



Ref: ATISN 16433

26 July 2022

Dear ,

ATISN 16433 – Covid Podcasts

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (FOIA) received on 28 June 2022 relating to the *Unlocked: Covid-19 Stories from Wales* podcasts. You have requested the following:

1. *What was the cost of the podcasts and the presenter's fee?*
2. *How many people have listened to them and the reason for them?*

Our Response

Question 1:

The cost of producing the podcast series (which included talent fees, production and hosting costs, and additional third-party services including translations and filming) was £31,983.50 exc VAT.

We are withholding information relating to the presenter's fees under **Section 43(2)** which exempts information from release if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). Please see **Annex 1** for further information.

Question 2:

As of the date of your request, the 30 second films created for the podcasts have been viewed 114,640 times.

The accessible versions of the podcasts, hosted on YouTube, have received a combined total of 1,718 views.

The audio podcasts have received a combined total of 922 listens across all streaming platforms.

These podcasts and associated film content were created as part of the Keep Wales Safe campaign, to remind people there are still lots of simple things we can all continue to protect ourselves and others from Covid-19.

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,

Engagement of Section 43(2)

Section 43(2) Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

Officials have carefully considered all the information captured by this request and consider that the information in question should be exempt under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 43(2) is a public interest exemption. This means that to withhold information under its provisions, it must be shown that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in releasing it.

Public interest arguments in favour of release

We recognise that there is a public interest in the disclosure of information, as greater transparency makes Government and decision making more open and accountable. Release of this information would promote transparency of fees paid to the presenter and increase public understanding and accountability in this area.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

The information you have requested relates to a commercial contract between Welsh Government, the Public Relations Agency and the Presenter and considered as commercially sensitive information. We recognise that there is a public interest in the disclosure of the information, as greater transparency makes Government and decision making more open and accountable. However, against this there is a public interest in ensuring that the commercial interests are not damaged or undermined by disclosure of information which is not common knowledge, and which could adversely impact on future business.

By disclosing the fee paid to the presenter for this activity has the potential to harm their commercial interests and ability to effectively negotiate competitive fees for a similar activity or activities in the future. This has the potential to cause harm to their ability to secure future work and income.

The presenter fees were negotiated costs by our contracted Public Relations Agency, Golley Slater. Releasing the fee has potential to cause harm to their commercial interests as their competitors will have greater insight into their negotiations within the competitive PR marketplace.

Additionally, if the presenter fee were to be disclosed and the presenter suffers commercial harm, then professional presenters and celebrities may be less likely to work with any part of the Welsh Government in the future. This has the potential to damage the impact and effectiveness of communications campaigns across the organisation or subject them to higher costs, decreasing the value for money of potentially all campaigns and the value to the taxpayer.

The commercial sensitivities mean that on this occasion we consider that the public interest would not be served by its release. Our decision is therefore to withhold the information. Presenters fees are considered to be sensitive commercial information and not considered appropriate to share or disclose.

Conclusion

Whilst recognising that there are public interest arguments for disclosure of the requested presenter's fees, I consider that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in releasing it in this instance.