

Submission from ELWa

The National Assembly for Wales
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

21 September 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the National Council-ELWa's initial thoughts to the Committee's inquiry into the provision of ICT in rural Wales. The National Council recognises the critical role that ICT offers for learning across Wales and, particularly for rural areas in terms of employment, access to, and participation in learning, and strengthening community identity.

The National Council is currently working very closely with the National Assembly to develop a coherent approach to implementing 'Cymru ar lein'. We shall also be developing an Action Plan for e-learning, which will be presented to the National Council members in early 2002. We hope that this Action Plan will help to address the current lack of coherent, strategic direction in e-learning across Wales. The broad themes of the Action Plan can be summarised as:

- Infrastructure
- Connectivity
- How we learn and teach
- Materials
- Learner and technical support

With specific regard to the Assembly's review, we would make the following initial comments:

- To raise the level of usage of ICT infrastructure in rural areas, it is critical that the

demand exists. This requires awareness raising of the benefits of ICT, as well as training to ensure that individuals and businesses are able to capitalise on ICT.

- The ICT service sector in rural areas is underdeveloped in terms of geographical spread and quality. Local people and businesses often prefer to deal with local ICT firms that can supply equipment, provide support services and undertake repairs within the area. It is vital, therefore, that this sector is nurtured.

These are the opening thoughts of the National Council. We would value the opportunity to contribute our evolving thoughts on the subject.

Yours sincerely

Annette Jones