

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Head of Training and Development
Subject	Hwb Awen Training Centre Outline Business Case



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Outline Business Case (OBC) for new Training Centre (Hwb Awen) at St Asaph Business Park and seek North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) approval to progress to the next stage of development, which will focus on securing funding and determining affordability.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Outline Business Case for Hwb Awen sets out a clear and compelling case for investment in a modern, inclusive, and sustainable training facility. Current arrangements rely on multiple ageing sites that are increasingly inefficient, costly to maintain, and unable to meet contemporary standards for safety, accessibility, and environmental performance.
- 3 The OBC identifies a purpose-built centre at St Asaph Business Park as the preferred option, offering significant operational and social benefits, including improved training realism, enhanced staff welfare, and alignment with Welsh Government priorities on decarbonisation and well-being.
- 4 Approval of the OBC is a critical milestone, enabling the project to move forward to the Full Business Case stage, where detailed design work will be undertaken, funding will be secured, and affordability will be confirmed.

RECOMMENDATION

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) Note the content of the Outline Business Case;
 - ii) Approve progression to Full Business Case development; and
 - iii) Endorse continued engagement with Welsh Government to secure capital funding.

BACKGROUND

- 6 The Training Centre project was initiated in 2022 following concerns about the suitability and sustainability of existing facilities. Training currently takes place across several dispersed sites, many of which are nearing the end of their operational life and do not meet modern standards for equality, safety, or environmental performance. These limitations affect the quality of training and create inefficiencies in service delivery.
- 7 In October 2024, the Authority approved the Strategic Outline Case, which confirmed the need for investment and identified St Asaph Business Park as the preferred location. Since then, significant progress has been made in refining the scope, engaging stakeholders, and developing the OBC in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance and Welsh Government requirements. This ensures that the project is underpinned by robust analysis and a clear governance framework.

INFORMATION

- 8 The OBC is a vital component of the project lifecycle because it provides the evidence base for decision-making and demonstrates compliance with best practice standards. It follows the five-case model recommended by HM Treasury, covering the strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and management dimensions of the proposal. This structured approach ensures that the preferred option is not only operationally necessary but also economically viable, commercially deliverable, and aligned with the Service's long-term objectives.
- 9 The OBC explains why investment is essential. Without a new facility, the Service faces escalating maintenance costs, increasing risk of non-compliance, and an inability to meet future training demands. It also sets out how the new centre will deliver significant benefits, including improved training realism, enhanced staff welfare, and reduced carbon emissions.
- 10 By approving the OBC, Members will enable the project to progress to the Full Business Case stage, where detailed design, and funding arrangements will be confirmed. This next phase is crucial for securing Welsh Government support and confirming affordability, ensuring that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) can deliver a facility that meets operational needs and provides long-term value for money.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The new facility directly contributes to workforce safety, community well-being, and organisational sustainability. Design ambitions align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, focusing on resilience, inclusion, and training excellence.
Budget	No direct financial implications beyond existing Authority approved project budget commitment, as the project remains unfunded beyond the initial development phase.
Legal	Procurement processes are compliant with public sector regulations. Planning and ecological constraints (including protected species) are being managed with specialist advice. Public consultation timelines will adhere to statutory requirements.
Staffing	Staff have been actively involved through workshops and consultation sessions, shaping design principles such as realistic training environments and improved welfare spaces. This engagement ensures the facility meets operational needs and builds confidence in the project.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The facility is designed to be inclusive, accessible, and bilingual. Consultation processes reflect these values.
Risks	Key risks include reliance on external funding, staff turnover, and ecological constraints. These are being mitigated through early engagement with Welsh Government, strengthened governance, and specialist environmental advice.