



Ein cyf/Our ref ATISN 15303

26 August 2021

Dear ,

Request for Information – ATISN 15303

I wrote to you on 4 August regarding your complaint dated 3 August.

I have conducted an internal review of your request in accordance with the procedure outlined in the [Welsh Government's Practical Guide for Making Requests for Information](#) which is available by post on request, or via the Welsh Government website.

I note that on 5 July, you asked for "all information relating to the decision to reduce the speed limit from 70 mph to 50 mph on the dual carriageway between McDonalds roundabout and the Horse and Jockey roundabout in Pontypool". You also provided a map showing the section you are referring to.

Your request was acknowledged on 13 July. On 29 July, a further letter was sent to you explaining that during the search for the information, it had become apparent your request would likely be time consuming to deal with. You were provided with advice and guidance to narrow the focus of your request and potentially bring it within scope. As you did not send a reply, your request was refused on 2 August under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, appropriate limit. You were provided with explanations as to why it would take more than 24 working hours to determine whether we hold the information and then to locate, retrieve and extract that information from our records.

In your e-mail of complaint, you stated: "I note your comments about not being able to find the information and that a search for 'Pontypool 50mph' returns a large number of results. I can understand this as there are a number of 50mph sections around the Pontypool area. I am asking for the information relating to the decision to reduce the speed limit from 70 mph to 50 mph on a very specific stretch of road, a dual carriageway around a mile long between two roundabouts and nothing else - which is why I'm asking for a review by your team as I believe that this is a tightly bound



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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.

request. I am particularly interested in emails that discuss this, however I feel that requesting all information on this bound query is not an unreasonable ask”.

I have noted your original request, the response that issued and your subsequent complaint.

The Welsh Government is obliged to provide advice and assistance to requestors when submitting requests for information. Section 16 of the Fof Act states:

16 Duty to provide advice and assistance:

(1) It shall be the duty of a public authority to provide advice and assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect the authority to do so, to persons who propose to make, or have made, requests for information to it.

(2) Any public authority which, in relation to the provision of advice or assistance in any case, conforms with the code of practice under section 45 is to be taken to comply with the duty imposed by subsection (1) in relation to that case.

I note that such advice was provided to you, with an opportunity to narrow the focus of your request to potentially bring it within scope. Such advice and guidance is normally provided much earlier in the process and I can only apologise that we failed to do so on this occasion. For this part of your request, your complaint is upheld.

I am satisfied, however, that it was correct to refuse your request under s12 of the FofA given the breadth of the request and the time calculated that it would take to navigate the significant volume of documents required to process your request. Requesting a broad scope of information ('all information') makes the search very difficult and time consuming. Essentially, there is no single file on our electronic records management system, known as iShare, containing all of the information you have requested which can be interrogated in isolation. iShare is the corporate repository for the majority of information created and received by Welsh Government Officials in the course of their duties that must be retained for business or historical purposes. Further information about iShare can be found under Section 7 of our Information and Records Management policy, which is available on the Welsh Government [website](#).

Documents are saved on iShare using naming conventions appropriate to the effective recording of information for our own purposes. Setting our systems in this way, and in line with our Records Management policy, enables effective delivery and will not necessarily lend themselves to being easily interrogated for generic requests for information.

A general iShare search using the search term 'Pontypool 50mph' yielded over 1400 results. At an average estimate of one minute per result to check whether it is relevant to your request and then extracting the relevant information, in addition to searching through individual e-mail accounts of relevant officials, would extend beyond the timeframe.

Utilising specific terms such as 'reduced speed limit' or '70mph to 50 mph' may have potentially reduced the number of results. That said, it is not necessarily the case that all the information you requested would have been captured. It is further possible,

however, that expanding the search in that way may have captured other documents not relevant to your request (for example other road schemes) meaning the time it would take to search through all documents would be even greater. This part of your complaint is therefore not upheld in relation to s12 of the FoIA.

To conclude, I uphold your complaint in part for the reasons outlined above.

Turning, then, to the matter of how your request can be reduced to potentially bring it within scope. As explained in our letters of 29 July and 2 August, it would be helpful if you could provide a more specific request for information to potentially bring it within scope. You were provided with advice and guidance as to how this may be possible for example, specific documents and reports relating to the decision to install and enforce 50mph at the Pontypool roundabout pedestrian crossing. These documents may contain the information you are looking for. Please try and avoid submitting general requests asking for 'all information'. It would be helpful if you could be more descriptive of the information you want us to search for and believe we hold. I note in your complaint that you refer to e-mail correspondence. Searching for e-mail correspondence may potentially reduce the scope of the request.

Alternatively, given the wide nature of your request, it may be preferable for you to discuss your request with officials in the first instance so that they can have a better understanding of what you are looking for. Please let us know your preferred method of contact and details (email/phone etc.) by e-mailing FOI.EconomyandInfrastructure@gov.wales. An official will then contact you to further discuss your request.

If you remain dissatisfied with this response you also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: casework@ico.org.uk

Also, if you think that there has been maladministration in dealing with your request, you have the option to make a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales who can be contacted at:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, Bridgend, CF35 5LJ
Telephone: 0845 6010987 (local rate)
Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Steve Vincent
Director – Economic Infrastructure