

19 August 2022

Dear

ATISN 16531 – International Relations Costs

Thank you for your information request received on 03 August 2022. You asked for:

How much does the Welsh Government spend per year (i.e. the most recent year-long period for which there is data) on activities that may be considered international relations not directly linked to trade. For example, hosting foreign dignitaries, international travel to promote Wales, climate change summits etc?

Departments from across the Welsh Government engage in international relations activity where it helps deliver on their objectives and there is no central record of this activity and associated spend.

For the 2021/22 financial year, the International Relations Division in Welsh Government had an international engagement budget of £3.47m and our international offices had a £750K budget to support their work. Activities associated with these budgets included the hosting of representatives of foreign governments, international visits and activity to promote Wales including St David's Day, engagement at climate change and sustainability summits, soft power engagement and public diplomacy, diaspora engagement, events at Dubai Expo, our Wales in Germany initiative, bilateral country and regional cooperation, international celebrations such as Diwali, marketing and communications. International relations activity both in Wales and overseas is often cross-cutting and can include trade and trade promotion.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or e-mail: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex A

ATISN 16510 - Information to be released

Part 1

- a. 2 Welsh Government officials attended SEMICON West 2022 in California (one from Wales, one from the USA)
- b. 1 Welsh Government official attended FinTech Week London 2022.

Part 2

The total costs associated with each event were as follows:

- a. SEMICON West = £5,931.64 (includes accommodation, entrance tickets, subsistence and travel).
- b. FinTech Week = **£10,xxx** (includes accommodation, event sponsorship of £10,000, subsistence and travel).

Annex B

ATISN 16510 - Application of Exemptions

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of **section 29** of the Freedom of Information Act and the subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

I have decided to withhold the following information:

Part 3:

A list of the businesses that Welsh Government officials met with at:

- a. SEMICON West in California
- b. London FinTech Week

Section 29(1) The Economy

The exemption states that information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice:

- (a) the economic interests of the United Kingdom or of any part of the United Kingdom, or
- (b) the financial interests of any administration in the United Kingdom

This is a qualified exemption; therefore, a public interest test has been undertaken.

Public Interest Test

Public interest arguments in favour of release:

The Welsh Government acknowledges the general public interest in openness and transparency that release of this information would engender. Furthermore, I recognise that there is public interest in understanding the process by which the Welsh Government generates investment into Wales and that the release of the information could lead to greater transparency and openness in the way the Welsh Government conducts business which can improve accountability and public trust. I also acknowledge that there is public interest in the value for money of attending events and exhibitions, especially ones that are not taking place in Wales.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding:

One of the key objectives of the Welsh Government is to grow the Welsh economy. The Welsh Government invests significant resource in identifying and engaging with companies that are making investment decisions, to try to ensure that Wales is considered as part of those decision-making processes.

We believe that the early release of information relating to discussions with potential investors would be likely to prejudice those discussions with the result that some, or all, of the potential investors decide to invest elsewhere. The disclosure of information at such an early stage in discussions would be likely to instil a sense of distrust amongst potential investors at the Welsh Government's ability to maintain a confidence. The result of this would be the potential loss of new investors, and a subsequent loss to the economy of Wales.

I believe therefore that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding the withheld information for the reasons outlined above.

For this reason, the exemption at s29(1) is engaged.