

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	10 April 2024
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Head of Training and Development
Subject	Training Centre Project Update



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with a strategic update on the progress of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service)'s Training Centre project, incorporating recent developments from the April business case workshops, updated risk position, revised timeline, and current focus areas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The project remains on track with significant progress made in this reporting period, including the development of the critical path, refinement of scope, and identification of viable funding routes. Staff engagement remains strong, and the outline business case is progressing with support from external consultants. The overall project remains rated amber, reflecting ongoing risks relating to funding, staffing capacity, and timescale pressures. A revised RIBA Gateway 4 target date of April 2027 has been established. The project team continues to take proactive steps to mitigate key risks and ensure deliverability within defined parameters.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 That Members note:
 - i) The revised critical path and target for RIBA Gateway 4 completion (April 2027).
 - ii) Progress in defining scope, specification, and delivery model through business case workshops.
 - iii) Key risks identified on the project risk register and the measures in place to mitigate them.
 - iv) The strategic alignment of the new Training Centre with broader service community risk management and well-being goals.

BACKGROUND

- 4 The Training Centre project was established to respond to operational and financial risks associated with current training arrangements and to provide a fit-for-purpose facility that meets the long-term needs of the Service. The project began in 2022, and over the past 12 months has moved from high-level concept to structured development, supported by formal governance and external expertise. April 2025 workshops with MIAA consultants and stakeholders focused on defining project outcomes, aligning the investment with strategic goals, and building a roadmap toward a viable outline business case by Q2 2025/26.

INFORMATION

5 Recent Progress:

- Working groups for product specification met from February onwards. Outputs are being refined by the Project Team into minimum viable product specifications, aligned with strategic priorities.
- A comprehensive programme review and critical path were developed in April. This clarified timelines, dependencies, and external consultation requirements, with construction forecast to begin mid-2027.
- MIAA-led workshops confirmed alignment between the project and wider service ambitions. Key focus areas include safety, decontamination, EDI, climate sustainability, collaboration, and economic value.
- The outline business case is in development, with a draft strategic case expected by the end of April 2025.
- Cost centres for land and build have been established; a financial dashboard is in development.
- Procurement activity continues, with IKG Consultants and Enfys Ecology appointed and further work underway to transfer the new licence and secure design support.

6 Emerging Design and Delivery Preferences:

- A centralised, purpose-built facility remains the preferred option.
- The facility should support operational, corporate, and multi-agency functions.
- Grant funding (including Welsh Government) is viewed as the most viable capital route, with exploration of collaborative models ongoing.
- A single-phase implementation is preferred, subject to feasibility and funding confirmation.

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 Act, focusing on resilience, inclusion, and training excellence.
Budget	The project remains unfunded beyond the initial development phase. The capital strategy is dependent on successful engagement with Welsh Government and other potential funders. Financial control mechanisms are being strengthened with new cost centres and oversight by the Service's training and financial leads.
Legal	Procurement processes are compliant with public sector regulations. Planning and ecological constraints (e.g. protected species) are being managed with specialist advice. Public consultation timelines will adhere to NWFRS and statutory requirements.
Staffing	Staff movements continue to impact project continuity. Defined roles and revised governance structures are being implemented to mitigate this. A need for dedicated programme delivery capacity has been recognised through recent workshops.
Equalities/ Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The facility is being designed to be inclusive, accessible, and bilingual, with consultation processes reflecting these values. Specification work incorporates diverse workforce and community needs.
Risks	<p>The following, red-rated risks are under active management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCR02: Project dependency on Project Manager capacity – mitigated through governance review. • TCR03: Staff turnover affecting continuity – addressed through clear role definitions and induction. • TCR05: Risk of inadequate financial oversight – AM for Training now appointed as budget holder. • TCR06: Dependency on external capital funding – early engagement with Welsh Government and robust outline and full business case development underway. • TCR07: Absence of estate strategy – development is in progress and will form part of the business case.