



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme

Guidance for delivery partners to transition to the Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme of investment.

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Overview

This guidance is aimed at local authorities, further education institutions, and diocesan authorities. It will assist in the transition to the rolling programme of capital investment.

It should be used when preparing a Strategic Outline Plan for the next phase of strategic infrastructure funding from the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme which will see the start of delivery partners' rolling programme.

Introduction

The first wave of investment (Band A) of the Programme was under the banner of '21st Century Schools and Education' and represented a £1.6 billion investment over the five-year period ending 2018 to 2019. This supported the rebuild and refurbishment of more than 170 schools. The second tranche of investment (Band B) began in April 2019. It was expanded to include further education colleges and renamed the '21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme'. In January 2022 the Programme was renamed 'Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL)' to make a clear statement about our commitment towards the environment, community cohesion, and our future generations. This Programme will see a further £2.3 billion investment in school and college infrastructure utilising both public capital and revenue.

Through a co-construct approach, the programme is delivered at the pace and to the priority of the delivery partners. Lessons learned from Band A, and the transition into the current Band B, have highlighted both the complexity and protracted nature associated with the delivery of a number of projects through the current 'fixed' programme timelines. This approach poses challenges for both the Welsh Government and delivery partners in the management and

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delivery of strategic infrastructure investment for the education estate in Wales. To that end, a rolling programme of investment is being implemented to improve efficiency and delivery for both partners and the Welsh Government.

The rolling programme will strengthen one of the key attributes of the Programme, that of projects being taken forward at the pace of and to the priorities of delivery partners, removing the environment of 'over-optimism' or the need for delivery partners to put forward overly ambitious proposals during what is typically a narrow bidding window.

Rolling programme

Educational transformation will remain a vital outcome of our investment in the Programme, and we also recognise that it is hugely important that we address the condition and efficiency of our school and college buildings. Local authorities should consult with all state-funded schools to consider their inclusion in the programme:

- community schools
- schools of religious character (both voluntary aided and voluntary controlled)
- foundation schools

As delivery partners are at differing stages through their existing Band B, it is expected that as and when a local authority or college is nearing completion of their Band B programme, typically above 60% of programme value (£) either completed or on-site/under contract, they submit their new strategic outline programme (SOP) which would initiate the start of their rolling programme.

This will encourage a smooth transition of each delivery partner's programme as and when the need arises, removing the stop-start actions associated with a fixed-term investment programme.

A nine-year capital programme, including an indicative funding forecast for the 9 years, is required to be submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration towards providing a commitment and support for the first 3 years along with in-principle support for years 4, 5 and 6. Years 7 to 9 will reflect your longer-term project pipeline. If appropriate, Band B projects can be included at the beginning of your nine-year capital programme.

Nine-year capital programme

Years	Expectation
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1, 2 and 3	Projects expected to reach full business case within the 3 years
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4, 5 and 6	Projects being developed and going through statutory consultation
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7, 8 and 9	Pipeline projects
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At the latest, delivery partners must review and resubmit their Programme by March 2024. Delivery partners may submit and join the rolling programme prior to this deadline if nearing completion of their Band B programme. Delivery partners are required to review their rolling programme at least every 3 years, by which time it is expected that years 1, 2 and 3 would comprise those projects that formed years 4, 5 and 6 of the previous revision, subject to those projects remaining a priority for the delivery partner with a further 3 years of pipeline projects added to the nine-year plan. This will focus on a three-year investment plan and draft budgets, alongside the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy.

For projects that continue to be classified as 'Band B', the current business case appraisal and approval framework will continue to challenge the strategic needs and priorities of delivery partners' individual business case submissions in the normal manner. The process for new SOPs will also follow this route.

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Projects identified for delivery under the SCfL Mutual Investment Model (MIM) delivery framework will continue to be classified as Band B projects.

All submitted business cases must be underpinned by a SOP, which provides an overarching view of individual local authority/further education institution strategies. Individual projects can then be approved subject to receipt of a satisfactory business case.

Current intervention rates would be retained in order to support the deliverability and affordability of delivery partners' individual programmes as per the table below.

Intervention rates

Category	Intervention rate (%)
Community, voluntary controlled and foundation schools	65
Voluntary aided schools of religious character	85
Special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs)	75
Mutual Investment Model (revenue-funded element)	81
Mutual Investment Model (associated capital cost)	65
Further education institutions	65
Extra over-costs of net zero carbon (NZC) (Band B)	100

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Programme investment objectives

Transforming learning environments and learner experience

- Supporting all learners to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in life and work, within places of learning that are safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.
- Improving learner experience and well-being in the built environment, supporting the delivery of Curriculum for Wales.
- Providing first-class digital infrastructure to improve learning environments and teaching methods for students of all ages and for the wider community.
- Supporting learners with additional learning needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Meeting demand for school places

- Providing efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places.
- Actively supporting the delivery of the authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.
- Providing the right number of places for the delivery of Welsh- and English-medium education.
- Addressing sufficiency issues where relevant.

Improving condition and suitability of the education

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estate

- Reducing backlog maintenance costs for the schools and colleges selected for the programme taking account of the overall estate.
- Removing category D condition and suitability buildings from the estate.
- Reducing category C condition and suitability buildings and improving condition to category A or B condition.

Developing sustainable learning environments

- Working towards whole-life NZC through the programme's mandated NZC in operation and the embodied carbon targets in line with the Welsh Government's Carbon Reduction Commitments.
- Delivering sustainable learning environments that invest in biodiversity to enhance the surrounding environment and support active travel.

Supporting the community

- Community-focused schools, optimising the use of infrastructure and resources to deliver public services working in collaboration with teachers, staff, governing bodies, learners, families and communities. This will include flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities are available outside school hours for extra-curricular, adult and community learning.
- Maximising community benefits and social value through the supply chain.
- Providing greater opportunities for adult learning, allowing community members to learn new skills and develop their confidence.
- Supporting multi-agency partnerships and offering an integrated approach to support learners and the community, including co-location of services.

Frequently asked questions

When will I be eligible to submit a new SOP?

All delivery partners can submit a revised/new SOP anytime between now and March 2024 where they can demonstrate progress on their current projects, typically above 60% of Band B programme value either completed or on site/ under contract.

What if I cannot meet the 60% completion due to the number or nature of projects in the current band of funding?

If due to the small number of projects in your current programme the 60% is impractical or your last projects are high-value projects, then this will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please speak to one of the SCfL Team to agree what the appropriate level should be in your case.

How long will the SOP approval take?

SOPs will be scrutinised and approved by the Business Case Scrutiny Group and Education Investment Panel in their normal schedule.

Will the delivery partners be issued with a funding envelope for years 1 to 3?

An in-principle agreement of your project pipeline will be approved but no funding envelope will be approved due to the fluctuating nature of the current

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market. Each project will be scrutinised and approved following the current process, and funding agreed at Full Business Case (FBC) or Business Justification Case (BJC) for projects under £5m.

Will funding be on a ‘first come, first served’ basis?

Due to the nature of the programme, despite strategic infrastructure funding being committed over several years, the Welsh Government and the SCfL team still manage the budgets on an annual basis. As the programmes are introduced at different stages it will be incumbent upon the SCfL team to manage the programme effectively in line with the demands of individual SOPs and to smooth out any peaks or troughs of budget pressures, ensuring that funding is available to all delivery partners at whatever time they submit their new SOP.

Why a nine-year plan?

A three-year review cycle is seen as an appropriate interval especially in the current volatile market and therefore years 1 to 3 for current projects, years 4 to 6 as planned projects, with years 7 to 9 being a forward look and pipeline is considered good practice.

What happens if a review is not undertaken by March 2024?

New business cases will not be accepted or funding for projects approved without the new SOP being approved.

What happens to current Band B projects?

As with any review you should ensure that any Band B projects are still valid and a priority to you and where applicable these should be prioritised as the first year's projects within the rolling programme.

Which projects should I include in years 1 to 3?

These should be current priority projects, including any Band B project being brought into the rolling programme, that are sufficiently developed to proceed within the three-year timeframe.

Which projects should I include in years 4 to 6?

Any projects included should again be sufficiently developed so that they can be achieved within the timescale. Allowances should be made in timings for statutory consultation process where necessary.

Which projects should I include in years 7 to 9?

These should be forward-looking pipeline projects, with initial discussions commenced, that are likely to come to fruition.

Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

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