

# OUTLINE BRIEF FOR A TWO-STOREY CIVIL CONTINGENCY-BASED EXTENSION TO Y MORFA LEISURE CENTRE, KINMEL BAY

- Draft paper July 2009 -

## Board of Kinmel Bay and Towyn Sports and Recreation Association



**Above:** OpTIC Technium St Asaph provides a local precedent for the potential also present at Kinmel Bay Y Morfa Leisure Centre for a low carbon footprint two-storey building thanks to a long south-facing wall with capacity for large quotas of solar gain and PV panelling.

## 1. SUMMARY

An outline design brief is presented for a substantial extension to the Y Morfa Leisure Centre in Kinmel Bay that, while satisfying the need to serve as a two-storey refuge for the entire population of infant and junior schools in the event of an imminent flood warning or unexpected flooding event during school hours, will also capture maximum benefit to the schools themselves and to the wider community – this being a task that embraces the wider context of Conwy's four-year Corporate Plan and its community development strategy, and of the current EU convergence funding programme.

Within these parameters and constraints there would seem to be potential for a flagship project to help the Towyn/Kinmel Bay community embrace the holistic vision of becoming one that - in conjunction with other measures - chooses to use the threat of climate change to transform its status from that of being looked down upon as doomed to be an insoluble climate change problem into that of being looked up to as a healthily adapted leading-edge part of the solution.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The general rationale for the proposed set of five two-storey refuges for the vulnerable on Morfa Rhuddlan has been set out in an accompanying paper that addresses the original Welsh Office objections to the All-Party Commons Select Committee recommendations for the building-in and planning-in of resilience to the floodplain community, and if adopted into the current EU Convergence Funding programme would (it is hoped) give the area an adaptational building programme that helps bring it up-to-date with the 2004 UK Civil Contingencies Act.

Of the five proposed refuge sites, the Y Morfa Leisure Centre is one of three potentially identified for fast-tracking in view of the fact that there are no inherent problems or likely delays with land ownership. Furthermore, in view of the schools modernisation programme (a high priority in the Corporate Plan) the potential for cross-benefits to the adjacent schools would also seem to favour prioritisation.

It is worth reminding non-local readers that the first knowledge of the 1990 flood event to that generation of primary schoolchildren was of seawater entering their classrooms. As levels quickly rose, children were obliged to sit on their desks awaiting rescue. Furthermore, afterwards a rescue coach to which children had been transferred became immobilised in the still-rising floodwater because the driver forgot to keep his engine running.

The Y Morfa Leisure Centre has a history dating back to the flood aftermath and marking it out as different from other leisure complexes within Conwy, involving as it did in 1991 the setting-up of a specially formed local (Kinmel Bay & Towyn) Sports & Recreation Association (KBTSRA) as a limited company with executive powers not just to use the Flood Disaster residue but to match those moneys with other funds in order to commission suitable building designs. Even now, although the everyday running of the complex is managed by Conwy's Leisure Services, this is by permission of the KBTSRA Board, to whom Conwy's Leisure Services remain accountable.

The present arrangement, while placing considerable responsibility on members of this Board, still provides unique opportunities for partnership working with user-groups, of a kind that (theoretically at least) continues to dynamise usage of the Centre, and to mean that it should remain highly attractive from the viewpoint of capturing further matching investment from grant-making bodies – a fact recognised by the Board itself in a recent resolve to seek to appoint a part-time project officer to identify funding options for extension work.

There is also confidence that the Heads of the two schools would be in support of a programme to build an extension, on the presumption that this would add educational value and opportunity at a time when (as mentioned above) schools modernisation is to the fore. Nevertheless, it must be recognised by Conwy that the role of the Board in setting up this proposed extension is one thing, but its sustainable continuance is quite another, and while the KBTSRA Board wishes to involve the education department and Heads as closely as possible in the building programme, a business plan must be set out that is realistic and fair to all parties in terms of recognising the revenue costs of providing extra services to the schools.

### 3. REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT TO DATE, AND OF A RECENT VISIONING SESSION

To date the Y Morfa Sports & Leisure Centre's development has been a three-stage one:

- (i) 1995: building of the core multi-use indoor complex with small front office and basic toilet & changing block to S side: also drainage of outside area to create football fields, small basic front car-park.
- (ii) 1999/2000: addition of two squash courts, all-weather cricket pitch, safe-route to school shared-use pathway crossing the E side of the sports field and entrance driveway means that despite or because of an enlarged carpark, for legal protection reasons a lockable gate has to be fitted at the entrance.
- (iii) 2006: addition of lit outdoor MUGA area.

The *strengths* of the present situation include good basic facilities for outdoor use, especially for junior football tournaments, as well as indoor cricket nets, while *weaknesses* include high heating costs and inadequate community and restroom/café, office and storage facilities – i.e. the classic 'half-full, half-empty glass syndrome'.

A visioning exercise in January 2009 between Conwy's Head of Leisure Services, the Manager of the Centre and members of the KBTSRA Board identified various options in terms of looking for how a new building programme could help build up the Centre's overall programme of activity and its accompanying business plan, it being agreed in principle to aim to boost the 'critical mass factor' in terms of usage alongside a business plan that would aim at justifying longer opening hours and a staffing rate of 2½ rather than 1½ FTE workers.

The upshot has been a realisation by the Board that a fundamental choice now confronts it of *either* continuing with piecemeal development, probably on just a one-storey basis, of (for example) a community area and office building in front of the present toilet and changing-room side-block, with to the rear of it a multi-use indoor games & fitness room, *or* going from the start for a single, more radical and all-inclusive two-storey extension based on demolition of the existing toilet and changing-room block.

A major disadvantage of the piecemeal approach is that it can do nothing to reduce or contain heating costs - already a major economic brake on staffing and usage of the Centre as a whole. By contrast - given successful trawling for suitable technical advice and funding opportunities for the extra cost of solar panels or wind turbines, groundsource heatpumps etc - a 'new-build' approach to the extension work could place the whole Centre on a much healthier economic basis. Here it was felt that, granted the emphasis on educational aspects of climate change adaptation, the close involvement and co-operation of the schools could be an important factor moving the debate forwards towards acceptance of the holistic approach. Clearly the two-storey refuge idea is a further argument that to a large clinches the issue - except of course that access, design and building plans still need to be drawn up and agreed....

#### **4. DESIGN AND ACCESS BRIEF FOR EXTENSION LAYOUT AND POWER SOURCES FOR LIGHTING AND HEATING**

Unlike the conventional situation, it is suggested that to fulfil the two-storey refuge requirement the Design & Access process must first focus on the upper rather than lower storey, as follows:-

(i) On the upper storey there must be two main rooms, W and E, each with separate stairway access and with floor-sitting space for one of the two schools. These should be separated by a services section, which may include toilets and a shared kitchen. The main rooms may be compartmented by movable dividing walls, in a manner yet to be determined through negotiation with the KBTSRA Board and with the two schools' governors as regards an agreed list of multipurpose requirements, as well as with Conwy's emergency planning service.

(ii) For the W upper room, the KBTSRA Board has ideas for a corner balcony that faces both W and S, so that spectators can look out onto activities taking place on either of the two main sports areas. If this main room is therefore left with the smaller internal capacity it may be that it should be designated for the infant school. However that decision may also depend on where the services section is centred, and on whether for emergency egress it is decided that both main rooms must have a balcony.

(iii) Separate stairwells are required for each main room, leading up from a broad central passageway that must have a main entrance at the E end and an emergency exit at the W end.

(iv) The lower storey room layout will be based on the spatial footprint of these stairwells and of the central toilet and changing room block.

(v) For the residual lower-storey space, the main requirements are:-

- (a) to the E side, an office and a café/general purpose community room
- (b) to the W side, a general purpose indoor games/fitness room or store room.

(vi) Although general layout will take its cues from the upper storey downwards, structurally the design process clearly works the other way round, and in particular heating would need to be under-floor with any form of ground-source heat exchange.

(vii) The extension has its long side facing S, offering opportunities both for solar gain and for solar panel heating. Clearly a compromise is required that optimises both inputs while also giving preference to natural lighting. Meanwhile wind-power opportunities may well also be available.

(viii) Clearly biomass may provide a cheaper alternative or additional main supply of renewable energy that could also provide for the main hall and squash courts. If this choice is made, ducting for the required blowers should be incorporated into the extension's main passageway.

(ix) Good building performance during heat-waves must also be designed in, so air conditioning is unnecessary so far as possible.

**5. LIST OF POSSIBLE USES FOR EXTRA SPACE:** the following is by no means an exhaustive list but may help to start debate.

**5.1 EXERCISE CLASSES** e.g. Studio cycling  
Step aerobics  
Pilates  
50+ keep-fit  
Fitball  
Legs Bums & Tums  
Box exercise

**5.2 ‘FLYING START’ CLASSES** to be run with health visitor  
e.g. Baby massage  
Parental classes  
New mother cookery  
Healthy eating & nutrition

**5.3. CRECHE FACILITY** allowing & encouraging parents to take exercise

**5.4 GENERAL FUNCTION ROOM(S)** for hire use with parties etc

**5.5 MEETING ROOMS** - range of sizes

**5.6 ROOM FOR THEORY COACHING CLASSES** – e.g. in soccer or cricket, for use in association with excellent outdoor facilities during training or weekend competitive events etc.

**5.7 DANCE CLASSES**

**5.8 MARTIAL ARTS AND SELF-DEFENCE CLASSES**

**5.9 EXTRA CLASSROOM AND CONSULTATION SPACE FOR SCHOOLS**

**5.10 YOUTH CLUB WORK** – incorporation in the General Leisure Centre setting avoids stigma of ‘age-band separation’ and hence encourages good behaviour.

**5.11 CLIMBING WALL** – if suitable location

**5.12 INTEGRAL KITCHEN FACILITIES**, if used for tournaments etc rather than motorised vans should improve convenience and help to internalise income streams.

**5.13 TOILET & CHANGING FACILITIES:** inside/outside orientation downstairs will need careful thought. Upstairs toilets also needed.