09 November 2026

Dear

Request for Information – ATISN 27580

Thank you for your request for information dated 27 September.

Information requested

1. For the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013:
(a) any business case, WelTAG appraisal or passenger demand forecast prepared in response to Network Rail's feasibility study (reference 112053, Issue 3, February 2011);

We do not hold information relating to the above.

(b) any record of the decision on whether to commission GRIP stages 3 and 4, which the study recommended for spring 2011, including ministerial submissions and decision notes.

We do not hold information relating to the above.

2. (i) the announcement, written statement or capital programme document listing the Aberdare-Hirwaun railway scheme;

Written Statement - Capital Spending Plans 2011-12 (15 March 2011) | GOV.WALES

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/inline-documents/2018-11/110315capitalannexaen.doc

https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s1626/FIN4%2001-11%20p1%20Supplementary%20Budget%202011-201…

(ii) the amount of capital funding, if any, allocated to the scheme in 2011-12;

No capital funding was allocated to the scheme in 2011/12.

(iii) any records explaining why the scheme did not proceed, and how any allocated budget was reallocated

We do not hold this information.

3. Any Network Rail studies, addenda or updated cost estimates for the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension produced after February 2011 and held by the Welsh Government.

The current estimate of the capital cost of the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension is included in Today, Tomorrow, Together: A vision for rail across Wales and Borders

4. A breakdown by financial year, from 2019-20 to the date of this request, of all Welsh Government funding for the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension. To include every stream, including the Local Transport Fund, Metro Plus funding through the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority, the Regional Transport Fund (including any share of the £49.3 million announced for South-east Wales in 2026-27), and funding through Transport for Wales.

Covering the period from 2019-20 to date, £216,265.33 has been provided to TfW via Welsh Government Regional funding on Aberdare to Hirwaun development.

5. Any records setting out which body the Welsh Government considers responsible for funding and delivering the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension, and any plan or timetable to fund its construction.

The railway line to Hirwaun was divested to Welsh Ministers in March 2020 as part of the Core Valley Lines. Responsibility for determining enhancements to the line therefore rests with the Welsh Ministers. However the Welsh Government does not receive a Barnett consequential for enhancements to the Core Valley Lines, so is dependent on funding from UK Government.

The UK Government has committed to fund Transport for Wales' £14 billion vision for rail improvements in Wales, Today, Tomorrow, Together, which includes the Aberdare to Hirwaun scheme.

To date, the UK Government has only committed £48 million for enhancements to the Core Valley Lines during the current Spending Review period. We are seeking further funding from the UK Government through the Welsh Government block grant to support delivery of the vision.

6. Any Wales Rail Board papers, minutes or prioritisation documents dated from 1 January 2023 to the date of this request that refer to the Aberdare to Hirwaun Extension or the Hirwaun to Tower Colliery Extension. This includes any ranking against other schemes, and any list of schemes the Welsh Government put forward for funding through the 2025 Spending Review.

A Wales Rail Board paper has been identified that refers to the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension. This paper is exempt from inclusion under Exemption 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please see Annex A below.

Prior to the Spending Review Published in June 2025, Welsh Government proposed a list of CVL enhancement projects that were part of the Wales Rail Board infrastructure enhancement pipeline. Hirwaun to Aberdare re-opening phase 1 – Re-opening of the freight only line to Hirwaun for passenger

services at a 2tph frequency was included in the list of CVL enhancement projects put forward.

Motion - NDM8852 - Welsh Parliament

Written Statement: Welsh Government response to the UK Spending Review 2025 | GOV.WALES

A pdf copy of a document listing CVL Enhancement projects is included in this response as an additional document: *ATISN 27580 – Doc 1 – CVL Enhancement project list.*

7. Any ministerial briefings or submissions concerning the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension dated from 1 January 2023 to the date of this request.

A Ministerial Briefing has been identified that refers to the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension. This paper is exempt from inclusion under Exemption 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please see Annex A below.

8. Any assessment of the Aberdare to Hirwaun extension under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 or the Socio-economic Duty, and any equality impact assessment of the scheme.

We do not hold this information.

Our Response

After searching our records, I can confirm that the Welsh Government does hold some information relating to your request which has been attached, however, for questions one (b) and eight, we do not hold this information.

The information being released to you is included above. Please note that some information is being withheld under Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, policy in development. Full reasoning for applying this exemption is appended at Annex A at the bottom of 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: Freedomofinformation@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

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

The information caught by this exemption relates to a Wales Rail Board paper relating to possible priorities for the 2027 UK Government Spending Review. Decisions relating to non-disclosure of this information have been taken with due consideration of the exemptions identified under sections 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of information Act 2000. 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.

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.

Public Interest For Release

The Welsh Government recognises the public has an interest in understanding the co-ordination of rail investment, infrastructure improvements and service development across Wales.

Public Interest Against Disclosure

The Wales Rail Board is a strategic body bringing together the Welsh Government, UK Department for Transport, Transport for Wales and Network Rail. The paper forms part of a live process of consideration and development. Its disclosure at this stage would undermine the ongoing discussions and decision-making. The document prepared for the Board is still in progress and no decisions have been taken by Ministers. No formal advice has been issued to Ministers by officials on the topic that the paper covers.

Good government depends on being able to produce the best advice available and to discuss all the options without fear of premature disclosure. The Wales Rail Board comprises representatives from the UK Government, Welsh Government, Network Rail, Transport for Wales and Department for Transport Operator and meet regularly to speak and debate freely and openly, often exploring a variety of options in a free and frank exchange of ideas and experiences.

I am of the opinion that some individuals would be less likely to engage in this way if they thought their thoughts would be revealed, and this would lead to a less strenuous and in depth exploration of options and potentially less robust and effective policies.

I am aware that as a general rule, the sensitivity of information is likely to reduce over time so that the age of the information or timing of the request may be relevant in determining whether to apply the exemption, or where the public interest may lie.

In this case, however, the information captured is very much current information and relates to policy which is still in development.

Once Welsh Ministers have agreed their priorities for the 2027 UK Government Spending Review this will be made publicly available.

I believe therefore that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding as this information relates to a policy that is still in development and to release it now may negatively impact the joint working between two Governments that are seeking to align on funding for rail infrastructure enhancements in Wales.