

WALES OFFICE BUSINESS PLAN

2012-15

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

This business plan will be updated periodically

Last updated: December 2012

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Wales Office

The Wales Office supports the Secretary of State for Wales in promoting the best interests of Wales within the 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 in accordance with its core values. They are:

- securing the best deal for Wales remains 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.

WALES OFFICE OBJECTIVES

Objective 1:

Promote the Welsh economy and the economic interests of Wales

Outcomes

- Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government 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 of Wales, whilst building new relationships and ensuring there are effective channels of communication on the UK Government's economic agenda, including supporting the Secretary of State's Business Advisory Group 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Welsh interests and needs are reflected in the UK Government's plan to improve infrastructure across the UK, with a particular focus on transport, energy and broadband, to support growth. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with HM Treasury, DCLG and the Welsh Government to promote the opportunities of guarantees for investment in infrastructure and new homes arising from the UK Guarantees scheme 	In progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with key stakeholders to take forward the electrification of railways in Wales: with the Department of Transport and the Welsh Government to implement plans to electrify the South Wales rail network, and with the Welsh Government and local stakeholders to prepare robust business cases for electrifying the rail network in North Wales 	In progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department for Energy and Climate Change and others to facilitate the building of a new nuclear power station at Wylfa 	In progress
<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 	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 and basic broadband coverage to virtually everyone else by 2015. 	In progress

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

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| ▪ Work with the Department for Transport on ensuring Wales' views are considered and reflected in the new Aviation Framework. | In progress |
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B. Work with UK Government colleagues, the Welsh Government and others to encourage inward investment and business growth in Wales

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| ▪ Work with both UKTI and the Welsh Government to increase inward investment opportunities; facilitating and promoting Wales as a destination for investment. | In progress |
| ▪ Work with Foreign Office, UKTI, the Welsh Government and others on effective engagement overseas, undertaking visits where appropriate. | Ongoing |

C. Help to promote Wales as a place to work and do business

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| ▪ Help to publicise and raise awareness of Welsh business opportunities and UK Government announcements relevant to Wales | Ongoing |
| ▪ Continue to maintain strong stakeholder networks to assist in the effective promotion of the Welsh economy | In progress |

Objective 2:

To oversee and maintain the devolution settlement and to facilitate co-operative working between the UK Government and the devolved institutions in Wales

Outcomes

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

Key activities:

A. Help deliver the UK Government's programme for democratic and political renewal in Wales	
▪ Ensure the Commission on Devolution in Wales has the resources, support and information required to undertake its work effectively	Ongoing
▪ Working with HM Treasury, respond to the Commission on Devolution in Wales' Part I recommendations	Spring 2013
▪ Working with HM Treasury, ensure a clear outcome to the inter-governmental talks on funding reform.	October 2012 and ongoing
▪ Submit the UK Government's evidence to the Commission on Devolution in Wales' Part II review	1 March 2013
▪ Lead the UK Government's response to the Commission on Devolution in Wales' Part II recommendations	Mid to late 2014
▪ Consider further the future electoral arrangements for the National Assembly for Wales	Ongoing
▪ Work with other Government Departments to ensure that constitutional developments fully reflect Welsh interests	Ongoing
B. Advise on the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy and legislation	
▪ Support other Government Departments to ensure UK legislation reflects the devolution settlement, seeking legislative consent from the National Assembly for Wales where required	Ongoing
▪ Monitor and report on Parliamentary and National Assembly for Wales business	Ongoing

B. Advise on the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy and legislation

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

▪ Actively engage with the Joint Ministerial Committee, British Irish Council and Finance Ministers' Quadrilaterals to advance Welsh interests within the United Kingdom	Ongoing
▪ Help raise awareness in other Government Departments of devolution issues and the Welsh devolution settlement	In progress
▪ Support Ministers and work with Welsh Government officials to ensure effective engagement between Administrations, including related Government Agencies	Ongoing

D. Help to ensure the seamless delivery of public services for the people of Wales.

▪ 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 geographical location or whether the service is devolved or non devolved are not obstacles to the provision of good quality services	As required
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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	In progress
▪ Act as a Champion of our armed forces in Wales	In progress
▪ Represent Welsh interests as reforms on policing are developed and implemented, in particular the election of police and crime commissioners	End 2012
C. Act as the lead within UK Government on Welsh language issues	
▪ Work with UK Government departments on Welsh language issues within Government, liaising with the Welsh Language Commissioner and other Welsh language stakeholders as necessary	Ongoing
▪ Undertake a review of UK Government Departments' Welsh language services to establish their potential to meet Welsh language standards, including an assessment of costs	Summer 2013

D. Ensure Welsh interests are represented in the UK Government's legislative programme, including Welsh provisions where appropriate

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| ▪ Work with Cabinet Office and Departmental Bill teams to ensure Welsh interests are fully reflected in legislative programmes and Parliamentary Bills | Ongoing |
| ▪ Facilitate engagement with Welsh Government and/or the Assembly Commission as parliamentary Bills are developed | Ongoing |

E. 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

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| ▪ Arrange a programme of 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 | Ongoing |
| ▪ Provide accurate and timely responses to public correspondence, Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary and Assembly enquiries | Ongoing |
| ▪ 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 |
| ▪ Maintain effective engagement with Parliament; journalists; news organisations and other interested parties | Ongoing |

Objective 4:

Promote the social and cultural interests of Wales

Outcomes

- Work with others to ensure a vibrant social and cultural environment in Wales
- Raise awareness of all that Wales has to offer socially and culturally
- Important national commemorations and anniversaries observed

Key activities:

A. Help to promote Wales as a place to live and visit	
▪ Help to publicise and raise awareness of key Welsh events/attractions and UK Government announcements relevant to social and cultural matters in Wales	Ongoing
▪ Continue to communicate and develop the UK Government's vision for the Big Society in Wales	In progress
▪ Build strong stakeholder networks to assist in the effective promotion of Wales, including as a tourist destination	In progress
B. Ensure Welsh interests are fully reflected in key national commemorations and anniversaries	
▪ Working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Government, take forward Welsh interests in plans to commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of WWI	In progress to 2014
▪ Working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Government, take forward plans to mark the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas	In progress to 2014
▪ Continue to review Welsh interests in respect of other commemorations and anniversaries	Ongoing

Objective 5:

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
- Wales Office information handled appropriately and sensitive information safeguarded

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	
▪ Develop and implement a programme of action to address issues arising from the annual staff engagement survey	March 2013
▪ Ensure performance and development needs of Wales Office staff are reviewed regularly during 2012-13	Ongoing
B. Ensure Wales Office premises provide a safe and efficient working environment	
▪ Deliver the on-going programme of improvements and health and safety related work for Gwydyr House to ensure that it is conducive to productive, efficient and safe working	In progress
▪ Ensure the move to new Wales Office premises at Caspian Point is completed within budget and with minimal disruption	July 2012
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	July 2013

C. Ensure we provide value for money and manage costs effectively

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| ▪ Contribute to government transparency by publishing data about the Wales Office activities and expenditure on www.data.gov.uk and www.walesoffice.gov.uk | In progress |
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D. Ensure good financial management

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| ▪ Transmit grant payments promptly to the Welsh Government | Monthly |
| ▪ Prepare financial returns, including the annual report and accounts | Quarterly |
| ▪ Ensure invoices are paid accurately within 10 working days | Ongoing |
| ▪ Ensure the Wales Office has effective financial controls in place | Ongoing |

E. Ensure 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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| ▪ Ensure the Wales Office's information assets are identified and risks assessed and managed to safeguard that information | November 2012 |
| ▪ Information assurance training carried out by all staff and reviewed annually | Spring 2013 |