



# Awards 2013 Case Study

Award Winner

## Value

Ysgol Yr Hendre - Caernarfon

The decision to use the imposing landmark of Caernarfon Castle as the inspiration for a new primary school might be seen as a means of intimidating young pupils in Llanbeblig, Gwynedd, into regular attendance. In fact, it was an inspired design solution to the problem of replacing the existing 1970s school with a new building on a very narrow site.



Gwynedd County Council employed Mold-based JIG Architects, who proposed taking pupils on a 'learning journey', by moving each year group through classrooms designed around a courtyard. The perfect design model for a long, narrow building with a courtyard at its centre was the local World Heritage Status-holding stronghold of Caernarfon Castle.

The £9.3 million Ysgol Yr Hendre project was the first in the Council's 21st Century Schools modernisation programme and winner of CEW's 2013 Award for Value.

"Value in our terms doesn't immediately translate to value for money," said Richard Farmer, project manager of the programme for Gwynedd County Council. "The Welsh government's agenda for community benefits encompasses the value of the building to the community and the value of the process to the community."

So, from the outset, there was considerable emphasis on the way the project was conducted, putting local employment, training and a local supply chain high on the agenda. Procured under a design and build contract with Wynne Construction as main contractor, building got underway in December 2010.

By the time it was opened to its 450 pupils in March 2012, 83% of labour costs had been spent on people living within Wales and 79% of the contract spend had gone to Welsh businesses. Of the suppliers used, 71% were located within 20 miles of the site.

High unemployment in the area contrasted with a skills shortage within the building industry. This dichotomy provided the council with a strong incentive to use the project as an opportunity for work experience and skills development, to inspire local people to become a part of the construction labour market.

As a result, 56 apprenticeship weeks were completed, involving five apprentices and six people studying for relevant NVQs. And a further element of value was lent by Wynne Construction providing more than £3,000 in sponsorship to community groups based around the site.

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## Richard Farmer

Project Manager Gwynedd County Council.

Extensive local consultation was undertaken from the start - including 1,500 newsletters sent to 500 households, meetings, site tours and an open day. This ensured the completed building fulfilled its role as a community amenity and base for services for young people. Demand for the facilities has more than justified its provision: within the first 18 months of opening, 4,500 hours of use had been clocked up by external bodies, generating an income for the school of more than £10k.

Input from teaching staff was particularly important in the design of the building and led to an emphasis on natural daylight and ventilation, as well as classrooms with walls that fold back to create flexible space within the school. Passivhaus principles producing high levels of insulation and air-tightness, and use of innovative low carbon technology delivered a BREEAM Excellent building that will reduce running costs in the long term.

The vision that emerged from these early discussions of a modern, high-quality and sustainable multi-use facility remained intact despite a cut of £2m from the original budget, forcing a redesign. This was made possible by close collaboration within the project team and a value engineering process that resulted in a solution using Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs) with no loss of performance or quality.

The fact that the SIPs panel system was manufactured off site and could be put up extremely quickly was all the more convenient faced with further unforeseen complications. Nationally significant archaeological remains connected to the nearby Roman fort of Segontium were discovered on the school site, causing a delay that unfortunately shifted the construction start date to the winter period which compounded an already very tight timescale.

“We were incredibly fortunate in the way Wynne Construction worked in partnership with us, the designers and the supply chain,” said Richard Farmer. “Despite the disruption and delays, they delivered the finished project a month in advance of the end date.”

With the success of this first project in the scheme, another school opened in September 2013, with further schools in the pipeline, all with community benefit integral to the brief rather than a mere add-on.

“Ysgol Yr Hendre is a showpiece of 21st century school design and is an exemplar for the County’s reorganisation programme. The CEW award for value has been extremely important to all parties involved. It adds strength to our argument that value as a measure of the project’s contribution to the wider community is the way forward,” concluded Richard.

