



# National Audit Office

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Reference GF 1619 17  
Date 08 January 2017

## UNIVERSAL CREDIT PROJECT ASSESSMENT REVIEWS

Thank you for your letter of 21 December 2017 in which you ask for clarification on how the NAO use project assessment reviews produced by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

The NAO does request and receive these documents. In the case of Universal Credit specifically we have received project assessment reviews, and have quoted ratings and comments from the project assessment reviews in our own reports.

I deal with reports produced by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority as I do any other information produced and held by Government. The Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) and the NAO have wide-ranging statutory access to such data and information. For the purpose of reporting on value to money to Parliament, the C&AG's powers are set out in Part 2 of the National Audit Act 1983. This Act states that the C&AG has a right of access at all reasonable times to all such documents he may reasonably require for carrying out an examination, and that the C&AG may report the results of any examination to the House of Commons.

HM Treasury's Managing Public Money (section 1.6.3) states that public sector organisations should cooperate with NAO requests for access to information. Where departments draw the NAO's attention to the confidentiality of any sensitive documents provided, it is then for the C&AG to judge what material can be published in the public interest.

I am aware that the Government has set its own internal rules for the handling of these assurance reports, including that the overall RAG rating will be published no less than six months after the review as part of the Infrastructure and Project Authority's annual reports. These rules do not affect my audit powers or form the basis, as far as we are aware, of any Parliamentary convention. I have in the past quoted from project assessment reviews produced more recently than the minimum six month lag that the Government maintains.

I hope this is helpful to you and your Committee

AMYAS MORSE