

20 April 2026

Dear

ATISN 26812 – Statutory notices

Thank you for your request which I received on 19 March. You asked for the information as listed at Annex 1.

Our response

We have considered your request carefully. However, we are unable to provide the information you have requested as it would exceed the appropriate cost limit under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This exemption applies where the cost of complying with a request would exceed the statutory limit, currently set at £600 (equivalent to 24 hours of work at £25 per hour).

Why this request exceeds the cost limit:

Your request is broad in several respects, and each of these dimensions adds significantly to the burden of compliance.

Volume of newspaper titles

You have listed 59 individual newspaper titles. Many of these are regional or local titles, some of which may be owned by larger publishing groups. Where payments are made to a parent company or through a media buying intermediary, rather than directly to an individual title, it would not be straightforward to attribute expenditure to a specific newspaper. Staff would need to manually cross-reference payment records against individual titles, then disaggregate those payments where they have been consolidated under a parent company or agency. This alone represents a substantial and time-consuming undertaking.

Length of the timeframe

Your request covers almost three complete financial years. Retrieving, reviewing and collating financial records across this period from multiple budget holders or directorates within the Welsh Government would require extensive manual work.

Breadth of notice types

You have defined public and statutory notices broadly to encompass a wide range of categories, including planning notices, environmental notices, compulsory purchase orders, road and transport notices, licencing notices, legal notices, electoral notices, budget and accounts notices, and consultation notices, among others. These different categories of notice may be managed and procured by different teams, directorates, or agencies acting on behalf of the Welsh Government, meaning that

no single consolidated record is likely to exist. Identifying all relevant spend would require enquiries to be made across multiple parts of the organisation.

Additional data point requested

You have also asked whether the Welsh Government holds data on the circulation or readership of the publications used. Establishing whether such data exists, and in what form, would itself require additional work across the teams involved in placing notices.

Taken together, we estimate that complying with this request in full would require significantly more than 24 hours of officer time and would therefore exceed the cost limit.

An initial search in our electronic records system (iShare) for Public Notice for the period 01 April 2022 - 31 March 2025 returned 300,623 records.

A search in iShare for Statutory Notice for the period 01 April 2022 - 31 March 2025 returned 282,031 records. This is 582,654 records in total.

If a member of staff took one minute to review each record for relevant information, extract and collate it, this represents 9,711 hours of work.

An alternative way to search would be for records associated with each newspaper title. That would require 59 searches. We have looked at a sample of five titles from the list provided. They return between 150 and 26,000 records across a three-year period. The average number of results across 5 searches is approx. 8700 records. So $8700 \times 59 = 513,300$.

Based on this average per title, if a member of staff took one minute to review each one for relevant information, extract and collate it, this represents 8,555 hours of work.

How you might narrow your request

Under section 16 of the Act, we have a duty to advise and assist requestors where possible. We would be happy to consider a revised and more focused request. You may wish to consider narrowing your request in one or more of the following ways:

- Reducing the number of titles — focusing on a smaller number of specific titles, particularly those most likely to have been used for Welsh Government statutory notices, such as those with a circulation area in Wales could reduce the scope of the request.
- Limiting the timeframe — restricting your request to a single financial year, for example 2024/25 to date, would reduce the volume of records to be reviewed.
- Narrowing the notice types — rather than requesting all categories of statutory and public notice, you might focus on one or two specific types, such as planning notices or consultation notices, which may be more centrally managed and therefore more straightforward to retrieve.

- Focusing on confirmed spend — rather than asking us to check all 59 titles, you might ask us to confirm which titles, if any, we have placed notices in, and provide spend figures only for those. This would still require some investigative work but would remove the need to account for a nil return for each title individually.

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

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 1

Information regarding your organisation's expenditure on placing public or statutory notices in the following specific newspaper titles.

1. Llanelli Star
2. Rossendale Free Press
3. Tamworth Herald
4. Burton Mail
5. Boston Target
6. Rochdale Observer
7. Tiverton Gazette
8. Sevenoaks Chronicle
9. Stockport Express
10. Chester Chronicle
11. Accrington Observer
12. Hertfordshire Mercury
13. Black Country Bugle
14. Lennox Herald
15. Paisley Daily Express
16. Hamilton Advertiser
17. Ashbourne News Telegraph
18. Stirling Observer
19. Nuneaton News
20. Surrey Mirror
21. Kilmarnock Standard
22. Birmingham Post
23. West Lothian Courier
24. Central Somerset Gazette
25. Southport Visiter
26. Croydon Advertiser
27. Perthshire Advertiser
28. Wells & Shepton Mallet Journal
29. Runcorn & Widnes Weekly News
30. East Coast Target
31. Dorking Advertiser
32. Retford Times
33. Sleaford Target
34. Glamorgan Gazette
35. Aldershot News & Mail
36. Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser
37. Brentwood Gazette
38. Strathearn Herald
39. Wishaw Press
40. East Kilbride News
41. Blairgowrie Advertiser
42. Cynon Valley & Rhondda Leader
43. Herald & Express (Torquay)
44. Standard & Guardian (Somerset)
45. Isle of Thanet Gazette

46. North Wales Weekly News
47. Ormskirk Advertiser
48. Rutherglen Reformer
49. Heywood & Middleton Guardian
50. Irvine Herald & Kilwinning Chronicle
51. Merthyr & Rhymney Express
52. Frome Standard
53. Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald
54. Cynon Valley Leader
55. Dover Express
56. Holyhead and Bangor Mail
57. Pontypridd & Llantrisant Observer
58. Gwent Gazette
59. Rochdale Observer

If you have placed a notice in any, please provide:

1. Whether your organisation has placed any public or statutory notices in that title during the financial years 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 to date.
2. The total spend per title to place the notices, broken down by financial year.

For the purposes of this request, public or statutory notices should be interpreted broadly to include any notices your organisation is required or chooses to place in newspapers by law or policy, including but not limited to: planning and development notices, environmental notices, compulsory purchase notices, road or transport notices, licensing or regulatory notices, legal notices, insolvency notices, electoral notices, budget or accounts notices, and consultation notices etc etc.

If you did place such notices would also be grateful if you could confirm whether your organisation collects, monitors, or holds any data on the circulations or readership of the publications in which you place notices.