

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 October 2026
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Area Manager Training and Development
Subject	Hwb Awen Training Centre Project Update



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide members with an update on the progress of the Hwb Awen training centre project and the key activities planned during the next phase of development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Hwb Awen Training Centre project continues to progress in line with the revised programme approved by the Project Board. Design development, technical assurance and procurement preparation remain on track, with the project continuing to operate within approved tolerances for programme, budget, scope, resources and quality.
- 3 During the reporting period, significant progress has been made in developing the design, undertaking technical assurance reviews, progressing planning activity and preparing for the procurement of a main contractor. The public consultation process has also concluded successfully, generating strong levels of support from stakeholders across North Wales.
- 4 Whilst the project continues to make good progress, affordability remains a key consideration. Work is therefore continuing to identify and develop a range of potential funding options and delivery approaches. The Project Board has also commissioned additional analysis of phased delivery options to ensure that Members are able to consider a range of affordable and deliverable options through the Authority's normal governance and budget-setting arrangements.
- 5 The project remains on track, and no decisions are required from the Authority at this stage regarding construction funding or future levy implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6 It is recommended that Members:
- i. **note the progress made on the Hwb Awen Training Centre project,**
 - ii. **note the continued focus on affordability and funding options, and**
 - iii. **note the next steps planned, ahead of future reports to the Authority.**

BACKGROUND

- 7 The Hwb Awen Training Centre project was established to replace aging and increasingly constrained training facilities with a modern purpose-built centre capable of meeting current and future operational, training and organisational requirements.
- 8 The project aims to improve operational competence, firefighter safety, leadership development, multi-agency collaboration and workforce wellbeing, whilst ensuring that the Service is equipped to respond effectively to future risks and challenges.
- 9 The Authority has previously approved progression through the initial development and design stages. The project is moving through detailed design, assurance, planning and procurement preparation activities ahead of future decisions regarding construction and funding.

INFORMATION

- 10 The Project Board met on 29 September 2026 and reviewed progress across all aspects of the project. Members were advised that project delivery remains within agreed tolerances and that the revised programme established earlier in the year continues to provide a realistic and achievable route forward.
- 11 Design development has continued throughout the reporting period. The project team remains on course to complete the RIBA Stage 2+ Cost Confidence Report during October. This work is important because it will provide greater certainty around project costs and support future decision-making regarding procurement, affordability and funding.
- 12 Progress has also been made in preparing for procurement. Legal and contractual work relating to the chosen JCT Design and Build approach is continuing and preparations are being made to commence the procurement process once the next stage of assurance and approvals has been completed.

- 13 Planning activity remains on track. The pre-planning assessment has been submitted, and discussions continue with the planning team regarding the most effective route to securing planning permission. Whilst there has been some delay in receiving pre-planning feedback, this is not expected to have a material impact on the overall programme. Technical reviews, including fire engineering assessments, have also been completed and have identified only minor amendments to the developing design.
- 14 The Project Board received updates on independent assurance activity. Gateway reviews are currently underway and will provide further assurance regarding project governance, risk management and delivery arrangements. The findings will be considered by the Project Board as part of the continuing assurance process.
- 15 A significant focus of the September Board discussion was affordability. Members acknowledged that whilst the project continues to progress well and remains within agreed financial parameters, securing an affordable funding solution for construction remains a critical consideration.
- 16 Work is therefore continuing to develop a range of potential funding options. These include consideration of external funding opportunities, borrowing, reserves, capital receipts and potential partnership arrangements. Alongside this work, the Board requested the development of additional phased delivery options and a minimum operational provision to ensure that Members are presented with a clear understanding of the potential choices available should external funding opportunities not materialise as anticipated.
- 17 Members should note that this contingency planning does not represent a change in the project's preferred outcome. The Board remains committed to delivering a fit-for-purpose training centre capable of meeting the long-term needs of the Service. However, the additional work demonstrates a prudent approach to affordability and will ensure that future decisions are informed by a thorough understanding of costs, risks and delivery options.
- 18 The Project Board also considered the results of the public consultation. A total of 222 responses were received from across North Wales, demonstrating strong support for enhanced firefighter training facilities, community benefits, environmental improvements and modern accessible facilities. Feedback also highlighted concerns regarding affordability, travel implications and environmental impacts, which will continue to be addressed through planning, engagement and business case development.

- 19 Engagement activities have continued with local communities, elected representatives and potential partners. The project team has also continued to promote the operational benefits of the facility, particularly in relation to firefighter safety, operational preparedness, incident command development, climate resilience and emerging risks such as wildfires.
- 20 The next phase of activity will focus on completion of the RIBA Stage 2+ Cost Confidence Report, completion of assurance reviews, development of the funding options for consideration through the budget-setting process and progression of planning activity.

IMPLICATIONS

- 21 The project represents a significant strategic investment in the future capability of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Progress made during the reporting period continues to improve confidence in programme delivery whilst ensuring that future decisions are informed by robust evidence and appropriate scrutiny.

Well-being Objectives	The project supports the Authority's Well-being Objectives through investment in workforce development, firefighter safety, community resilience and sustainable public infrastructure. The development also aligns with the long-term and preventative principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	The project remains within its approved development budget and expenditure continues to be managed through established governance arrangements. The principal financial consideration for the project remains the identification of an affordable funding solution for the construction phase. Work is ongoing to explore all viable funding opportunities and delivery options. Members should be assured that no decisions have been made regarding future funding arrangements and no additional financial approvals are being sought through this report. Any future proposals relating to project funding will be considered through the Authority's normal budget-setting process, including detailed consideration through the Member-led Budget Scrutiny Working Group, before being presented to the Authority for decision.
Legal	Legal advice continues to be obtained throughout project development. Legal review work is currently supporting procurement preparation, contractual documentation and planning activity to ensure that the project remains compliant with all relevant requirements.

Staffing	The project will provide significant long-term benefits for operational and support staff through improved training facilities, enhanced learning environments and greater opportunities for workforce development. Staff engagement will continue throughout the development of the project.
Equalities/ Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Equality, accessibility, human rights and Welsh language considerations continue to be incorporated within the design and development of the facility. The consultation process demonstrated strong support for the provision of modern, accessible facilities and for the continued promotion of Welsh language and culture.
Risks	The most significant risk facing the project remains the availability of sufficient funding to support construction of the preferred scheme. Other key risks include construction cost inflation, planning timescales, procurement risks and maintaining programme certainty as the project progresses through future stages. These risks continue to be actively managed through the Project Board, independent assurance processes and ongoing affordability assessments. The development of phased delivery options and alternative scenarios further strengthens the Authority's ability to respond to changing financial circumstances whilst maintaining a focus on operational need and value for money. At this stage, the Project Board is satisfied that the project remains on track and that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage affordability, risk and future decision-making.