

Date:	17 October 2002
Time:	9.00am - 12.30pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title:	Business Support Review – Progress Report October 2002

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to report on progress to date on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to this Committee's Review of Business Support and Development Services concluded in July 2001
2. This Progress Report has been prepared by the WDA and Graham Hawker and Siân Lloyd Jones will be present to answer any detailed questions.

**Economic Policy Division
October 2002**

BUSINESS SUPPORT REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT
WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Welsh Assembly Government's response to the EDC's Review of Business Support and Development Services was concluded in July 2001 and recommended that the WDA should:-

- be the lead body in Wales for the delivery of business support for businesses of all sizes
- be responsible for the management of Business Connect.
- be responsible for the co-ordination of publicly funded business support services

1.2 The WDA was asked to provide interim proposals by the end of October 2001 with implementation from April 2002.

1.3 The WDA's approach to implementing the recommendations is based on the key principles of:-

- a customer focused, customer driven approach
- building on and disseminating best practice
- efficient and effective partnership.

1.4 Whilst it is recognised that implementing the recommendations is a long term process, much has already been achieved. Progress to date includes:-

2. MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS CONNECT

The WDA proposed a national Gateway providing access to impartial advice, information, initial diagnosis, signposting and referral accessed through Call Centre, Website and local access points. The Gateway service would be based on the principles of:

- quality and professionalism
- customer focus and satisfaction
- accessibility and ease of use
- value for money
- transparency
- impartiality

PROGRESS TO DATE: -

- Network of local gateways in place – 36 offices providing all Wales coverage provided by 15 different organisations on a contract basis. These are listed at Annex I. The number of offices reflects the need to retain services as close as possible to business themselves. Service rationalisation and improvement has been achieved through:
 - i. clarity of service provided by the gateways, and each local one covering a specific area of Wales.
 - ii. operational rationalisation by only 1 office receiving calls from the general enquiry number, rather than the previous 32
 - iii. organisational restructuring by bringing it within the WDA.

- Interim National Call Centre established at Caerphilly with over 13,000 calls handled since it commenced in April 2002 compared with 10,000 over the same period last year. Training has been provided for staff on call handling and referral and customer satisfaction with the service provided being independently monitored.

- Business Connect Website has been updated to reflect the principles of the Gateway Service.

- Review of client management system initiated jointly with Business Connect Wales and ELWa in 2001 was completed in April 2002.

- Operational management groups established in each of the 4 regions comprising the WDA and local gateway providers designed to share and disseminate best practice, improve product knowledge etc.

ONGOING WORK:-

- **Quality Assurance / Customer Satisfaction**

Whilst mechanisms already exist for monitoring customer satisfaction and to deal with complaints, more robust quality systems are being developed that focus on the business process rather than simple standards.

Key indicators and measurement established by November 2002

Benchmarking to be completed February 2003

Ongoing monitoring and development programme from March 2003

- **Marketing**

Currently reviewing the positioning, branding and key messages for the Gateway.

Review to be completed by end October 2002.

“Launch” – January/February 2003.

- **National Call Centre/Website**

Options for long-term arrangements are currently under consideration, taking account of what already exists, experiences elsewhere and those gained through the interim arrangements.

Review to be completed by end October 2002 and options to be considered with implementation from January 2003 onwards.

- **Client Management System**

As a consequence of the review completed in April, Linktrack will be the primary client management system for the Gateway.

The immediate priorities are usage and integration and the WDA is working jointly with ELWa to achieve this.

3. IMPROVED CO-ORDINATION OF BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The review found that there was a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities in the provision of business support services, a perceived overlap and duplication, a proliferation of brands and confusion on the part of the customer.

The WDA's approach to improving the co-ordination of business support services is twofold:

- (i) improving the consistency and co-ordination of business support services which the WDA funds and/or delivers.
- (ii) establishing mechanisms for improving co-ordination of business support services funded and delivered by others.

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- (i) Services funded and/delivered by the WDA:
 - Best practice review of new business starts and diagnostic consultancy services completed April 2002. Recommendations implemented with immediate effect.
 - Review of WDA Account Management System completed April 2002. Recommendations being used as basis for dialogue with ELWa and others to agree a joint approach to account management.
 - Mapping of WDA business support products and services.

Data input complete. Analysis and streamlining proposals being debated with a view to reducing the number of brands in the market place and ensuring greater clarity from the customer perspective. Will feed through

into Marketing, business planning and delivery in 2003/04 and will be continuously reviewed.

- Transfer of SPUR/SMART/RIN grant schemes from Welsh Assembly Government to WDA completed April 2002. Schemes currently being reviewed in context of other support for innovation. Review to be completed by March 2003.

(ii) Improving co-ordination of publicly funded business support services

- 4 regional business support consortia being established to develop business support strategies that promote greater effectiveness of provision, clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountability.
- Establishment of a national co-ordination group for publicly funded business support services to include ELWa, WLGA, WTB, Welsh Assembly Government and the WDA to address issues such as overlap/duplication of provision, value for money etc.

4. UNDERSTANDING AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF CUSTOMERS

Improving the effectiveness and impact of business support services can only be achieved by understanding the needs and wants of existing and potential customers and tailoring provision and delivery to meet these needs.

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- WDA SME Survey completed September 2001.
- WDA Customer Magazine, *Busnes*, launched September 2002 with a follow up survey in train.
- Ongoing review of findings of other surveys (eg., FSB, CBI, Chambers of Commerce....).
- Regular dialogue with representative bodies regionally and nationally eg., CBI, FSB, TUC and Sector Fora.
- Developing customer feedback mechanisms for all aspects of WDA business support and development activity (eg., through client management systems, complaints procedures, focus groups).
- Delivery of Potentia's pre-business start up support for under-represented groups as highlighted in the Entrepreneurship Action Plan, including delivery of a Diversity Training Programme to raise awareness about equality and diversity issues amongst mainstream business support providers.
- Joint Sector identification and needs study with Welsh Assembly Government and ELWa reporting in October 2002.

5. CONCLUSION

Significant progress has been made in implementing the recommendations arising from the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the EDC's Review of Business Support and Development Services. However, the WDA is aware from its regular contact and dialogue with both customers and providers of business support services that a long term and sustained effort is required on the part of the WDA and its partners to achieve better co-ordination of services, better quality of services and a customer focused, customer driven approach.

SIAN LLOYD JONES
OCTOBER 2002

LOCAL GATEWAY CENTRES

The following list details the locations of the Gateway Offices set up around Wales under contract from the WDA. The list does not include special arrangements such as Outreach centres which may be used for part of the working week.

SOUTH EAST WALES**Centre location**

Blaenau Gwent (Tredegar)
 RCT (Treforest)
 Cardiff
 Vale of Glamorgan (Barry)
 Bridgend (Tondur)
 Caerphilly (Ystrad Mynach)
 Merthyr Tydfil (Pentrebach)
 Monmouthshire (Cwmbran)
 Newport
 Torfaen (Cwmbran)

Contracted Organisation

Blaenau Gwent CBC
 Business Connect
 Business in Focus
 Business in Focus
 Business in Focus
 Caerphilly CBC
 Merthyr Tydfil CBC
 Monmouthshire CC
 Newport CC / N & G Enterprise
 Torfaen CBC

NORTH WALES**Centre location**

Clwydfro (Lon Parcwr, Ruthin)
 Morfa Clwyd (Morfa Clwyd Business Park, Rhyl)
 Rhyl (Rhyl Library & Arts Centre, Rhyl)
 Conwy (Llandudno Junction)
 Anglesey (Llangefni)
 Pwllheli
 Caernarfon
 Bangor
 Wrexham (Bersham Enterprise Centre)
 Wrexham (Wrexham Library & Arts Centre)
 Mold
 St Andrew's (Bromfield Industrial Estate, Mold)

Contracted Organisation

Denbighshire CC
 Flintshire CC
 Flintshire CC
 Flintshire CC
 Flintshire CC

SOUTH WEST WALES**Centre location**

Swansea / Neath Port Talbot (Neath)
 Carmarthenshire (Ammanford)
 Pembrokeshire (Pembroke)

Contracted Organisation

Neath Port Talbot CBC
 Carmarthenshire County Council
 Pembrokeshire County Council

MID WALES

Centre location

Penrhyndeudraeth
Dolgellau
Cardigan
Lampeter
Aberystwyth
Welshpool
Llandrindod Wells
Brecon
Ystradgynlais

Contracted Organisation

Denbighshire CC
Denbighshire CC
Antur Teifi
Antur Teifi
Ceredigion CC
Powys CC
Powys CC
Powys CC
Powys CC