

Sir Derek Jones KCB
Ysgrifennydd Parhaol
Permanent Secretary



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Darren Millar AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Darren,

06 October 2014

**ACTION POINTS FROM THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON
22 SEPTEMBER 2014
WELSH GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS 2013-14**

I hope that you and Committee members found the session on the 2013-14 Annual Accounts to be helpful. I promised to write on a number of points, covered below.

A. Severance Packages and Increase in Staff Numbers

Severance Packages. During 2013-14 there were 4 members of staff that received severance packages in excess of £100,000. The table below provides details of the total severance, annual pay and payback period for each individual.

	Severance £	Salary £	Payback Period
FY13-14	129,000	88,176	17 months
	138,000	94,606	17 months
	119,000	81,780	17 months
	162,000	111,615	17 months

I am satisfied that, with payback periods of this kind, the departures represent good value for money.

Staff Numbers. The table below details those areas of the business that have seen the main increase in staff numbers over the period 2012-13 and 2013-14 (286 additional staff).

Reason for increase in staff numbers	Total
Transfers into the Welsh Government following the creation of the Welsh Language Commission and Natural Resources Wales.	75
Rural development; introduction of Glas Tir scheme	32
Increase in overall number of secondees within Departments	31
Legal services; including the Office of the Legislative Counsel and the Counsel General	29
Creation of the National Procurement Service	29
European Funding area (WEFO); including staff for the new Energy Team (Horizon 2020)	24
Planning Division; legislation and casework	17
Cabinet Division including staff to support additional Ministers	13
Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales	11

The increase in overall staff numbers also reflects the ongoing commitment to our Apprenticeship Programme. Over the past two years, some 158 young people have completed, or are still engaged in, the programme although this commitment to young people has impacted total staff numbers within the Welsh Government. As many as 72 of the apprentices have successfully gained employment with the Welsh Government.

B. The Welsh Risk Pool

NHS Wales operates a risk pooling scheme which allows Health Boards and Trusts to seek reimbursement for amounts paid out in respect of negligence claims. A £25,000 excess is applied to each claim. The scheme is operated by the Welsh Risk Pool Service (WRPS) which is part of NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership. In order to better align the governance and financial management arrangements, the budget for the Welsh Risk Pool reimbursement of claims transferred as of 1 April 2014 from the Welsh

Government to NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (hosted by Velindre NHS Trust).

In recent years, and in common with other nations, NHS Wales has experienced a growth in the number of legal claims. For example in 2012/13 the NHS Litigation Authority in England reported a 10.8% increase in clinical negligence claims from 2011/12. The reasons for the increase in claims are multifactorial and it is not possible to say with any certainty what the primary driver for the increase is. It is known that there has been a general upward trend in claims over recent years both in terms of number and value.

Recent changes to funding rules for legal claims which came into effect on 1st April 2013 are considered to have had an impact on the registration of claims before this date and, therefore, upon the subsequent submitted case volumes being experienced in 2013/14. It is also considered that increased public awareness of clinical redress options is contributing to claim volumes.

The cost of claims has also increased, especially for settlements involving long term care packages. The reason for this increase is that care needs are becoming more complex and it is necessary to ensure that any care packages are fully compliant with applicable legislation such as Health and Safety and Working Time Directives.

NHS Wales takes a pro-active approach to learning from claims to reduce the risk of recurrence. Before reimbursement is made by the WRPS, Health Boards and Trusts are required to outline the key weaknesses which gave rise to the claim and outline the steps taken to reduce the risk of recurrence. Claims are reviewed internally within the WRPS for efficacy of action and then considered by an All Wales Executive Level multidisciplinary group with representation from Medical Directors, Directors of Nursing, Chief Executives, Directors of Finance, Chairman of a Health Board, Directors of Governance and the Welsh Government. Where there is evidence of risks which may be relevant to other NHS bodies, or evidence of good practice, a more detailed claim review can be requested.

Where all Wales issues are evident from claims, the WRPS undertakes themed work. This involves the clinical assessment of high risk areas including those of maternity, emergency departments and the surgical pathway. The findings of the reviews are

shared with the individual Health Boards with a composite report being shared with the Welsh Government and Chief Executives. In addition, specific themed work has been undertaken to further consider specific risks associated with claims.

C. Renewable/Non Renewable Energy

The Annual Accounts report a reduction in the amount of renewable energy consumed by the Welsh Government since 2012-13. Information on the proportion of electricity derived from renewable sources is provided by our electricity supply companies. For 2013-14 they advised consumers, including the Welsh Government, that the basis for calculating the renewable proportion had changed in line with DEFRA guidelines. This means that the proportion for 2013-14 can not be compared to previous years.

Nevertheless, the Welsh Government is implementing a carbon reduction programme across the whole of our administrative estate and, as a result, a 27% reduction in carbon emissions has been achieved since 2010-11. This puts us well on course to meet the Government's overarching target of a 30% reduction by 2020.

D. Business Travel and CRC and Energy Expenditure

Business travel. The Welsh Government is unable to provide a total cost for business travel without a significant amount of manual investigation by departments. Although the financial systems record hire car charges and accommodation separately, the majority of the travel costs continue to be booked to a single travel and subsistence cost code. It is also possible to charge travel costs to a Welsh Procurement Card (WPC). As a result, we would have to scrutinise many hundreds of individual claims and Welsh Procurement Card (WPC) transactions as well as the invoices paid to travel related suppliers such as Eurocar and Arriva Wales in order to extract the correct total cost for business travel only. We will consult with the Financial Reporting advisory board (FRab) to determine whether other departments are able to comply.

CRC allowance. The CRC allowances total for 2013-14 was 0.191.

Energy expenditure. Total energy expenditure for the Welsh Government administrative estate for 2013-14 was £2.17m.



Unfortunately the 2013-14 information for CRC allowances and energy expenditure (detailed above) was not available in time for the preparation of the accounts. The online Accounts for 2013-14 will be amended.

E. Breakdown of Expenditure for Travel, Subsistence and Hospitality

The table detailed below provides a breakdown by cost category (used within the Welsh Government financial systems) for travel, subsistence and hospitality for 2013-14. Due to the reasons outlined in D above, it has not been possible to compile a total for travel and a separate total for subsistence.

	2013-14 £K
Travel & Subsistence	3,439
Travel	892
Accommodation	359
Car Hire	295
Hospitality	16
Total as detailed in the accounts	5,001

F. Non cash overspend in DfES

The supplementary budget process enables departments to submit and agree adjustments to in-year budgets with HM Treasury. Any requests; typically for non cash and AME, must be submitted at the end of November each year. During 2013-14, the Welsh Government successfully negotiated an increase in non cash (£326m) to reflect the impact of changing the student loans model used by DfES. The change in model followed a similar decision by BIS for student loans in England. However, unfortunately the subsequent error in the new model (£26m) was not identified until after the supplementary budget deadline and, therefore, we were unable to request further changes. Nevertheless, on this occasion, the Welsh Government was able to absorb the increase within the overall Ambit and given that the error impacted non cash, it had no bearing on the cash resources available to be spent on policy delivery.

A lessons learned exercise was conducted and a copy of the report presented to the DfES Corporate Governance Committee is attached.

Yours,
Derek

