

An Open Letter

1st line of address provided: (Redacted)

Postcode: (Redacted)

13 June 2022

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Welsh Government

5th Floor

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Sent by email: Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales

Dear Education Minister

21st Century Schools programme & funding tourism & sport provision in Cardiff Bay

I am writing in a personal capacity but as I believe that the following is a matter of public interest I am doing so as an open letter, with only the identifying parts of my home address redacted. I understand, therefore, that any future FoI or similar requests may mean that my name is not redacted and I accept that this may happen as a consequence of putting it in the public domain myself.

I have read the documents released by you under the provision of FoI requests on the following weblink <https://gov.wales/atisn15767> and it appears to my reading of the information set out is that Cardiff Council shall be requesting funding support from the 21st Century Schools programme and that a significant portion of this funding will replace capital money that has been intentionally removed from the education budget in order to fund non-educational provision elsewhere in Cardiff.

In particular (but not exclusively) I have noted “ ... which has the following comment from a Cardiff spokesperson: “The proposed new velodrome can only be delivered if the Maindy track closes, as it absolutely relies on a funding contribution from the education capital programme. If the school does not progress, the Maindy track will stay open, and the ISV velodrome proposal will not progress.” [page 18 of redacted information in document identified simply as “Doc 1” on the weblink] A simple reading of this to a lay person such as myself is that, in effect, essentially the 21st Century Schools programme is actually helping fund the capital spend for the International Sports Village in Cardiff Bay, intended to attract visitors and promote tourism through the creation of sports facilities on one site.

Again, my simple reading is that if this money was not removed from Cardiff Council’s education budget in the first place then it would not require replacement of this sum by the 21st Century Schools programme. I accept that it is entirely possible that a simple reading by an ordinary member of the public may not be the case and that perhaps it is not possible for an everyday individual such as myself to be able to understand the detailed terms and criteria of the 21st Century Schools programme, and what may well be complex arrangements of funding that exist within it. I should be grateful, therefore, if you would confirm whether the relevant terms etc within the programme allow Local Education Authorities which deliberately deplete the capital spend within their education budgets for use on other Council activities to recoup an amount equivalent to this depletion through the 21st Century Schools programme?

However, if this is the way that the 21st Century Schools programme has been devised I should be grateful if you would set out the following in relation to allocation of monies under the programme:

- Total number of similar schemes to replace intentional depletion of capital education budget for spend on other purposes and which have received or been earmarked for funds;
- Total value of these schemes above;
- Total number of similar schemes which have been submitted and are awaiting a decision;
- Total value of these schemes awaiting decision;
- Total value of all of the above (approved or awaiting a decision) broken down by Council/Local Authority.

If, though, programme funds are not intended to replace Local Authority decisions to divert their own funds to non-education provision, then please would you set out how this will be applied in relation to Cardiff Council, the application for capital funds for Cathays High School and the construction cost of a new tourist attraction in Cardiff Bay, or whether Cardiff Council is being treated as an exception to the rules that apply to all the other local authorities in Wales.

I am sure you will understand the wider public interest should it turn out that Cardiff is somehow being treated in a privileged manner not available to other Councils.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully: (Redacted)