

WALES OFFICE BUSINESS PLAN

2015 - 20

Aim: To promote the best interests of Wales within the United Kingdom

This business plan will be updated periodically

July 2015

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Wales Office

The Wales Office supports the Secretary of State for Wales in promoting the best interests of Wales within a stronger United Kingdom. It ensures Welsh interests are fully and effectively represented at the heart of the UK Government, and the UK Government's responsibilities are fully and effectively represented in Wales.

The Wales Office also supports the Secretary of State in ensuring the smooth working of the devolution settlement in Wales.

Our vision is for a more prosperous, ambitious and fairer Wales. We will achieve this by working in partnership with colleagues in Whitehall, the Welsh Government and others across the public, private and third sectors.

We continue to be Wales' voice in Westminster and Westminster's voice in Wales.

Values

The Wales Office conducts its business with courtesy, efficiency, effectiveness and propriety, and in accordance with its core values. They are to:

- secure the best deal for Wales, which remains our overriding priority and shapes every aspect of our work;
- deliver excellence and quality in everything that we do;
- support and develop our staff, and ensure they have a safe working environment; and
- be open and transparent, and work in partnership with others.

We demonstrate these values by:

- Providing value for money and managing costs effectively. We are implementing a programme of efficiency savings and reviewing Wales Office services provided by other Government departments to make sure that services are provided efficiently and economically;
- Ensuring good financial management, with effective financial controls in place. We aim to pay invoices accurately within 10 working days (5 working days for small and medium-sized enterprises), transmit grant payments promptly to the Welsh Government and prepare accurate financial returns (including the annual report and accounts);
- Providing accurate and timely responses to public correspondence, Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary and Assembly enquiries;
- Maintaining a competent, highly motivated workforce. The Wales Office is committed to recruiting talented people and retaining a skilled, engaged and resilient workforce. We use effective succession planning, performance management and tailored learning and development to ensure a workforce which is well led, flexible, effective and fit for purpose. We have a People Plan to implement this;
- Ensuring information held by the Wales Office is managed and protected properly to safeguard the interests of Government and individual members of the public; and
- Delivering an on-going programme of improvements and health and safety-related work in Wales Office buildings.

WALES OFFICE OBJECTIVES

Objective 1:

Promote the Welsh economy and the economic interests of Wales

Outcomes

- Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government, Business and other stakeholders to drive economic growth and create a more balanced Welsh economy
- Work with others to encourage inward investment for Wales
- Raise awareness of all that Wales has to offer economically.

Key activities:

A. Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government and others to promote economic growth and boost enterprise in Wales.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen established links with the business community both inside and outside Wales, build new relationships and ensure there are effective channels of communication on the UK Government's economic agenda. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the Secretary of State's Economic Advisory Board so that it drives forward specific projects and provides clear support and insight to Ministers 	September 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Welsh interests and needs are reflected in the UK Government's plans to improve infrastructure across the UK, with a particular focus on transport, energy and broadband, to attract businesses and good jobs across the whole of Wales 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other Government Departments to ensure that major infrastructure projects in Wales achieve maximum benefit for the local community and supply chains delivering contracts to local firms and jobs for local people. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide momentum and ambition to plans for a Cardiff City Deal, working with local stakeholders, council leaders, Welsh Government and colleagues across Whitehall 	March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote investment in North Wales to ensure it benefits from the Northern Powerhouse, including supporting local partners in preparing a robust business case for improving the North Wales main line 	September 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government to ensure that the agreement to electrify the South Wales rail network, and devolve responsibility for the Wales & the Border rail franchise to the Welsh Government, is implemented. 	By end of 2018

A. Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government and others to promote economic growth and boost enterprise in Wales.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Energy and Climate Change and others to facilitate the building of major new energy projects in Wales and localise decision-making on applications for onshore wind farms 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that Welsh interests continue to be reflected in UK Government broadcasting policy, particularly in relation to S4C and the forthcoming BBC Charter review 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure Wales continues to benefit from the Government's commitment to make superfast broadband available to 90% of UK homes and businesses by 2016, and 95% by 2017 	End 2016 / End 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure Wales continues to benefit from the Government's commitment to improve mobile network coverage, providing access to 4G mobile to at least 90% of UK homes and businesses by 2016, and 98% by 2017 	End 2016 / End 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Transport on plans to end the Severn Bridge concession with the aim of bringing down the tolls on the crossing to ease burdens on small business and support cross border economic activity 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore with Sport Wales and other partners the potential for Wales to host the Commonwealth Games and support bids for other major sporting events such as the Champions League final and international cricket 	Ongoing

B. Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government and others to encourage inward investment and business growth in Wales

▪ Work with UKTI and the Welsh Government to increase inward investment opportunities; facilitating and promoting Wales as a destination for investment.	Ongoing
▪ Work with Innovate UK and the Welsh Government to increase R&D and innovation opportunities; facilitating and promoting Wales as a place to develop innovative products and services.	Ongoing
▪ Work with UK Export Finance and the Welsh Government to increase the amount that Welsh manufacturers and producers export	Ongoing
▪ Help to publicise and raise awareness of Welsh business opportunities and UK Government announcements relevant to Wales	Ongoing

Objective 2:

To reform the devolution settlement and deliver a clearer, fairer and stronger devolution settlement for Wales

Outcomes

- A coherent and stable devolution settlement
- UK Government, Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales legislation accurately reflects the devolution boundaries
- A productive relationship between the UK Government and the Devolved Institutions in Wales

Key activities:

A. Deliver the St David's Day agreement to create a clearer, stronger and fairer devolution settlement in Wales	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement a reserved powers model of devolution for Wales, and deliver on the commitments made in the St David's Day Agreement 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish a Draft Wales Bill for Pre-Legislative scrutiny 	October 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to Pre-Legislative scrutiny recommendations and introduce a Wales Bill to Parliament 	February 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the Bill receives its Second Reading ahead of Easter recess 	March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the Bill is enacted 	By end of 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement those elements of the agreement which do not require primary legislation 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the review of intergovernmental relations (led by Cabinet Office) 	Autumn 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with Her Majesty's Treasury to introduce a funding floor for Wales in expectation of the Welsh Government calling a referendum in this Parliament on income tax devolution 	Spending Review 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drive forward the full implementation of the Wales Act 2014 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to make the case for a referendum on income tax devolution 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend and support the work of the Joint Exchequer Committee 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support work to devolve Stamp Duty Land Tax and Landfill tax 	April 2018

A. Deliver the St David's Day agreement to create a clearer, stronger and fairer devolution settlement in Wales

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| ▪ Support HM Treasury in reviewing potential options to mitigate the impacts of Air Passenger Duty devolution on regional airports | Summer 2015 |
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B. Advise on the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy and legislation

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| ▪ Support other Government Departments to ensure UK legislation reflects the devolution settlement, seeking legislative consent from the National Assembly for Wales where required | Ongoing |
| ▪ Review Assembly and Welsh Government legislation, ensuring it is within the terms of the Government of Wales Act 2006; and facilitate engagement with other Government Departments as Assembly Bills are developed | Ongoing |

C. Encourage and facilitate co-operative working between the UK Government and the devolved institutions

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| ▪ Ensure effective and cooperative engagement with the Welsh Government in order to work together to help the people of Wales | Ongoing |
| ▪ Act as a centre of expertise and advice for other Government Department's interaction with the Welsh Government and their work in Wales, including encouraging Departments to actively engage about their programme of activities in Wales | Ongoing |
| ▪ Help raise awareness in other Government Departments of devolution issues and the Welsh devolution settlement | Ongoing |

C. Encourage and facilitate co-operative working between the UK Government and the devolved institutions

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| ▪ Actively engage with the Joint Ministerial Committee (Plenary, Europe, Domestic), British Irish Council and Finance Ministers' Quadrilaterals to advance Welsh interests within the United Kingdom | Ongoing |
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D. Help to ensure the seamless delivery of public services for the people of Wales.

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| ▪ Work with colleagues in the UK Government and the Welsh Government to address any issues arising in the delivery of public services in Wales to ensure good quality services are provided across Wales irrespective of whether services are devolved or reserved | Ongoing |
| ▪ Act to encourage effective cross border services, assist in the resolution of any difficulties and work on the development of better cross border protocols in order to ensure people on both sides of the border receive quality public services | Ongoing |

Objective 3:

To represent Wales' interests within the UK Government, and to promote a wider understanding of UK Government policies in Wales

Outcomes

- Wales' interests fully represented in UK Government policy-making and implementation
- Awareness in Wales of UK Government policies in non-devolved areas

Key activities:

A. Act as an advocate for Wales at the heart of Government	
▪ Support the Secretary of State and Ministers in ensuring the interests of Wales are represented effectively at Cabinet and in Cabinet Committees	Ongoing
▪ Support Ministerial input into the formulation and implementation of policy and legislation across Whitehall, whether through correspondence or in meetings	Ongoing
B. Represent Welsh interests in key non-devolved policy areas	
▪ Ensure Welsh interests and needs are understood in the implementation of the UK Government's employment and welfare reform agenda	Ongoing
▪ Act as a Champion of our armed forces in Wales	Ongoing
▪ Represent Welsh interests in policy developments relating to crime and policing, and maintain effective working relationships with police and crime commissioners and chief constables	Ongoing
▪ Work with the local community, security services and all levels of Government including the Government's Extremism Taskforce to tackle extremism in all its forms	Ongoing

C. Act as lead Department within UK Government on Welsh language issues

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities to raise the profile of the Welsh language across Government, and support UK Government departments in delivering their Welsh language services 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide expert advice to Departments on Welsh language issues relating to their policy areas, including policy initiatives in relation to the language 	Ongoing

D. Communicate UK Government policies and implications for Wales to Parliament, the general public, media and external organisations, and ensure people can make representations to officials and Ministers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrange a programme of regular Ministerial visits and meetings throughout Wales and across all sectors 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure key interested bodies and individuals are kept aware of developments 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver a multi-channel communications plan to engage with target audiences 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain effective engagement with Parliament; journalists; news organisations and other interested parties 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and maintain an extensive network of stakeholders from across Wales and across the sectors in Wales to provide mutual assistance and support. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate meetings of the Welsh Grand Committee to communicate key Government messages on non-devolved issues to Welsh MPs; facilitate similar opportunities with Welsh Peers 	Ongoing

Objective 4:

To ensure the Wales Office delivers its objectives in accordance with good governance principles and having regard to the need to secure value for money.

Outcomes

- Wales Office Business Plan delivered within an affordable and sustainable cost base, providing value for money for the taxpayer
- A more effective and efficient Department, year on year
- An exemplar Department in the operation of good governance

A. To spend within budget.	
▪ Deliver the Business Plan within annual spending limits set by HM Treasury at each Spending Review	31 March 2016 and ongoing
▪ Ensure appropriate processes are in place to monitor and report on expenditure in year; respond to any variance between actual and forecast expenditure; and address fraud	Ongoing
▪ Ensure robust controls are in place to detect and prevent fraud and other financial irregularities	Ongoing

B. To support the transformation of Government services by identifying areas for cost savings and driving Departmental efficiencies.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve efficiency by delivering a programme of cost and efficiency savings whilst delivering the Departmental Business Plan 	March 2016 and ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate service delivery options against opportunities for shared services and other alternatives 	March 2016 and ongoing

C. To ensure the Wales Office applies best practice in good governance.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure an effective management structure for the Department, with appropriate governance arrangements including sound arrangements for risk identification and management 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure compliance with departmental and Civil Service wide policies 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts to agreed standards and timescales. 	July 2015 - Done