

Business Case Scrutiny Group – 6 November 2025

Item 5.3.1 – RCT – Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Cwm Rhondda – OBC

REDACTED

**RCT YSGOL GG CWM RHONDDA
OVERALL FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT**

1. STRATEGIC CASE

Please could all assessors sign off their comments on the Capital Panel section of this report?

Branch/Division	Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme Delivery
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

Strategic needs still evident. Good site maps and plans included to show project delivery.

Costs still remain high although abnormals are **REDACTED**

The abnormals have been reduced by **REDACTED** why has the project cost stayed the same?

Abnormals list does not contain enough information about each element – a number also seems above and beyond spec, or not an abnormal.

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

REDACTED

Please provide more detailed information about offsite drainage - not usually covered as this is outside the red line boundary.

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

A. The only part of the school site that is suitable for the new school building is where buildings that currently house the sports hall, and other subject areas sit. These buildings require demolition to provide space for the footprint of the new building and in the interim period (during the build) some of these subject areas will need to be provided elsewhere on the site to facilitate a single-phase build. This single-phase method of construction saves time on the construction programme, is more cost effective and will cause less disruption to school operations. An option offered by the Contractor was for the provision of a temporary sports hall and temporary teaching accommodation, however, the cost of this and the impact on the restricted outdoor play area meant that this option was not progressed. Refurbishment of some areas of the existing school is more cost effective and operationally efficient. Once the new school build is complete and occupied, all existing school buildings will be demolished to create informal play areas, MUGAs, outdoor teaching and learning areas. The new school will be a vibrant, welcoming and a fully accessible setting for Welsh medium education in the Rhondda.

REDACTED

Please update the summary table [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	NZC and Condition / Suitability
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

Condition and suitability of the existing school buildings warrants the proposal with some system buildings which would be beyond their life expectancy. Backlog maintenance in excess of £4m. However, costs are high with many items looking excessive. Embodied carbon information is incomplete and looks unlikely to meet target.

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

Please provide current estimate of embodied carbon for the building showing how you will meet the current target of 600kgCO₂e/m².

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11: An outline embodied carbon assessment has been completed at RIBA Stage 2 to include all components associated with the proposed building. The total estimated carbon emissions of the new building to practical completion currently sits at: 740 kgCO₂e/m². The target figure may be due to the following contributing factors:

- Overestimating of quantities typical to the early stage of the project
- Topography of the site requiring significant engineering ground works

A series of recommendations have been provided within the RIBA Stage 2 Whole Life Carbon Assessment detailing methods to reduce the embodied carbon. These include increasing the recycled content and cement replacement within concrete products, increasing the recycled content in the structural steel and further consideration of alternative roof coverings reducing the bitumen content.

These and further reduction measures will be investigated further during the next stage of developed design to meet the current target of 600 kgCO₂e/m².

Please update the summary table [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Tertiary Education
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

BTEC Sport is mentioned but will there be broader vocational and skills-based provision at the new site? Does the school plan on offering VCSEs at 14-16 for example? (DM)

26/11: Medr response to information from LA.

Approval is granted for the proposal to proceed to the Education Investment Panel, on the assurance that the Local Authority explore a formalized partnership approach to Welsh Medium sixth form delivery within Rhondda Cynon Taf as per the ambitions and aspirations set out within the WESP which includes Coleg Cymoedd. This would ensure a broader offer, enhance viability, and align with Medr's strategic aims and long-term ambitions for tertiary education across Wales.

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11:

A.While BTEC Sport is currently referenced, the new school build is designed to support a broader vocational curriculum. The school intends to expand its vocational offer to include areas such as:

Health and Social Care

Digital Technology

Creative Industries

Construction and Engineering (via partnerships)

The school are actively exploring the introduction of Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education (VCSEs) for learners aged 14–16, when these are available from 2027, aligning with the Curriculum for Wales and the increasing emphasis on skills-based learning. These will be delivered in collaboration with local providers and through blended learning models, where appropriate.

B. Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is currently engaged with:

- Cyfleoedd+ (other RCT Welsh-medium schools with sixth forms) to explore joint curriculum planning and shared delivery models, to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.
- Coleg y Cymoedd as a partnership to allow for Junior Apprenticeship schemes currently 14-16, with collaboration towards further post-16 collaboration. Our school pupils already access opportunities through Coleg y Cymoedd and in liaison with the LA, for example 'The Green Light Project', The Junior Apprenticeship Scheme, Open Days/Evenings, celebration events, and pathways opportunities with employers.
- E-learning to support subject breadth and specialist provision.

This collaboration ensures that learners have access to a coherent and progressive Welsh-medium pathway from 14–19, with shared CPD opportunities, curriculum mapping, and learner transition support.

C. Esgol has been utilised previously in maintaining subject breadth, particularly in post-16 provision. Although models of purely distance learning have previously proven difficult to ensure learner engagement, the school has since adopted and employs a hybrid model of learning, with strategies including:

- A-level subjects with low cohort numbers, such as Further Maths, are being accessed through FMSP at Swansea University.
- Shared teaching arrangements with other Welsh-medium schools, for example, Level 3 Child Care course. This is further facilitated by support through Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Medr.

The school plans to expand its use of Esgol in the new build, with dedicated digital learning spaces and timetabled slots to support synchronous and asynchronous learning.

D. RCTCBC is committed to ensuring the viability of the sixth form at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda through:

- Strategic curriculum planning to avoid unnecessary duplication, in partnership with other Welsh-medium secondary schools across the authority and with Cyfleoedd+ Partnership and ensure that provision of both schools and Coleg y Cymoedd is complementary and provides a full Welsh-medium provision.
- Shared staffing and resources across Welsh-medium institutions is currently employed, with further opportunities to strengthen this work through current funding opportunities and in liaison with Medr.
- Joint marketing and learner engagement strategies to promote Welsh-medium post-16 pathways, supported through the joint work towards RCTCBC's ambitious WESP targets

- Collaborative efforts include curriculum alignment, joint enrichment activities, and shared careers guidance to ensure learners see a clear and attractive Welsh-medium route into further education, training, and employment.

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is one of four Welsh medium schools in RCT to have collaborated on a bid for funding from MEDR to increase equitable access, breadth, and continuity of Welsh-medium post-16 provision by widening qualification pathways and enrichment and curriculum opportunities.

The aim of the project is to use Welsh across academic, vocational, creative, scientific, and workplace contexts. The project also hopes to strengthen trainee teacher experience in Welsh-medium settings to support the development and sustainability of the future bilingual workforce. A detailed plan has been put in place for this collaborative work and there are other avenues of funding being explored if the MEDR bid is not successful.

The four Welsh medium schools are collaborating to enhance the strategic leadership of Welsh-medium post-16 provision to greatly enhance learner choice and experience. This will develop scalable, high-quality post-16 hybrid curriculum models responsive to learner demand and choice and strengthen progression routes, aligning school, FE, HE, and industry.

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda have been part of a pilot with Coleg y Cymoedd and RCTCBC to establish a Junior Apprenticeship route. A small cohort of Learners in Year 10 and 11 have been identified who are at risk of disengaging and have begun vocational qualifications at the Rhondda Campus of Coleg y Cymoedd. While these qualifications are through the medium of English, the re-engagement of them to learning and the continued support and contact from the school means the collaboration between school and college has ensured a positive pathway for learners who would otherwise have become NEET.

There have been early discussions about further collaboration with Coleg y Cymoedd who currently do not offer qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Number of Roll

SCHOOLNAME	Year 7 No of Pupils	Year 8 No of Pupils	Year 9 No of Pupils	Year 10 No of Pupils	Year 11 No of Pupils	Year 12 No of Pupils	Year 13 No of Pupils	Year 14 No of Pupils	Total Pupils
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	120	106	127	111	103	52	31		650

Years 7-11 = 567

Years 12 & 13 = 83

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Cymraeg 2050
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

As noted in the SOC this project will support the LA achieve the targets within the WESP and the WG Cymraeg 2050 strategy.

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	School Organisation and Admissions
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

My previous comments remain the same from the SOC. As soon as I have 2025 pupil data, I can update on that. But content with the proposal

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Support for Learners Division, Additional Learning Needs Branch
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

Not much mention of benefits for ALN learners. SOC had previously given impression that whilst the school supported learners with ALN, 'ALN provision' was something separate (ie special school/SRB).

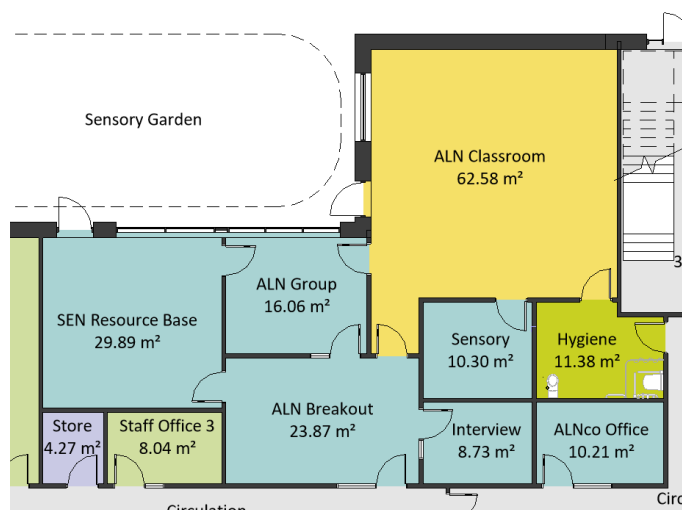
**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

How will learners with ALN benefit from this proposal? Will it contribute to a more inclusive learning environment and make the school more accessible to learners with ALN?

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11:

The new school will be a fully accessible school in compliance with the Equality Act (2010) with 21st Century facilities. There will be a dedicated area within the new school for pupils with additional learning needs that meets their educational requirement and be suitable for their learning needs. The current proposal gives the opportunity for direct access to a sensory garden that will be fenced from the main play space giving greater flexibility to the teaching space. Also included are group rooms, breakout rooms for those pupils that work better in a quieter area, and direct and supervised access to a sensory room. Included below is a working snapshot of the current floor plan for your information.



The demand for Welsh Language Learning Support Classes (LRCs) is constantly under review with 3 new Welsh medium classes opened in the last 3 years in RCT following the required statutory consultations. The area shown as part of the current plans has been designed so can be redesignated as a LSC should demand warrant it and subject to a successful outcome of any statutory consultations. This is being kept under constant review as part of Outcome 6 of the WESP.

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Children, Young People and Families – Childcare and Play
Assessors:	REDACTED
<u>Comments Section</u>	
1. Internal comments	
<hr/>	
2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College (for follow up questions, please add the date)	

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Sports Division
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College

The abnormal costs include Flood Lighting. Which elements of the sports facilities will benefit from flood lighting? (11 November 2025)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

27/11: The floodlighting for Cwm Rhondda is for the 3G pitch.

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Transport Policy, Active Travel
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

Encouraging to see commitment to developing an Active Travel Plan and incorporating infrastructure such as cycle and scooter storage into the school design. The proximity to Porth town centre and the new transport hub presents a valuable

opportunity to promote multi-modal sustainable travel. The inclusion of a Traffic Impact Assessment that considers pedestrian and cycling routes is also welcome.

While 68% of pupils arrive via school transport, how are the remaining 32% travelling? Has any postcode analysis been undertaken to assess the potential for active travel to the existing site among pupils who do not receive home-to-school transport?

Given that the new school will be built on the existing site, is there scope to begin behaviour change support now, for pupils, parents, and staff, to build momentum ahead of the new development? This could include engagement activities, travel planning, and promotion of walking, wheeling, and cycling, which would complement future infrastructure improvements. The active travel team within the local authority could advise on support available either internally, or via third sector opportunities. To strengthen delivery, we encourage early engagement with the local Active Travel team going forward, to ensure any facilities and infrastructure align with active travel guidance and best inclusive practise.

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11: The school will prepare an Active Travel Plan and will engage with the Active Travel Officer to ensure this is a robust and targeted plan. It is the school's intention to change the way pupils, staff, parents and carers travel to and from school in line with the commitments of Welsh Government's Active Travel Delivery Plan 2024-27.

Data received from the school on pupils' mode of transport is included below;

Mode of Transport	Pupil Numbers
Home to School Transport	424
Private Taxi	5
Cycle / Scooter	2
Walk	60
Parent / Carer Drop Off	160 (not cars as some siblings/families travel together)

The majority of staff drive or car share to and from school, with a small number using public transport or walk.

The school aim to participate in various initiatives at the earliest opportunity to encourage pupils and staff alike to use sustainable modes of transports. Behavioural change programmes, such a Climate Action Wales, Go Safe with support from RCTCBC's Road Safety Team and engagement with Transport for Wales are all items on the school agenda to assist in the promotion of active travel.

To support the sustainable travel aspirations of Welsh Government, RCTCBC and the school, the new school design will include EV Chargers, Car Sharing bays, have separate secure bike storage for pupils and staff.

There will be a digital screen available in the main school reception for staff, pupils and visitors to view live data of local bus and train times to encourage the use of the transport facilities at the nearly local transport hub in Porth town centre.

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Digital Inclusion Unit
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

It is not clear how the new school will support digitally excluded people in the local community. Could the school consider providing community access to a dedicated space within the building that offers public access to WiFi and digital devices? This would help enable connectivity, access and opportunity to develop basic digital skills - supporting those who are digitally excluded.

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11:

As mentioned within the OBC, the school have strong links with a variety of community groups. The intention is to strengthen these by providing fully accessible internal and external facilities in the new school design. A community room will be available with its own dedicated accessible access for use by the community during the school day or out of hours. This includes direct access to an accessible toilet and storage space for any additional equipment that is required to serve the community provision. The intention is for this room to include desktop computers which have access to public enabled WIFI.

The school are continuing their engagement with the Council's Community Development team and the Community Focussed Schools' Officer and discussed offering courses to improve health and wellbeing, upskill parents/carers or assist the community in gaining new skills in Computers and Languages including Welsh language courses for beginners and advanced learners for parents/cares and the members of the community.

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Environment
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Regeneration
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

This project falls outside of the boundary of the town centre (Porth) and the remit of the Transforming Towns programme. We acknowledge that it enhances the provision on an existing site.

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Enrichment & Engagement - Community Focused Schools
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	Curriculum Experiences and Access
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

Branch/Division	CADW
Assessor	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

ECONOMIC CASE

Branch/Division:	Education Economist
Assessor:	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

Appreciate this would have been agreed at SOC but there seems to be quite a difference in shortlisted options from 'do minimum' to 'do maximum preferred' option (both in scale of the option and then the cost) - I can see that other comments have referenced price being high – are

there other considerations that would be included to help reduce cost when looking at more intermediate options? Qualitative case is strong but large cost differences

Would also be good to get clarity on the cost presented at the top of this doc for approval (looks like the initial capital costs excluding OB?)

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

The scale of difference between shortlisted options from 'do minimum' to 'do maximum preferred' option (both in scale of the option and then the cost) - I can see that other comments have referenced price being high – are there other considerations that would be included to help reduce cost when looking at more intermediate options? Qualitative case is strong but large cost differences.

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

18/11:

Several options were considered at appraisal stage but were discounted due to the absence of benefits to the school and community. Due to the varying levels and the constraints of the wider school site, an option to only improve the internal teaching facilities was considered, omitting the costly upgrades of external areas but this option would not provide 21st century facilities and the facilities would not be compliant with the Equality Act (2010) and would not be comparable to the investment made in English medium secondary schools. Our objective to increase the number of Welsh speakers in line with targets of the WESP drove these options to ensure the offer of Welsh medium secondary was competitive with English medium schools in the area who have previously benefited from funding to create modern, fully accessible and welcoming 21st Century learning environments.

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

3. COMMERCIAL CASE

Branch/Division:	Procurement
Assessor:	REDACTED

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

PBA will be incorporated in the project.
Clear community benefits have been highlighted.
Tenders via SEWSCAP4
REDACTED comments

**2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)**

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

4. FINANCIAL CASE

Branch/Division:	Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme Finance
------------------	---

Assessor:	REDACTED
-----------	----------

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

Initial client costs at 5% of total cost are allocated to 2025/26 but the majority of the funding required falls within the following 4 years which is within the current committed budget.

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)

5. MANAGEMENT CASE

Branch/Division:	Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme Delivery
------------------	--

Assessor:	REDACTED SCfL Programme
-----------	----------------------------

Comments Section

1. Internal comments

PRINCE 2 methodology highlighted, along with a clear project milestones schedule, reporting structure and benefits/risk registers. Contract management and monitoring also detailed.

2. Question(s) for Local Authority or College
(for follow up questions, please add the date)

3. Response(s) from Local Authority or College

To sign off your comments please click [HERE](#)