

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	21 July 2025
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer,
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Training Centre Project Manager
Subject	Training Centre Project Update



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with a progress update on the training centre project, summarising developments across legal, communications, design, ecology, and programme timelines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The training centre project continues to progress at pace. Following the first formal design meeting in June, activity has focused on planning, ecology and design feasibility. Following procurement, the contract for the primary design consultant have been signed. A communications plan has been developed and engagement with site neighbours has commenced. A short-term constraint on planned site clearance activity has been introduced following an ecology assessment. Site design is being developed to achieve an excellent sustainability standard (BREEAM¹), with estimated scores currently exceeding the minimum threshold. Cost modelling and option appraisals are in progress to support the outline business case.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 It is recommended that Members:
 - a) **Note the current progress of the Training Centre project.**

BACKGROUND

- 4 The development of a new, fit-for-purpose training centre remains a strategic priority for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), responding to operational risk, compliance issues and future workforce needs. The project is entering the early design and costing phase, with continued governance through the Project Board and Service Leadership Team (SLT).

¹ BREEAM | Sustainable Building Certification

INFORMATION

Legal

- 5 Following a compliant procurement process and further due diligence legal teams for both Gleeds and the Service, Veale Wasbrough Vizards (VWV) have confirmed readiness to sign the Perfect Circle contract documentation.
- 6 It has been agreed that any outstanding social value elements will be finalised retrospectively.

Communications

- 7 Letters have been hand-delivered to all residential and commercial properties near the proposed training site, explaining the scope of initial works and intention to hold an open event to view plans and discuss proposals.
- 8 Engagement with local councillors has commenced.

Design and Technical Work

- 9 The first design meeting was held on 26 June 2025 with attendance from the appointed design consultants, architects, mechanical and electrical engineers, BREEAM assessors, ecology advisors and Service staff, including operational training representatives.
- 10 The following surveys have been completed:
 - Topographical Survey
 - GPR Survey
 - Utility Survey
 - Site Investigation – Phase 1 and Interim Phase 2
 - Unexploded ordnance Survey
 - Flood consequences assessment
 - Arboriculture Survey
 - Health and safety exclusion zone plan
 - Interim planning pre application letter
 - Baseline ecology survey
- 11 The licence for the management of great crested newts has been secured and site works have been programmed.
- 12 The design brief is progressing with a requirement for the site to achieve carbon neutrality and BREEAM Excellent (target score: 75%). This is important to support the development of a business case attractive for funding.

Ecology Update

- 13 A nest of little ringed plovers (Schedule 1 species) has been confirmed near the proposed site access area. Disturbance is now legally restricted.
- 14 Quiet, manual work is permitted in the northern part of the site, but access and any machinery-based activity are prohibited until fledging is complete.
- 15 This may delay the start of site clearance by several weeks and potentially several months. The situation is being closely monitored with impacts upon project timelines being considered.

Cost Modelling and Options

- 16 National costings have been requested for:
- Training centre only;
 - Training centre with HQ;
 - Training centre with all corporate functions; and
 - A residential facility (included for completeness and to test potential efficiencies)
- 17 These options will inform the shortlisting in the Outline Business Case.

Key Project Dates

- 18 Project Timeline (Design)
- End-Aug 2025: complete design brief
 - Mid-Nov 2025: complete RIBA stage 1
 - Mid-Nov 2025: complete Outline Business Case
 - End-May 2026: complete RIBA 2/3
 - June 2026: submit planning application
 - Nov 2026: complete RIBA stage 4a
 - March 2027: agree contract price
 - Aug 2027: projected start on site
 - Jan 2029: project complete

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The project supports long-term workforce resilience, environmental sustainability, and future training needs.
Budget	Capital funding remains subject to business case approval. Cost options are under development and will be presented at the next project board.
Legal	Compliance with environmental law is critical due to the Schedule 1 bird protection. CDM requirements are being actively addressed.
Staffing	Input from operational training staff is informing layout and design. Additional support is being scoped to manage programme delivery.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Community engagement has begun. Bilingual materials will be provided at future consultation events.
Risks	<p>Ecological restrictions may delay enabling works.</p> <p>Cost pressures and design ambition must be balanced to support affordability.</p> <p>A change to the BREEAM assessment criteria is expected in summer 2025. Projects not registered with 3 months may face more stringent assessment criteria.</p>