

SUBJECT:	Sustainable Learning Communities Programme Abergavenny 3-19 School
MEETING:	Council
DATE:	2022
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	Cantref, Castle, Croseonen, Grofield, Landsdown, Mardy, Priory, Llanelly Hill, Llanover, Goetre Wharf, Llanwenarth Ultra, Llanfoist

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval to include the construction of a new 3-19 school on the King Henry VIII School site in the Council's Capital Funding Programme.

The new 3-19 school will be established through the closure of King Henry VIII and Deri View Schools, as agreed at the Monmouthshire County Council Cabinet meeting on 19th January 2022. The funding will enable the relocation of Ysgol Y Fenni to the current Deri View site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Council note that Ministerial approval has been achieved on the Full Business Case confirming Welsh Government (WG) commitment and their contribution of £47,024,335 (67%) towards the total cost of building a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny of £69,292,623.
- 2.2 Council approve an increase the approved budget within the Council's Capital Programme from £43,000,000 to £69,792,623, reflecting the revised build cost of £69,292,623 and an additional £500,000 required for associated highways improvements.
- 2.3 That Council note that the increase in budget will require a further commitment of Council borrowing of £7,718,288 and that there are consequential revenue budget costs of servicing this borrowing as outlined in the resources section of this report.
- 2.4 Council note the appointment of Morgan Sindall Construction to build the new 3-19 school.
- 2.5 To declare Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni Primary School surplus to requirements, to be disposed of by the Estates Development Team on terms to be agreed in consultation with the Chief Officer for Resources.

3 KEY ISSUES:

Project background

- 3.1 The WG 21st Century Schools Programme has now been renamed Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCLP) and will be referred to as such throughout this report.

- 3.2 In September 2017 Monmouthshire's Cabinet agreed to submit a revised Strategic Outline Plan (SOP) for Band B projects. It proposed to build a 3-19 school on the King Henry VIII School site which would incorporate King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and Deri View Primary School. Deri View Primary School building would be repurposed to accommodate the growing numbers at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.
- 3.3 In determining that the Band B development should focus on the Abergavenny area the key considerations were addressing social deprivation, improving educational attainment for children eligible for free school meals, addressing poor building condition and creating greater capacity for the expansion of Welsh medium education.
- 3.4 The wider challenges of deprivation were a key factor to be considered when determining the decision to invest in Abergavenny. Comparative rates of deprivation were established using the rates of children eligible for free school meals in the affected schools and the consideration of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
- 3.5 King Henry VIII school has an in year eFSM rate of 21.5% and a three-year average of 19%. Deri View's eFSM rate is 45.3% and has a 3-year average of 40 % The cluster has a three-year average of 17.4 %.
- 3.6 When the Abergavenny project was considered in March 2017 analysis of Monmouthshire's Wellbeing Assessment (approved by Monmouthshire County Council in March 2017) confirmed that Abergavenny was the most deprived town in Monmouthshire both in terms of income deprivation and those on employment related benefits.
- 3.7 The condition of the existing school buildings was a clear driver for the decision to renew the provision in Abergavenny. King Henry VIII is in poor condition and is not suitable or appropriate for the delivery of the modern education – this has been further exacerbated by the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales which will be introduced in September 2022. In a condition survey King Henry VIII school was rated at C- at the time of decision.
- 3.8 The investment decision of 2017 was a progressive decision – not one merely focusing on remediation of buildings of poor quality. One of the key areas that the programme addressed was the expansion of Welsh medium provision in the north of the county. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017 was the contemporary strategic document and the evidence used in developing the WESP identified that the demand for Welsh medium education is greatest in the north of the county. We are currently in the process of agreeing the new longer-term WESP¹ with Welsh Government. The expansion of Ysgol Y Fenni to a two-form entry school is a key component of that document.
- 3.9 Refurbishment of the former Deri View Primary School site and relocation of Ysgol Y Fenni from its current site will facilitate the continued growth of Welsh medium education in the north of the County through increasing the capacity of the school.
- 3.10 Since the agreement of the SOP in 2017 there has been an ongoing formal dialogue with Welsh Government to consider adaptations to the scope of the project and the inevitable cost rises that have been seen due to inflationary pressures in the last five years. This process has been based on the 'Five Business Case Model'. At each stage of the process more detail has been provided and greater certainty to the cost profile included. The Outline Business Case (OBC) being approved in December 2021 and Full Business Case

¹ The new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) will have a focus for ten years and sets ambitious targets to grow the number of Welsh Speakers in Monmouthshire. This is in line with the Welsh Governments Cymraeg 2050 ambition of a million Welsh speakers.

(FBC) approved in March 2022. The engagement with the Welsh Government has been very purposeful through the programme development.

- 3.11 During 2021 a statutory consultation process was undertaken to facilitate the creation of a new school in Abergavenny. This process was concluded in January 2022 and following the statutory process under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013² Cabinet agreed to close King Henry VIII and Deri View Schools and establish a new 3-19 school.

3-19 Education

- 3.12 An all-through school is a school which provides both primary and secondary education. The school is led and managed by one Headteacher, a single Governing Body, and funded as one school. The new school in Abergavenny will offer a wider range of provision on-site. This will include Flying Start and wrap around childcare that will be provided by a non-maintained setting and will cater for children aged 2 to 4 years.
- 3.13 Primary and secondary aged pupils belonging to one educational establishment provides opportunities for sharing of facilities and resources. This can be especially positive as children transition through years 5-8, where traditionally there can be a drop in performance. Pupils will have the ability to access specialist curriculum provision such as technology suites, language teaching and physical education provision. It should be noted that all-through schools continue to provide access to separate facilities for children of different ages to ensure that they are supported in a way that they are comfortable. Safeguarding is a key principle of the design. This includes separate teaching accommodation, different start and finish times as well as separate areas to use during break times.
- 3.14 As noted above an all-through school brings a number of potential benefits when pupils transition between primary and secondary schools. This remains a key challenge despite the extensive work that has been undertaken within the Abergavenny Cluster. It is anticipated that the school will raise attainment by establishing continuum of education from 3-19.
- 3.15 The model of through schools is well established in England and is becoming increasingly popular in Wales with authorities such as Ceredigion and Rhondda Cynon Taff investing in the model.

Community Focussed Schools

- 3.16 Community focused school provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. Across Wales many schools already provide some community services including adult education, study support, ICT facilities and community sports programmes The Governing Body of a school controls the use of the school premises during and outside school hours and are encouraged to consult with the Local Authority, parent, staff and where appropriate the community when considering any proposals to provide additional services and activities. It should be noted that Governing Bodies cannot provide any service that might interfere with their main duty to educate pupils or their responsibility to promote high standards of educational achievement at the school

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

- 3.17 The new school will encourage and facilitate community use of the asset. A maintained nursery, wraparound childcare and Flying Start provision will be located as part of the proposed development.
The new school will open to the community on evenings and weekends for adult education and recreation.
- 3.18 The school site is shared with the existing Abergavenny Leisure Centre and will continue to provide facilities for community use both during the school day and after school hours. Beyond this sharing of assets, the redevelopment of the site will see a considerable increase in the facilities available. There will be a new 3G pitch that will be available throughout the year and will not be affected by weather.
- 3.19 The design of the school includes measures to enable safe 'zoning' of the building so that they are available for public use.
- 3.20 There are numerous clubs using the site currently and this project will enhance and develop the existing provision.
- 3.21 An existing area of land on the site which is designated as amenity land will remain.

Design development

- 3.22 Since the Cabinet meeting in 2017 the project scope has evolved and now includes a centre for children with complex neurodevelopmental needs, wellbeing centre, additional Flying Start provision and provision of wraparound childcare.
Additional Flying Start provision is included within the project to expand the existing provision and maintain the already established and successful relationship between Deri View School and Flying Start.
- 3.23 There are currently a limited number of childcare places within the Abergavenny area and by including wrap around childcare within the project will help to address this shortfall.
- 3.24 The new school will have: 20 Flying Start spaces [allowing up to 40 children to access the provision each day], 30 FTE Nursery places [allowing 60 children to attend each day – this feeds directly into a two form primary element], 420 Primary places, 1200 secondary places and 200 sixth form places.
- 3.25 The provision of education for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is a priority and children with complex neurodevelopmental needs are the most significant area of demand and growth within Monmouthshire. Out of a total of 328 statement pupils within the County, there are 150 pupils who have statements of ALN for complex neurodevelopmental needs. This equates to 46% of all statemented pupils. The inclusion of the specialist centre within the new school ensures that the Council has the capacity to meet the needs of learners and provide a seamless education offer across a wide age range. The Centre will also enable pupils to be educated within their existing community a key ambition of the new ALN and Tribunal Act and the local approach to its delivery.
- 3.26 The *Wellbeing Centre* will provide behaviour support provision delivered by the Pupil Referral Unit [Dalen Newydd] as outreach provision which will be part of a graduated response and complement school-based interventions. This will enhance the capacity of the school to support pupils who display challenging behaviour and disaffection. This integrated provision will help maintain these young people within mainstream learning environments.
- 3.27 The design of the new school has been challenging for the team of architects, engineers and advisors we have commissioned. The King Henry VIII School site presents

challenges for construction. The site is a collection of disparate buildings and open playing fields. There were further design constraints:

- It was decided that the existing school should remain open and functional during the construction of the new school to maintain pupils' learning experiences and minimise expenditure on temporary buildings. This has therefore influenced the location and design of the new school.
- The existing Leisure Centre is retained and has been accommodated within the designs of the new masterplan for the site.
- The existing Energy Centre is to be retained on-site but will be relocated in a new plant room.
- The site slopes from north to south with a fall of approximately 20m.
- There are several existing tree groups within the site which will be retained and protected as part of the new development.
- This is an existing single veteran oak tree on site which will be retained. The oak tree has been a key consideration in the development, and it has been important throughout the design evolution that the safeguarding of the tree was accommodated. As part of the design, the tree will have 15m root protection.
- There is an existing stream, partly culverted which runs north to south through the site. This culverted part of the stream will be redirected as part of the new proposals.

3.28 As noted above minimising disruption to teaching and learning is a key priority and whilst there will inevitably be some disruption during construction a key requirement is for pupils and staff to remain in their existing buildings for the duration of the build and removes the need for temporary accommodation. This does however restrict the area available to build a new school upon.

Net Zero Carbon

- 3.29 In line with Welsh Government's strategy for public sector buildings being carbon neutral by 2030 the new school will be the first 3-19 operationally Net Zero Carbon School in Wales.
- 3.30 The building will prioritise a reduction in the building's energy use and maximising the use of on-site renewable energy.
- 3.31 This will be achieved by reducing operational energy use by improving building fabric, using low carbon heating, improving catering equipment, improving plugged in equipment and evaluating the energy use of specialist items.
- 3.32 Renewable energy sources will be increased by maximising photovoltaics on the roof. Offsetting any remaining carbon via the purchase of off-site renewable energy and reporting and independently verifying annual energy use and renewable energy generation annually over a 5-year period.

Highways and Active Travel

- 3.33 The potential travel needs of learners who will attend the new school have been examined as part of the school development. Responses were received from learners and community and the data collected has identified key routes for development and provided detail on current travel needs. The data indicates high numbers of pupils and adults would like to cycle, walk and scoot to school /shops more.
- 3.34 As a result of this consultation and aspiration to increase levels of Active Travel a cycle and foot path has been included as part of the school development to join east and west of

the site. In addition, there is a commitment within the project to provide improved walking and cycling access on Penypound and funding for this will be secured through the MCC capital budget alongside exploring external grant funding opportunities with partners. In the event that the eventual funding secured through this process is insufficient to deliver the preferred outcome, a further bid for MCC capital funding will be made via the established process in place

- 3.35 There will be no change to the number of learners entitled to home to school transport or impact on journey times as there will be no location change for secondary pupils.
- 3.36 The amount of traffic on Pen y Pound will be reduced because of the new school development. The entrance from Pen y Pound will now only be used by staff working at the school and home to school transport.
- 3.37 All other traffic including parent drop off, visitors and Leisure Centre users will access and vacate the site on the eastern side onto Old Hereford Road.
- 3.38 Adaptations to the site entrances and road safety measures on both Pen y Pound and Old Hereford Road will be undertaken as part of this project. The funding to undertake this work is requested as part of this report.

Consultations and Governance

- 3.39 A SCLP Project Board comprising of four Cabinet members, opposition representation, Senior Leadership Team and Officers have provided governance of the project. (See appendix 1 for project board membership)
- 3.40 Project Board has agreed and signed off the initial strategic brief, design development and each RIBA design stage up to Stage 4 (see <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work> for RIBA Stages).
- 3.41 All changes in the scope of the project have been reported and agreed by the Project Board, the changes in project scope resulted in the floor area increasing and subsequently an increase in cost. The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, UK's departure from the European Union and war in Ukraine have also influenced project costs however it is not fully known the total impact yet.
The design has emerged through a combination of the space available on the restricted site alongside core requirements being established by local authority staff. However, it must be noted that there was significant consultation with pupils, staff, governors during the initial development of the strategic brief. This consultation considered the needs and wishes of the main building users i.e. staff and pupils. Consideration was given to how they wanted it to feel, how they wanted to learn, how they wanted it to look and its ability to deliver the curriculum.
The Band B project team identified the need for engagement around the pedagogical approach to the building's design and secured the services of a highly experienced educationalist who could lead the work with all staff and pupils across both schools.
- 3.42 Consultation took place with statutory authorities and there were opportunities for governors, staff, stakeholders and members of the public to view the plans through 9 engagement sessions held during November 2021.
- 3.43 Consultation took place between April 2021 and June 2021 on the proposal to establish the new school. A further opportunity to comment on the proposal was afforded to members of the public during November 2021.

- 3.44 As part of the OBC submission an economic appraisal was undertaken on the various options considered to deliver the objectives of the proposal and a preferred option identified. Each option was scored against investment objectives, critical success factors and benefit delivery. This exercise was repeated as part of the submission of the FBC to WG and due increase in costs, relating to market price inflation on labour and materials, an appropriate up lift has been applied to all options. The 3-19 school as outlined in remains the preferred option to take forward despite increased costs.
- 3.45 The Contractor appointment was procured through the SEWSCAP 2 Framework in April / May 2021 and Morgan Sindall Construction were appointed as the main contractor for RIBA stages 3&4 The appointment was agreed by Project Board in June 2021.
- 3.46 The project has now reached the end of RIBA Stage 4 and Morgan Sindall have provided a Contract Figure to construct the new school building. The Contract Figure is within the amount agreed with WG through the FBC.

4 **OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 In determining how to proceed with the project the following options were considered, and appraisals undertaken.
- Option 1: Refurbish King Henry VIII School and Deri View primary and Ysgol Y Fenni swap sites.
 - Option 2: Rebuild King Henry VIII School and Deri View and Ysgol Y Fenni swap sites
 - Option 3: Rebuild King Henry VIII School and build new primary for Deri View on King Henry site. Ysgol Y Fenni moves to current Deri View building.
 - Option 4: Build a new 3-19 school on the King Henry VIII site. Close Deri View Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive to establish the 3-19 school and relocate Ysgol Y Fenni to the former Deri View site.
 - Option 5: As above in option 4 but include a Welsh Medium stream within the 3-19 school at KS 3,4 &5.

Based on detailed considerations Option 4 was the preferred option to take forward.

- 4.2 The options for Council to consider now are outlined below along with the risks and consequences

Option 1 Proceed with the recommendations at para 2.2 to 2.4 for the reasons set out above.

Risks and Consequences

- Project is [within the cost parameters as set out in the FBC and the contract not to exceed figure] affordable and has Ministerial approval and agreed support from the SCLP.
- Project meets aspirations of Welsh Government in terms of policy and cost envelope.
- Revenue savings as a result of the project will be realised sooner. Revenue savings will be achieved from areas such as a reduction in building maintenance and the reduction of transport costs and tuition fees resulting in children with complex neurodevelopmental needs remaining within the county for education.

- Reversal of risk of decline in achievement through the transition between Key Stage 2 & 3 will be achieved sooner.
- Ability to facilitate growth in Welsh medium education will be achieved.
- Ability to provide more choice to Post 16 pupils and enable them to be taught closer to home
- Ability to provide education for pupils with ALN closer to home and within the community they live in

Option 2 Defer the project and allow for further consideration of the development.

Risks and consequences

- The project has received Ministerial approval within Welsh Government approval maybe revoked if additional funding is requested or delays incurred as this will impact on the Welsh Government's own pipeline.
- Reduces the ability to meet Welsh Government's aspirations
- Any redesign and associated procurement will create a minimum of 12 months delay into the Programme. If this decision is taken the most fundamental programme implications are Phase 1 – School Completion – August 2025 and Phase 2 – External Works Completion – May 2026.
- Cost for redesign is estimated to be an additional £1.65m, however this could increase in accordance with rising inflation.
- Increased construction cost inflation, not including change of scope or design, will be approx. £1.5m.
- There will be increased borrowing required for Council in line with inflationary pressures this may be greater if Welsh Government do not increase their contribution in line with inflation.
- There will be a delay to the anticipated improvement in standards of achievement for our most vulnerable learners through transition between key stages 2&3.
- An extension of Post-16 pupils leaving Wales for Post 16 education (primarily through attendance in Hereford VIth Form College).
- A continuation of pupils with Additional Learning Needs being educated (and transported) out of Monmouthshire for their education.
- Increase in costs to maintain existing buildings.
- Failure to create greater capacity for Welsh Medium learning in the north of the county and Abergavenny specifically.
- Pupils continue to be taught in buildings not fit for purpose
- Disappointment to pupils, staff and parents who have helped develop design.

Option 3 Stop the development and recast a new programme for education in Abergavenny

Risks and Consequences

- All of those listed in Option 2.
- Aborted costs of approx. £2m for work undertaken to date.

- Effectiveness of 3-19 school running from 2 separate sites would be questionable.
- Failure to create greater capacity for Welsh Medium learning in the north of the county and Abergavenny specifically.
- Procuring contractors will be challenging.
- Project may come out of timescales of Welsh Government Band B programme

6 REASONS:

To update Council on the development of the Abergavenny 3-19 school and for Council to approve the overall capital cost of £69,792,623 and enter a contract with Morgan Sindall Construction to build the new 3-19 school

The programme has the potential to bring significant benefits to the education community in Abergavenny and its wider cluster of schools. This paper has sought to set these out over the areas of educational benefits, net-zero carbon benefits, improvements to transport arrangements, benefits relating to community usage, the expansion of Welsh medium education and the improvement of our provision for learners with complex neurodevelopmental needs.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The total financial cost of the project and associated funding is summarised as follows:

	Total Cost	WG Funding	WG %	MCC Funding	MCC %
Main build	£62,372,523	£40,541,735	65%	£21,830,788	35%
Special Needs Resource Base	£1,750,000	£1,312,500	75%	£437,500	25%
Net Zero Carbon costs	£5,170,100	£5,170,100	100%	£0	0%
Highways costs	£500,000		0%	£500,000	100%
Total	£69,792,623	£47,024,335	67%	£22,768,288	33%

7.2 The financing of Monmouthshire's contribution of £22,768,288 will be met through unsupported (prudential) borrowing. As the project progresses there may be opportunities to apply for additional grants or contributions and these will be used to offset the overall borrowing requirement.

7.3 A capital budget of £43,000,000 has already been approved by Council as part of its budget determination on the 5th March 2020, reflective of the forecast project cost at the time and based on the original Strategic Outline Programme. The increase in scope of

the project, as outlined in this report, and consequently the overall cost envelope to £69,792,623 will require approval of a further capital budget of £26,792,623 as follows:

	Capital budget approved to date (Council - 5 th March 2020)	Additional budget to be established	Total budget
Expenditure	£43,000,000	£26,792,623	£69,792,623
Of which: External grant	£27,950,000	£19,074,335	£47,024,335
Of which: Unsupported (Prudential) Borrowing	£15,050,000	£7,718,288	£22,768,288

7.4 The consequential revenue cost of the approved Council borrowing of £15,050,000 is already fully costed within the existing revenue medium term financial plan budgets. The additional £7,718,288 of borrowing required would, at the time of writing, result in further indicative borrowing costs of £322,700 per annum to be added to revenue budgets for the estimated useful life of the School (50 years).

7.5 Disposal of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni will generate a capital receipt for the authority.

8 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

8.1 This is detailed in appendix 2

9 CONSULTEES:

SLT

Cabinet

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Cabinet Report 17th October 2017

Cabinet Report 19th January 2022

11 AUTHOR:

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