

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	20 July 2026
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Head of Training and Development
Subject	Risks and Mitigations around the Hwb Awen Training Centre Project



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To update Members on the key risks associated with the Hwb Awen Training Centre project, the mitigations in place, and the actions underway to secure funding and maintain appropriate programme control.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Hwb Awen Training Centre remains a critical element of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) long-term operational, workforce and wellbeing strategy. Approval has been granted to progress the project to RIBA Stage 4; however, the absence of secured capital funding represents a significant and ongoing risk which requires careful management.
- 3 In response, the Project Team is continuing to seek external funding opportunities, re-engaging with Welsh Government and key stakeholders, and strengthening the Outline Business Case to maximise alignment with national priorities and wider social value.
- 4 To mitigate the risk of prematurely locking in design and cost commitments, the Project Board has proposed a short, controlled slowdown of the programme to allow further stakeholder engagement and funding activity. Members are not being asked to commit to funding decisions at this stage but should anticipate that options involving local authority support may be brought forward for consideration in future if all the funding cannot be secured from external sources.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL

- 5 The Executive Panel recognised the strategic importance of the Hwb Awen Training Centre to firefighter safety, while noting concerns regarding funding pressures and potential impacts. Members emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring and careful consideration of future funding options and implications

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 It is recommended that Members:
- i) **Note the current risks and mitigations associated with the Hwb Awen Training Centre project;**
 - ii) **Note the proposed adjustment to the programme to allow additional time for funding and stakeholder engagement; and**
 - iii) **Note that no funding commitment is sought at this stage, but that future proposals may be brought for Members consideration if external funding routes cannot be secured.**

BACKGROUND

- 7 The Hwb Awen Training Centre project was initiated to address long-standing critical issues in the Service's training estate and to provide a modern, safe and sustainable facility capable of meeting current and future operational requirements. The project supports the Service's strategic objectives in relation to operational competence, firefighter health and wellbeing, and organisational resilience, and has been developed through established governance arrangements.
- 8 An Outline Business Case (OBC) has been developed and remains live. This sets out the strategic need for investment, the preferred option for delivery and the anticipated benefits to the Service and wider partners. The OBC continues to be refined as further opportunities for partnership working, shared use and social value are identified.

INFORMATION

- 9 The Hwb Awen Training Centre project remains a strategically important investment for the Service, supporting operational capability, firefighter health and wellbeing, and longer-term organisational resilience. North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) approval has previously been granted to progress the project to RIBA Stage 4. Members will be aware that this stage represents a significant point of commitment, as it effectively locks in design solutions and associated cost parameters. In the absence of secured capital funding for the development of the site, this position is now being actively reviewed through the Project Board and established governance arrangements to manage exposure and maintain appropriate programme control. This position reflects the current risk of progressing design without confirmed funding.

- 10 Work to explore funding options is active and ongoing. The Service is pursuing opportunities across a number of domains, recognising that the scale and complexity of the project is unlikely to be supported by a single funding source. Initial conversations have taken place with Welsh Government and briefing letters have been issued to key stakeholders with an interest in capital investment, skills, resilience and firefighter health, outlining the Service's organisational direction and plans for the development. These discussions will now be refreshed with the new Welsh Government administration, with a clearer focus on alignment to current and emerging policy priorities.
- 11 Firefighter health, including risks associated with contaminant exposure, continues to receive increasing national attention, including recent political commitments in this area. The proposed design and function of Hwb Awen would directly support this agenda through improved training environments, modern facilities and enhanced controls to reduce exposure risks. This strengthens the strategic case for the project and will be reflected more explicitly in future engagement and business case updates.
- 12 The OBC for the Training Centre remains live and will continue to be developed. It will be updated to reflect any agreed changes in use or design, as well as opportunities for shared use and the demonstration of wider social value. Discussions have taken place with other Category 1 responders to explore how the site could be used jointly. This work remains at an early stage but is considered important in strengthening the overall case for investment and long-term sustainability, without diluting the Service's core training requirements.
- 13 Alongside this, the Service is exploring how the Hwb Awen site could contribute more fully to community resilience during a period of increasing uncertainty. This includes engagement with voluntary, faith and community leaders, together with the Local Resilience Forum, to consider how the site could function as a resilience-building asset for communities across North Wales. Learning from other developments with strong community value has highlighted opportunities that could materially enhance the impact of the project. These ideas are now being captured and will be incorporated into revised plans and supporting documentation where appropriate.

- 14 The Project Board has reviewed the current risk profile and key milestones for the programme. In light of funding uncertainty, the Project Delivery Team has proposed a controlled slowdown of the programme by approximately four months. This is intended to provide additional time for stakeholder engagement, funding discussions and refinement of the OBC, while avoiding unnecessary commitment to design and cost decisions at this stage. This approach is considered a prudent and proportionate mitigation to the risks currently faced by the project.
- 15 While the OBC continues to present a compelling case for change, it is recognised that it may not, in isolation, be sufficient to secure funding from a single source. The Service is therefore considering how a blended approach could be developed, potentially combining low-interest loans, direct capital funding and capital support from partners. Although the Service has previously stated that it would not seek to self-fund the project, the risks previously identified remain. As taking no action is not an option, some level of direct investment from local authorities now appears more likely. This remains an area of active exploration, and Members will be kept informed as options develop.
- 16 At this stage, no commitment is being sought from Members in relation to funding from local authorities. However, Members should reasonably expect that evidence-based and proportionate proposals may be brought forward for consideration through budget setting workstreams if alternative funding routes cannot be secured. Throughout this period, the Service remains committed to the overall scale and ambition of the project, and there is currently no compelling argument to value-engineer or materially reduce the proposed designs. A draft Estates Strategy is in development and will align with the objectives of the Hwb Awen build, further supporting the strategic case for change and investment.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The project supports firefighter health, workforce wellbeing and community resilience, aligning with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	No capital funding has yet been secured. Funding uncertainty remains a significant risk, managed through phased decision-making and the active exploration of multiple funding routes.
Legal	Progression to RIBA Stage 4 without funding certainty, mitigated through active programme review and a controlled slowdown agreed through Project Board governance.
Staffing	No direct staffing implications at this stage. The project supports long-term workforce capability and safety.
Equalities/ Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The design and operation of the Training Centre will continue to support inclusive access and Welsh language provision, consistent with Service commitments.