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Page: 1 of 3

Dear Christine

INQUIRY ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

In the course of giving evidence on 2nd October as part of the Committee's inquiry on local government collaboration, committee members asked me to provide examples of local authorities that have moved to open source software. I have appended to this letter a list of various examples that Wales Audit Office staff are aware of. I trust that this information will be of use to the Committee.

Huw

HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES

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Annex: Examples of local authorities that have moved to open source software (OSS) based on information held by the Wales Audit Office

The Welsh Government's 2011 *ICT Strategy for the Public Sector in Wales* says that it will 'build capability within the public sector in Wales to increase the amount of open source code and software in use and to make it available for reuse elsewhere'.

Whilst the Wales Audit Office has not undertaken work looking specifically at the use made of OSS in Wales, we are aware of some instances in which it is being used across local government. We have identified these examples through financial audit related work which concentrates on ICT systems that present a potential material risk to the accuracy of local authorities' accounts and as part of the improvement assessment work that we undertake each year under the 2009 Local Government (Wales) Measure. Examples of OSS in use include:

- **Newport** uses the Ingres Database - Ingres a commercially supported, open-source SQL database with a global community of contributors.
- **Rhondda Cynon Taff** uses Solaris as an operating system underpinning their Capita Academy Revenues and Benefits system. Solaris is a hybrid of OSS and commercial off-the-shelf software (COTS).
- **Gwynedd** uses Ingres as a database for their Academy Revenues and Benefits. The Council also uses Red Hat as a platform for its Cyborg payroll. Red Hat is one of a plethora of commercially supported variants on Linux. Linux is arguably one of the most widely used and recognisable OSS operating systems and is itself a version of the earlier UNIX system originally developed as an educational tool for use by trainee programmers.
- **Flintshire** uses Capita's OpenHousing, an OSS housing management application. Historically, Capita has strong track record in using or promoting OSS as part of its commercial offering. OpenHousing is software marketed and supported by Capita, but developed by a worldwide network of users with a strong central management of features and version control.
- **Wrexham** uses the Progress OpenEdge OSS database within its Orchard Housing Rents and Repairs software. Orchard's housing software contains a mix of COTS and some OSS components, they support both.
- **Conwy** uses the MySQL OSS database to manage data within its website. MySQL is particularly suited to web applications such as corporate websites. Conwy use this in conjunction with an Apache Tomcat OSS web server which sits within a Linux OSS operating system. This is quite a typical OSS Website system. Conwy also use many smaller scale OSS tools and applications for IT admin purposes and they also participate, as do many local education authorities in Wales, in the Moodle project (OSS interactive web pages for schools parents and pupils).

- **Carmarthenshire** uses Solaris as the operating system for its payroll. However, one of the features of OSS is that users often become developers, applying their experience in applying the software to the on-going task of improving it. Whilst in many of the above cases, the Council is simply an end user, running OSS without necessarily participating in its development, Carmarthenshire also provides an example of a full-scale development using OSS: They are currently using OSS to develop electronic forms (planning applications, etc) using tools produced by I-Local. . This application has the potential to be used by other councils.

As with COTS, there is a vast amount of OSS available, covering almost any commercial or service delivery application imaginable. Often organisations will run mainstream services and processes with COTS, but add OSS for specific add-on components where local tailoring is needed. This seems to be consistent with the pattern of use emerging in Welsh Local Government. The Wales Audit Office is considering holding a shared learning seminar on the use of open source software, following on from recent seminars on the effective use of information technology.