

Wales Audit Office, Response to concerns raised by Amanda Brewer

Sent: 23 January 2013 07:57

The term that we used in our correspondence with Karen Sinclair throughout the period of our watching brief was always 'internal investigation'; we did not distinguish between the various reviews (Internal Audit review, compliance review, internal disciplinary review and technical review), and the updates we provided her were limited to informing her only about the progress of the reviews, to assure her that her concerns were being addressed by the Welsh Government. It did not extend to providing her with copies of, or any detail about, the content of those reviews.

The role of the WAO during this period was one of maintaining a watching brief on developments (as referred to in paragraph 14 of the WAO report). During the period in question... [the Wales Audit Office] maintained regular contact with ... the Head of the Welsh Government's Corporate Governance and Assurance Division... which was, and still is, a key part of progressing any concerns that arise during the audit cycle. When the Welsh Government produced reports from their various reviews, they were shared with the WAO to demonstrate that the issues raised by the correspondent were being progressed. At that stage our role was to ensure that the concerns raised by Karen Sinclair were being dealt with by the Welsh Government, and that we did not need to undertake any additional work. At no stage did the WAO share the results of these reports with Karen Sinclair; neither did the WAO have any input into the reports themselves.

At no time during the period when the WAO was maintaining a watching brief on matters relating to the River lodge (January 2010 to October 2011) or subsequently, as part of our audit examination of the River Lodge, has the WAO engaged in any discussions, or engaged in any other action, that could be construed as having an influence on disciplinary investigations or related proceedings. Apart from knowing of their existence and their outcomes, insofar as they were relevant to our watching brief role and later our report (as per paragraphs 4.4 and 4.6 and footnote 5 at the bottom of page 26 of the WAO report), we have no knowledge of the investigatory/disciplinary proceedings against individual members of staff, which were outside the remit of our own audit examination.