamours.

12. Joint provision is not of course confined to agreements concerning new schools. Successful schemes are possible concerning schools which were in existence when the co-operating authorities' negotiations began. Options are fewer and capital savings less but the schemes themselves can be excellent.

13. As regards separate or in-tandem provision for sport and the arts: any school building is in-tandem - or, more accurately, multi-purpose - for a school building is a place where the curriculum can be taught and studied, and the curriculum embraces sport and the arts equally. In any event, separate or in-tandem is not confined to separate or in-tandem as between sport and the arts, because within sport and within the arts there is in-tandem compromise. A hall in which opera, ballet, dance displays, orchestral and choral concerts are given is very much in-tandem because each, ideally, needs its own type of hall. The question to be answered is: to what extent, when the capital comes wholly, and the running costs largely, from public funds, dare provision be separate and at what point is in-tandem so impracticable as to be unthinkable? Opinion about the point at which in-tandem provision becomes unthinkable varies. Among the answers which I received to my questioning on this point are categorical statements that a sports hall can never make a satisfactory concert hall and an engagingly frank (and probably very modest) testimony from the Borough of Taff Ely Planning Officer, who says: "Wonder upon wonder, the sports hall at Hawthorn (Pontypridd) was found to be acoustically ideal as a broadcasting studio for a symphony orchestra playing before a very large and lively audience."

14. In some discussion about sport and the arts there is hint of an underlying assumption that their respective devotees are separate people. Fortunately, they need not be. This unsurprising thought prompts the comment that in-tandem provision means one visit to one place on one occasion for both the sports and the arts interests of one person, whereas separate sport and arts provision means separate visits on separate occasions. Admittedly, it is possible to over-emphasise catholicity of interest but, even accepting that the arts enthusiast and the sports enthusiast are different types of people, my impression is more of mutual acceptance than of mutual antipathy. In addition, there are plenty of

examples of interest being extended through a visitor to a centre becoming aware of new horizons.

15. New horizons can open up by means of three aspects of leisure centre organisation. The first is the social area, where people of diverse interests can meet if they want to and where those who are so inclined can heed notices and advertisements. The second is the staff, whose rapport with patrons is vital. The third springs from the second, and is a sense of identification. A leisure centre which can foster this, without obtrusive proselytizing and while recognising that everybody has a right to be clubbable or unclubbable, will gain and give a lot. Some formal means of involving users in programme planning and policy making is to be commended and is, indeed, consistent with open government.

16. The second basic is sharing, with its two aspects of sharing between school and community and sharing within community use. It is only fair to local education authorities to record that there is more community use of schools, out of school time and during weekends and school holidays, than some of the critics of education committees imply, even to the point where some local education authorities (Coventry, Walsall, Solihull and Birmingham are examples) make special appointments, to schools or to the authority's education department, specifically to encourage community use of school buildings and grounds.

17. Sharing between school and community, and sharing within community use, ought to be sharing of everything on the site, with a few necessary exclusions like specialist laboratories and offices. Those with chief responsibility for the school and for community provision need to show a measure of indulgence towards each other and a degree of self-discipline which is easier to commend than to practise. A formula worth bearing in mind is "No space unnecessarily unused; no space badly used." But much more than friendly co-operation is needed to make this formula a reality. There must be sufficient money and manpower for the effective supervision, maintenance and cleaning of every space, outdoors and in, which is in use.

18. The 'all-in' philosophy is that which Gwent has adopted. The scope that it gives for comprehensive community coverage can be instanced in a variety of ways. One is by categorising differing modes of attendance. There are the following: pay-at-the-door visitors or season-ticket holders, come for a swim or a chat or both or to take a chance of being invited into a game; others a bit less casual, having had to book to make sure of a squash court or a workshop bench to finish work on a model boat for the children; societies and clubs formed within the leisure centre organisation,

or 'outside' societies and clubs hiring a part of the premises, both types taking in interests as varied as opera, sailmaking, photography and rugby; further education classes, using up the alphabet from art to zither; WEA and University Extra Mural classes, studying in depth social and economic problems; the youth service, way beyond its table-tennis image; spectators, some regular patrons, some not, attending a play or a concert or a recital, arranged perhaps in conjunction with the Arts Council; families, their individual members split among these sorts of interests and modes of attendance. For good measure add the mothers and their toddlers in playgroups and creches. All of these would be found in one centre on one day, and most of them in one centre at the same time on one day.

19. It is surely not too fanciful to find in all this, but provided by the statutory instead of the voluntary, the amalgam once achieved in Miners' Institutes and Workmen's Halls, which mixed Bach and billiards and philosophy and football in a blend that greatly enriched local life.

20. It is important to ensure that one category does not dominate, to the detriment of the others. Any group can dominate, and not necessarily from any more selfish motive than sheer enthusiasm. Teenagers can, especially if they are present as individuals with no formal affiliation such as membership of the leisure centre youth club. Their abounding and noisy joie-de-vivre points to the need for them to have their own space and time. Given these, and firm leadership which they respect, they can add immeasurably and acceptably to the vigour of leisure centre life.

21. Whether one can go beyond this, to the extent of claiming that a leisure centre exerts on social behaviour an influence for good extending beyond its precincts, is hard to establish. In one area of Gwent which is excellently provided with facilities for leisure there was a substantial decrease in reported criminal damage of over £20 value (sometimes referred to as vandalism) in 1975 and in 1976, and it was tempting to come to the conclusion that leisure centres and outside sports and play areas were largely responsible for this welcome decline. But in the same area there was a substantial increase in 1977. In most parts of Gwent 1977 was worse in this respect than 1976, but there were parts of Gwent where 1977 was an improvement on 1976. There are leisure centres both in the improved and in the worsened places. At present there is insufficient data to permit valid judgments.

22. In present arrangements for sharing it is often stressed that good relationships between the Head of the school and the leisure centre Manager are essential. Truly they are, but my personal opinion is that

there would be many advantages in having one person in charge of everything on the site. However good the understanding - and the success of centres in Gwent and elsewhere proclaims that it is often very good - Head and Manager are bound to be subject to strains and stresses. My reason for wanting unified professional control is, however, not merely the negative one of seeing in unified control a means of minimising difficulties. I believe that true school-community integration is more likely to be achieved under unified control, with one Principal holding professional responsibility for everything on the site. There is a pointer in what Gwent has done regarding leisure provision in jointly-provided leisure centres. The Manager, with a senior staff carefully chosen to ensure that no major sector of leisure is neglected, is the professional accountable for all the leisure activities, whether they be the activities of so-called casual users, of clubs and societies, or whether they be officially part of further education.

23. The most crucial of the basics - what to provide, how to share, and finance - is clearly finance. In round figures Gwent capital spending on jointly-provided leisure centres associated with schools totals £4 million. Of this, about £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million would have been spent anyway by Gwent Education Committee on recreational and physical education facilities for the schools concerned; and to this sum the Gwent Education Committee has added another £ $\frac{1}{4}$ million capital for further education (which includes the youth service). Other Gwent County Council sources have put in £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million, making a total of £ $1\frac{3}{4}$ million county council capital. Other bodies - mainly but not solely district councils - have put in £ $2\frac{1}{4}$ million capital. Sometimes a given project involves the county council and one other council, sometimes more than one other council is involved with the county council in one project. There is one project in which one of the original partner authorities was a local council from another county. Moreover, agreements need not be confined to statutory authorities; a voluntary body such as a sports club can be a participant. In addition to there being financial agreement regarding jointly-provided centres, the county council has made capital contributions towards some district council leisure centres and outdoor sports facilities.

24. The Gwent division of running costs recognises that only the county council in its capacity as the local education authority has responsibility for further education (see note below) because the net running costs split between the county council and the other - usually but not invariably district - council(s) do not include the sum attributable to further education. The division is 50-50 after this deduction. The amount to be divided, on this basis, between the county

council and the other bodies is about £1 million net annually. This is not, however, £1 million more than revenue spending would have been had there been no jointly-provided centres, for without these centres there would have been spending on items like transport and admission to swimming pools.

25. The net running costs obviously vary from centre to centre. The costs to be shared, on the basis outlined, in one Gwent district council area which has a population of about 65000 and four secondary-school based jointly-provided centres (at Monmouth, Abergavenny, Chepstow and Caldicot) averages about £65000 net annually per centre. Abergavenny, with net expenditure not far removed from this figure, has over 2500 separate individuals attending - apart from school use - in a typical week.

26. Present evidence suggests that a population of about 20000 is ample to support a jointly-provided secondary-school based leisure centre not greatly dissimilar in accommodation from that which I have described at Risca, whose total capital cost for sharing between the county council and its partners was just over £ $\frac{1}{2}$ million. Cwmbran (population about 45000) has two jointly-provided secondary-school based leisure centres, in addition to the Torfaen Borough's international-standard sports stadium, another council social and recreational centre, public playing fields, and other playing fields owned and extensively used by a variety of sports clubs. Ebbw Vale's population is about 25000, and its big centre is booming. The population of Risca itself is considerably less than this, although people travel some way to attend the Risca centre (plenty of parking space is essential); and already Risca, after early months of climatic and financial freeze, gets 400 - 500 visitors on weekdays and twice that many on Sundays.

27. I said in paragraph 22 that I favour unitary professional control of school and leisure centre on one site. I should also like to see

NOTE: The general duties of local education authorities with respect to further education are set forth in Section 41 of the Education Act, 1944, which states that every local education authority must 'secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities for further education, that is to say:-

- (a) full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age
- (b) leisure-time occupation, in such organised cultural training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements, for any persons over school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose.'

unitary site government in the form of one governing body responsible for the school and leisure centre. Such a body would not have to contain representatives of more authorities than are already represented on school governing bodies and it could include representation of parents, staff, pupils and leisure centre users without being overnumerous. It is true that the status of this single body, as regards education, would as things now stand be different from its status as regards leisure provision. A school must have a governing body with powers set forth in Articles of Government and this governing body is not a sub-committee of the Education Committee, whereas there is no statutory requirement for a governing body for a leisure centre. It should not be beyond the wit of legislators and administrators to devise a system of unified government. I had hoped that the Taylor Committee would respond to a plea which I made that it should attempt this task but it did not. The Taylor Report does no more than refer to various investigations and researches and to say that "further consideration may well need to be given to the functions of community centre governing bodies in the light of the further information which will become available when reports on these projects (various investigations and researches) have been published."

28. Whatever the form of governing body nearest to any particular leisure centre, maximum delegation is essential. It is worth reflecting that a technical college jointly established by two local education authorities was twin-carburetted if its governors had maximum delegation but operated under the handicap imposed on contestants in a three-legged race when delegation was begrudged. The Director of the Lea Valley Regional Park remarked, according to a 'Times' article (4th January, 1978) that, without a strong authority with maximum delegated powers, those who first envisaged the Lea Valley Regional Park would still be discussing where to begin.

29. Each jointly-providing authority's arrangements for relating its leisure centre activities to its overall policy is of course its own concern; but it will not surprise anybody if I say that, as regards the county council, by far the best system of committee control is through a sub-committee of the Education Committee. The co-operating authorities will decide jointly the arrangements necessary for co-ordination of their policies and for review. The maximum permutation of meetings is alarming and a stern resolve to go for the minimum will save busy people's time and still permit sufficient democratic control at key points.

30. Much forward planning that concerns school building will in the years immediately ahead be dominated by the fact that the primary school population in England and Wales is expected to fall by 1.2 million by

1985, and the secondary school population by a similar amount by 1991. In the 1980s, therefore, some of the oldest school buildings could become redundant and feature in joint-provision and dual use agreements. These older buildings may seem more suited for arts than for sports adaptation but some of them have large hard-surfaced surrounds which floodlighting outdoors and changing rooms indoors could transform into a valuable asset. The splendour of many post-war school buildings may be lacking but these unsplendid buildings have advantages significantly absent from newer buildings. They are situated in the centres of towns rather than on the outskirts. They have height inside. Some of the best trampoliners of recent years, who came from Cefn Forest and competed very successfully nationally and internationally, trained and practised in a very old-fashioned school building situated on the hills between the Rhyimey and Sirhowy valleys.

31. Despite falling school rolls, some new schools are bound to be needed. It is to be hoped that there will be an attempt at a national plan, for new and for old schools. We shy away from over-much central direction because of our deep distrust of concentrated power. Achievements resulting from local initiative do indeed suggest that there has been more need of centrally-directed tidying-up than of centrally-inspired stimulation and DES Circulars 49/64 and 2/70 are, perhaps as a result, hardly dynamic. But a sentence in the 1977 Study of School Building by an Interdepartmental Group is worth quoting. It is this: 'There are perhaps 200 community schools in England and Wales - schools whose facilities are adapted and available specifically for public use; these represent the most fully developed expression of joint provision.' 3000 secondary schools and 10500 primary schools have been built since 1945. These bare figures suggest the need for a plan.

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