

As part of a series of features, the *Echo* will be taking a closer look at the inner workings of the Metrix consortium - the body tasked with delivering the Defence Technical College (DTC) in St Athan, in the Vale of Glamorgan. In this first feature, we look at the *Metrix Property* team and speak to Project Manager, Mike Grimmel.

The *Metrix Property* team is the name given to the part of the consortium that will deliver the planning and construction of the Defence Technical College (DTC) over the course of the next five years, as well as the crucial delivery of the support services for the rest of the concession period.

The delivery of a world class technical training environment for the UK's armed forces sits at the heart of what the property team has set out to achieve. Currently, the team is working hard to finalise the layout and design of the buildings that will form part of the planning application that will be submitted to the Vale of Glamorgan Council in May of this year.

Once operational, the new College will incorporate a diverse range of buildings, including a significantly refurbished Red Dragon Hangar together with purpose built classroom and lecturing facilities, all of which will have been designed to ensure students benefit from the very best in modern technical training.

At this juncture, important though the future is, we should reflect on the past. MoD St Athan first opened as a training centre in 1938 and ever since it has been the home of No 4 School of Technical Training (4STT). During World War II, there were some 5,000 trainee flight engineers on site, and between 1941 and 1951 around 22,000 British, Commonwealth and allied flight engineers trained and passed through St Athan.

Through the creation of the DTC, this legacy in training excellence will continue and ensure that the UK's armed forces receive the very best in technical training which is so critical in supporting their operations throughout the world.

Mike Grimmel, Project Manager in the *Metrix Property* team, explains: "Currently, specialist training in aeronautical and electro mechanical engineering and communication/IT disciplines takes place at nine different sites across the UK, producing some of the world's best trained military personnel. But to ensure this success continues, we cannot stand still and must address future needs and challenges.

"The DTC will achieve just this. It will be a wholly new type of training facility that will bring technical training to each of the armed services, Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Training will take place within purpose-built training facilities where buildings will be specifically designed to accommodate the latest training techniques and methodologies, whilst at the same time being flexible enough to facilitate the continually changing military training requirements of the future.

“Of course, as well as providing technical training, the DTC will also become a home for students during their time here. Accordingly, it will be important to provide all the facilities necessary to support them and keep them occupied outside of the training day. These will include first class sports and leisure facilities, a shop, a pub and places where students can relax and socialise.

“The interaction between MoD St Athan and the wider community is also of key importance and we are keen to play our part in ensuring the positive and strong relationship established with the surrounding community continues.

“While security is obviously a priority, we don’t want St Athan to become a ‘gated community’ that the public feels entirely cut off from. One element where the public and students and other service personnel will be able to interact is through the new sports and leisure facilities that will be created. While exact details are still to be confirmed, for set periods of time these facilities will be open to all. This will be of tremendous benefit to the local community and we hope the public will make full use of the facilities that will become available.”

So, on arriving at the newly completed DTC, what can a prospective ‘new student’ expect to see?

Mike continues: “Let me try to orientate the newcomer to the future DTC. The focal point for the site will be the Red Dragon Hangar. This was constructed around four years ago and was originally designed for aeronautical maintenance. Now, it is be given an exciting new lease of life. To put the size of this facility into perspective, the Red Dragon Hangar is big enough to contain six VC10 aircraft. Furthermore, it is perfectly laid out and equipped to carry out training on the aircraft and vehicles systems that it will contain, and within the classrooms that will be built in and around it.

“The classrooms in part will be located within the technical area so students will be able to look out at the aircraft and vehicles that they are learning about in addition to taking classes in purpose-built facilities that will be attached to the hangar.

“Students will stay in brand new accommodation that will provide a modern living environment where they can relax and further their studies.

“The design of all the buildings where students and support personnel will live, work and socialise will be integral to how the DTC will ultimately function. These buildings will proactively support the training that takes place. For a comparison, we can look to the excellent training environment that has been created at the Defence Academy at Shrivenham which was designed by the same team that will deliver the DTC.”

Mike concludes: “The DTC will be an environment that will attract and retain the service personnel of the future and will, we believe, project the right image and make the right impression on young people who want to develop a career in the Armed Forces.

“Overall, the vision of the DTC at St Athan is to ensure that all who train there as well as all those who provide the training and who help to manage the site, will be given the best facilities, the best tools and the best maintained environment that can be devised in a modern campus environment.”

Public Consultation:

An important element of the planning for the DTC has been to consult with the local community and gain their input into the evolving master plan.

Following public consultation in connection with the development brief in July 2008 which provided members of the public with their first opportunity to see and comment on the draft plan for the site reflecting their concerns from the initial consultation. During the week, approximately 300 members of the public attended the exhibitions. Many people took the time to make their views on the draft plans known and this feedback has been comprehensively analysed by the project team with a number of ideas and suggestions directly influencing the masterplan.

In December 2008, the St Athan project team held two public workshops which focused on community, facilities and transportation. The workshops proved extremely popular and together attracted well over 100 attendees.

The beginning of March saw two further interest groups taking place on the environment and community welfare, the latter covering employment, security, the training environment and housing. Again, the comments made at each of the workshops and Interest Groups will be compiled into reports which will be considered as part of the masterplanning process.

A second series of public exhibitions will be held in the later Spring of 2009 providing an opportunity for members of the public to view a much more detailed version of the draft plan, which will ultimately form part of a planning application that will be submitted to the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Dates and venues for the exhibitions will be confirmed soon and will be widely promoted.

For further information on the community consultation, please visit: www.st-athanconsultation.co.uk

Meet the team:



The core Metrix Property Services team are:

- Andy Garbutt - Procurement Strategy
- John Alexander - Transition
- Gemma Asplin - Finance and Forecasting
- Alastair Page - Design and Construction
- Tom Anderson - Project Director
- Mike Grimmel - Planning and Infrastructure
- Duncan MacRae - Development Director
- Claire Ruscoe - Senior Team Secretary