

## **Business Case Addendum**

**LA name:** RCT

**Funding Programme:** SCfL

**Project name:** Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Cwm Rhondda

**Business case stage:** FBC

**BCSG review date:** 22 January 2026

**Addendum date:** 28 January 2026

Please provide responses to the queries raised below about your project at the BCSG review on 22 January 2026.

## **A. STRATEGIC CASE**

### **Policy Area: NZC / Condition and Suitability**

Content subject to the LA continuing to reduce the embodied carbon through final stages to meet the 600kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/m<sup>2</sup> target.

#### **LA response:**

As required by all new schools delivered in Wales from 2022 that are funded under Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, the new school development for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda will achieve net zero carbon in operation and meet the embodied carbon targets, below 600kgCO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>.

As the design has progressed through RIBA Stage 2, the overall carbon values have been reduced using various initiatives and further reduction measures will be sought to ensure the current target of 600kgCO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup> is achieved.

### **Policy Area: Medr / Tertiary Education**

1. What strategic planning has been undertaken to address the anticipated increased demand for Welsh-medium provision, given that post-16 Welsh-medium learner numbers have continued to decline rapidly year-on-year despite previous interventions and investment?

2. How will future planning ensure that provision is both sustainable and responsive to the specific factors contributing to this decline?

3. The existing links with Cymoedd for JAs is very positive. Would the school intend to collaborate further with Coleg y Cymoedd to broaden the offer available to learners (particularly for vocational subjects)?

4. There is a decline in sixth form demand so please provide evidence to support why the sixth form proposed has such a big capacity.

5. Please provide assurance that RCT have followed collaboration, partnership and alignment with the broader Welsh Medium Tertiary landscape in RCT.

#### **LA response:**

1. On the 17th of October 2025, Medr invited bids for its Strategic Development Fund for the academic year 2025/26. The fund aims to encourage collaboration within the tertiary education sector and is set at £5 million. Bids were asked to address themes that align with Medr's strategic aims and must be new projects with no part having started. In collaboration with RCT's four Welsh Medium Secondary Education providers, a Rhondda Cynon Taf LA bid was submitted to develop the curriculum offer post-16 for Welsh Medium Learners in our

school 6th forms. On 14th January 2026, RCT received confirmation we had been successful in our bid.

The aims of the project are to increase equitable access, breadth, and continuity of Welsh-medium post-16 provision by widening qualification pathways and enrichment and curriculum opportunities to use Welsh across academic, vocational, creative, scientific, and workplace contexts. Also, to strengthen trainee teacher experience in Welsh-medium settings to support the development and sustainability of the future bilingual workforce.

The funding will:

- Enhance strategic leadership of Welsh-medium post-16 provision and greatly enhance learner choice and experience.
- Build capacity and sustainability through the strategic dissemination and collaborative delivery.
- Develop scalable, high-quality post-16 hybrid curriculum models responsive to learner demand and choice.
- Strengthen progression routes, aligning school, FE, HE, and industry.

By strengthening strategic collaboration between Welsh medium 6<sup>th</sup> forms, FE institutions, HE providers, industry and employers, this project will improve access to and enhance the quality and sustainability of Welsh-medium post-16 provision. It aims to create coherent, attractive and accessible Welsh-medium pathways that support learners to progress to further study, training and employment whilst maintaining and developing their Welsh language skills. This directly impacts the future workforce and our nation's ambition to deliver Cymraeg 2050.

Further collaboration work with Coleg y Cymoedd is underway to look at broadening and enhancing the offer available to learners, offering the JA through the medium of Welsh.

This project aims to develop strategic leadership of post-16 collaboration between the Cyfleoedd+ Cooperative and identified tertiary sector partners (i.e. USW Network 75, Reading Scholars, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Trinity St David's) to develop innovative curriculum and enrichment opportunities, and shared curriculum models and hybrid resources. This provision will deliver a sustainable model across the region, securing improved and equitable learner choice, stronger bilingual pathways, and long-term progress toward Cymraeg 2050 and Medr's strategic priorities.

2. Please see response to Question 1, above.

3. Please see response to Question 1, above.

4. Although the 6<sup>th</sup> form at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is experiencing a decline in learners at present, the capacity planning of new school developments is based on broader pupil forecasts, current and future needs of the area and requirements for flexible, and high-quality provision. The transition rates of learners between Key Stages Four and Five in both English and Welsh medium schools is challenging as learners decide to pursue work, training and vocational opportunities.

However, projection figures for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda's Years 12 and 13 indicate a consistent number, with an increase projected in 2028/29. Recognising the importance of **'Cymraeg 2025: A Million Welsh Speakers'** and the ambitions within **RCT's WESP**, the capacity of 150 pupils has been built in to allow for the fluctuations over time, including the ambition of future rises.

The new school facilities will include attractive and modern sixth form spaces, including an independent 6<sup>th</sup> form study area; social area; coffee shop and multi-gym, which along with wider facilities (brand-new all-weather pitch, MUGAs, science laboratories etc.) will make the school a very attractive Welsh-medium option for pupils / parents / carers.

5. Please see response to Question 1, above.

#### **Policy Area: Early Years, Childcare and Play**

Positive to read that the proposal supports the local community to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. Would this include children and young people access to improved play and recreational spaces / activities?

#### **LA / College response:**

In line with Welsh Government policy – particularly the **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**, **Planning Policy Wales** and the **Curriculum for Wales**, the new school development at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda will promote health, wellbeing and active lifestyles. The provision of high quality outdoor and indoor facilities will strengthen the existing opportunities for the pupils, staff and the wider community.

The re-development of the school will enhance accessibility and inclusivity ensuring facilities are suitable for a wide range of needs and abilities. The school has excellent links with the community and neighbouring Cymmer Primary School, Flying Start setting, The Rainbow Room as well as several community organisations and groups. These relationships will be strengthened with the new facilities being modern, attractive and fully accessible.

The much-improved outdoor areas, now including an all-weather pitch and Multi Use Games Areas as well as improved internal facilities will enable grassroots activities to thrive and flourish.

#### **Policy Area: Environment & Local Government & Planning**

Please outline how you have followed the Planning Policy Wales stepwise approach to biodiversity as included in your Green Infrastructure Statement as part of your planning process (20/01/26).

#### **LA / College response:**

We have followed the Stepwise Approach as follows:

1. AVOID – where possible we have avoided GI loss on site, especially to the periphery of the school grounds where most of the existing GI occurs. As part of the GI strategy, we have avoided any development works within the northern woodland area, to

maintain the flora and fauna of this area.

2. MINIMISE – Some GI will need to be lost for the development, mainly the loss of 40 trees and 1 No tree group to the south of the site, and some amenity grassed areas to deal with the phasing of the project. Wherever possible we have minimised loss.
3. MITIGATE/RESTORE – A variety of new biodiverse GI is proposed to mitigate any loss or to enhance retained GI, concentrating on creating new north-south and east-west corridors, which includes tree planting (more than the required 1:3 replanting ratio), hedges, shrubs, species-rich grassland and SuDS planting. Species are chosen for being climate resilient and where possible native and locally relevant.
4. COMPENSATE ON SITE – The above planting types will be implemented within the school boundary, and overall, they provide the holistic net gain for biodiversity.
5. COMPENSATE OFF SITE – the proposals plan to compensate within the masterplan, however there may be opportunities in the future to compensate outside of the site boundary in the local environs.



### **Policy Area: Regeneration**

Given that Town Centre First has not been explicitly covered in the FBC, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of how the links will be strengthened between the school and Porth town centre, so businesses can gain maximum benefit from this investment.

### **LA / College response:**

With Porth town centre facing challenges common to many town centres, connecting education, business and regeneration plans to the new school development will actively contribute to Porth's social and economic resilience, as well as providing greater opportunities for pupils.

The redevelopment of the school aligns directly with the Porth Town Centre Strategy, which aims to create a place where people want to live, work, and visit. The proximity of the school's location supports this goal by encouraging increased footfall in the area. This, in turn, will provide a boost to local businesses, attracting more visitors and supporting the regeneration of the main retail area.

Significant investment is being made into Porth town centre, with initiatives to bring empty buildings back into use for both commercial and housing purposes. The redevelopment of the school complements this broader effort. Funding streams such as the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns initiative, Social Housing Grant, and the United Kingdom Government's Shared Prosperity Fund are already being utilised to revitalise the town. By enhancing the town's infrastructure and economy, these initiatives will also support the community that the school serves. The recently developed Porth Transport hub is a short walk from the school and staff will be encouraged to use sustainable transport as part of the school's Travel Plan. It is hoped while travelling through the high street, the offer within the town will be attractive and encourage local spend from pupils and staff alike.

There are established links between Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda and the business community of Porth town centre, and the school's aim is to enhance these. With the new school benefiting from a fully accessible school with dedicated community access, the school intend to make facilities available for business community meetings and/or town centre events. It is intended the links will be further expanded, establishing the opportunity for work experience schemes, apprenticeships and work-related learning opportunities to embed the town centre businesses into the curriculum.