

Education Investment Panel – 26 February 2026

Item 7.3.2 – RCT - Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Cwm Rhondda - FBC

1. Key Statistics

Project Title	Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Cwm Rhondda			
Project Type	Secondary new build			
Local Authority	RCT			
Cost/WG Share (%)	Element	Total Cost	WG Contribution	WG %
	Project Cost (Excl. NZC)	73,730,980	47,925,137	65
	NZC Cost	3,769,020	3,769,020	100
	Overall Project Cost	77,500,000	51,694,157	66.7
Business Case Stage	FBC			
Business Case History	SOC Approval Date	June 2025		
	SOC Cost	£77,500,000		
	OBC Approval Date	December 2025		
	OBC Cost	£77,500,000		
	Recent links attached:			
Primary Purpose	Condition, suitability, Cymraeg 2050, rationalisation and improving access			

2. Summary

This proposal aims to build a new Welsh medium secondary school for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda (YGCR), with new teaching facilities for 750 pupils (ages 11-16) and 150 sixth form pupils (total capacity: 900 pupils). Investment will improve the school building offer for Welsh medium education and create a continuum of learning to support Cymraeg 2050 targets.

SOC was approved in June 2025.

It is proposed that a new school will be built on the existing school site (proposed start on site is Sept 2026), and it will open during the 2030 academic year. Investment will provide a modern, flexible learning environments for all pupils which will include:

- a hall/dining area, sports hall, and specialist teaching and learning areas to cater for the needs of all pupils i.e. science labs, food technology classrooms and ICT suites.
- Dedicated facilities within the school boundary that the local community will be able to safely use, both during and after the school day.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities.
- Improved traffic management systems including on-site pupil bus drop off, and onsite staff and visitor parking.

Kier, with scrutiny from Aecom have benchmarked the construction costs and an opportunity schedule has been developed since submission of the OBC. Kier and Aecom, are confident further opportunities can be identified as the project progresses through the RIBA stages.

The project cost with this business case has been completed using a Stage 2 Plus Cost Plan. This is predominantly based on the RIBA Stage 2 design, including elements of the Stage 3 design which have been developed to date. The latest benchmarked cost data has been used to inform this cost plan. This ensures the costs included are robust and a reflection of the current market rates. The preliminary costs and design fees are based on tendered sums submitted by Kier.

Key Benefits

- Delivering a significant improved educational provision, having a noteworthy positive impact upon the educational performance of the pupils and staff morale.
- Building to net zero carbon in operation with a BREEAM rating of 'excellent'. Be fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.
- Providing dedicated facilities will be designed within the site so that the local community will be able to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- Deliver external areas that would allow pupils and staff to experience a greater breadth of teaching and learning experiences, in line with the New Curriculum for Wales.
- Provide sustainable and attractive Welsh Medium education opportunities to support Welsh Government's Cymraeg 205: A Million Welsh Speakers and RCT's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

Delivery Timescales

Action	Timeline
RCTCBC Cabinet Approval to Proceed	19th March 2025
SOC Submission	1st May 2025
OBC Submission	23rd October 2025
PAC Period Commences	15th December 2025
FBC Submission	8th January 2026
Planning Submission	February 2026
SAB Submission	May 2026
Construction Commencement	Summer 2026
New Build Complete	2029
Demolition and Externals Complete	2030

3. Discussion Points

Category	Details
Local provision	<p>Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is in the village of Cymmer, southwest of Porth, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The existing school site is made up of seven buildings varying in construction methods, across several level changes.</p> <p>Block 1: Sports block Block 2: Teaching block split over 4 levels (CLASP 1960/70) Block 3: New 3 storey teaching block Block 4: Single storey specialist teaching block (CLASP 1960/70) Block 5: Victorian teaching block Block 6: teaching block with main hall and sixth form</p> <p>There are currently 625 pupils on roll, 559 aged 11-16 and 66 sixth form pupils aged 17-19 (PLASC 2025). To note there are 5 WM primary schools in the YG Cwm Rhondda cluster.</p> <p>Pupil projections within the school are set to rise over the next 4 years (647 2028/29), however feeder school projections show a gradual decrease over the same time hence the reduction in capacity in the new school.</p>

Short-listed options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option One – Business as Usual: Maintain current Welsh medium secondary school provision at YG Cwm Rhondda. Provision at YGCR to remain as is, with future repairs and redecorations dealt with on a priority basis. RCTCBC continue to project manage future repairs and redecorations of the school. Ongoing. Funded entirely using RCTCBC funds. • Option Two – Do Minimum Demolish the Victorian building at YG Cwm Rhondda and rebuild in the same footprint. Demolish the Victorian building at YG Cwm Rhondda and rebuild in the same footprint. RCTCBC to design and manage the design and reconstruction of the Victorian teaching block. Deliver the new school by September 2032. Funded entirely using RCTCBC funds. • Option Three – Most Ambitious (A): Preferred way forward Redevelop YG Cwm Rhondda in a phased approach with 21st Century facilities. Build a new Welsh medium secondary school with 21st Century facilities. RCTCBC to commission and project manage consultant team to redevelop the school on the existing site, to design and build new facilities. <p>Deliver the new school during 2030 academic year. This project is funded through a combination of RCTCBC funds and external funding via the WG’s Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.</p>																																																																			
Capacity	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th colspan="2">Existing (FTE)</th> <th colspan="2">Proposed (FTE)</th> <th colspan="2">Change +/-</th> </tr> <tr> <th>EM</th> <th>WM</th> <th>EM</th> <th>WM</th> <th>EM</th> <th>WM</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Childcare Offer</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nursery</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Primary</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secondary</td> <td></td> <td>870</td> <td></td> <td>750</td> <td></td> <td>-120</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post-16</td> <td></td> <td>153</td> <td></td> <td>150</td> <td></td> <td>-3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional Learning Needs</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td></td> <td>1023</td> <td></td> <td>900</td> <td></td> <td>-123</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							Existing (FTE)		Proposed (FTE)		Change +/-		EM	WM	EM	WM	EM	WM	Childcare Offer							Nursery							Primary							Secondary		870		750		-120	Post-16		153		150		-3	Additional Learning Needs							Total		1023		900		-123
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Cymraeg 2050 / WESP	<p>This project supports Cymraeg 2050 targets and RCT’s Outcome 1 of its WESP. An impact assessment has been undertaken.</p>																																																																			
Condition and suitability	<p>Recent condition survey grade: C with backlog maintenance of c£4.097m.</p> <p>‘The overall mechanical and electrical services are functioning but are near the end of their expected life span. Some buildings need significant investment.’</p> <p>Number of buildings known to contain asbestos.</p>																																																																			

Sustainability	<p>Net Zero Carbon in operation and BREEAM Excellent will be achieved, in accordance with current requirements of planning and building control legislation. It will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>This project will include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards are met.</p> <p>Traffic/Highways will form part of the Client Engagement Meetings (CEM) process, which will be used in this project from initial contractor appointment to build the project brief and keep all stakeholders involved in the project. An initial presentation has been made to key internal stakeholders include highways, on 7 August 2025; providing an opportunity to ask questions and share observations of the plan.</p> <p>This project will include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards are met. Where possible, we will look to increase opportunities for pupils, staff and the community to walk/cycle/scooter to school. The promotion and implementation of active travel will also feature within the design of the new school.</p> <p>The new school will allow for public enabled Wi-Fi which will facilitate the delivery of adult learning and other community activities.</p>	
Town Centre First	The school is in walking distance to Porth town centre.	
Community Facilities	There will be areas designed within the new school for the local community to safely access and benefit from use of the new facilities, both during and after the school day. This will enhance the already well-used community facilities and allow for the further expansion of wider community engagement. The project will include a community room with ICT equipment whereby there could be an offer of ICT support, Welsh learners' sessions etc. Also, the existing offer of internal, and external sports facilities for community use will be strengthened – this includes a much-improved sports hall and an all-weather sports pitch.	
Size compared with standard benchmark	(a) Proposed area (m ²) New build: c8,888 Light refurbishment (to facilitate a single-phased build) c1,200	8888 + 1,200 10,088
	(b) Benchmark area (m ²) New Build Light refurbishment	8726
	(c) Variance (m ²)	1,362
	<p>Justification for additional areas: The size of the hall and the inclusion of a multi-gym is showing above the recommended guidelines for a school of this size. This reflects the community use aspect. Various stakeholders already use the school and as part of the proposal there is an opportunity to provide a setting for Rhondda Netball group to compete at a 'Club' level and support their links with Rhondda Schools Rugby and Welsh Rugby Union.</p>	
Cost compared	(a) Total cost of project:	77,500,000 REDACTED

with standard benchmark figure		
	(b) Standard benchmark cost for construction (or nearest available benchmark):	37,955,548
	New build Refurbishment	36,268,348 1,687,200
	Variance With abnormals included Without abnormals	REDACTED
	Overall cost per square metre Significantly higher than other projects when abnormals included. REDACTED	REDACTED
Further explanation (abnormals; adjustment to allow for more or fewer pupil places compared to nearest benchmark figure): The school site is challenging with significant level changes. It is proposed that the new school be built on the existing school site of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda, which was selected as no other suitable sites were available. Historic maps and information indicate the school site was previously used for industrial purposes including a quarry and tramway sidings, therefore, detailed site-specific investigation works with the appropriate enabling and demolition works along with clearance of the existing buildings and site are required. Robust site surveys and investigations have been undertaken that have aided the design of the new school. The topography and the nature of the site are extremely challenging, with circa 25m level difference from the highest to the lowest part of the school site. A significant proportion of the project costs are considered 'abnormal' as listed above. REDACTED	REDACTED	
Comparison with other projects	Cost comparison to similar projects - comparison information in the absence of an updated benchmark REDACTED	
Risks	A limited part of the site is located with the Flood Zone 2 & 3 (Surface Water and Small Watercourses). This is located near to the existing cluster of teaching blocks southeast of the site. Management of this will be considered during the design stage. To note: the site is not located in a flood zone for rivers and seas. SAB approval is required. A SuDS application will be submitted February 2026 for Sustainable Drainage Approving Body (SAB) approval prior to the commencement of works. A Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) will be undertaken for this project and a PAC report will be submitted. An initial presentation was made to key internal stakeholders including a Planning Officer on 7th August 2025. This presentation also provided the opportunity for questions to be	

	asked and observations to be shared. The PAC period is currently live, running from 15th December 2025 until 23rd January 2026.
Links with other grants	NA

4. Assessment Summary

Case	Assessor/Division	Queries raised	Date Addendum Issued	Date Addendum Response Agreed	Approved
Strategic Case	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	No	28/01/26	3/2/26	Yes (see note)
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	Yes			Yes
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	Yes			Yes
	REDACTED	Yes/No	28/01/26	12/02/26	Yes (with caveat)
	REDACTED	Yes	28/01/26	12/02/26	Yes
	REDACTED	NCR			NA
	REDACTED	Yes	28/01/26	03/02/26	Yes
	REDACTED	No			Yes
	REDACTED	NCR			NA
	REDACTED	No			Yes
REDACTED	NA			NA	
Economic Case	REDACTED	No			Yes
Commercial Case	REDACTED	No			Yes
Financial Case	REDACTED	No			Yes
Management Case	REDACTED	No			Yes

* Approved - Assessor content within own area of expertise

** NA - Not applicable

*** NCR - No comments received from policy colleague

5. FEI Financial health check rating

NA

6. Recommendation / Sign Off

Business Case Scrutiny Group meeting date	22/01/26
Business Case Scrutiny Group – date of sign off	12/02/26

Recommendation to Education Investment Panel	Approve so that a grant award letter can be issued. Subject to further justification for retaining a sixth form capacity of 150 places despite numbers on roll falling from 125 in 2021 to 65 in 2024–25. While recent Cymraeg 2050 investments have supported modest improvements, the benefits of the newly awarded Medr funding have not yet been realised and, as the Medr funding is for one year only, it cannot be relied upon to justify such a significant expansion at this stage. Additional clarity is required on realistic future demand, long term sustainability, and alignment with wider Welsh medium tertiary planning across RCT.
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