

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	20 April 2026
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	
Subject	Hwb Awen Training Centre Project Update



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with an update on progress with the Hwb Awen Training Centre Project, including governance activity, site status, communications and engagement planning, and emerging external considerations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Training Centre Project, Hwb Awen, continues to progress through its agreed governance arrangements, with the Project Board most recently meeting on 1 April 2026. Following completion of the site clearance works, the site has now been returned to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) control and ecological mitigation activity has recommenced, including the ongoing management of Great Crested Newts.
- 3 The project is progressing towards RIBA Stage 2, which will provide further clarity in relation to design development, costs and programme and will inform the next phase of work. Alongside this, work continues to explore external funding and investment options.

RECOMMENDATION

- 4 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the progress being made with the Hwb Awen Training Centre Project.**

BACKGROUND

- 5 Members will be aware that the Service is progressing proposals for a new Training Centre to address the limitations and risks associated with the current training estate, which no longer meets the needs of a modern fire and rescue service. The project is overseen through a dedicated Training Centre Project Board, supported by established internal governance arrangements.

INFORMATION

6 Project Governance and Progress

The Training Centre Project Board (the Board) met on 1 April 2026 and received updates on project progress, milestones, issues and risks. As part of this update, the Board considered compensation events arising from increases in project scope that had previously been agreed by the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). These compensation events have been reviewed through the project's governance arrangements and approved by the Board, ensuring that the implications of agreed scope changes are fully considered and remain within project tolerances.

The project continues to be managed in line with the RIBA framework, and work is currently progressing towards RIBA Stage 2. This stage will provide increased clarity in relation to design development, costs and programme and will inform the next phase of work and future reporting to Members in line with agreed governance arrangements.

7 Site Status and Ecology

Following completion of the site clearance works, the site has now been formally returned to Service control. Ecological mitigation works recommenced this week and include the continued management of Great Crested Newts in accordance with statutory requirements and the agreed ecological management plan. These works are being coordinated alongside the wider project programme to minimise risk and avoid unnecessary delay.

8 Training Need and Organisational Risk

The Board continues to recognise that the Service's existing training facilities present operational and safeguarding risks and do not meet the needs of a modern fire and rescue service. The development of a new Training Centre remains central to addressing these risks and to supporting safe, effective training and future operational capability.

9 Funding Activity

A dedicated Funding Sub-Group continues to explore external funding and investment opportunities, including engagement with Welsh Government and other stakeholders. Members should note that there is still uncertainty around the timing and availability of any possible Welsh Government funding, reflecting the forthcoming election and the potential for changes within key government roles. It is also recognised that, following the election, there may be a period of delay while funding priorities are confirmed and new ministerial and official arrangements are established. This uncertainty is being factored into project planning and risk management, and Members will be kept informed as the position becomes clearer.

10 Communications and Engagement

Communications planning continues alongside the technical and governance workstreams to support clear, consistent and timely engagement. Draft communications and briefing materials have been prepared to support structured engagement with national and local political leaders, ensuring that stakeholders are appropriately informed of the Service's strategic context, emerging issues and future needs. This activity is being coordinated to ensure alignment with project governance, consistency of messaging and compliance with political impartiality and pre-election considerations.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The project supports the Service's well-being objectives by improving training environments, strengthening workforce capability and enhancing long-term organisational resilience, while addressing risks arising from the condition and suitability of existing training provision.
Budget	No additional budget approval is sought through this report. Financial implications will be brought forward for Member consideration as the project develops and funding options become clearer.
Legal	Statutory and regulatory requirements, including environmental and ecological obligations, continue to be met. Legal advice is taken as appropriate in relation to governance, procurement and funding considerations.
Staffing	There are no direct staffing implications arising from this update.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Equalities, human rights and Welsh language considerations continue to be embedded within project planning and communications activity.
Risks	Key risks remain under active management through established project governance arrangements. These include uncertainty around the timing of external funding decisions, particularly in the context of the Welsh Government election cycle, programme dependencies and potential delays arising from external factors such as ecology, and ongoing risks associated with the condition and suitability of existing training facilities.