

December 2019

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Fee Scheme 2020-21



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU



This is a fee scheme prepared by the Wales Audit Office under section 24 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013.

This fee scheme is laid before the National Assembly under section 24(4)(c) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Overview

Introduction

- 1 This Fee Scheme has been prepared by the Wales Audit Office under section 24 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) ([Appendix 1](#)). The Fee Scheme, following approval by the National Assembly's Finance Committee, provides the basis on which the Wales Audit Office charges fees.
- 2 The Board has listened carefully to stakeholder feedback in relation to our cost-efficiency agenda and the fee rates we set. In our Estimate for 2020-21, we proposed:
 - a 3% increase in fee rates to be offset by reductions in audit days and skills mix resulting in an overall small (0.7%) overall reduction in fee scales.
 - to continue in line with previous National Assembly agreement to fund National Fraud Initiative (NFI) work from our charge on the Welsh Consolidated Fund rather than through fees charged to participating bodies. Feedback told us that audited bodies welcome this approach.
 - to continue to provide public sector secondment opportunities for our accounting trainees, without impacting on fees charged for audit work.
 - to maintain capacity for transformational thinking in our approaches to audit work. Feedback reinforced the need for us to do more developmental work as part of balancing the overall cost of audit on public bodies.
- 3 This Fee Scheme reflects the approved Estimate and sets out:
 - the enactments under which the Wales Audit Office charges audit fees.
 - the arrangements for setting those fees, which comprise either:
 - fee scales that set out fee ranges for particular areas of audit work in local government; or
 - fee rates for work not covered by fee scales.
- 4 Broadly, 64% of our expenditure is funded through fees charged to audited bodies and a grant from the Welsh Government to support improvement assessment work. The remaining 36% is provided directly from the Welsh Consolidated Fund through vote of the National Assembly. Further information about our expenditure and funding is contained in annual estimates of income and expenditure which are laid before the National Assembly.

Fee rates and fee scales

- 5 The Wales Audit Office does not generate profits on fees. Legislation requires that the fees we charge may not exceed the full cost of exercising the function to which the fee relates. Our fee rates are set at a level to recover that full cost.
- 6 There is a tension between providing audited bodies with an up-front fee for the work to be undertaken on specific audits and having a sufficiently flexible regime that recognises the inevitability of variances. We set our audit fees based on our estimated expenditure, the estimated skills mix and the estimated number of days required to complete the work. Where the required work is significantly greater than that originally estimated, as a result of complexities experienced during the audit, we may charge a higher fee, as permitted by legislation.
- 7 We went beyond the statutory fee consultation requirements and, in August 2019, consulted all audited bodies and other stakeholders on our fee scales for 2020-21. A total of 96 different bodies were consulted. We received just nine responses, suggesting that for most bodies, our fees are not a significant area of concern. Responses received told us that:
 - audited bodies welcome the work done by the Wales Audit Office and the professional approach of our staff;
 - audited bodies continue to welcome free participation in the National Fraud Initiative;
 - the proposed reduction in median fee levels is welcomed;
 - there is a continuing expectation that the Wales Audit Office demonstrates value for money in line with the financial pressure being faced by audited bodies;
 - one audited body would welcome more transparency in how fees are set; we will discuss this with them; and
 - for the National Parks, there is concern about how our fees compare with those paid by equivalent bodies in England; again, we will discuss this with them.
- 8 In 2018-19 we reduced our fee scales through audit efficiencies and maintained these scales at the same level for 2019-20. Our consultation for 2020-21 anticipated these scales reducing further by around 1%, despite increases in our fee rates.

9 In November 2019, the Finance Committee of the National Assembly asked that we reconsider our Estimate for 2020-21 upon which the fee scales we consulted on in August 2019 were based. This re-consideration means that some costs which we had expected to be paid by the Welsh Consolidated Fund will now need to be passed on through our fees. Despite this change, our fee scales will still be, on average, around 0.7% lower than those agreed for 2019-20.

10 **Exhibit 1** sets out the hourly fee rates for audit staff.

Exhibit 1: fee rates for audit staff

Grade	Proposed rate (£ per hour) 2020-21	Rate (£ per hour) 2019-20
Engagement director	162	161
Audit Manager	119	115
Principal Auditor	96	94
Senior Auditor	77	73
Auditor	59	57
Graduate trainee	48	46
Apprentice	37	46

11 We are required to prescribe fee scales for:

- work relating to the audit of local government bodies;
- work under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009; and
- data-matching work (NFI).

12 Fee scales for the audit of the 2019-20 financial accounts and 2020-21 improvement audits and assessments are provided in **Appendix 3** in relation to work conducted at unitary authorities, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities, police and crime commissioners and chief constables, town and community councils and local government pension funds. A separate fee scale is provided in relation to the NFI.

- 13 Fee scales are a means of regulating the cost of public audit, through setting limits and by reviewing fees against those limits. Fee scales also provide a framework for auditors to assess the amount of annual audit work necessary and the fee to be charged for that work at a particular audited body.
- 14 Audited bodies not covered by the statutory requirement for a fee scale have their estimated audit fees calculated in the same way as for those which are covered – that is, through applying the fee rates published in this Fee Scheme to the estimated team mix and hours of input required for the audit.
- 15 Auditors undertake grant certification work on behalf of the Auditor General. The amount of grant certification work undertaken in any year is dependent on the number of schemes subject to audit and the number of audited bodies participating in those schemes. Charges for this work are calculated using the fee rates and reflecting the size, complexity or any particular issues in respect of the grant in question.
- 16 The fee rates apply to all audit work that the Wales Audit Office will charge for, except to the extent that the fee scales, where applicable, regulate the amount to be charged (or in the case of work done by agreements prior to 1 April 2014, rates are in terms as agreed). If it subsequently appears to the Wales Audit Office that the work involved in a particular audit differs substantially from that originally envisaged, the Wales Audit Office may charge a fee which differs from that originally notified.
- 17 In the case of the provision of other administrative, professional or technical services provided, fees will be charged in accordance with the relevant agreement, subject to such amounts being capped at the full cost of providing the service. To meet their statutory responsibilities, it is sometimes necessary for auditors to carry out work which goes beyond their general duties. Additional work can include reports in the public interest, extraordinary audit, special inspections and further work in relation to electors' questions and objections, and the prevention of unlawful expenditure. Charges for this type of work will reflect the nature of the work required.
- 18 Where specialist support or legal or other professional advice is required, this will be charged to audited bodies in addition to the cost of Wales Audit Office staff.

Charging of fees

- 19 Each body's Engagement Director will explain that body's skills mix for the audit and the factors influencing the overall fee. Charging arrangements are agreed with audited bodies and may encompass one-off, periodic, regular or annual charging, as appropriate in the circumstances.
- 20 Audited bodies are expected to pay the Wales Audit Office's invoices within their performance target for creditor payments, usually ten days in the public sector. We may charge for the administrative costs incurred in pursuing late payments.
- 21 On completion of audit assignments, we will assess the actual costs incurred in undertaking the assignment in comparison with the fee charged. We will refund any excess of fee over cost and, conversely, we may charge additional costs where the fee falls short. We will process refunds and additional charges in a manner which seeks to minimise administrative costs, such as through offsetting against future fees or fees for other aspects of audit activity.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013 – full text of section 24

- (1) The Wales Audit Office must prepare a scheme relating to the charging of fees by the Wales Audit Office.
- (2) The scheme must include the following:
 - a a list of the enactments under which the Wales Audit Office may charge a fee;
 - b where those enactments make provision for the Wales Audit Office to prescribe a scale or scales of fees, that scale or those scales;
 - c where those enactments make provision for the Wales Audit Office to prescribe an amount to be charged, that amount; and
 - d where no provision is made for a scale or scales of fees or for an amount to be prescribed, the means by which the Wales Audit Office is to calculate the fee.
- (3) The scheme may, amongst other things:
 - a include different provision for different cases or classes of case; and
 - b provide for times at which, and the manner in which, payments are to be made.
- (4) The Wales Audit Office:
 - a must review the scheme at least once in every calendar year;
 - b may revise or remake the scheme at any time; and
 - c must lay the scheme (and any revision to it) before the National Assembly.
- (5) Where the Welsh Ministers prescribe a scale or scales of fees under:
 - a section 64F of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (fees for data matching); or
 - b section 27A of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Welsh Ministers' power to prescribe a scale of fees).

to have effect instead of a scale or scales prescribed by the Wales Audit Office, the Wales Audit Office must revise the scheme to include the scale or scales prescribed by the Welsh Ministers instead of those prescribed by the Wales Audit Office.

- (6) If a revision made in accordance with subsection (5) is the only revision to a scheme, it does not require the approval of the National Assembly.
- (7) The scheme takes effect when approved by the National Assembly or, in the case of a revision made in accordance with subsection (5), once it has been laid before the National Assembly.
- (8) The Wales Audit Office must publish the scheme (and any revision to it) as soon as reasonably practicable after it takes effect.

Appendix 2 – List of enactments under which the Wales Audit Office may and must charge fees

Exhibit 2: list of enactments under which the Wales Audit Office may and must charge fees

Nature of work	Enactments
The Wales Audit Office may charge fees for the following activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of accounts by the Auditor General (other than local government accounts). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(2) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money studies undertaken by agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(3)(a)-(c) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An examination, certification or report under section 31 of the Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act 2016 in respect of the Welsh Revenue Authority's Tax Statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(3)(ba) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An examination under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (anaw 2) (examinations of public bodies for the purposes of assessing the extent to which a body has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(3)(ca) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any functions of a relevant authority exercised by the Wales Audit Office or the Auditor General and undertaken by agreement, and any administrative, professional or technical services to be provided by the Wales Audit Office or the Auditor General by arrangement under section 19 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(3)(d) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extraordinary audit of the accounts of a local government body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 37(8) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data-matching exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 64F(A1) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 A fee scale must be prescribed for this work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and assistance provided by the Auditor General for registered social landlords. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 145D(2) of the Government of Wales Act 1998 Terms of payment may only be made in accordance with a scheme for charging fees under s24 of Public Audit Wales Act 2013

Nature of work	Enactments
The Wales Audit Office must charge fees for the following activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 27 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 A fee scale must be prescribed for this work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant certification services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(4)(a) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies at the request of educational bodies under section 145B of the Government of Wales Act 1998. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 23(4)(b) Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditing the accounts of a local government body and undertaking studies by agreement with a local government body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 20(A1)(a)-(b) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 A fee scale must be prescribed for the audit of the accounts of local government bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit administration studies for the Secretary of State. The Auditor General may conduct, or assist the Secretary of State in conducting, a benefit administration study only if the Secretary of State has made arrangements for the payment to the Wales Audit Office of a fee in respect of the study. The amount of the fee must be a reasonable amount agreed between the Secretary of State and the Wales Audit Office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 45 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales with inspections of local authorities. The Auditor General for Wales shall not provide such assistance unless, before he does so, the Chief Inspector has agreed to pay the Wales Audit Office a fee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 41A of the Education Act 1997
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmes of studies relating to registered social landlords undertaken by agreement between the Welsh Ministers and the Auditor General. It shall be a term of every such programme that the Welsh Ministers must pay to the Wales Audit Office a sum in respect of the costs incurred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 145C(3) of the Government of Wales Act 1998

Appendix 3 – Fee scales for work undertaken at local government bodies

Fee scales for work undertaken under the National Fraud Initiative (data matching)

- 22 We are required to consult on and prescribe scales of fees for data matching for mandatory participants in the NFI. The Auditor General conducts the NFI using his statutory data-matching powers under Part 3A of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.
- 23 The NFI matches data across organisations and systems to help public bodies identify potentially fraudulent or erroneous claims and transactions. The NFI has been a highly effective tool in detecting and preventing fraud and overpayments. Since its commencement in 1996, NFI exercises have resulted in the detection and prevention of more than £35.4 million of fraud and overpayments in Wales and £1.69 billion across the UK.
- 24 Since April 2015, the National Assembly has met the costs of running the NFI through payment from the Welsh Consolidated Fund as approved through the Wales Audit Office's Estimate. This is intended to encourage participation of organisations on a voluntary basis and also simplifies arrangements for mandated participants. As required by legislation, the fees for mandatory participants are shown in [Exhibit 3](#).

Exhibit 3: NFI fees

	Fee 2020-21
Unitary authority; police and crime commissioners and chief constables; fire and rescue authorities; NHS trusts; local health boards.	Nil
Voluntary participants	Nil
All participants may also be provided with access to the NFI Application Checker (App Check).	Nil

Unitary authorities

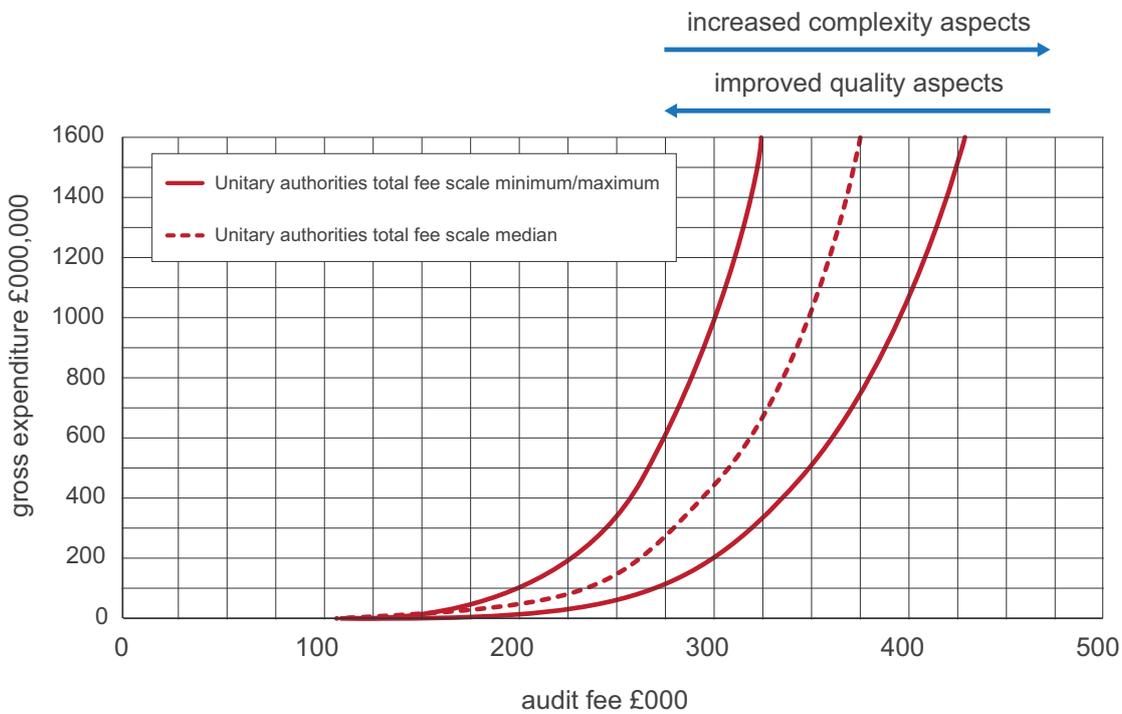
Exhibit 4: fee scale for the audit of 2019-20 accounts

Gross expenditure £m	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
100	114	135	155	138
200	138	162	186	166
300	153	180	207	185
400	166	195	224	199
500	176	207	238	211
600	184	217	249	222
700	192	226	260	231
800	199	234	269	240
900	205	242	278	247
1,000	211	249	286	254
1,100	217	255	293	261
1,200	222	261	300	267

Exhibit 5: fee scale for 2020-21 performance audit work

All unitary authorities	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
	94	102	113	99

Exhibit 6: graphic of total fee scale for unitary authorities¹



1 'improved quality aspects' refers to the quality of the accounts production process, ie the quality of the draft financial statements and the supporting working papers.

Pension Funds

Exhibit 7: fee scale for audit of 2019-20 accounts

All pension funds	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
	31	42	48	40

Fire and rescue authorities

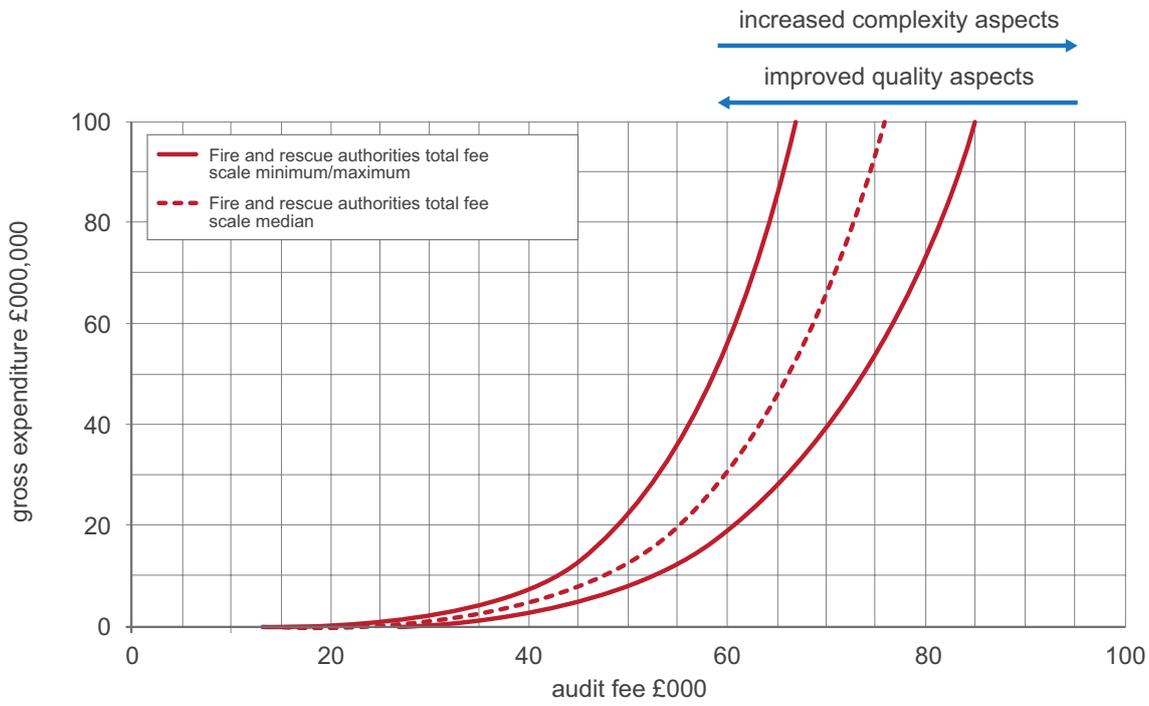
Exhibit 8: fee scale for audit of 2019-20 accounts

Gross expenditure £m	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
20	34	39	45	40
40	40	47	55	49
60	45	53	61	54
80	49	57	66	58
100	51	61	70	62

Exhibit 9: fee scale for 2020-21 performance audit work

All fire and rescue authorities	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
	16	16	16	16

Exhibit 10: graphic of audit total fee scale for fire and rescue authorities



National park authorities

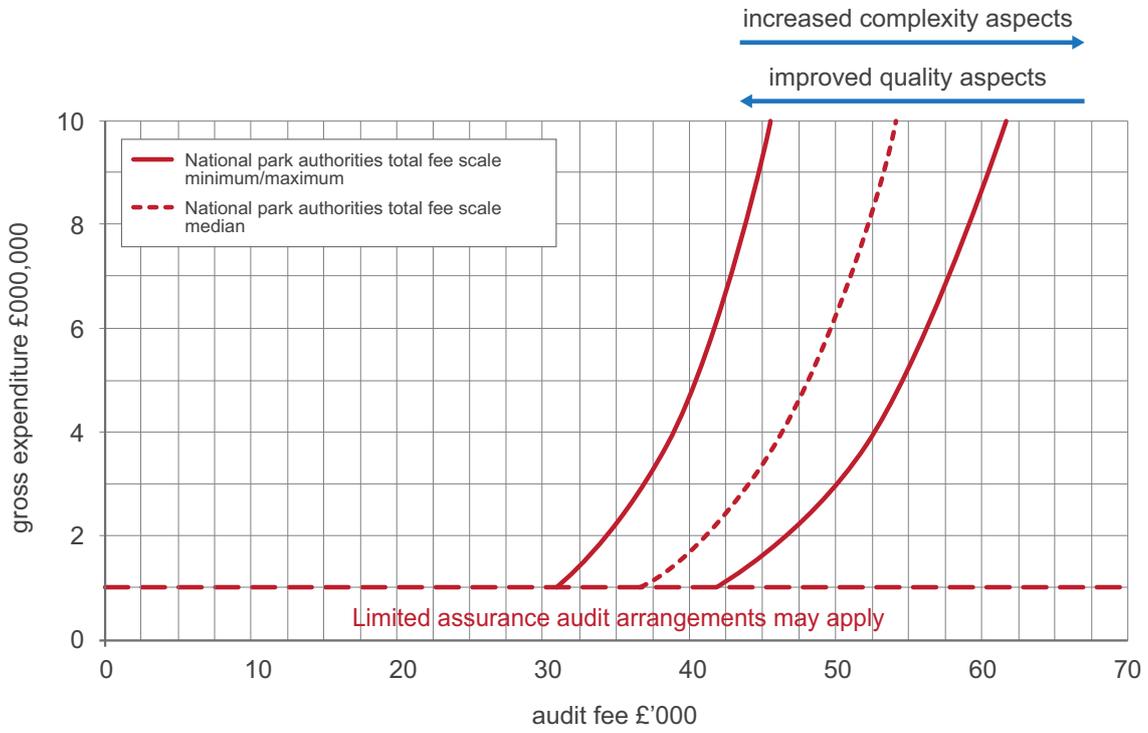
Exhibit 11: fee scale for audit of 2019-20 accounts

Gross expenditure £m	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
2	21	24	28	25
4	25	29	34	30
6	28	33	38	34
8	30	35	41	36
10	32	38	43	38

Exhibit 12: fee scale for 2020-21 performance audit work

All national park authorities	Fee range £000			Previous year median £000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
	14	17	19	17

Exhibit 13: graphic of total fee scale for national park authorities



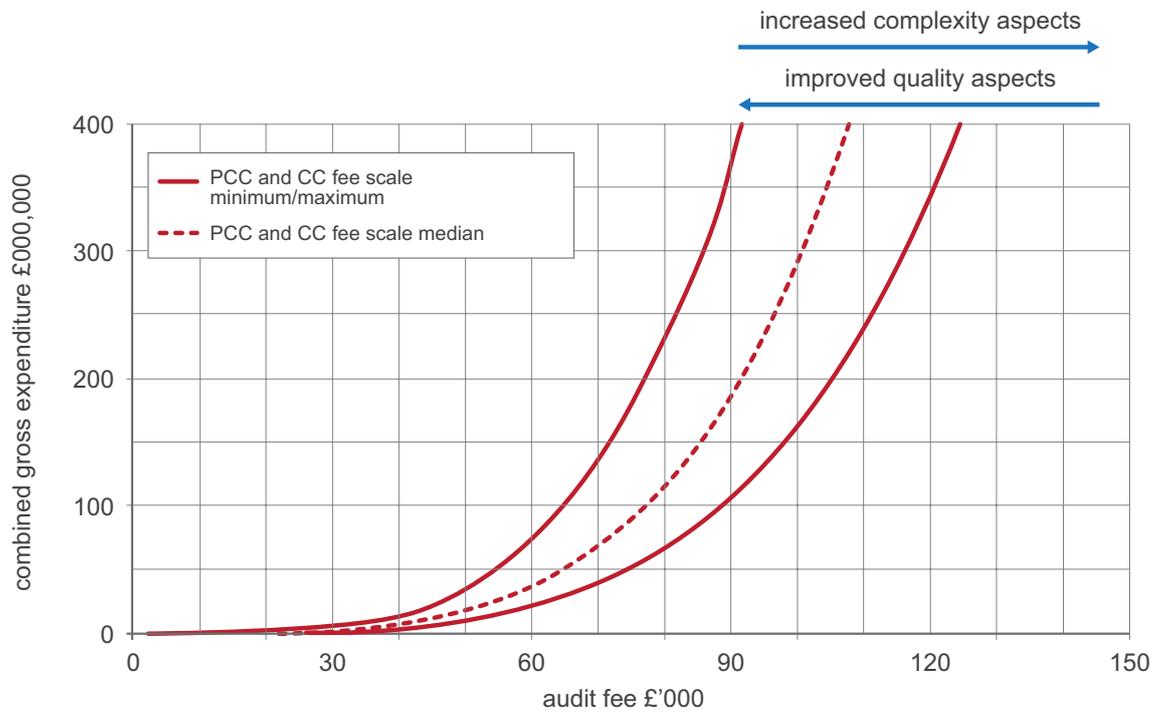
Police and crime commissioners and chief constables

Auditors undertake audits of two statutory bodies in a police area – the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and the Chief Constables (CCs). The split of the total fee between the two bodies in a particular police area will be a matter for auditors to determine, based on accounting requirements and the operational arrangements put in place by each of the bodies.

Exhibit 14: fee scale for audit of 2019-20 accounts

Combined gross expenditure of PCC and CC £m	Combined fee range for PCC and CC £'000			Previous year median £'000
	Minimum	Median	Maximum	
50	55	65	75	66
100	65	77	89	79
150	72	85	98	87
200	78	92	106	94
250	82	97	112	99
300	86	101	117	104
350	89	106	122	108

Exhibit 15: graphic of total fee scale for police and crime commissioners and chief constables



Town and community councils with annual income or expenditure under £2.5 million

Town and community councils in Wales are subject to a limited assurance audit regime. Since 2016-17, we have charged for this work on a time basis rather than the historical basis of a fixed fee according to expenditure/income bands.

The fee rate charges are as set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

In circumstances where the auditor requires further evidence to properly discharge their responsibilities, including following publication of a related public interest report, additional testing will be undertaken to address the auditor's concerns.

It is emphasised that the actual charge made to any particular body will be dependent on the time actually worked on that particular audit. The ranges provided in [Exhibit 16](#) are for indicative purposes only.

Exhibit 16: estimated time charges for the audit of 2019-20 accounts of town and community councils

	Indicative baseline charge	Indicative upper range fee
£0 – £5,000	£140	£280
£5,001 – £100,000	£160	£320
£100,001 – £500,000	£200	£380
£500,001 – £2,500,000	£240	£460

Fee rates for other work in local government

Other than those types of bodies for which fee scales have been prescribed as shown above, there are a small number of other types of local government body where our prescription of the fee scale is a matter of converting the resource requirements into fees directly based on the costs of delivering the work or by applying the fee rates as set out in [Exhibit 1](#). It remains the case that for audits of these bodies we apply a zero-based approach to audit planning.

For all types of local government body, to meet his statutory responsibilities, it is sometimes necessary for the Auditor General to carry out work which goes beyond general duties (those set out in section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004). Additional work can include reports in the public interest, extraordinary audit, special inspections and further work in relation to elector challenge and the prevention of unlawful expenditure. Charges for this type of work will reflect the nature of the work required.

Auditors may also undertake grant certification work at local government bodies on behalf of the Auditor General. The amount of grant certification work undertaken in any year is dependent on the number of schemes subject to audit and the number of audited bodies participating in those schemes. Charges for this work are made on a per-hour basis and reflect the size, complexity or any issues in respect of the grant in question as set out in [Exhibit 17](#).

Exhibit 17: estimates of the relative proportions of audit staff grades to be used for different types of grants work.

Grade of staff	Complex grants staff mix %	All other grants staff mix %
Engagement Director	1 to 2	0 to 1
Audit Manager	4 to 6	1 to 2
Principal/Senior Auditor	18 to 21	12 to 16
Auditor/ graduate trainee/ apprentice	71 to 77	81 to 87

Complex grants include:

- BEN01 Housing and council tax benefits scheme
- LA01 National non-domestic rates return
- PEN05 Teachers' pensions return

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