



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment

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Senior Responsible Owner (SRO):	Dickie Davis
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Review Team Leader:	[REDACTED]
Review Team Members:	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
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This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH)

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1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

<u>Delivery Confidence Assessment:</u>	AMBER
The case for investment in the National Digital Exploitation Centre remains sound and the aims and objectives of the programme are closely aligned with key policies and strategy documents. Considerable progress has been made over the last year despite the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. The programme has the widespread support of its stakeholders and the Thales UK leadership team is held in high regard. Strong productive relationships are being forged and we heard examples of areas where NDEC is exceeding expectations. However, the programme has experienced some slippage and there are areas of concern that need to be addressed and risks that need to be actively managed. These include: • NDEC governance arrangement • Outcome measures and KPIs • Project and programme management controls • Risk and issue management • Planning We conclude that successful delivery of NDEC's full potential appears feasible but significant issues exist that require management attention. If addressed promptly, they should not impact the programme's timescale, costs or the quality outcomes.	

1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment

Delivery confidence is an independent assessment of the programme's ability to deliver its principal aims and objectives, to the required standard of quality, on time and within the agreed financial envelope.

Our assessment reflects specific risks, issues and dependencies that may undermine successful delivery and is influenced by the resilience of the programme to overcome any identified shortcomings and challenges. This assessment is based on current guidance and best practice, the documentation provided to us for the review and our interviews with programme personnel, key stakeholders and delivery partners.

The Delivery Confidence assessment RAG status uses the definitions below:

RAG	Criteria Description
Green	Successful delivery of the programme to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.
Amber/Green	Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
Amber	Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present a cost/schedule overrun.
Amber/Red	Successful delivery of the programme is in doubt with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to ensure these are addressed, and establish whether resolution is feasible.
Red	Successful delivery of the programme appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which, at this stage, do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The programme may need re-baselining and/or overall viability re-assessed.

2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

The Review Team makes the following recommendations which are prioritised using the definitions overleaf. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the main body of the report.

Ref No.	Recommendation	Urgency (C/E/R)	Target date for completion	Classification
1.	As the NDEC programme moves from mobilisation to the building and operational phase, review and update the governance framework to ensure it is fit for purpose.	C- Critical	Do now	1.1
2.	Steering committee members should consider (a) the type of baseline data that would be useful as a measure to demonstrate added value/benefit over time, (b) potential sources and (c) ease of collection.	E- Essential	3-6months	6
3.	Introduce proportionate programme management controls and disciplines, particularly in relation to document management, risk and issue management and programme planning.	E- Essential	2-3 months	3.2
4.	Working in partnership, develop and agree a high level, integrated master plan for the delivery of the hybrid units into operational service, showing all activities on the critical path and critical inter-dependencies between Thales UK, Welsh Government and BGCBC.	C- Critical	Do Now	3.1
5.	Develop a joint risk and issue register for NDEC and ensure risk and issue management is a standing item on the Steering Committee agenda.	E- Essential	1-2 months	9.1
6.	Review and agree the communication and marketing approach to ensure clear and consistent messaging across all media and audiences.	E- Essential	3-6 months	3.6

Critical (Do Now) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that the programme should take action immediately

Essential (Do By) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the programme should take action in the near future.

Recommended – The programme should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation.

3.0 Comments from the SRO

A really useful report, thank you – my comments as requested:

Recommendation 1 - This recommendation doesn't sit entirely easily with me as clearly Thales are responsible for the delivery and governance of their project. NDEC was funded by a grant, which followed WG procedures in place at the time and continues to be monitored by an established process. We don't have a governance framework for NDEC as we are applying our grant monitoring process to the Company with the KPIs we discussed and as we do with any other grant award to a company. There is scope however for more coordination as clearly we have a vested interest in the successful delivery of NDEC by Thales and especially the delivery of the educational and economic outputs. There will be a benefit in a more joined up future governance but there is balance to be had between working together and seeking to control. This concerns me as we may stray from being the provider of grant funding into a joint venture partner or even procurer of services role.

Recommendation 2 - Some interesting suggestions of additional statistics that could be gathered, some of which were considered in the appraisal process, but there was a preference for actual figures to be included in the measured outputs rather than percentage increases as NDEC will certainly have contributed to these increases but other factors will also have a bearing. Conversely we could not hold Thales responsible for a decrease in percentages or numbers in the region which may be due to factors outside of their control (e.g. Covid).

Recommendation 3 - Some cross over with my response to recommendation 1 in that I recognise the potential benefits of joined up governance between Thales and WG in relation to NDEC but that our terms of engagement as outlined in the grant offer letter are based on NDEC being a grant funded project. What impact would joint governance have on this agreement ?

Recommendation 4 - I am in agreement with and this has begun to be addressed by WG. (Colleagues are meeting this pm to discuss the speed and implementation of the building plan.)

Recommendation 5 - This is an action for Thales with support from WG.

Recommendation 6 - Agree that more could be done to publicise NDEC but that this is a role for all stakeholders.

/cont'd overleaf

Comments from the SRO *(continued)*

Next review – In my opinion July 2021 is too early for another review but perhaps we should not wait until the end of the programme. I would suggest towards the end of 2021 or Q1 2022 would be more appropriate to enable Thales to embed NDEC into the hybrid units.

4.0 Background

In December 2018, Thales UK Limited made a successful bid for £10m funding towards the establishment of a new National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) in Ebbw Vale. The principle aims and objectives of the new centre sit at the heart of the Tech Valleys programme, an initiative announced by the Welsh Government in December 2017.

NDEC will be delivered by Thales UK in collaboration with the University of South Wales (USW) and will be the first of its kind in Wales. With shared state-of-the-art labs and technical facilities, the centre will comprise four inter-related zones:

- **Digital Education Centre**
- **Advanced Cyber Institute**
- **Applied Digital Trust Environment**
- **Project R&D Zone.**

All elements, with the exception of the educational aspects of the centre, are expected to be fully self-sufficient within five years.

The aims of the programme

Through digital training, research, cutting-edge facilities and access to state-of-the-art technologies, the principal aims and objectives of NDEC are:

- To position the region to exploit the global opportunities of digital transformation;
- To prepare the region for the range of large infrastructure, transportation and energy projects in the next 10 years;
- To equip regional and local businesses to compete for, and win, workshare on large regional projects;
- To work with Welsh SMEs to adapt their products and services to the digital/cyber marketplace, with a view to generating increased sales which, in turn, will translate to additional new, high-value jobs;
- To increase awareness of digital opportunities and risks, in both the business community (via the Applied Digital Trust Environment) and with young people (via the Education Zone);
- To stimulate and create local employment in high value technology;
- To increase the digital skills base for the region;
- To provide a research lab in which big multi-nationals can develop major technology advances;
- To connect Wales to major tech centres across the UK and globally.

The procurement/delivery status:

In December 2018, Thales UK Limited was awarded £10m towards the establishment of a new National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) in Ebbw Vale. In November 2019, a request was made by Thales for a further £1.4m to support the additional 12-month operations costs incurred as a result of delays in locating to the Ebbw Vale site. This received Ministerial approval and a revised award letter for £11.4m was issued in December 2019 for the period September 2018 to March 2025.

The NDEC programme is currently running one year late and on the current revised schedule is due to end March 2025.

After an initial feasibility and design phase, the NDEC programme is now in the Mobilisation and Build Phases which run concurrently.

The driving force for the programme:

“The role of technology and the pace of the digital revolution are driving the need for an immediate increase in focus and acceleration of the development of digital skills. Across industry sectors there is a clear recognition of the need to develop more digital skills and capabilities to release the value and benefits of digital transformation. Particularly, the need is most prevalent in Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and transportation.”

(Strategy Paper, NDEC Business Plan v3 September 2018)

Blaenau Gwent's economy has fallen behind the rest of Wales and without intervention, educational under-achievement and limited employment prospects will continue to impede the prospects of current and future generations.

To address these shortfalls, the Welsh Government's has published their *Prosperity for All* agenda¹ and the Wales Economic Action Plan², to:

- Maximise job creation and retention, generate growth and economic prosperity in the region;
- Prepare the region for a range of forthcoming major infrastructure and Critical National Infrastructure programmes, including preparing regional businesses to play a successful part in the Supply Chain.

Current position regarding previous assurance reviews:

This is the first Gateway review of the NDEC programme

In the Ministerial Advice Note requesting additional funding (dated November 2019), a commitment was made to undertake an independent review to determine whether the NDEC programme should be continued. On the original timetable, this review was due to be held in March 2020.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-10/prosperity-for-all-the-national-strategy.pdf>

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf>

5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review

The primary purpose of this Gateway Review 0 (Strategic Assessment) is to:

- (i) review the outcomes and objectives for the NDEC programme (and the way they fit together)
- (ii) confirm that they make the necessary contribution to Ministers' or the Department's overall strategy,
- (iii) review the arrangements for managing risks and monitoring the programme
- (iv) confirm market and stakeholder engagement activities

In consultation with the NDEC team, the review will also provide assurance that:

- challenging but achievable targets are being set in areas where NDEC can provide added local and national economic value;
- the structures and systems in place are appropriate, and make recommendations on any changes that need to be made to increase delivery confidence.

Annex A gives the full purposes statement for a Gateway Review 0.

Annex B lists the people who were interviewed during the review.

6.0 Acknowledgements

The Review Team would like to thank the Senior Responsible Officer and all those who participated in the interviews for their support and openness throughout this review. Their cooperation has enabled us to develop a shared understanding of the scope and ambitions of the new centre, and contributed to the final outcome of this review.

7.0 Scope of the Review

OGC Gateway Review 0 is applied at the start-up of a programme, and is repeated at appropriate key decision points during the programme. This is a mid-point Gateway 0 Review.

8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations

8.1: Policy and Business Context

With funding from the Welsh Government and partnership working between Thales UK and University of South Wales (USW), NDEC will provide:

- **Digital Education Centre** - where a diverse set of stakeholders, including schools, colleges, individual citizens and small to medium enterprises (SMEs) can acquire the relevant knowledge and cyber/digital skills to remain secure and thrive in the modern digitalised world;
- **Advanced Cyber Institute** - where academic institutions, industrial research organisations and businesses can engage in R&D activity around cyber security and digital trust in a state of the art facility, administered by USW;
- **Applied Digital Trust Environment** - where organisations will work with Thales' experts to draw out creative strategies and utilise industry-proven methodologies, techniques and technologies to address identified needs and generate new or improved products that are more secure and resilient, ensuring that the needs of cyber security, safety, confidentiality, privacy and legislative standards are addressed;
- **Project R&D Zone** - where core Thales R&D projects and firms (including Thales existing and future clients) can work in a specific digital trust environment (co-located with the Applied Digital Trust Environment) to deliver technology projects.

The case for investment in NDEC is strategically sound. Digital and cyber security skills are seen as vital building blocks for the future economy of Wales and the UK at large.

The principal objectives of NDEC - its concept, operating model and its long-term sustainability - remain fully aligned with key policies and national strategy documents.

The UK National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021 (updated 2020) emphasises the importance of the digital economy and the criticality of cyber security:

"The future of the UK's security and prosperity rests on digital foundations. The challenge of our generation is to build a flourishing digital society that is both resilient to cyber threats, and equipped with the knowledge and capabilities required to maximise opportunities and manage risks.....Our economy, the administration of government and the provision of essential services now rely on the integrity of cyberspace and on the infrastructure, systems and data which underpin it"

The UK government has committed to raise investment in research and development and has called on the Welsh Government - along with the other devolved administrations - to work with the private and public sectors to ensure that individuals, businesses and organisations are fully equipped for the digital transformation.

NDEC will also deliver the policy objectives and change priorities of the Welsh Government described in the national strategy *Prosperity for All* (2017, updated March 2019) and the *Economic Action Plan* (EAP) that underpins it.

Similarly, the *Tech Valleys Strategic Plan* (April 2018) recognises that the advancement of technology presents a considerable opportunity for industry, academia and the public sector to work together to deliver economic prosperity.

Looking to the future, the USW Strategy, (USW 2030) also sets out a direction of travel that will “...equip our students with the skills, knowledge and experience required to maximise their potential and future opportunities in the world of work” and provide “a distinctive and relevant academic portfolio focused on student & employer needs”.

If the long term aims and ambitions of NDEC are fully realised, it has the potential to create employment in high value technology businesses, and reverse the migration of skills away from the region – an ambition that is at the heart of the Tech Valleys initiative.

There are high levels of confidence that, once established, NDEC will inform and educate young people in the opportunities available to them in the digital/cyber industries, equip businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of large regional and national projects, and enable Wales to exploit the global opportunities of digital transformation.

8.2: Business Case and Stakeholders

Business Plan

A Business Plan was prepared by Thales UK in support of their grant application to establish and run a NDEC in Ebbw Vale. The document is comprehensive and makes a compelling case for investment, linked to a need to address specific skills shortages and lack of employment opportunities within Blaenau Gwent area. It also references specific initiatives to provide a digital trust/cyber focus, and the regional infrastructure programmes due in the next 10-15 years. The initial justification for the investment remains sound and the value of NDEC is now being realised.

Stakeholders

During the course of the review, we met a range of stakeholders from the Welsh Government, USW, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and representatives from industries, both large and small.

From our discussions, it is clear that there is widespread support for NDEC among the stakeholder community and strong productive relationships have been forged. There is universal recognition of the benefits and added value that NDEC is already bringing to both education and local industry.

The Vice President of Thales UK is held in high regard by all stakeholders. His personal qualities and professional leadership combined with his commitment to Ebbw Vale are highly valued.

We received encouraging feedback with regard to the educational/academic components of NDEC. Effective partnership arrangements are in place and we heard examples of team working at both an operational and strategic level.

Reference was also made to a three-day conference that Thales had arranged, which had used the expertise of their partners. We also heard examples of the educational programmes and engagement activities with primary school children, the support Thales had provided to the “Cyber First Girls Competition” and the Wales Tech week in June which was attended by 4,500 delegates from 17 different countries.

Several stakeholders described the transformational potential of NDEC and the prosperity it could bring into the local area. Others emphasised the positive impact that Thales had already made by organising SME Open Days, supporting the

development of SME networks and helping businesses to develop their own vision for the future. A number of stakeholders are now keen to publicise the role of NDEC and its achievements in relation to both education and industry.

Some stakeholders raised concerns about the mismatch between the public and private sectors, with regard to the pace of change and problem-solving capacity. The delay to the building is a major source of concern. It is important that there is a clear joined-up plan to deliver the alternative accommodation as soon as possible. Relying on a change in personnel may not be enough.

8.3: Management of Intended Outcomes

Governance

The NDEC steering committee has been established and led by Thales UK. The meetings are well attended and its membership contains appropriate representation from industry, academia and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and the Welsh Government.

Opinions varied on whether members were sufficiently proactive in the meetings eg raising questions and providing appropriate levels of challenge. One member regarded the steering committee as a communications forum, with a focus on updating members on current activities. The minutes and action log provide a summary record of the meeting but, based on the two sets of minutes we have seen, they do not provide sufficient documentary evidence that the committee is yet realising the full scope of responsibilities as set out in its terms of reference. The new SRO may wish to request that the minutes include a brief overview of any discussion and the basis on which decisions or approvals are made.

We heard that the committee has tended to focus on operational activities rather than wider, more strategic aims and objectives. As the NDEC moves into its fully operational phase we expect this to change and for the steering committee to take a more proactive role in determining the strategic direction of the NDEC programme. A number of interviewees referred to the committee as the “programme board” and some suggested that it should function as such in the future.

The NDEC governance paper was made available to us. This was produced by Thales and sets out the terms of reference and membership of the steering committee. It provided no insight into the wider governance framework and organisational structure under which NDEC operates. The Welsh Government’s assurance and approval routes overlaying NDEC are also unclear. During the review we encountered references to the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board (WIDAB), the Tech Valleys Strategic Advisory Board, Welsh Economic Research Unit (WERU), the Economy Skills and Natural Resources Group (ESNR) and the Development Bank of Wales. How these fit within the Welsh Government’s governance framework for NDEC remains unclear.

Several steering committee members commented on the lack of clarity regarding the division of roles and responsibilities. The example given was the apparent lack of ownership, responsibility and accountability for the new build (Regain 2) and the perceived lack of urgency in resolving the ongoing problems. This was frustrating for external stakeholders. We suspect that Thales UK may have been expected to resolve difficulties between the local council and the government offices that were outside its sphere of influence or direct control. In this context, we heard that they would benefit

from greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities within the Welsh Government, BGCBC and Thales UK.

As the NDEC programme moves into the next phase of delivery and responsibility transfers from the Industrial Transformation Division to the Tech Valleys South East Regional Office team, it would be prudent to review and update the Welsh Government's governance arrangements and provide greater clarity on lines of responsibility and accountability.

Recommendation 1: As the NDEC programme moves from mobilisation to the building and operational phase, review and update the governance framework to ensure it is fit for purpose.

The NDEC programme has been established as a partnership between Thales and the University of South Wales, funded in part by the Welsh Government. We understand from our discussions that if Thales fails to deliver or decided to exit, funding would be re-imbursed, the implication being that nothing would be lost. Whilst this is valid financial argument, it does not reflect the wider ambitions of the NDEC programme or the associated risks. Failure to deliver the NDEC vision would result in significant reputational damage for the government and undermine relationships with the business world. It would also mean that the opportunity to bring about much-needed transformational change and economic growth in the area would be pushed still further into the distance.

It is clear from our discussions with key stakeholders that the programme is highly valued by local government, academia and industry. Thales UK is held in high regard and no one wants this exciting and innovative venture to fail. This is the largest investment within the Tech Valleys and the Welsh Government should position itself as a key enabler, supporting Thales to ensure that it can deliver the best possible outcomes for the benefit of the Blaenau Gwent community.

Key Performance Indicators

Payments are being made to Thales UK in accordance with established monitoring process for grant awards. The process has been transactional in nature, based on key performance indicators (KPIs) set out in the revised Offer Letter. The limitations of monitoring progress based solely on KPIs are now surfacing. The level of the NDEC investment, its scope and long-term ambition mean that it is not best suited to this type of approach. We heard numerous examples from both academia and industry of the added value the NDEC is bringing to the area and the business networking opportunities and collaborations that are now possible. Many of the stakeholders gave explicit examples of how Thales is exceeding expectations despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic. We also learned from external stakeholders that consideration was being given to establishing centres within the Tech Valleys area, citing NDEC and Thales as the chief magnet.

Work is now being undertaken to develop more effective measures of outcomes. We are unsighted on the outputs from this work or the agreed way forward. There has been some discussion of the development of case studies and storyboards. These are valuable tools to illustrate the added value NDEC is delivering on the ground. However, it is also important to compile more long-term objective measures to demonstrate the return on investment over the lifecycle of NDEC. To do this, there is a need to establish baseline datasets against which improvements over time can be measured. From our discussions, we understand that some of these datasets are

readily available from statistics units within government, the council, academia and, possibly, SME network organisations. Examples might include:

- % of school leavers taking up local employment in the digital/cyber sector
- % take up of digital-related subjects at GCSE and A-level in the local area
- Number of new job opportunities within digital/cyber sector in the local area
- % of applications from local people for local jobs within the digital/cyber industry
- Number of new technology firms starting-up in the local area.

Other statistics could be gathered now as part of the school engagement activities with teachers, career advisors and students eg the percentage of school children with an awareness of the (i) importance of digital technology/cyber security and (ii) job opportunities within these areas (A baseline survey could form part of NDEC initial engagement with a school or college).

Some of these measures are long-term and the true gains may not be realised until the end of the investment period (2025) and beyond. It is important that the task is not overly burdensome and that the information gathered is used to inform future activities and planning.

Recommendation 2: Steering Committee members should consider (a) the type of baseline data that would be useful as a measure to demonstrate added value/benefit over time, (b) potential sources and (c) ease of collection.

Project/Programme management disciplines

From the outset NDEC has been managed like other grant award schemes with responsibility for delivery residing with Thales as the recipient of the award. It is interesting that many of the people we spoke to saw NDEC as a major transformational programme and we share this view.

NDEC is the largest investment within the Tech Valleys portfolio and given its scope and complexity, we believe it would benefit from the introduction of *appropriate and proportionate* programme management controls and disciplines, particularly in relation to document management, risk and issue management and programme planning.

We recognise that, like other public sector organisations, resourcing in Welsh Government can be a challenge. However, we understand that there is a PPM wrap being placed around other initiatives across the division and there may opportunities to utilise this resource for NDEC.

Recommendation 3: Introduce proportionate programme management controls and disciplines, particularly in relation to document management, risk and issue management and programme planning.

8.4: Risk Management

From our conversations with delivery partners and stakeholders, several risks have been identified eg the operational, financial and economic impact of Covid-19 and Brexit; changes in leadership and the loss of key personnel within Thales. However, of most concern is the risk of further delays with the commissioning and fit-out of the new Hybrid units ready for full operational service.

We detected differing views on the design and appearance of the building, and its function. Some business stakeholders saw its potential as a flagship centre of global excellence, the design of which would reflect the vision and ambition of NDEC and attract global interest. Others within government had more modest aspirations for the building. Clearly, the decision to abandon plans for a new single building (Regain 2) and move instead to the new Hybrid units means that compromises will have to be made. It is essential that expectations are properly managed and that these differing perspectives are resolved as a matter of urgency. If not, further delay will be inevitable. It is imperative that lessons learned from Regain 2 are taken on board.

Opinions also varied on the likely timescales to achieve operational readiness within the Hybrid units. We strongly recommend that high level integrated master plan is drawn up for the delivery of these buildings into operational service. This should include all activities on the critical path, including key milestones, approvals within the three organisations, and critical inter-dependencies between Thales, WG and BGCBC. This will act as an important management tool for the steering committee, reduce the risk of administrative delays and provide added support to Thales.

Recommendation 4: Working in partnership, develop and agree a high level, integrated master plan for the delivery of the hybrid units into operational service, showing all activities on the critical path and critical inter-dependencies between Thales UK, Welsh Government and BGCBC.

We have received verbal assurances that risks are being discussed at the Steering Committee but this is not explicit in the minutes.

We would expect to see risks and issues as a standing item on the agenda and would recommend that a joint risk and issue register is compiled and maintained to ensure that steering committee members remain focused on the key risks and issues facing the NDEC programme, and that there is clarity and agreement on ownership and mitigations.

Recommendation 5: Develop a joint risk and issue register for NDEC and ensure risk and issue management is a standing item on the Steering Committee agenda.

8.5: Review of Current Outcomes

Throughout the review, reference was made to progress that had been made by Thales despite the challenges afforded by the coronavirus pandemic. This is to be commended. We heard that expectations are being exceeded in a number of areas and there is recognition of the added value Thales UK is bringing to Blaenau Gwent and the wider area.

We understand that the Welsh Government maintained a relatively low profile during the early phases of the NDEC programme but several stakeholders suggested that its achievements should now be celebrated and marketed more widely. Some stakeholders suggested that if it was understood that NDEC was endorsed by Welsh Government, it would have more “gravitas” among certain industrial/SME audiences.

A number of stakeholders were keen to publicise the role of NDEC and its success in relation to both education and industry. The creation of opportunities for people within the local community and other areas of deprivation was recognised and valued. Some stakeholders felt that NDEC was not “visible” and that opportunities were being lost

to tell the good news stories. For example, in terms of education, good working relationships with “Hwb” (WG’s digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales) have been established and the production of a resource pack “Cyber Heroes” is imminent. There is also a programme to train students to become trainers in care home settings so that they can work with residents and staff to improve their digital/cyber skills.

There were some concerns that the NDEC website had not kept pace with the programme and needed to be updated. A review of the website www.ndec.org.uk shows that this is the case with latest news dated 1st May 2020 and the text in the projects section stating “Details of these exciting projects are coming soon”.

Comments were also made regarding clarity of the messaging and the need for external communications to be appropriate to the audience. Due to time constraints, we have been unable to establish whether a communications plan and marketing strategy has been agreed for NDEC but it is important to ensure that messages are clear and consistent across all media and audiences.

Recommendation 6: Review and agree the communication and marketing approach to ensure clear and consistent messaging across all media and audiences.

9.0 Next Assurance Review

In the Ministerial Advice Note (dated November 2019), a commitment was made to have a second NDEC review in Year 5, to determine (i) whether the programme should continue, and (ii) if additional funding would be required. This full programme review would consider if and how the educational activity undertaken by Thales and the University of South Wales should or could be delivered in the future. It is expected that the business activity will be self-sustaining by the end of the programme period.

However, given the known challenges and risks associated with the delivery of NDEC into operational service in the new buildings, we would recommend that a follow-up independent assurance review is undertaken in July 2021. This should be a **Gateway 0/4 Review (Readiness for Service)**, prior to operational deployment in the new Hybrid units.

ANNEX A

Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:

- Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management.
- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders.
- Confirm that the programme's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of Government policy and procurement objectives, the organisation's delivery plans and change programmes, and any interdependencies with other programmes or projects in the organisation's portfolio and, where relevant, those of other organisations.
- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme as a whole and the links to individual parts of it (e.g. to any existing projects in the programme's portfolio).
- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks (and the individual project risks), including external risks such as changing business priorities.
- Check that provision for financial and other resources has been made for the programme (initially identified at programme initiation and committed later) and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised.
- After the initial Review, check progress against plans and the expected achievement of outcomes.
- Check that there is engagement with the market as appropriate on the feasibility of achieving the required outcome.
- Where relevant, check that the programme takes account of joining up with other programmes, internal and external.
- Evaluation of actions to implement recommendations made in any earlier assessment of deliverability.

ANNEX B

List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed via video-conference during the review:

Name	Organisation and role
Dickie Davis *	SRO and Deputy Director for the Industrial Transformation Division, Welsh Government
David Rosser	Chief Regional Officer, South East Wales, Welsh Government (incoming SRO)
[REDACTED] *	NDEC Project Manager, Strategic Engagement Manager Advanced Materials & Manufacturing or Business Development Manager, Welsh Government
Gareth Williams *	Vice President, Thales UK
[REDACTED]	Senior Monitoring Manager, Welsh Government
Julie Lydon *	Vice Chancellor, University of South Wales
Richard Crook *	Corporate Director for Regeneration & Community Services, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
[REDACTED]	Manager – Tech Valleys Programme, Welsh Government
Avril Lewis *	CEO of Technology Connected
[REDACTED]	NDEC Business Manager, Thales UK
[REDACTED]	Education Lead – Thales UK (on secondment from USW)
Perry Duffill *	Vice President and General Manager, TT Electronics
[REDACTED]	Business Development Director, Drone Evolution

* Denotes members of the NDEC Steering Committee