

Business Case Addendum

LA name – RCT

Programme – Rolling Programme

Project name – YG Cwm Rhondda

Business case stage – SOC

BCSG review date – 15 May 2025

Addendum date – 29 May 2025

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College response to Welsh Government following queries raised following BCSG review 15 May 2025.

- **STRATEGIC CASE**

Policy Area: Sustainable Communities for Learning

REDACTED

- No Executive Summary document has been received. Can this be provided please.
- The SOC references a quantitative benefits assessment at Appendix A, but this has not been received. Can this be provided please.

Local authority response:

REDACTED

- Please find Executive Summary Proforma attached.
- Please find Appendix A Project Benefits Table attached – this was incorrectly referred to as Appendix A Quantitative Benefits Table in the SOC submission.

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Policy Area: NZC and Condition/Suitability

Please provide confirmation that the project will be working towards the embodied carbon target of 600kgCO₂/m² as well as the net zero in operation target.

Local authority response:

- RCTCBC adopted the **Climate Change Strategy – ‘Think Climate Rhondda Cynon Taf (2022-2025)’** with the goal of becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030. This ambitious target contributes towards the Welsh Government’s ambition for the Welsh public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030.

RCTCBC are committed to deliver sustainable learning environments, and the new school for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda will be Net Zero Carbon in Operation in line with Welsh Government’s Carbon Reduction Commitments. The project will replace an existing school with a new asset that meets the embodied carbon target of 600kgCO₂/m² as well as the net zero in operation target, in line with the funding conditions of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Rolling Programme.

Policy Area: Cymraeg 2050

Does the LA need to reduce the school’s capacity from 1023 to 900? Although the data shows a decrease in numbers of pupils do we need to allow for a new school attracting greater numbers?

Could the LA please consider immersion provision on site? Additional capacity would be needed to offer immersion provision at the school and this service could also attract additional pupils who may want to transition from English medium provision.

Local authority response:

- Given the numbers on roll, and the pupil projection figures, we feel a capacity of 900 pupils would be sufficient and will allow us to contribute towards the Cymraeg 2050 targets and support the outcomes in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
- RCTCBC’s strategy for immersion is currently a peripatetic support service. The immersion service is seeing an increase in numbers term on term. Given the geography of RCT, if a different model was to be delivered, it is acknowledged that a minimum of three

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immersion units would need to be set up for equity across the County Borough

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This was set out in our funding bid to establish our immersion provision 4 years ago. Should the demand continue, we will ensure to review the provision in line with our WESP and the annual review and monitoring procedures that are reported annually to WG. Should we continue with the existing model, there will be sufficient space within the school to support immersion learners.

Policy Area: Support for Learners Division, Additional Learning Needs Branch

Has there been consideration of a WM LSC provision as part of this new build?

Local authority response:

- RCTCBC aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside school. Learners attending specialist provisions are encouraged to use incidental Welsh and planning for Welsh in the curriculum is monitored as part of the quality assurance of the educational provision within specialist provisions. This is aligned to the RCTCBC's WESP Action Plan under Outcome 6 of the WESP that relates specifically to ALN and learners will continue to be encouraged to use the Welsh language when accessing specialist provisions.

Data submitted as part of RCTCBC's Year Two Annual Review Report for the years 2023 to 2024 demonstrated a slight decrease in the percentage of learners with ALN in Welsh medium education against the backdrop of an increasing percentage of learners with ALN in English medium of education. In line with the duties placed upon Councils under Section 63 of the ALNET Act 2018, RCTCBC's Access and Inclusion Team continue to work towards ensuring sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in our locality.

Following the reviews undertaken during Year One of the WESP (2022 to 2023), as reported as part of RCTCBC's Year Two Annual Review Report, many potential areas for development were identified which informed the actions for RCTCBC's Year 2 Work Plan, however the creation of a LSC at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda was not identified as a key area of focus at that time . This however is something that is continually reviewed in accordance with RCTCBC's strategy to build the capacity of mainstream settings to deliver high quality ALN provision for learners with complex behavioural, emotional and wellbeing difficulties to enable pupils to remain in mainstream settings.

As such, we will work with our designers to ensure that capacity is built into the new school to allow a new Welsh medium LSC provision to open at the opportune time. We will incorporate suitable space into the

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designs to futureproof the school so that a new provision can be opened in the future subject to a successful outcome of a statutory

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school organisation consultation in line with the School Organisation Code 2018.

Policy Area: Tertiary Education

Please can you provide information to understand the sixth form offer, its alignment with the local tertiary landscape, and the potential impact on existing provision.

Local authority response:

- The 6th form provision at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is the only Post 16 Welsh medium setting for learners in the Rhondda Valley. Currently, 26 AS and A level subjects are offered. Learners can opt to leave Welsh medium education to attend Coleg Y Cymoedd Nantgarw campus 8.7 miles away from the school, where most of the same subjects are on offer. Improved facilities at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda would encourage Post 16 learners to stay in Welsh medium education.

Policy Area: Transport Policy, Active Travel

Is there scope to liaise with the active travel team within the local authority to ensure the future route proposed on the ATNM is prioritised?

Local authority response:

- There are several Active Travel routes on the Rhondda Fach Trail (NCN 881) linking Porth to areas of the Rhondda Fach and Trehafod. RCT Highways, which includes the Active Travel team will form part of the RCT Internal Stakeholder group where discussions will continue as part of the Client Engagement Meeting (CEM) Process, following appointment of the Contractor. Active Travel will also form part of the PAC and Planning procedures.

Policy Area: Digital Inclusion

It is positive that the school intends to allow public access to Wi-Fi however many people also do not have access to a device, meaning that, despite the public Wi-Fi, they would remain digitally excluded. Could the school consider providing community access to devices within the Wi-Fi zone/s (e.g. laptops/ computers/ tablets) in addition to the Wi-Fi? This would further address a key barrier to people engaging with the digital world - access (devices and connectivity).

Local authority response:

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- ICT equipment, including laptops, interactive boards and tablets will be located within the Community Space designed for the new school. This will support any members of the community who may be digitally

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excluded and encourage their attendance in any community groups/events even if they are without a device.

- **ECONOMIC CASE**

To note my colleague would like to highlight that the options development for this case was excellent and very clear to understand. He has a couple of questions as outline below:

- The case references a quantitative benefits template, but I couldn't seem to find that, would it be possible to see this
- Only real concern about the size of the new school. Would it be possible to check the forecasts for YGCR as the bullet point states "the data demonstrates as assumed further decrease in pupils accessing their education in the WM secondary school between 24/25 and 28/29" although 24/25 is 625 and 28/29 is 647.
- Given these forecasts, was there an option considered that created a new school with smaller capacity as it feels as though there will still be high excess capacity. Would be good to get a sense of cost differentials of this option moving forward please.

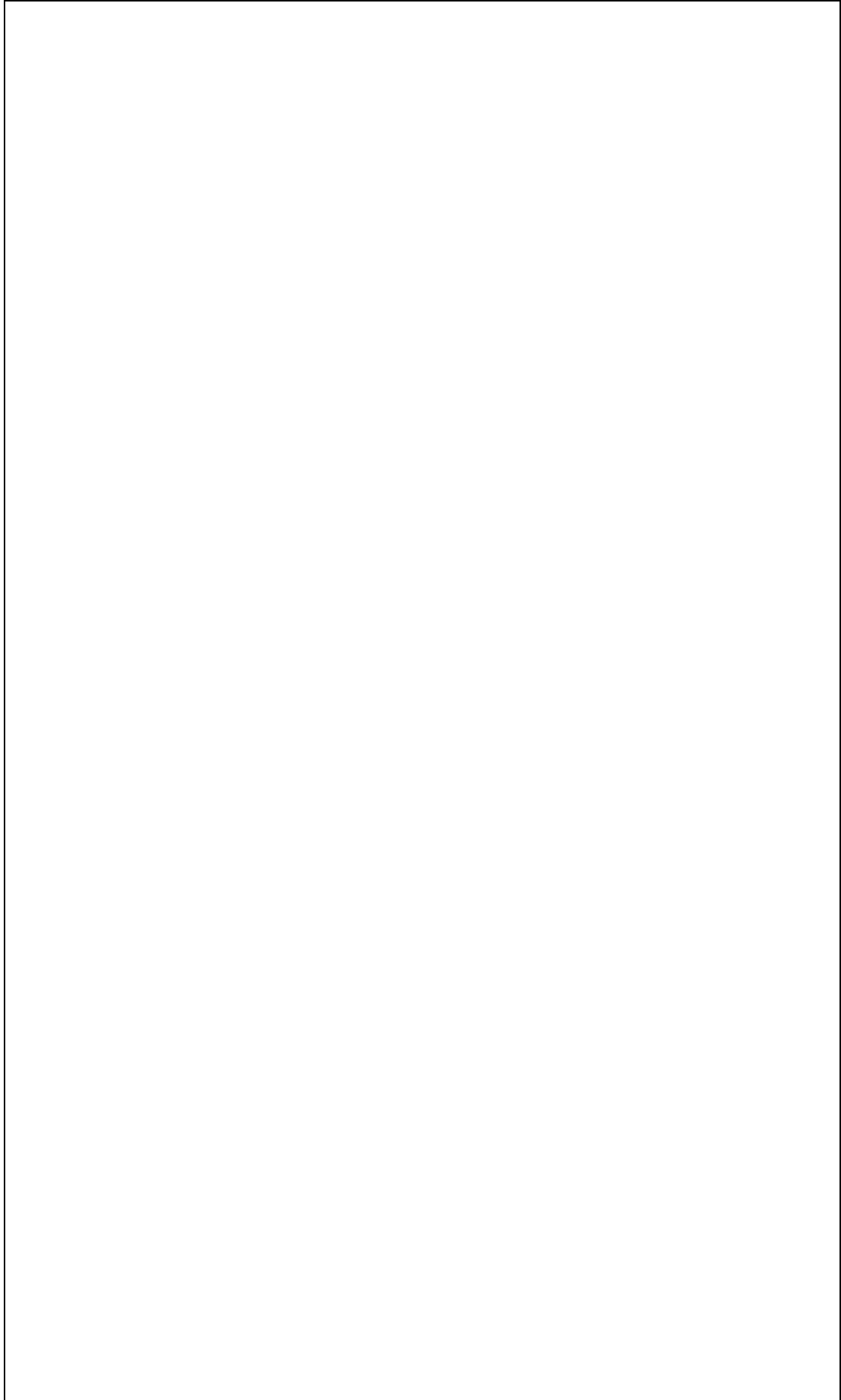
Local authority response:

- Please find Appendix A Project Benefits Table attached – this was incorrectly referred to as Appendix A Quantitative Benefits Table in the SOC submission.
- Apologies, the sentence should read;
The data demonstrates an assumed increase in the number of pupils accessing their education in the Welsh medium secondary school between the academic years 2024/25 and 2028/29.
- In line with our targets to increase Welsh medium education within our WESP and Cymraeg 2050 we feel the capacity while ambitious, is wholly appropriate. Should an option be required at OBC to demonstrate the costs of a smaller school we will ensure this is costed for comparison.

- **FINANCIAL CASE**

Future business cases will need to include additional detail on site specific abnormals including potential works and cost. Are there currently contingencies build into the estimates for potential remediation and what level of optimism bias has been included in the costings used in this SOC?

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Local authority response:

- As noted above in the Strategic Case, we are at such an early stage of the design and development of this project, a significant risk sum has been added to the project costs.
At the time of submission of the SOP, the original £65M was an estimated high-level sum. Following the submission of the SOP, RCTCBC appointed consultants who provided a more accurate cost estimate. They have considered all the constraints, complexities and challenges of this site such as multiple phasing requirements, topography, sequencing of demolition, asbestos, costs and disruption associated with maintaining a 'live site' school and benchmarked the project against other projects of similar size, complexity and nature. This includes the adjustment of the inflation which is now in line with the programme provided by the consultants.

Additionally, there is a potential need for extensive civil works such as large amount of cut and fill, retaining structures or complex foundations to address the complexities mentioned above. Regarding the ground conditions, the nature of the made ground present on site is currently unknown. However, the latest information we received with the preliminary coal mining risk assessment has found that due to shallow coal being present beneath the site and presence of the shaft to the east, the risk to surface stability from mining legacy features is considered moderate, and the site is in a high-risk zone from mine gas.

With regards to additional detail on site specific abnormal including potential works these are as followed:

- Demolition/asbestos remediation
- Temporary Accommodation/Sports Hall
- Temporary access
- Medium Refurbishment, c.350m²
- Site profile
- Habitat
- 4G Pitch
- SUDS
- Fencing
- EV Chargers
- Retaining structures
- Site wide drainage
- Incoming Services