

Department of Education and Youth /SEAI Pathfinder Programme 2027 & 2028

Information Note for Programme Management Procurement

Climate Action Unit

14 September 2026

1.0 Introduction

The need for a flexible and tailored approach to heating decarbonisation of schools is critical to enable the school sector to achieve its 2030 and 2050 climate action targets. The decarbonisation of schools cannot be mapped out in one distinct approach, given the size, age and diversity of school buildings flexibility is required as there is no one size fits all plan that can be applied to all schools.

The Pathfinder Works Programme 2027 and 2028 will subject to approved funding consists of the following strands focusing on

1. Biomass decarbonisation heating upgrade programme.
2. Heat pump decarbonisation heating upgrade programme.

Capital Works value for both programmes is circa €60 million excluding VAT

The successful tenderers will be appointed to provide Programme Management (PrM) services to the programmes described below. Note; where projects do not progress, programme management fees will be adjusted accordingly, it is envisaged works will be split over the period of 2028 and 2029.

The successful Programme Managers will be working in close co-ordination with a dedicated Stakeholder Group and Technical Advisory (TA) team.

The Department of Education and Youth (DEY) and the SEAI reserve the right to transfer projects and funding allocation between the above two strands while maintaining the overall number of projects to be delivered.

The programme will develop for delivery up to **138 schools** in typically **20 separate bundles** with each bundle comprising of between 4 and 10 schools. These bundles will be for design team appointments, for contractor appointments these bundles will be split into smaller bundles. These bundles will typically be located in Carlow, Cork, Clare, Dublin, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Kildare, Limerick, Laois, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary and Waterford.

Design team appointments will be procured in two phases in 2027 and 2028. The works are envisaged to go to site typically over the following respective years.

The Programme Management (PrM) team will be responsible for the procurement & appointment of Mechanical & Electrical Engineering lead consultants (M&E consulting engineers), there will be multiple lead consultants appointed on a bundle basis to realise this programme.

The PrM role will involve project managing the M&E consulting engineers, technical advisory team, M&V specialist and ensuring works are carried out in 2028 and 2029.

As part of measurement and verification in conjunction with sub metering, a specialist shall be appointed to complete an engineering calculation for each of these upgrades for each school to record the energy and carbon estimated savings. The PrM will liaise as necessary with this specialist in relation to providing programme reports to the Stakeholder Group.

The M&E consulting engineers appointed to the programme projects will be responsible for full Stage 1-5 delivery as employer led designed projects. The PrM will create the procurement documents (SAQ, ITT, FTS, PIM, etc) and use the DEY etenders account, to create workspaces, upload, download documents and manage the tender queries. A prior information notice (PIN) will be required for these calls for tenders.

Design Teams to complete the full design pack (drawings and specifications) and pricing documents for tender. The PrM is to develop and agree the SAQ, ITTs and FTS requirements with the Steering Group and complete the standardised tender documentation (SAQ, ITT, FTS, PIM, etc) for each tender competition, rather than individual Design Teams. This will improve consistency and accuracy across standard tender documentation and expedite completion of the tender packs, supporting timely publication of tender competitions. Procurement tender queries will be responded to by the PrM and tender queries will be responded to be the design team.

The projects are to be delivered by a mechanical & electrical consulting engineering lead consultant who will be responsible for providing full-service delivery including any planning, archaeology and fire technical advises.

The consulting engineers will be required to demonstrate (by means of turnover, capacity, team structure etc.) that they are of a sufficient calibre and capacity to deliver a project of such value and complexity.

The appointed PrM will be responsible for the procurement of the consulting engineers for each bundle by means of an open tender procedure. Prior to embarking on the procurement process, the PrM will be required to develop a strategy that considers the procurement approach to appointment of the consulting engineers across all projects.

Each Consultant will be required to provide the following services: mechanical & electrical engineer (as design team lead, Employer's Representative, PSDP & (Ancillary certifier.)

The programme will be using DEY BIM requirements but design drawings will likely be in 2D given the scope of the works.

A Steering Group consisting of the project stakeholders, SEAI and DEY is in place. The appointed programme management service provider will provide oversight to the project through participation in and regular reporting to this Steering Group. The appointed service provider is expected to work closely with ETBs and schools in relation to the procurement, delivery and financial aspects of the project.

2.0 Biomass Decarbonisation Heating Upgrade Programme

This strand of the DEY/ SEAI Pathfinder 2027/2028 will target decarbonisation heating projects with biomass systems,

As part of measurement and verification in conjunction with sub metering, a specialist shall be appointed to complete an engineering calculation for each of these upgrades for each school to record the energy and carbon estimated savings. The PrM will liaise as necessary with this specialist in relation to providing programme reports to the Stakeholder Group.

It is proposed to progress the delivery of containerised biomass plant heating solutions targeting high energy usage schools, typical energy usage of more than 300,000kWh.

The programme will include the supply & installation of typically a 200/ 220 kW biomass prefabricated containerised units in the selected schools. Improved efficiency of support heating plant will also be included as part of this programme where required with the upgrade

of supporting heating plant to fully modulating boilers and controls to ensure optimisation of the decarbonised heating systems and unnecessary oversizing of the biomass plant.

The programme may include some adjoining schools with a single heat centre and some district heating connectivity. In these cases, the biomass plant may be larger than 220kW,

Where oil is the existing primary fuel, this will be removed and replaced by LPG to act as a back-up and support to the biomass heating system, as well as, if needed the existing schools boiler plant and controls heating system. The biomass energy cabin will be craned into a location adjacent to the existing school boiler house.

The delivery will be compatible with the Public Sector Biomass Pilot Scheme (PSBPS). As part of the heat purchase agreement an Energy Supply Company will maintain, service, replace parts and operate the system fully and sell the heat generated to the school. This agreement will be signed at the same time as the construction contracts.

There will be a single client for tendering of bundles and then the ESCO contracts will be signed individually with each school.

The M&E consulting engineer's responsibilities will include:

- The design incorporating the biomass containerised units into the installation, the supporting heating plant and controls.
- Planning permission, ESB upgrades (if required) & revised fire cert associated with the installation.
- Production of design documents for tendering the heating enabling contract works and the biomass unit and overseeing the installation of all works.
- Managing the PSBPS applications for the schools

The tender invitation will be issued, by the PrM, for the supply, installation, operation, fuel supply repair, replace parts and maintenance of the prefabricated containerised biomass units **separate** to the heating enabling contract. These will be bundled by geographical locations. The fuel supply, operation, repair, replace parts & maintenance contract will be with the individual School Authorities. Both contracts will be signed at the same time.

Design Teams to complete the full design packs (drawings and specifications) and pricing documents for both the heating enabling works and biomass cabin/ 15 year local energy

supply contract tenders. The PrM is to develop and agree the SAQ, ITTs and FTS requirements with the Steering Group and complete the standardised tender documentation (SAQ, ITT, FTS, PIM, LESC etc) for each tender competition, rather than individual Design Teams. This will improve consistency and accuracy across standard tender documentation and expedite completion of the tender packs, supporting timely publication of tender competitions. Procurement tender queries will be responded to by the PrM and tender queries will be responded to by the design team.

Under this programme, the biomass boiler and its associated fuel store are provided within an off-site constructed energy cabin. The energy cabin is purchased upfront by the Contracting Authority from an Energy Supply Company (the 'ESCO'), under a PWCF-5 contract. To ensure the long-term performance and reliability of the system, the ESCO that installs and commissions the biomass cabin will enter into a 15 year local energy supply contract with the school to operate, maintain, service, repair and replace failed components of the system.

The heating enabling contract works which will include any supporting heating plant and controls upgrades and the builders work. The ESCO will be responsible for all connection pipework associated with the prefabricated biomass unit.

3.0 Heat Pump Decarbonisation Heating Upgrade Programme

This strand of the DEY/ SEAI Pathfinder 2027/2028 will target decarbonisation heating projects, with the delivery of heat pump bivalent heating solutions targeting medium energy usage schools, typical energy usage less than 300,000kWh.

The objective of this heat pump programme is to install and evaluate a heating system where the heat pump is provided and designed to address a portion of the heating load, and a high efficiency boiler makes up the remaining load. Along with heat pump works, will include control system works and supporting boiler as required. Where oil is the existing primary fuel,

this will be removed and replaced by LPG to act in tandem with the heat pumps. This programme will typically tie into the largest boiler house in the school only.

The heat pump will be sized considering available electrical infrastructure and potential future phasing of heat loss reduction programme while ensuring school operation continues. This approach will support the phased integration of air source heat pump (ASHP) systems in the school in a risk controlled and reliable manner.

There will be a single client for tendering each bundle and then the contracts will be signed individually with each school.

The consulting engineers appointed to the programme projects will be responsible for full Stage 1-5 delivery as employer led designed schools except for procurement documents (SAQ, ITT, FTS etc) and managing the tenders process which will be carried out by the PrM

The consulting engineers' responsibilities will include:

- The design of the incorporation the heat pump units into the existing installation, the supporting heating plant and controls.
- Planning permission, ESB upgrades (if required) & revised fire cert associated with the installation if required.
- Production of tender drawings and specifications of the contract works and overseeing the installation of all works.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASA	Additional School Accommodation
ASHP	Air Source Heat Pump
BC(A)R	Building Control (Amendment) Regulations
BIM	Building Information Modelling
CASWS	Climate Action Summer Works Scheme
DEY	Department of Education & Youth
DT	Design Team
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ESCo	Energy Supply Company
ETB	Education and Training Board
EWS	Emergency Works Scheme
KPI	Key performance indicators
LESC	Local Energy Supply Contract
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
M&E	Mechanical and Electrical
M&V	Measurement and Verifications
MRSO	Meter Registration System Operator
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
PEP	Project Execution Plan
PIN	Prior Information Notice
PIM	Project Information Memorandum
PF	Pathfinder
PrM	Programme Manager
PSBPS	Public Sector Biomass Pilot Scheme
PSDP	Project Supervisor Design Process
SDG	Schools Design Guidance (Previously TGD)
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TA	Technical Advisory
TGD	Technical Guidance Document