

Technical excellence

Charles Barrington, Chairman of the Metrix consortium, explains the projected benefits of the Defence Technical College at St Athan...

Of the thousands of young men and women who will be coming to St Athan to train in such vital skills as communications and aeronautical and electromechanical engineering, the skills that they learn and hone at the Defence Technical College (DTC) will be of immediate importance to their role in the UK's armed forces.

Whatever corner of the globe they find themselves in, or whatever they might be confronted with, the training provided to these future servicemen and women at St Athan will greatly underpin their operational capability.

Another benefit will be that the efficiencies brought about by the DTC will help release 1,200 personnel from their training role to the front line, thus significantly benefiting the services' operational capability at home and abroad.

Beyond their time as servicemen and women, these future DTC trainees will eventually move on to develop careers in the civilian employment marketplace, where it is fully expected that they will find their civilian career prospects enhanced. It is worth reflecting that even today 70% of those leaving the services are in employment within one month, and 94% within six months. One of the principle goals at St Athan is that the DTC will improve on these statistics and produce people with highly desirable and



The TALRC, Training Administration and Learning Resource Centre, at the future Defence Technical College (DTC) in St Athan

readily transferable skills for the civilian marketplace. Indeed, we will have some of the best resources on hand to make it happen. However, arguably of greater importance is the fact that the DTC has the real potential to become a model for training in this country.

How do we intend to do this? In short, by ensuring that we are always at the leading edge of technology in training delivery and that we motivate and inspire young learners. The DTC will contrast significantly with the 'chalk and talk' classroom environment in which so many of us have grown up.

The DTC promises to breathe life into the much talked about and discussed 'classroom of the future' model, which has for many years now been anticipated by futurologists and leaders in the education community.

Implementing new teaching technology into the facility is a major priority, and DTC classrooms will incorporate e-learning, training simulations and on-the-job conventional training technologies. An efficient modern workshop environment will be fully integrated with classroom work, delivering the essential hand skills and operating techniques that are required to operate and maintain modern military hi-tech equipment.

Interactive training technologies will be installed and trainers will be coached in making the maximum use of the new media. Training courses can be webcast on the



An artist's impression of a typical classroom at the future Defence Technical College

internet allowing the training materials to be 'sent' to the trainee, rather than always having the trainee travel to the DTC. Some training material may even be sent to trainees' mobile devices, such as iPods, in order to facilitate further study outside the classroom.

Most importantly, the commitment to a wholly new training system provides greater flexibility to pass better trainees faster through to front-line commands. Combined with training conducted in a joint service environment, it will improve the armed forces' ability to respond to changing requirements.

The DTC is an exciting venture and it is the firm belief of Metrix and the MoD that St Athan will become an educational and training model, which will ultimately produce, in the words of the Leitch Review of Skills, '...world leadership in skills which will enable the UK to compete with the best'.

Working toward planning submission for the Defence Technical College (DTC)

MoD St Athan, located in the Vale of Glamorgan, has been an integral part of the local community for over 70 years. Under the Defence Training Review (DTR), it has been selected by the MoD to become the home of the Defence Technical College, alongside an associated Aerospace Business Park promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government. Together they represent one of the most significant projects ever to have been undertaken in South Wales. Recognising the considerable impact that a development of this scale could have on the surrounding area, Metrix, the Welsh Assembly Government and the MoD made communication and consultation with the local community a priority in the run up to the submission of the planning applications. A team of external consultants were brought onboard in late spring 2008 to manage and direct a comprehensive community consultation programme, which enabled members of the public and local stakeholders to understand and contribute to the evolving masterplan for the development.

From July 2008, until the submission of the planning applications in early May 2009, an ongoing programme of consultation was implemented, including the distribution of newsletters, a regularly updated website, workshops and a series of public exhibitions. In addition, a dedicated consultation phone line and email address made it as easy as possible for comments to be made and questions asked.

Phase 1 exhibitions

The first round of public exhibitions was held over five days in July 08. During that week, approximately 300 members of the public attended exhibitions in St Athan, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. Representatives from Metrix, the Welsh Assembly Government, the MoD and other specialist consultants were on hand to answer questions while exhibition materials provided background information. The exhibition also provided members of the public with their first opportunity to see and comment on the latest draft plan for the site. The St Athan team was delighted with the strong turnout and were particularly encouraged to hear that the overwhelming majority of people were keen to see the project progress and acknowledged the benefits that the DTC and Aerospace Business Park will bring to the region.

Workshops and interest groups

During the public exhibitions, it became clear that there were a number of key areas of interest to the local community and these formed the subjects of a series of four workshops and interest groups held in December 08 and February 09. These events provided an opportunity for the project team to discuss a number of topics in more depth with members of the local community and to seek their views on specific elements of the draft plan for the site's redevelopment. The two workshops focused on the subject areas of transport and community facilities and were attended by a total of well over 100 people. Attendees worked together in small groups led by a dedicated facilitator and discussed a range of topics relating to the overall subject area. This proved extremely constructive and many good ideas, questions and comments were tabled. The two interest groups were held in early 2009 and look in more detail at the subject areas of the environment and community welfare. The environmental interest group covered a broad range of issues including energy generation, recycling, green travel, ecology and pollution. The community welfare interest group focused on issues including employment, security, the training environment, housing and construction.

Phase 2 exhibitions

Following the workshops and interest groups, a second round of public exhibitions began at the end of March 2009, and over 200 people attended the events held in the villages of Llantwit Major, Cowbridge and Barry. The exhibitions enabled the project team to show how the views of the public and stakeholders, expressed at previous exhibitions, workshops, interest groups and via feedback forms, had been considered and where possible impacted on the evolving plans. It was also a further opportunity for the project team to capture the public's views ahead of submitting the planning application to the Vale of Glamorgan Council in May 2009.

Planning application submission

On 12th May 09, Metrix submitted the outline planning applications for the Defence Technical College and associated infrastructure to the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The submission of the planning application documents was marked by a special presentation at the council's offices attended by Duncan MacRae, Managing Director of Metrix Property, and representatives of the council. Following the submission of the planning applications, the council is undertaking a comprehensive, 16-week study of the proposals incorporating further public consultation during which the local community and stakeholders will be invited to give feedback on the plans directly to the council.

Metrix is a consortium of companies which is jointly led by technology-based services company QinetiQ and Sodexo, a facilities management company.



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