

# WALES OFFICE BUSINESS PLAN

## 2011-15

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

*This business plan will be updated periodically*

*Last updated: June 2011*

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Wales Office

The Wales Office exists to serve Wales and its people. Its key purpose is to support the Secretary of State for Wales in promoting the best interests of Wales within the United Kingdom, providing the voice of Wales at the Cabinet table. We are the guardians of the Welsh devolution settlement. Our vision is for a more prosperous, ambitious and fairer Wales for all. We will achieve this by working in partnership with colleagues across Whitehall, the Welsh Government and others across the public, private and third sectors. This business plan outlines how we will work to realise this aspiration.

We are a strong advocate for Wales within Whitehall, ensuring that Welsh interests are fully and effectively represented in the many non-devolved areas, including amongst others defence, fiscal, economic and monetary policy (including revenue, customs and tax), policing, criminal and civil justice, social security, employment law and relations, energy, constitutional matters, discrimination law, post, telecommunications and broadcasting.

We will take action to showcase Wales both within Government and beyond as an attractive place to live, visit, work and do business, and be the conduit through which the people of Wales can have their voices heard at the centre of Government. Three specific priorities for the Wales Office in the coming years will be to ensure the devolution settlement beds-in successfully following the 'yes' vote in the Welsh Referendum, to establish a process to review the financing and accountability of the Welsh Government<sup>1</sup> and the National Assembly for Wales, and to work with others – particularly the Boundary Commission for Wales – to put in place a mechanism for a review of Assembly constituency boundaries.

## Values

The Wales Office will adhere to its core values at all times, namely:

- the good of the people of Wales is our overriding priority and shapes every aspect of our work;
- delivering excellence and quality in everything that we do;
- to be exemplary employers, committed to the development and welfare of our staff;
- a commitment to transparency and working in partnership with others.

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<sup>1</sup> From May 2011 the title *Welsh Government* will be used in publications, correspondence and the media, but note that the statutory title, as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006, remains the *Welsh Assembly Government*.

# WALES OFFICE OBJECTIVES

## *Objective 1:*

*To oversee and maintain the devolution settlement and to facilitate partnership working between the Government and the devolved institutions in Wales*

## *Outcomes*

- A coherent and stable devolution settlement
- UK and National Assembly for Wales legislation accurately reflects the devolution settlement
- Effective relations between the Government and the devolved institutions in Wales

## Key activities:

A. Help deliver the Government's programme for democratic and political renewal in Wales	
▪ Establish a 'Calman-like' process following the Welsh Referendum	Autumn 2011
▪ Work with others – particularly the Boundary Commission for Wales – to put in place a mechanism for a review of Assembly constituency boundaries	Ongoing
▪ Work with other Government Departments to ensure that constitutional developments – for example through the Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill and the establishment of a Commission to investigate the creation of a UK Bill of Rights – fully reflect Welsh interests	Ongoing
B. Advise on the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy and legislation	
▪ Support other Government Departments to ensure that UK legislation reflects the devolution settlement, seeking legislative consent from the National Assembly for Wales where required.	Ongoing
▪ Review and revise Devolution Guidance Notes following Welsh Referendum	Summer 2011
▪ Deliver Government of Wales Act Orders	As required
▪ Monitor Parliamentary and National Assembly for Wales business	In progress
▪ Ensure a sound understanding of the Welsh Government's priorities	In progress

### C. Encourage and facilitate partnership working between the Government and the devolved institutions

▪ Help establish a network of devolution ministers, and provide the appropriate support networks	Completed
▪ Actively engage with the Joint Ministerial Committee, British Irish Council and Finance Ministers' Quadrilaterals to advance Welsh interests	Ongoing
▪ Help raise awareness of devolution issues and settlements across Whitehall	In progress
▪ Support Ministers and work with Welsh Government officials to ensure effective engagement between Administrations	Ongoing

### D. Monitor and seek to manage cross-border issues.

▪ Establish a process for monitoring cross-border issues	Autumn 2011
▪ Work with colleagues within the Government and Welsh Government to address any issues arising in cross-border areas	As required

## ***Objective 2:***

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

## ***Outcomes***

- Wales's interests fully represented in UK government policy-making and implementation
- UK government policies in non-devolved areas known and understood in Wales

## Key activities:

A. Act as an advocate for Wales at the heart of Government	
▪ Support the Secretary of State and Minister in ensuring that 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
▪ Advise Government Departments on Welsh language issues	As required
B. Represent Welsh interests in key non-devolved policy areas	
▪ Ensure that Welsh interests and needs are understood in the implementation of the Government's employment and welfare reform agenda	In progress
▪ Represent Welsh interests in the implementation of the Strategic Defence and Security Review	Initial stages Summer 2011
▪ Represent Welsh interests as reforms on policing are developed and implemented	Summer 2012
C. Ensure that Welsh interests are represented in the Government's legislative programme, including Welsh provisions where appropriate	
▪ Work with Cabinet Office and Departmental Bill teams to ensure that Welsh interests are fully reflected in legislative programmes and Parliamentary Bills	Ongoing
▪ Facilitate engagement with Welsh Government as Bills are developed	As required

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

▪ Develop processes for ensuring effective engagement with members of Parliament and Peers	Autumn 2011
▪ Regular Ministerial visits and meetings throughout Wales and across all sectors	In progress
▪ Develop mechanisms for ensuring key interested bodies and individuals are kept aware of developments	Autumn 2011
▪ Maintain excellent record on accurate and timely responses to public correspondence and Freedom of Information requests	Ongoing
▪ Effective engagement with journalists and news organisations	In progress

### ***Objective 3:***

*Promote the economic, social and cultural interests of Wales*

#### ***Outcomes***

- Work with Government colleagues, the Welsh Government and other stakeholders in efforts to rebalance the Welsh economy
- Work with others to encourage inward investment for Wales
- Raised awareness of all that Wales has to offer economically, socially and culturally

**Key activities:**

A. Work with the Welsh Government, coalition Government colleagues and others to encourage inward investment and business growth in Wales.	
▪ Ensure the Secretary of State's Business Advisory Group continues to be an effective vehicle both for communicating the views of Welsh businesses and for explaining the impact of Government policies to them	Ongoing
▪ Establish strong links with the business community in Wales and ensure there are effective channels of communication	In progress
▪ Work through UKTI and the Welsh Government to increase inward investment opportunities	In progress
B. Help to showcase the best of, and opportunities in, Wales.	
▪ Maximise use of Gwydyr House, both to showcase the best of Wales and also to host events and meetings for external organisations	In progress
▪ Help to publicise and raise awareness of key Welsh events and attractions	Ongoing

## C. Help to promote Wales as a place to live, visit and work

▪ Build strong stakeholder networks to assist in the effective promotion of Wales	In progress
▪ Ensure that Welsh interests and needs are reflected in the Government's improvements to transport infrastructure	Ongoing
▪ Work with Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that Welsh interests and needs are considered in relation to broadband investment.	Summer 2011
▪ Work with Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that broadcasting changes reflect Welsh interests, particularly on S4C	Ongoing
▪ Work with Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Welsh Government and others to ensure Wales has a robust and coherent tourism strategy	Autumn 2011
▪ Work with Foreign Office, UKTI, the Welsh Government and others on effective engagement overseas, including in the European Union	Ongoing
▪ Work with Department for Transport and others ensure Wales has a robust and coherent ports strategy	Winter 2011
▪ Help develop and communicate the Government's vision for the Big Society in Wales	In progress

## ***Objective 4:***

***Conduct our business with courtesy, efficiency, effectiveness and propriety***

### ***Outcomes***

- Highest standards of commitment and care to our staff
- Support effective operation of the devolution settlement by ensuring the block grant is transferred promptly and reliably
- Implementing efficiencies through the current Spending Review period, ensuring value for money for the taxpayer by managing Wales Office resources effectively and with propriety
- Our suppliers supported, by paying all invoices quickly and reliably

## Key activities:

A. Sustain a competent, highly motivated workforce, ensuring they are consulted on key issues and developments and able to participate in the running and future direction of the Wales Office	
▪ Ensure staff actively participate in the annual staff engagement survey, acting on the results	Autumn 2011
▪ Ensure performance and development needs of Wales Office staff are reviewed regularly during 2011-12	Summer 2012
B. Repair and conserve Wales Office assets	
▪ Develop an ongoing programme of improvements for Gwydyr House to protect and restore the listed building and to ensure that it is conducive to productive and safe working	In progress
C. Ensure we provide value for money and manage costs effectively	
▪ Develop and implement a programme of efficiency savings	In progress
▪ Review service level agreements with other departments providing services to the Wales Office to ensure that services are provided efficiently and economically	As required
▪ Contribute to government transparency by publishing data about the Wales Office activities and expenditure on <a href="http://www.data.gov.uk">www.data.gov.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.walesoffice.gov.uk">www.walesoffice.gov.uk</a>	In progress

#### D. Ensure good financial management

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| ▪ Transmit grant payments to the Welsh Government                                    | Monthly   |
| ▪ Prepare end of year accounting returns, including resource accounts from 2011 - 12 | Quarterly |
| ▪ Ensure invoices are paid accurately within 10 working days                         | Ongoing   |

#### E. Ensure that information held by the Wales Office is managed and protected properly to safeguard the interests of Government and individual members of the public

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| ▪ Information assurance training carried out by all staff and reviewed annually | Spring 2012 |
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