



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Public Audit Committee

Jennifer Inglis-Jones
Director for Internal Audit and Assurance
Scottish Government

Geoff Huggins
Chief Digital Officer
Scottish Government

11 October 2024

Dear Ms Inglis-Jones and Mr Huggins

Major IT Projects

Thank you for providing the most recent major IT projects update to the Public Audit Committee on [5 September 2024](#).

The Committee notes that this is the first update we have received since [July 2023](#), following confirmation in your letter of [21 December 2023](#) that the December 2023 update would be postponed to focus on the development of a new style report.

In your most recent letter to the Committee, you explain that the report “will continue to undergo continuous improvements including strengthening the focus on active digital projects in the future.” The letter also seeks feedback on any improvements the Committee wishes to see in future reports.

The Committee recently considered the most recent update and agreed to provide feedback on some areas where it believes improvements could be made, in order to gain a better understanding of the status and progress of active digital projects. I set out a summary of this feedback below.

Annex B – Major IT Projects

Digital assurance

Annexe B of the report provides an overview of current major IT projects which have digital assurance activity associated with them. When considering the most recent update, the Committee noted that there has been no assurance since the last IT projects update for some projects including—

- Body Worn Video – National Rollout, Police Scotland

Contact: Public Audit Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.
Email: publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

- Digital Case Management System – Office of the Public Guardian, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service.

The Committee would be interested to establish why these projects have not been subject to any further assurance since the last update in July 2023.

It also asks that future updates include information on the assurance status for all active projects, including an explanation where no further assurance has taken place since the last update.

Budget and schedule information

In December 2022, the Committee [wrote to the Scottish Government](#) to request that future IT updates should include an assessment of whether each project is tracking to time and budget. This feedback was incorporated into the July 2023 update, with the inclusion of either a “Yes” or “No” to confirm this information for each project.

The Committee notes that the new report continues to provide this information, which is welcome. It is concerned however that this high-level “Yes” or “No” assessment does not provide a sufficient level of detail for the Committee to establish the extent to which costs have increased or a project is delayed.

For example, the most recent update reports that the Scottish Government’s Justice Directorate and Police Scotland project, “Digital Evidence Sharing Capability” is not currently on budget or on schedule. The accompanying project note refers to a “successful pilot” but provides no information setting out the reasons for the cost overrun and delay.

Similarly, the most recent update highlights that the Scottish Public Pensions Agency’s McCloud Remedy project is not tracking to budget or schedule. However, no information is available to establish the extent of the situation for this project.

The Committee asks that further information is provided in future updates on the extent to which costs have increased, or timescales have changed for all relevant IT projects, including the reason(s) why.

Tracking whole-life costs

The Committee notes that whole-life cost information continue to be provided for each project in the new style of report. However, it further notes that from the information provided in the update, it is not possible to establish how these estimated costs have changed over time.

For example, in the July 2023 update, it was reported that the Body Worn Video project was estimated to cost £18.2 million. In the most recent update, received in September 2024, the estimated whole-life cost has almost doubled to £32.9 million. The only way to track this significant increase in cost is by cross-referencing the most recent update with the July 2023 update.

When comparing the July 2023 update with the September 2024 update, the Committee notes that the estimated whole-life costs also appear to have increased for the following projects—

Project	Estimated whole-life cost - July 2023 update	Estimated whole-life cost - September 2024 update
Digital Case Management System – Office of the Public Guardian, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service	£4.05 million	£6.6 million
McCloud Remedy, Scottish Public Pensions Agency	£8.1 million	£10.65 million

The Committee further notes that the most recent update refers to a reduction in the estimated costs for the Aspen (Management Information Platform), Forestry and Land Scotland project “due to more accurate costs following the completion of the procurement exercise.”

While it is helpful that the update draws our attention to this reduction in estimated cost, there is no information setting out the extent of this reduction. Indeed, only by comparing the July 2023 update with the September 2024 update is it clear that costs have reduced from £8.3 million to £4.8 million.

The Committee is strongly of the view that any change in estimated whole-life costs, whether this be an increase, or a decrease, should be clearly highlighted in IT project updates. It therefore asks that consideration is given to how this information can be included in future updates.

Accountability and governance

In your letter of 21 December 2023, you confirmed that a programme of work had been progressed during 2023 “to develop a more system wide approach which includes the prioritisation of digital investment and delivery through portfolio management.”

As you may recall, the Committee [sought information in April 2022](#) regarding the accountability and governance structures for major ICT projects and programmes. This included requesting diagrams setting out the arrangements for projects where—

- responsibility lies with the accountable officer of a public body.
- the Digital Director is the accountable officer
- where the accountable officer sits outwith the Digital Directorate.

This information was helpfully provided to the Committee in [May 2022](#)

Recognising that work was conducted during 2023 to develop a more system wide approach to major IT projects, the Committee asks whether any changes have been made to accountability and governance arrangements, as set out in the letter of May 2022.

The Committee would welcome the opportunity to have an informal discussion with you on this feedback, and the future direction of IT project updates. The clerks will be in touch to suggest possible dates for this to take place.

The Committee requests a response to this letter by **8 November 2024**.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener