

<b>MEETING</b>	FULL COUNCIL
<b>DATE</b>	01 March 2012
<b>TITLE</b>	Twenty First Century Schools Programme Plans
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Ensure the support to move ahead with the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Plans and the publication of the appropriate Statutory Notices
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Support the proposal and recommendations
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director
<b>PORTFOLIO LEADER</b>	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts

This report was presented to the Board on 14 February 2012, and was referred to Full Council. The report is attached as presented to the Board.

<b>MEETING</b>	COUNCIL BOARD
<b>DATE</b>	14 February 2012
<b>TITLE</b>	Twenty First Century Schools Programme Plans
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Ensure the support of the Board to move ahead with the 21st Century Schools Programme Plans and the publication of the appropriate Statutory Notices
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Support the proposal and recommendation
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<b>PORTFOLIO LEADER</b>	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Leader

## **I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the situation of the Welsh Government's funding programme - the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme, and to seek the support of the Board to proceed with the investment programme.
- 1.2 Board Members will recall that the Welsh Government invited Local Authorities to submit an Outline of a Strategic Programme - Twenty-first Century Schools Programme in December 2010. In accordance with the decision of the Board at its meeting held 14/12/2010, the Council submitted its proposal at that time. The delay by the Welsh Government in reaching its decision on these applications was reported to the Council Board on 26/7/2011, and it was decided to reserve Council funds to proceed with some specific schemes.
- 1.3 During October 2011 guidance was received from the Welsh Government regarding the next steps in the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme. The main messages from this guidance were the following points:
- The Twenty-first Century Schools Programme will collect together all the funding for capital resources within the education sector into one investment fund.
  - The first round of funding is extended for a period of 6 /7 years.
  - It was noted that Authorities would be expected to contribute 50% towards investment packages, and that there would be a 50% contribution from the Welsh Government. This means that the authorities and the Welsh Government would be investing the same amount as part of the programme.
- 1.4 In response to this guidance, Gwynedd Council's application was prepared in line with the decision of the Board at its meeting of 22/11/2011.
- 1.5 A statement was made by the Government Minister on 5 December 2011 identifying which of the submitted plans had been successful. It was announced that Gwynedd Council had successfully secured an investment envelope worth more than £36 million. It is noted that the following schemes were successful;

<b>SCHEME</b>	<b>COST OF SCHEME (Estimate)</b>
Berwyn	£10.27m
Y Gader	£3.60m
Special Education Scheme and Residential Scheme	£12.40m
Groeslon	£4.84m
Glan Cegin	£5.11m
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£36.22m</b>

## 2. UPDATE

- 2.1 After the announcement before Christmas, the Education and Skills Minister made a further statement reinforcing the commitment of the Government to the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme (Minister's statement – January 17 – Appendix 1).
- 2.2 As explained at the time of the original application, some of the plans submitted by the Council were at varying degrees of preparedness. Indeed, some of the plans had been prepared since the time of making the original application for funding back in December 2010.
- 2.3 The Board will be aware of the decision of the Full Council to proceed with plans for schools in the Berwyn catchment area (meeting of the Full Council 12/5/2011). The Council has decided to develop a Lifelong Learning Campus in Bala and invest in the remaining rural school of Ffridd y Llyn, Bro Tryweryn and O.M. Edwards. The Board will also be aware of the decision of the eastern part of the Gader catchment area (Full Council meeting 15/12/2011). To date, no statutory notices have been published for the relevant proposals in these catchment areas as we are expecting clarity regarding the funding that has been earmarked for the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme.
- 2.4 To this end, discussions were held with the Government about the best way of moving forward to publish the statutory notices where a decision has been made by the Council to do so. It became apparent during the discussions that other Local Authorities (such as Caerphilly) are in a similar situation, and by now there is a suggestion by the Government that they consider looking to accelerate the funding of certain projects (Appendix 1).
- 2.5 The option was discussed that it might be possible to proceed with the plans using the Council's funding and then re-claiming the Government's share of the money in due course. Government officials noted that there would be a process to follow before releasing the funding, but that the exact details of the process were yet to be confirmed. As part of the process a clear work program for the successful plans of the County must be ensured.
- 2.6 As with the situation in the Dolgellau catchment area, implementing the plan in the Berwyn catchment area will happen gradually. Consultation was carried out to establish the Lifelong Learning Campus by 2015, and to develop Ysgol O.M. Edwards in order to receive the pupils of Ysgol y Parc by 2012. It was decided by the Board

(26/7/2011) to allow the closure date of Ysgol y Parc to slip to 2013 in the face of the timetabling of the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme.

- 2.7 Following discussions with the Welsh Government – a statement was received noting that funding had been earmarked for realising the Council’s vision for the catchment area as part of its financial programme, and that there is now a process to be followed before the government’s proportion is released. The cost of developing the Lifelong Campus is much higher (£8.1m) than the cost of developing Ysgol O.M. Edwards, Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn (up to £1.3m), with an extra (£850,000) contingency fund. The Board already discussed details of these plans (14/12/2010) and has already decided (in its meeting on 26/7/2011) to proceed with traffic improvements in Ysgol O.M. Edwards.
- 2.8 Given the fact that resources are now in place, and as an initial step, it is recommended moving forward and ensuring that Ysgol Ffridd y Llyn, Bro Tryweryn and O.M. Edwards are upgraded and to re-claim the matched funding in accordance with Government guidance. This application is made so that it is possible to secure the resources to be able to proceed with improvements, and to do the preparatory work and plans for these improvements.
- 2.9 Regarding the situation of the Multi-Site Area School in the east of the Gader catchment area in Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy, there is concern that any further delay would create uncertainty and problems. During the discussion, the fragility of the situation in Ieuan Gwynedd and Machreth schools was emphasised, in terms of numbers (the present numbers in both are 16 each). There is real concern about the situation of the schools, and the need to proceed with the decision made by the Council is noted.
- 2.10 During the delay by the Welsh Government referred to above – the Board in its meeting on 26/7/2011 decided to reserve a sum (approx. £1.5m) to develop the Area School in eastern Dolgellau. Of course in the meantime, the opportunity arose to use this funding as a way of drawing additional funding from the Government through the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme. In line with decisions already taken, therefore, it is intended to proceed to develop the sites of the Area School, and to publish the notices for eastern Gader.
- 2.11 Members are reminded that the funding through the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme is 50% from the Government and 50% by the Council. Following the discussions held, the Government published a statement noting positively that it would be possible to proceed with the process of using the money invested to draw matched funding subject to fulfilling the steps that are still to be confirmed.
- 2.12 The broad guidance by the Government provides an outline framework in relation to the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme, and the Council awaits more detailed information. It could be argued that there is a small risk in this, but we are of the opinion that, it is wise to move ahead forward in realizing the decisions the Council has already made. Therefore, weighing the risks of action and inaction, the following is recommended.
- 2.13 In addition, the Council realises the need to move forward with the remaining successful plans, and acknowledge the need to move forward with the Lifelong

Learning Campus plans in Bala town, improvements to Ysgol Cynradd Dolgellau, and new Ysgol Hafod Lon, Groeslon area and Glancegin. A clear work program needs to be constructed with clear milestones for the remaining plans which are subject to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Publish statutory notices in accordance with Council decisions, and subject to the the statutory process outcome move on with the appropriate expenditure in rural schools of the Berwyn area (O.M. Edwards, Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn), and in the rural, eastern part of the Dolgellau area (Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy site).
- 3.2 Develop a clear work program and milestones for the County's plans (Lifelong Learning Campus plans in Bala town, improvements to Ysgol Cynradd Dolgellau, a new Ysgol Hafod Lon, Groeslon area and Glancegin) which are the financial subject of the Twenty-first Century Schools Programme.

## Opinion of the Statutory Officers:

### 1. Chief Executive

“Now that the Welsh Government has confirmed the availability of funds for the project the Board has a duty to expedite the decision of the Council to take the first steps to ensure the sustainability of education in the Berwyn area”

### 2. Monitoring Officer

“The original decision to release Statutory Notices was made by the Council in May following a consultation period, which is a statutory requirement. Implementing this decision was dependant upon securing the appropriate capital funds. The guidance for the organisation process, specifically in the School Organisation Circular, couples the availability of appropriate funds and releasing specific statutory notices. The recommendation meets this request from the perspective of releasing the statutory notices as regards the specific schools noted. It also has to be noted that delaying the implementation of this decision could effect upon the legal risks which are associated with completing this process”.

### 3. Chief Finance Officer

“The Welsh Government has devised and established a "5 case model" as a procedure in order to approve and distribute Twenty First Century School grants, which means considerable work preparing business cases and delay before receiving official approval of the grants. In paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12, the Corporate Director's report highlights the risk of moving forward in spending the Council's corresponding money (£1.3m for the development of O.M. Edwards, Ffridd Y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn, together with about £1.5m for the development of the Multi-Site Area School in the eastern part of Dolgellau) before official confirmation of the Welsh Government's contribution and the relevant grant's conditions.

The Welsh Government has firmly committed to its "5 case model", but it is not yet known what the conditions of relevant spending will be. I understand an officer's word was received that early spending by the Council would be eligible as (50%) match in order to claim the grant's subsequent contribution, but we have not received written confirmation of this. Members of the Board will have to balance the risks of implementing soon (possibility, but low probability, of missing the chance to claim £1.4m of the grant) against the risk of waiting and the advantages of moving forward.

However, one thing is already clear by discussing the “5 case model” with the Welsh Government, which is, unless the Council starts on the re-organisation process of relevant schools, the certainty is that the Twenty First Century Schools grant won't be available at all.”

## APPENDIX I

The Minister for Education and Skills Statement : Twenty-first Century Schools  
17/1/2012

Source : <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber-fourth-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=229547&ds=1%2F2012#06>

### The Record

**The Minister for Education and Skills (Leighton Andrews):** My statement today is to provide Members with an update on the progress made and our continuing commitment in line with our programme of government to fund high-quality buildings and ICT provision through the twenty-first century schools programme.

In July last year, I issued an update statement on the progress of the twenty-first century schools programme, which, at the time, reflected the difficult decisions that were necessary in moving the programme forward as a result of the significant reduction in capital funding available to the Welsh Government. However, despite the reduction in capital funding, every project that has been approved by my department under the transitional stage of twenty-first century schools is being delivered and will be delivered over the next two years. This programme, as a precursor to twenty-first century schools, will dovetail into the new programme, which is planned to start in the financial year 2014-15.

Following my July 2011 statement, local authorities were asked to review and resubmit their forward outline programmes of investment that underpin their strategic outline programmes against sharper prioritisation criteria, for example, rationalisation of the school estate, including a reduction in surplus places, together with the cost-effectiveness of delivery and alignment with our all-age transformation programme. I also signalled the Welsh Government's intention that the maximum rate of grant support would be set at 50%. As I announced in a written statement in December, I am pleased to say that local authorities met that challenge and have reassessed and prioritised their investment proposals in line with published guidance, and Department for Education and Skills officials met every authority prior to submission of their investment programmes. Authorities' outline programmes of investment seek to address not only the poor condition and surplus capacity in the school estate, but also any investment required for additional learning needs, Welsh-medium education and faith-based school provision.

The twenty-first century schools programme underlines our close working partnership with colleagues in local government, the Welsh Local Government Association, diocesan directors of the voluntary aided sector and CollegesWales. It is through this partnership working that a capital programme has been agreed that ensures that all 22 local authorities will receive Welsh Government grant support of some £700 million per year over a seven-year period, commencing in 2014-15. That said, it will be our intention, where funds allow, to bring forward individual capital projects at an earlier stage. This investment will build upon the £415 million of capital investment that is already being provided by the Welsh Government from the transitional funding programme.

Authorities have been given the security of a long-term capital programme, and that is vital in the current economic climate. The investment in schools announced in December 2011 also sends a positive message to the construction industry that this Government is planning for the long term, and investment in our schools will provide much-needed support to the Welsh economy.

The twenty-first century schools programme will encourage local authorities to secure community benefits, such as training and apprenticeship opportunities, through the adoption of a community benefits approach to procurement, which includes equality of opportunity, local supply chain opportunities, especially for smaller organisations, and positive environmental impacts.

I will continue to work with the Minister for Finance on the issue of securing additional capital, including the development of alternative sources of funding. Collaboration across the Welsh public sector is essential to ensure that we deliver the strategic projects and programmes that will have the greatest impact on the Welsh economy both in terms of direct employment and educating our future workforce.

It is important that we look to maximise our investment of the Welsh pound, as, by 2014-15, the Welsh Government's capital budget will be almost 50% lower in real terms than it was in 2009-10. We will look to explore more effective design of school buildings to make our investment work harder, and my officials are already meeting leading architectural organisations within and outside Wales to explore innovative ways of delivering schools for the twenty-first century.

The announcement of nearly £1.4 billion is an important contribution to the Wales infrastructure investment plan, identifying and prioritising our investment into the schools estate through the twenty-first century schools programme.

Finally, it is important to recognise how far we have come since the launch of the twenty-first century schools programme in March 2010. Securing capital investment in these difficult economic times is essential, not only for better education outcomes, but also for improving the economy of our communities.

I want schools in Wales to be places that inspire our young people, that can accommodate twenty-first century technology, and that can be adapted to meet the changing needs of learners in a rapidly developing knowledge economy. Schools also need to be resources for their local communities, and they need to work seamlessly and coherently with providers of education and training.

My statement underlines our commitment, as a Welsh Government, to improving the lives of people in Wales. I am pleased to expand further on the statement that we made in December.