
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus

National Assembly for Wales
Public Accounts Committee

Julie James
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff CF10 3NO

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Welsh Government Investment in Next Generation Broadband Infrastructure

Dear Julie

Thank you for writing with the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations contained in the Public Accounts Committee report on Welsh Government Investment in Next Generation Broadband Infrastructure

We would be grateful if you could provide further information and clarification on the following points:

Recommendation 1: The Committee understands why the Welsh Government has partially accepted this recommendation, reflecting the fact that the timescales for deploying to some premises in the original project have changed following a project extension which has resulted in a new deployment plan. Given the Committee's concerns about the impact of the project extension, your response might have indicated the number of premises that are affected by changes to the scheduled roll-out, the extent to which these premises are clustered in particular areas, and how any delays in roll-out are being communicated to those affected.

The response indicates that the Welsh Government has not taken an approach to 'blend' new premises into the original contract, a renegotiation to the contract that may have led to a less favourable position for the Welsh Government. Can you clarify why the Welsh Government feels it would have been in a weaker negotiating position than when it let the original contract?



Recommendation 2: Can you clarify the contribution of the scheme in delivering access to next generation broadband to all eligible premises? The Committee would also welcome an indication of the possible cost of next generation broadband installation for residents or businesses in difficult-to-reach premises (over and above the value of the vouchers on offer).

Recommendation 3: Can you provide more specific detail on how the Welsh Government has engaged with internet service providers, and whether this engagement has resulted in the identification of difficult-to-reach premises that might benefit from the new Access Broadband Cymru scheme?

The Committee would also welcome additional information about the likely level of the investment fund that the Welsh Government indicates will support the new scheme. The Committee assumes that the clawback mechanism is the arrangement the Auditor General for Wales referred to in his report?

Recommendation 5: Can you provide more detail on the application for WEFO funding under the new structural funds programme, including the value of the funding and what it is for.

Recommendation 6: It would be helpful if you can provide an indication of planned timescales for the related actions your officials will be taking forward.

Recommendation 8: The response states that changes have been made to the Superfast Cymru website to improve the information given to website visitors. However, having visited the website again, the Committee does not consider that the information available looks to have been significantly enhanced. The response states that the success of advertising and events is borne out by the numbers of visitors to the website and on-line registrations; however, the number of internet hits does not automatically suggest success. We would welcome further information as to what enhancements have been made to the website and how you are analysing the number of internet hits against success.

The Committee looks forward to receiving this clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Darren Millar AM
Chair

