

Dear

Request for information - ATISN 17299

I wrote to you on 24 March regarding your request for information. I apologise for the delay in sending this response to you.

Your request

You asked for the following information regarding the T1C coach service between Aberystwyth and Cardiff:

1. The number of passenger journeys made on the T1C service in each month of 2022
2. The average length (in km or miles) of passenger journeys made on the T1C service in 2022
3. The annual cost in 2022 to the Welsh Government of funding the T1C operating contract between Adventure Travel and Ceredigion County Council
4. The value of Bus Services Support Grant paid to Adventure Travel in respect of T1C operation in 2022
5. The value of Bus Emergency Scheme funding paid to Adventure Travel in respect of T1C operation in 2022
6. The vehicle costs, e.g. depreciation, incurred by the Welsh Government in respect of the coach used for the T1C in 2022
7. All assessments of value for money for the T1C service which have been carried out at any time since 2017.

Our Response

I can confirm we hold some of the information you have requested. The Welsh Government does not hold any information for questions two, four, five and six.

For question one, the number of passenger journeys made on the T1C service in each month of 2022 are as follows:

January	358
February	347
March	312
April	1097
May	1219
June	1199
July	1484

August	855
September	1256
October	1177
November	1009
December	947
Total	11260

For question three, the annual cost in 2022 to the Welsh Government of funding the T1C operating contract between Adventure Travel and Ceredigion County Council = £167,841.45. The figure quoted includes payments to the operator for BSSG and BES funding during 2022.

For your final question, I can confirm that we provided funding to Transport for Wales to examine potential further improvements to north – south strategic public transport links down west Wales. As part of this work, consultants will be looking at the existing T1C service with a view to identifying options to make the service more attractive to longer distance passengers as well as the potential deployment of additional coaches to improve strategic links not served by rail. This work is ongoing so we are not in a position to share with you the key outcomes as yet. This information will be available in the future and is therefore withheld under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Information Intended for Future Publication. 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

Section 22 – Information Intended for Future Publication

Section 22 states that *Information is exempt information if –*

- a) *The information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not)*
- b) *The information was already held with a view to such publication at the time the request for information was made, and*
- c) *It is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph a).*

I am of the opinion that subsections (a) and (b) above are met because the information is held with a view to it being made available to the public. This information is expected to be available within the next 12 months.

With regards to part (c), I have given consideration as to whether it would be 'reasonable in all the circumstances' that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the proposed publication date. I am of the opinion that releasing the information at this time would cause disruption to the Welsh Government's intentions in relation to its publication arrangements. Thus, I am content that the exemption is engaged.

Section 22 is a public interest exemption. This means that, in order to withhold information, I must show that the public interest in withholding is greater than the public interest in releasing it.

In terms of the public interest, it is recognised that there is public interest in there being openness and transparency within Government.

Assessments of value for money for the T1C Service are currently being carried out by consultants who will be looking at the existing T1C service with a view to identifying options to make the service more attractive to longer distance passengers as well as the potential deployment of additional coaches to improve strategic links not served by rail. This work is ongoing, therefore we are not in a position to share with you the key outcomes as yet. This information will be available upon request within the next 12 months.

The assessments are still ongoing and therefore a thorough validation process will need to be undertaken on the information to ensure its accuracy. By restricting access to the assessments ahead of them being completed, we will be able to provide the information in a co-ordinated manner to all people at the same time, and will ensure an editorial process is adhered to which will confirm the quality and integrity of data.

An accelerated release of assessments which involve research, drafting preparation which might result in inaccurate, unchecked information being disclosed prematurely, misleading the public.

To that end, I do not think it is reasonable in all the circumstances or in the public interest to release this information prematurely. Rather, I believe the public interest would be best served if the information were made available once the assessments have been completed.

I am satisfied therefore that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding the information.