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Mr David Melding AM
Chair of the Audit Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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De Chie,

**ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
THE SENEDD**

The Clerk's letter of 13 February requested my advice on the responses received by the Audit Committee with regard to its report on *The Senedd*.

The Audit Committee's report contained two recommendations, the first of which asked for a response to the five recommendations contained in my own earlier report into this matter. There are thus six recommendations in total. The Assembly Government has responded to four recommendations, and the Assembly Commission, which is now running the building, responding to the other two. The responses of both the Assembly Government and the Assembly Commission are entirely positive and accept in full all recommendations.

In the Assembly Government's response, what it refers to as recommendations 1 and 4 (recommendations a and d in my own report) relate to learning the lessons from construction and procurement of the Senedd and applying them to future projects. Since the completion of the Senedd, the Assembly Government has been involved in a number of major construction projects, such as the new offices in Aberystwyth and Llandudno Junction. The Assembly Government's lead official on the Senedd project – Richard Wilson, who gave evidence to the Committee – is now the Senior Responsible Officer for three major Assembly Government's construction projects. Through Mr Wilson's post, the Assembly Government should be in a position to ensure that the lessons from the Senedd are being incorporated within the governance procedures and documents for these new projects.

Recommendation 5 (recommendation e in my own report) relates to the dissemination of guidance and best practice, on matters such as value engineering, whole life costing, procurement and project management. These are important issues in ensuring the proper governance of projects, in managing projects efficiently and in maximising the potential for value for money. In the current global financial downturn in particular, it is essential that both public and private sector organisations in Wales are making full use of cost-saving methods such as value engineering and whole life costing, and the Assembly Government has an important role to play in disseminating and promoting best practice in these areas.

Recommendation 6 (the Committee's own recommendation ii) called for a further note from the Assembly Government to the Committee, by the end of 2008, with more details on how the lessons learnt from the Senedd project have been applied to the other construction projects it is managing. This note has been promised by the end of February 2009.

Members should be aware that, as part of my programme of work related to the Assembly Government's *Making the Connections* policy objective, in 2009 the Wales Audit Office will be conducting reviews of building management at a wide range of public sector organisations in Wales, including the Assembly Government as well as local authorities and health bodies (although the Senedd will not be included in these reviews).

The Assembly Commission has responded positively to recommendations b and c in my own report, on the need for it to continue to monitor the extent to which the building meets user requirements, and to ensure that the building continues to meet its very high environmental and sustainability standards.

I shall draw the Committee's attention to any issues from my ongoing work in this and related areas where I consider further action is merited.

Yours sincerely,



JEREMY COLMAN
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES