

22 July 2026

Dear

**ATISN 27172**

Thank you for your request which was received on 1 July 2026. You asked:

*Further to WQ99244, will the Cabinet Minister publish the minutes of the meetings held with Laura McAllister and Rowan Williams on 15 and 18 June 2026?*

**Our response**

The Welsh Government holds information within the scope of your request.

**Section 35 (1)(a) – Formulation of Government Policy**

Section 35 is a qualified (public interest tested) exemption. This means that in order to engage it, I must show that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the public interest in releasing it. I have therefore given consideration to the effects of disclosure of the information to the world at large as the information is made available to anybody and everybody, not just the requestor.

The information caught by this exemption relates to the matters being discussed around the development of Welsh Government policy on the new National Commission. This exemption states that:

*(1) information held by a government department is exempt information if it relates to (a) the formulation or development of government policy.*

**Prejudice test**

The minutes record discussions relating to the development of policy and contain views, ideas and considerations that were shared to inform Ministers' thinking. The policy development process remains ongoing. Disclosing the information at this stage would be likely to prejudice the Welsh Government's ability to formulate and develop policy effectively, including its ability to engage openly with external experts and stakeholders as part of that process.

**Public interests in favour of release**

The Welsh Government recognises that there is a public interest in transparency and openness around policy development and in understanding the considerations informing Ministers' decisions on the National Commission. Disclosure of the information would increase public awareness of issues being considered by government and could enhance public understanding of the decision making process.

There is also a legitimate public interest in understanding the nature of engagement between Ministers and external experts, particularly where those discussions relate to matters of public importance.

## **Public interest arguments in favour of withholding**

Good government depends on Ministers and officials being able to seek, receive and consider advice from a range of external experts, stakeholders and interested parties in a free and frank manner. The meetings in question form part of that process and included discussion of policy considerations and options.

Disclosure of the minutes at this stage could inhibit the willingness of participants to contribute candidly to future discussions if they believed their comments and preliminary thinking might be disclosed before policy development has concluded. This would be likely to reduce the quality and breadth of advice available to Ministers and could result in a less robust policy-making process.

The information reflects policy discussions that are reflective and exploratory in nature and records views and considerations that have not necessarily been adopted by the Welsh Government. Premature disclosure of such material may not provide an accurate picture of the eventual policy position and could lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of issues that are still under consideration.

I am aware that, as a general rule, the sensitivity of information is likely to diminish over time and that both the age of the information and the timing of the request are relevant considerations when applying this exemption. In this case, however, the information is recent and relates to matters that remain under active consideration.

I therefore believe that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding the minutes under section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as they relate to the formulation and development of government policy that remains under consideration.

## **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 e-mail: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto: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](http://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