



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Case study

a

application management

Government without borders, technology without barriers

A new model for regional government

Wales is an integral part of the United Kingdom, but has its own distinctive culture and identity. Since 1998 it has also possessed a high level of autonomy, thanks to the devolution of many government powers from the center.

Throughout this transfer period, Atos has led the Merlin consortium, which brings together a number of specialist IT providers, delivering essential IT services, from core systems and processes through to applied innovation, tailored to the needs of Wales. We have applied lessons learned in other European regions and also developed new best practice ready to be shared more widely. Atos and its partners have successfully supported the key priorities set by the Welsh Government and have helped deliver better value and enhanced service quality to both the government and people of Wales.



Collaboration and engagement

Wales is special in many ways. It is an extraordinarily diverse region, with three million people, its own ancient and distinctive language, a very high level of rural and farming activity, and a mountainous landscape that can make communications between some communities difficult.

This unique set of conditions influences the Welsh Government's policy and the demands placed on its strategic IT partners. In working with the Welsh Government, the Merlin team, now led by Atos, was asked to work within the context of the five strategic challenges they had established, which are:

- ▶ **Meeting the efficiency agenda**—helping to ensure that the Welsh Government is a lean and high-performing body, fit for the future and an example to the country at large
- ▶ **Delivering on One Wales priorities**—enabling critical programs of cross-functional activity to transform the way that services are delivered, improving quality while reducing cost
- ▶ **Making business change happen**—strengthening capability in-house and supporting change throughout the Welsh public sector that is both effective and sustainable
- ▶ **Delivering citizen-centric services**—putting the citizen at the heart of the government program; developing and implementing new channels and methods to make services more easily accessible and usable
- ▶ **Harnessing technology to deliver the results**—building a world-class ICT infrastructure to enable advanced services; gaining maximum benefit from existing investments, while also promoting the eGovernment agenda.



While focusing on the strategic vision, the Merlin team also built a comprehensive infrastructure for a body that had not existed before 1998, created the IT and communications environment for the new Welsh Assembly building, which is the flagship and pride of Welsh political life, and managed an environment that has grown steadily in recent years as new developments have extended the scope of the Welsh Government and its responsibilities.

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From top to bottom and from end to end

The Merlin team is responsible for all IT and communication activity at all levels of the Welsh Government. This has led to intense activity on a growing range of projects, and a remarkable list of achievements.

They include:

- ▶ **State-of-the-art systems for the building** occupied by the legislature, the National Assembly for Wales, which opened in March 2006. The building, known as the Senedd, was intended to be one of the most advanced and sophisticated facilities of its kind in the world, and a key factor in its success has been the multimedia infrastructure designed and implemented by Atos. The core systems within the Senedd building include extensive use of video conferencing, the ability for each Assembly Member (AM) to use comprehensive IT and multimedia systems in real time to improve access to information and commentary, a secure voting system for members, and an innovative three-tier security system to safeguard the building and the people who work there.
- ▶ **Integration of external agencies**, including the National Tourist Board and, most important, Rural Payments Wales. This is the body set up by the UK Government to manage payments to farmers under the terms of EU-managed and audited subsidy arrangements. This is a matter of great importance, as errors or delays in payment can cause real hardship. The Atos-led project team quickly moved the failing, existing system onto a new platform and started to deliver immediate performance improvements. This is now a model for efficient management of such schemes and has greatly enhanced the lives of many Welsh farmers.
- ▶ **Sustainability projects**, a strategic imperative for the Welsh Government, which aims to be one of the most environmentally responsible bodies of its kind in the world. Our team has instigated a series of initiatives designed to reduce travel, cut energy use, rationalize everything from print to lighting, and enable home working. The carbon footprint of the government and its agencies has dropped steadily in the past decade, as “green” leadership is now becoming a reality.
- ▶ **Major change projects**, which are now transforming day-to-day activities internally and externally. First, Atos led the effort to migrate 7,000 users onto a new platform, designed to enable faster collaborative working between teams and departments internally. Then we ensured that colleagues had complete functionality and could be integrated with the rest of their teams while working from remote locations. After that, the focus turned to citizen-centricity, as more and more services, both from the Welsh Government and six external agencies, could be accessed and managed by citizens via multi-channel methods.
- ▶ **Bringing greater resilience and flexibility** to all systems through the process of continuing standardization, is now helping to further drive down costs and bring added scalability and speed to all systems, year-on-year. Atos is also bringing innovations to all service users by enabling mobile and home working and by bringing improved targeting and functionality to external services.

“This new chamber, with its computers, has been compared to the control room of the starship Enterprise, so that is progress for you—boldly going into the future which, on this occasion, managed to arrive both on budget and on time.”

Rhodri Morgan, former First Minister of Wales, on the opening of the new building

Delivering the results

Any government organization is subject to intense scrutiny in virtually everything it does. This is especially true of a body that represents a real innovation, as the Welsh Government does.

As a consequence, all the government's suppliers are subject to similarly demanding expectations. So far, the results achieved by the Merlin consortium, led by Atos, have been outstanding.

Standards are audited through an annual benchmarking exercise, which ensures that the costs and service levels delivered by Merlin are comparable with best-in-class services delivered to other public bodies around the world. The results to date have provided objective proof that Merlin reaches the right performance levels across the board, and delivers real value to the client and to the taxpayer.

Performance quality is measured via customer satisfaction levels for transactions, backed by a comprehensive annual interview of 1,300 randomly selected users, and an annual executive survey of twenty key leaders in the Welsh Government. Latest satisfaction surveys show that 76% of users are satisfied with the service levels they receive, which compares extremely well to international results for organizations of a similar scale going through sustained transformation.

The partnership continues to evolve

The Atos-led team also works with the Welsh Government, to help formulate, test, and validate policies in areas that relate to technology and service delivery. In Wales, we can see true collaboration in action—with policy makers, key officials and users alike, to set strategy, share intelligence, and jointly develop plans for the future.

This project also has great significance for the many autonomous regions and small countries across Europe and beyond. Atos has shown how quickly and efficiently a new infrastructure and supporting systems can be put in place, and how use of best practice examples, backed by repeatable solutions, can drive exceptional performance, even in smaller national communities. Lessons learned in Wales could be used to improve performance and drive down costs across Europe in the next few years, as Atos takes its Welsh experience to the rest of the world.



“Support for the delivery of ICT related projects is a key component of the partnership arrangements we enjoy... there have been notable successes of project delivery and this, with a closer working relationship between us, sets a stronger foundation to move forward in supporting the business change agenda within the Welsh Government.”

Brian Reeves, former Director of ICT Programmes Division, Welsh Government

For more information:
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