

29 April 2026

Dear

ATISN 26841- Head of Environment Governance Policy

Thank you for your request which I received on 27 March 2026. You are seeking information on work undertaken by the role titled 'Head of Environment Governance Policy' within Welsh Government.

You have asked for information covering the period 1 March 2026 to 31 March 2026. Please note that FOI/EIR requests cannot capture information not held at the time a request is made, therefore we can only provide you with information covering the period 1 March 2026 to 27 March 2026.

You have specifically asked for:

1. Any policy papers, briefing notes, draft policy documents, reports or internal memoranda produced, authored, commissioned or substantively contributed to by the Head of Environment Governance Policy during the period specified, where the subject matter relates to environmental governance, environmental regulation or environmental policy in Wales.
2. Any ministerial submissions, advice notes or briefing materials prepared for Welsh Government ministers during the period specified where the Head of Environment Governance Policy has provided input or contribution.
3. Any meeting minutes, agendas, notes or action logs for meetings attended by the Head of Environment Governance Policy during the period specified where environmental policy, environmental regulation, water quality, sewage discharge, river management or related environmental matters were discussed.
4. Any programme board papers, working group papers or governance documents produced during the period specified where the Head of Environment Governance Policy participated or contributed.
5. Any recorded information identifying the policy areas, workstreams or programme activity assigned to or undertaken by the Head of Environment Governance Policy during the period specified.
6. Any internal correspondence, including emails or other recorded communications, held by Welsh Government during the period specified which record substantive policy discussion or input from the Head of Environment Governance Policy on matters relating to environmental governance, environmental regulation or environmental policy.

Our response

I have decided that some of the information requested is exempt from disclosure under section 12 (4) (d) of the Environmental Information Regulations and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

1. Exempt under section 12(4)(d).

2. The Head of Environment Governance Policy has not provided input or contributed to any Ministerial submissions, advice notes or briefing materials prepared for Welsh Government Ministers during the period specified.
3. Exempt under section 12(4)(d).
4. The Programme Board is in development and timescales have not yet been agreed.
5. This information was provided to you in ATISN 26782, sent to you on 8 April 2026.
6. The Head of Environment Governance Policy was new in post in this period, and we thus do not hold any substantive policy discussion or input for the period requested.

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 A- application of exemptions

The Freedom of information Act/Environmental Information Regulations provide a right for anyone to ask a public authority to make requested information available to the wider public. As the release of requested information is to the world, not just the requester, public authorities need to consider the effects of making the information freely available to everybody. Any personal interest the requester has for accessing the information cannot override those wider considerations.

I have decided to withhold the following information:

- Any policy papers, briefing notes, draft policy documents, reports or internal memoranda produced, authored, commissioned or substantively contributed to by the Head of Environment Governance Policy during the period specified, where the subject matter relates to environmental governance, environmental regulation or environmental policy in Wales.
- Any meeting minutes, agendas, notes or action logs for meetings attended by the Head of Environment Governance Policy during the period specified where environmental policy, environmental regulation, water quality, sewage discharge, river management or related environmental matters were discussed.

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of regulation 12(4)(d) of the Environmental Information Regulations and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

Engagement of regulation 12(4)(d) (information in the course of completion) of the Environmental Information Regulations

The Welsh Government considers that the policy papers and associated notes, drafts and reports within the scope of the request relate to the draft Environmental Principles and Integrating Environmental Protection Statement. This Statement is required to be prepared by the Welsh Ministers under section 6 of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026 and remains in preparation at this time.

The information that we hold that is captured under these parts of the request comprises material that is still in development and therefore incomplete. Release of the information at this time will have the effect of placing incomplete information into the public domain that may be misleading, may contain errors, and may not be included in the final policy proposals.

Public Interest Test

In order to satisfy the public interest test in relation to the exemption(s), it is necessary to conclude that the public interest arguments in favour of withholding the information are sufficient to outweigh the public interest arguments in favour of release.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

Government policy has, by its nature, a clear public interest, and the Welsh Government is committed to open and transparency in its decision making mechanisms. There is a public interest in how policy is formulated, as well as in the content of any such policy, and in

ensuring that such information is made available to the public in a timely manner, to allow public engagement with the process of policy formulation.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

It is not in the public interest that inaccurate or incomplete information be placed in the public domain, as the public may then seek to rely upon such information or engage with the policy process based on information that has already been corrected, discarded, or is no longer relevant to the policy process. It may lead to reliance upon information that is unchecked and incorrect and could derail the policy formulation process.

The danger of putting incomplete information, and information that has not undergone quality assurance checks, into the public domain is that this will, in fact, damage the public interest identified above, by potentially misinforming public debate, placing potentially incorrect and incomplete data and analysis into the public domain, which will lead to incorrect conclusions, and that will damage public trust in the information supplied by Government.

Balance of public interest test

Although there is a very clear and strong public interest in release of the information into the public domain, the question here is not whether the information may be published at all. It is clearly intended that we publish this information soon. It will be subject to public consultation associated with the statutory process for finalising the section 6 statement under the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026, including provision for Senedd scrutiny and recommendations before the statement is finalised. The question, therefore, is whether it should be released now. On that question, the risk of placing incorrect and incomplete information into the public domain outweighs any public interest in early publication, and so the information is withheld.