Circuit of Wales debacle – Lessons for the future…

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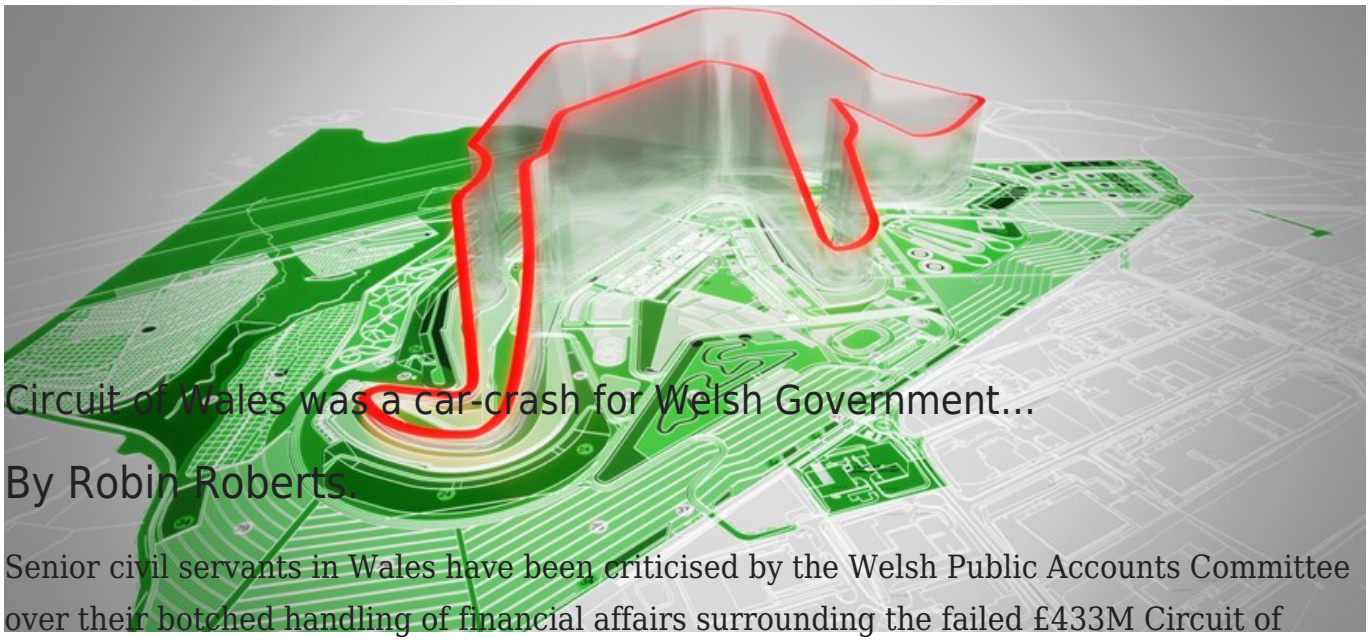

Circuit of Wales was a car-crash for Welsh Government...

By Robin Roberts.

Senior civil servants in Wales have been criticised by the Welsh Public Accounts Committee over their botched handling of financial affairs surrounding the failed £433M Circuit of Wales.

Account Managers on the committee said the officials made “inexplicable decisions” about the spending and authorised £9M initial investment, but it’s unlikely to see £7.3M returned as the developers have taken legal steps to protect themselves from liquidation. They had wanted about £200M from Welsh Government.

The civil servants also failed to keep Government ministers informed about the progress of the investment and its spending, including a £42,500 monthly payment for consultancy services to Mr Michael Carrick (pictured below), boss of Aventa Capital Partners and also the man behind the Heads of the Valleys Development Company which secured the initial investment from Welsh Government. He had used some money to develop his home garden and £300,000 to buy a Buckinghamshire motor-cycle firm which failed.

The senior Welsh Government civil servant dealing with the project was James Price, then deputy permanent secretary at the economy department with a salary of over £135,000 a year.

About the same time last June as Welsh Government showed the chequered flag to further investing in Circuit of Wales, he was moved sideways to become chief executive of the Transport for Wales body overseeing the £5 Billion Metro development, with electrification of the Valleys Lines, and Wales and Borders rail franchise.

Ministers have hinted that Transport for Wales will ultimately oversee major road schemes and bus regulation as well as other developed transport powers.

Yesterday, the Public accounts committee chairman Nick Ramsay said the public were “misled” over the Circuit of Wales project and wants spending controls tightened.

The Welsh Government said it recognised there were “lessons to be learnt”.