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**WALES AUDIT OFFICE**  
**SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU**

Work available for consideration by the Audit Committee through to July 2009 and beyond



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1. I am pleased to present this paper which provides an update on the work that I intend to make available for future consideration by the Audit Committee. In particular, the paper sets out:
  - details of those reports that I aim to publish for consideration by the Committee before the 2009 summer recess;
  - other ongoing or planned work that will be published after July 2009; and
  - further work that might be developed for future consideration.

## Reports due for publication before the end of July 2009

2. In setting out my plans, however, I can never emphasise enough how important it is for me to retain a strong degree of flexibility in the planning and delivery of my work to respond to changing circumstances, priorities and risks. For instance, I may wish to defer work that is already underway to be able to respond quickly to the need to undertake a more time critical piece of work, or to ensure that emerging findings are able to be shared in a timely way with the Assembly Government to inform policy and strategy development. For example, my recent follow up report on the Ambulance Services in Wales was completed to a very tight timescale to support the review of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust commissioned by the Minister for Health and Social Services.
3. Before I publish my reports, I invite those senior officials who are responsible and accountable for the public expenditure being examined to comment on the accuracy of the facts in the report, the balance of their presentation and the conclusions drawn. This process of 'clearance' means that it is not always easy to predict exactly when individual reports will be published. However, **Exhibit 1** sets out those reports that I aim to publish before the end of July 2009 and that would therefore be available for the Committee to consider during this period.

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### Exhibit 1: Reports available for consideration by the Audit Committee through to July 2009

Topic	Details
<b><i>Reports already published and awaiting consideration</i></b>	
<i>The provision of home oxygen supplies</i>	This report considered the handling of the introduction of the new contract for the provision of home oxygen supplies from 1 February 2006 and whether the new arrangements were likely to bring about higher clinical quality and service efficiency. The report is scheduled for consideration by the Committee in November 2008.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b><i>Planned publications through to the end of 2008</i></b>	
<i>Operations of the Forestry Commission Wales</i>	This report will consider whether the Forestry Commission Wales is well placed to deliver its strategic objectives now and in the future.
<i>The management of chronic conditions by NHS Wales</i>	Drawing on local fieldwork undertaken across NHS Wales this report will consider whether current service provision supports the effective management of chronic conditions.
<i>Briefing on tackling violence and aggression in the NHS</i>	This briefing will provide an update on the action taken by the Assembly Government and NHS Wales to tackle violence against NHS staff since my September 2005 report <i>Protecting NHS Staff From Violence and Aggression</i> .
<b><i>Planned publications between January and March 2009</i></b>	
<i>NHS sickness absence follow-up</i>	Summarising the findings from local audit work, this report will examine the progress made in improving the management of sickness absence by NHS trusts in Wales since the previous Auditor General's report in January 2004.
<i>Delayed transfers of care</i>	I have commenced some further work in the Cardiff and Gwent health and social care communities to follow through the response to the issues highlighted in my November 2007 report <i>Tackling Delayed Transfers of Care Across the Whole System</i> .
<i>Higher education collaboration</i>	This report will consider whether good progress is being made towards the Assembly Government's policy objectives for higher education through reconfiguration and collaboration.
<i>RAF St Athan and the Red Dragon Project</i>	I shall be reporting jointly with the National Audit Office on whether the Ministry of Defence and Welsh Authorities properly managed the risks and opportunities involved in funding the creation of a jet repair super-hangar and a commercial aerospace business park at RAF St Athan.
<i>Sustainable development – business decision making</i>	This report will consider whether the Welsh Assembly Government's business decision making process is supporting its sustainable development objectives.
<i>Maternity services in Wales</i>	Summarising the findings from local audit work, this report will examine whether NHS trusts in Wales are providing high-quality, value for money, maternity services.

Topic	Details
<b>Planned publications between April and July 2009</b>	
<i>Management of coastal erosion and tidal flooding risks</i>	This report will consider whether the Welsh public sector should implement its planned proposals to address the changing risks associated with coastal erosion and tidal flooding.
<i>Capital investment in schools</i>	This examination is considering whether current approaches to funding and asset management are supporting the effective use of capital investment in schools.
<i>Communities First</i>	This work will examine the value for money of the Assembly Government's Communities First programme for the renewal of deprived communities, and whether key issues identified from the design and delivery of Communities First are being addressed in developing the next phase of the programme, Communities First Plus.
<i>Child and adolescent mental health services</i>	This examination, being undertaken in partnership with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, is considering whether children and adolescent mental health services in Wales are meeting the needs of young people.

## Other ongoing or planned work to be published beyond July 2009

4. **Exhibit 2** sets out other examinations that are underway or planned to commence over the next six months and which would be published beyond July 2009.

### **Exhibit 2: Other ongoing or planned work to be published beyond July 2009**

Topic	Details
<i>Transport – major capital projects</i>	This work will be focusing on the delivery of major transport projects. Audit Scotland has recently produced a similar review of major capital projects in Scotland (including several transport projects).
<i>The Merlin contract follow up</i>	This work will focus on progress in improving ICT performance in the Assembly Government since my March 2006 report <i>The Merlin Contract – Enabling the National Assembly to change its business processes through ICT</i> .
<i>NHS capital investment</i>	I shall be re-examining the optimum scope and timing of this work to take account of likely changes in capital planning and investment arrangements as a result of the planned NHS restructuring.
<i>Emergency planning – Civil Contingencies Act</i>	This work will focus on whether duties under the Civil Contingencies Act are being delivered effectively to prepare Wales for emergencies. In particular, I will be examining arrangements for community risk assessment, the robustness of the plans in place to ensure continuity of services, recovery and learning in the event of an emergency.

Topic	Details
<i>A review of the NHS dental contract</i>	The focus of this work would be on the management of the contract by Local Health Boards, rather than the terms of the contract itself. Nonetheless, I aim to deliver this work in time to help ensure effective financial controls are in place when letting contracts from 1 April 2009. There may be opportunities, in time, to extend this work to examine other primary care contracts.
<i>Provision of affordable housing</i>	This topic is a refinement of my original proposal to look more generally at the implementation of the Welsh Housing Strategy. Affordable housing is a key One Wales commitment.
<i>Rollout of the 2007-2013 European Union convergence funding for West Wales and the Valleys</i>	This work will look at the progress being made by the Welsh Assembly Government in the rollout of the 2007-2013 round of European Union convergence funding for West Wales and the Valleys. The new funding programme is worth around £1.3 billion of EU funding, alongside additional match funding. In conducting this work, I shall be examining whether issues raised by the previous Auditor General's reports, <i>European Union Structural Funding: Progress on Securing the Benefits for Wales</i> (July 2004) and <i>European Union Structural Funds: maximising the benefits for Wales</i> (June 2002) have been adequately addressed in the rollout of this latest round of funding.
<i>Unscheduled care</i>	I am undertaking this work on a modular basis, building on my follow-up review of <i>Ambulance Services in Wales</i> . Further modules will cover NHS Direct, Out of Hours Services and Patient Handover in Accident and Emergency Departments, culminating in an overall whole system report in late 2009. I also intend to report the findings from the individual modules of this work on a phased basis as and when the work is completed.
<i>Nutrition in schools</i>	I had originally proposed to examine the provision of free breakfasts in schools and have now decided to extend the focus of this work to the more general topic of nutrition in schools, which could cover all school catering as well as curricular activity. In determining the exact scope of this work I shall be reflecting on the opportunities to build on the May 2008 report by Estyn on <i>Food and Fitness in Schools</i> .
<i>Waste management</i>	This work will take account of the recommendations in the previous Auditor General's 2004 report, ' <i>Environment Agency Wales – Regulation of waste management</i> ' and also the Audit Commission in Wales's 2005 report, ' <i>Waste Management – A challenging agenda for the Welsh public sector</i> '. It will also draw on findings from my recent local audit work across a number of local authorities in Wales.
<i>Informing Healthcare</i>	This examination will look at the overall management of the Informing Healthcare programme, especially the management of key risks. It would also explore how the benefits of the programme are being realised.
<i>Education of looked after children</i>	This work will focus on whether the action being taken by the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities is enough to significantly improve the educational outcomes for looked after children.

Topic	Details
<i>Adult mental health services – follow-up</i>	This follow-up review will assess the progress made by public sector bodies in addressing the gaps and variations in service provision identified in my October 2005 report, <i>Adult mental health services in Wales: a baseline review of service provision</i> .

## Further work that might be developed for future consideration by the Committee

5. The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 18 October 2007, I presented a long list of proposals for possible future value for money examinations. Members will see from the topics set out in Exhibits 1 and 2 that I have already decided to press ahead with several of these examinations. In some cases I judged that the timing was not right to bring forward topics from that list, but I shall nevertheless be monitoring these issues closely with a view to developing future work if and when it is appropriate to do so. In particular, I have already approved some preliminary development work on the following topics:
  - working with the voluntary sector;
  - public procurement;
  - continuing care; and
  - cancer services.
6. I have also been conscious to avoid the risk of overlap with work planned by other audit, inspection and regulatory bodies, whilst taking advantage, where appropriate, of opportunities for joint working. For example, although I have decided not to undertake my own review of the Teacher Workload Agreement, I hope that Wales Audit Office staff might be able to provide some useful support to related work on school workforce remodelling that is being planned by Estyn. I am also keeping a watching brief over the topic of older people's services with a view to responding as appropriate to any opportunities that arise for joint working with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.
7. In addition to the work already detailed in this paper, and in light of the Committee's decision to meet more frequently, I anticipate that there will also be opportunities to bring forward reports that draw on the findings from other areas of my work, notably:
  - my programme of financial and/or value for money audit work at individual public bodies in Wales;
  - my cross sector work on good practice and asset management;
  - investigations undertaken in response to correspondence; and
  - other general follow-up work.

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8. Given the volume of work that I already have underway, or planned, I have decided not to present to the Committee at this stage a new list of possible future value for money examinations. However, I would welcome the Committee's views on any topics not listed in this paper that it feels should be examined as a matter of priority. I also invite the Committee to consider whether it would like to receive more regular updates on the precise scope of individual examinations as and when I agree this with my project teams.

**Jeremy Colman**  
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