

Sir Derek Jones KCB  
Ysgrifennydd Parhaol  
Permanent Secretary



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Darren Millar  
Chair - Public Accounts Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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*UK* March 2015

*Dear Darren,*

In your letter dated 17 July 2014, you requested an update in Spring 2015 on our response to Recommendation 5 of the Auditor General for Wales's report on the Welsh Government's Location Strategy.

While we welcome the WAO's favourable remarks regarding the engagement work delivered through Y Bont at our offices in Aberystwyth and Llandudno Junction, our response of June 2014 noted that the dedicated staffing of the Y Bont facilities at those offices had to be discontinued on grounds of affordability. We were unable to continue the service at a time of reducing budgets.

The marketing review mentioned in our response covers two main pieces of work. The first was to consider campaigns to be developed in support of a wide range of government policies in the 2015-16 financial year. This work will be completed ahead of the new financial year.

The second part, scheduled for later in the year, was to consider and evaluate all types of public engagement that the WG undertakes and its effectiveness. This forms part of regularly reviewing our communications work to ensure effectiveness and best use of available resources, especially given the changing media landscape and developments in social media.

In this context, I am now of the view that we must be more realistic about the prospect of re-opening Y Bont facilities or extending Y Bont to the Merthyr Tydfil office in the future. This is based on reducing staff budgets, which continues to be a serious challenge for the foreseeable future, and also the fact that the Merthyr office is not designed to accommodate a public space in its reception area. It is prudent to concentrate the marketing review on areas that stand to have the greatest impact on the overall effectiveness of how the Welsh Government is engaging directly with all citizens in communities across Wales. With this in mind, analysis of Y Bont, and whether this type of facility should be extended further, will not form part of this year's marketing review work.

As set out in our original response to the WAO's recommendation, the Welsh Government takes engagement with the public very seriously, and we encourage all of our staff in all of our offices to take responsibility for this, rather than a discrete team. We continue to engage with the public in many ways, including school visits and other outreach work, as well as marketing campaigns, social media work and Ministerial visits. In addition, our First Point of Contact service continues to be available to anyone who wishes to contact the Welsh Government for information or advice. The First Point of Contact extends its service to all parts of Wales and people are able to make contact in a variety of ways – by letter, telephone, email or social media.

Yours,  
Derek

