



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref: ATISN 16855
Date: 20 December 2022

Dear _____,

ATISN 16855: Attendance at 2022 FIFA World Cup

Thank you for your email of 10 November 2022 in which you asked for the following information (Part 1):

- 1. How many officials/advisers and Ministers are travelling to Qatar for the World Cup?*
- 2. How much are the flights and what class are they travelling?*
- 3. How much is the accommodation and what class are the hotels?*
- 4. How many officials/advisers and Ministers have previously travelled to Qatar, for what purpose, when, and how much did it cost?*
- 5. All statements made by the First Minister that refer to Qatar in the years previous to 2022.*

On 16 November you requested the following additional information (Part 2):

- 6. How much has been spent on that office,*
- 7. How much has been spent by the Government since 2018 on all matters relating to Qatar World Cup,*
- 8. How many visits have been made by Ministers to Qatar and at what cost, and copies of Ministerial itineraries whilst in Qatar.*

Our response (Part 1)

A total of eight officials and two ministers travelled to Qatar for the World Cup. Accommodation for the two ministers and accompanying four officials was provided by the Qatari Government at no cost. A hospitality package was offered by the Qatari Government to the Heads of State of each country that qualified for the World Cup but the Welsh Government does not hold any information about the value of this package.

The remaining four officials travelled by economy class. The total cost of four return flights was £3,768. The total cost of accommodation in Doha for four officials travelling economy class was £20,320 and the rating of the hotel was 4 star.

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The information you have requested regarding ministerial costs associated with overseas travel is exempt under Section 21 and Section 22 of the Freedom of information Act 2000 – information accessible by other means and information intended for future publication.

All ministerial travel, including the associated costs, is published on an annual basis by financial year as required under the Ministerial Code and can be found here [Ministerial Code information publication: 5th assembly | GOV.WALES](#).

In addition, all ministerial meetings and engagements is published online every quarter in accordance with the ministerial code and can be found here [Ministerial meetings and engagements | GOV.WALES](#).

Section 22 is a publicly tested exemption and I have set out my arguments for non-disclosure at Annex 1 to this letter.

Non World Cup Tournament Travel to Qatar

The Minister for Economy and two officials travelled to Qatar 9-10 May 2022 to develop economic links with Qatar and to discuss our values with Qatari organisations. As above, the ministerial costs and details of ministerial engagements and meetings is exempt under Section 21 and Section 22 of the Freedom of information Act 2000 – information accessible by other means and information intended for future publication.

Three officials travelled to Qatar on a pre-World Cup scoping visit from 23-27 October 2022. The total cost of this visit was £5,272.

| Date Out | Date Rtn | No. of officials | Reason for Travel |
|------------|------------|------------------|--|
| 23/10/2022 | 27/10/2022 | 3 | Pre-World Cup Scoping Visit. To gain an understanding of the city's layout, meet with key stakeholders/ and personnel, visit key sites in relation to Wales' activities in-market, scope transport options, cultural awareness and to support food and drink colleagues in hosting a dinner at the British Ambassador's residence. |

In addition, between 01 January 2018 to 31 December 2021, 9 officials travelled to Qatar on 7 separate occasions as set out below. The total combined cost of the visits was £14,624. Please note that some of the individual costs are based on top estimates.

| Date Out | Date Rtn | No. of officials | Reason for Travel |
|------------|------------|------------------|---|
| 07/08/2018 | 09/08/2018 | 1 | Meeting with Qatar Airways to discuss the Welsh Government and Qatar Airways joint marketing campaign |
| 29/09/2018 | 03/10/2018 | 2 | Manage the Welsh Government's Travel Development Visit to Qatar |
| 25/02/2019 | 28/02/2019 | 1 | Meetings with Qatar tour operators and Qatar Airways |
| 09/10/2019 | 14/10/2019 | 1 | Manage the Welsh Government's Food & Drink trade mission to Qatar |
| 24/02/2020 | 28/02/2020 | 1 | Attend St David's Day celebrations, meetings with business and consular staff |
| 07/05/2022 | 13/05/2022 | 2 | Manage the Welsh Government Export Market Visit to Qatar |

| | | | |
|------------|------------|---|--|
| 23/10/2022 | 26/10/2022 | 1 | Manage Food and Drink VIP Dinner at the British Embassy in Qatar, accompanying Food and Drink producers to showcase product to potential new export market trade buyers and re-establish relationships with existing trade contacts. |
|------------|------------|---|--|

Statements made by the First Minister that refer to Qatar in years previous to 2022

Prior to 2022 there is one reference to Qatar made by the First Minister during his statement to the Senedd on the International Strategy the link to the transcript is shown below [Plenary 11/11/2020 - Welsh Parliament \(senedd.wales\)](#)

Our response (Part 2)

Welsh Government Office in Qatar

We have a Welsh Government Office in Qatar with one member of Country Based (locally employed) Staff. That office is co-located with the UK Embassy [on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Platform]. This means that our office utilises the FCDO Platform and Corporate Services facility.

The FCDO does not charge for partial year occupancy of offices and operates on a deferred basis, charging only for the previous full financial year. Therefore, the associated costs for the current 1 member of staff in Doha will be incurred by the Welsh Government in the financial year 2023-2024.

The cost incurred by the Welsh Government for each overseas posting that is on the FCDO Platform is calculated by dividing the total annual Common Platform Charge as derived by the FCDO, by the combined number of staff in each of the overseas offices. In 2021-2022 the Common Platform Charge incurred by the Welsh Government in relation to 1 member of staff in Doha was £14,551.

There is also an additional salary cost associated with this member of Country Based Staff in Qatar, however, information on individual salaries is exempt under Section 40 of the Act. Data protection legislation requires us to protect personal information being held in relation to individual members of staff, and others, and to ensure that it is only used for the purposes for which it was collected. As there is one member of staff based at the office, disclosure would allow the actual salary of the individual to be identified. We believe that releasing this information would be in breach of the Data Protection Act.

Spend on World Cup Activity

The Welsh Football team only qualified for the Qatar FIFA World Cup in June 2022. As the wider activity surrounding the World Cup has not fully concluded we are unable to provide information on actual spend at this point. However, the total budget set aside for the Welsh Government's World Cup activity is £4.31m.

Ministerial Visits

The information you have requested on ministerial visits is exempt under Section 21 and Section 22 of the Freedom of information Act 2000 – information accessible by other means and information intended for future publication.

All ministerial travel, including the associated costs, is published on an annual basis by financial year as required under the Ministerial Code and can be found here [Ministerial Code information publication: 5th assembly | GOV.WALES](#).

In addition, all ministerial meetings and engagements is published online every quarter in accordance with the ministerial code and can be found here [Ministerial meetings and engagements | GOV.WALES](#).

Section 22 is a publicly tested exemption and I have set out my arguments for non-disclosure at Annex 1 to this letter.

Next steps

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 Email: 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.

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 1

Section 22: Information intended for future publication.

The Welsh Government believes that Section 22 is applied in relation to the requested information. Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act is subject to the public interest test. This means that in order to withhold information under its provisions, any personal interest of the requester notwithstanding, it has to be shown that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in releasing it.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

The general presumption of openness and transparency, which the Freedom of Information Act aspires to.

Public interest arguments against disclosure

This information is published as a requirement in the Ministerial code. This information will be published along with details of other Ministerial visits overseas according to the usual schedule. The information for the financial year 22/23 will be published after March next year. The Welsh Government acknowledges the public interest in openness and transparency, and it is a long standing requirement that details of Ministerial visits overseas, including the costs, are published in line with the Ministerial code.

Therefore, we believe the public interest would be better served in the information being published at the appropriate time. To that end, I believe the information should be withheld under s22 of the Act, until it is published in due course at the following links: [Ministerial Code information publication: 5th assembly | GOV.WALES](#) and <https://gov.wales/ministerial-code-information-publication-5th-assembly>.