

25 March 2025

Dear

ATISN 24433 Greyhound Racing

Thank you for your request which we received on 24 February 2025. You asked for:

All the information and evidence the Welsh Government, and specifically Huw Irranca-Davies, received and used to decide to move to ban greyhound racing in Wales during an announcement on the 18 February 25.

Specifically, the information below from the 1 February 22 to the 18 February 25.

1. The number of signatures on the petition to ban the sport in Wales that the Welsh Government used to spearhead the proposed who were from Wales.
2. What specifically happened to the petition against the ban that was submitted to the Welsh Government? When was this debated, what was the outcome and what was the published response?
3. The number of visits that were made to the Valleys Greyhound Track by ministers to hear from the owners and staff - dates and times.
4. The number of visits that Huw Irranca-Davies made to the Valleys Greyhound Track by ministers to hear from the trainers, owners and staff - dates and times.
5. The number of visits that were made to Greyhound Trainers premises in Wales by ministers to hear from the trainers, owners and staff - dates and times.
6. The number of visits that Huw Irranca-Davies made to Greyhound Trainers premises in Wales to hear from the trainers and staff - dates and times.
7. The number of submissions, meetings, consultations that took place between the organisations and charities supporting the ban and Welsh ministers involved in the decision making process.
8. The number of submissions, meetings, consultations that took place between the organisations and charities supporting the ban and Huw Irranca-Davies.
9. All documents, evidence, written submissions, e-mails, telephone logs etc that occurred between the 12th February 25 to the 18th February 25 that resulted in Huw Irranca-Davies moving forwards the announcement on his decision from Spring 25 (as stated in the debate on the 12th February 25) to the 18th February 25.

The response to your full request is as follows:

1. The number of signatures on the petition to ban the sport in Wales that the Welsh Government used to spearhead the proposed who were from Wales.

Information not held.

This information is available from the Welsh Parliament.

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Tel: 0300 200 6565

Email: Information-request@senedd.wales

2. What specifically happened to the petition against the ban that was submitted to the Welsh Government? When was this debated, what was the outcome and what was the published response?

Information not held.

As above, this information is available from the Welsh Parliament.

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Tel: 0300 200 6565

Email: Information-request@senedd.wales

3. The number of visits that were made to the Valleys Greyhound Track by ministers to hear from the owners and staff - dates and times.

None

4. The number of visits that Huw Irranca-Davies made to the Valleys Greyhound Track by ministers to hear from the trainers, owners and staff - dates and times.

None

5. The number of visits that were made to Greyhound Trainers premises in Wales by ministers to hear from the trainers, owners and staff - dates and times.

None

6. The number of visits that Huw Irranca-Davies made to Greyhound Trainers premises in Wales to hear from the trainers and staff - dates and times.

None

7. The number of submissions, meetings, consultations that took place between the organisations and charities supporting the ban and Welsh ministers involved in the decision making process.

None

8. The number of submissions, meetings, consultations that took place between the organisations and charities supporting the ban and Huw Irranca-Davies.

None

9. All documents, evidence, written submissions, e-mails, telephone logs etc that occurred between the 12th February 25 to the 18th February 25 that resulted in Huw Irranca-Davies moving forwards the announcement on his decision from Spring 25 (as stated in the debate on the 12th February 25) to the 18th February 25.

Some of the information you requested is set out in Annex 1 to this letter.

We have decided that **some of the information described in question 9** is exempt from disclosure under sections **35(1)(a) and 42** of the **Freedom of Information Act** and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex 2 to 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: 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

Annex 1

Advice about the role of the proposed implementation group

If an implementation group is suggested it could be composed of various interested parties, such as animal welfare organisations, greyhound racing industry representatives, veterinarians and government officials, and that would play a crucial role in effectively advising on the implementation of a ban on greyhound racing.

By bringing together diverse perspectives, this balanced membership could ensure that all stakeholders' concerns are addressed, unintended consequences are minimised and that the impact and any harms associated with the ban could be reduced.

An implementation group could facilitate open dialogue, promote transparency, and develop comprehensive strategies for transitioning affected parties, such as rehoming greyhounds and supporting industry workers. Additionally, the group could establish a review and evidence framework, ensuring that decisions are fair, well-informed, and based on robust evidence. The group may also propose further work needed, including the possibility of further consultation. This collaborative approach could achieve an equitable outcome for all involved while protecting the welfare of racing dogs.

Overview of the International Picture

In New Zealand, a ban on greyhound racing is set to take effect on 1 August 2026, following multiple reviews highlighting persistent welfare issues. The decision follows multiple reviews over the past decade highlighting persistent animal welfare concerns within the industry. Similarly, other countries have seen a reduction in the number of active tracks and a decline in public support for the sport. The sport has faced significant scrutiny and decline in countries where greyhound racing is common practice, due to animal welfare concerns by those campaigning for animal welfare and the ethics of using animals in sport.

Greyhound racing is still legal in several countries, including some states in the United States, Ireland, Australia, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, and Mexico. There are many countries where greyhound racing is not officially banned, as the need is not there, as it is not a common practice or part of the culture.

Globally, there is a growing movement towards the adoption of retired racing greyhounds, reflecting increased awareness and concern for their welfare. This shift is part of a broader trend where countries are re-evaluating the ethical implications of greyhound racing and implementing stricter regulations or outright bans to protect the welfare of the animals involved.

Gambling and racing regulations vary widely across different countries, reflecting their unique cultural, social, and economic contexts. Whilst we understand that most greyhound racing bans in other countries are primarily driven by animal welfare concerns, some are linked to gambling laws, as is the case in China.

Annex 2

Application of exemptions

The Freedom of information Act provide a right for anyone to ask a public authority to make requested information available to the wider public. As the release of requested information is to the world, not just the requester, public authorities need to consider the effects of making the information freely available to everybody. Any personal interest the requester has for accessing the information cannot override those wider considerations.

I have decided to withhold the ministerial advice which is exempt from disclosure under sections 35(1)(a) and 42 of the Act.

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of sections 35(1)(a) and 42 of the of the Freedom of Information Act and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

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

We are not obliged to provide information if it relates to the formulation of government policy.

A final decision on how the ban on greyhound racing in Wales will be implemented has not been made by the Government.

The announcement to ‘move towards a ban on greyhound racing in Wales’ is the first step in the policy development of this work. Consideration of the impacts on the local economy, workforce and welfare of the dogs affected will need involvement and input from a wide range of stakeholders who will likely be affected by the ban.

The Welsh Government believes that some of the ministerial advice provided should be exempt from disclosure under section 35(1)(a) - formulation of government policy.

Public Interest Test

Public interest considerations favouring disclosure

- The information relates to how the decision was made to ban greyhound racing in Wales. Disclosure would enhance public scrutiny of decision making.
- Release of the information could promote public understanding of the process by which decisions are made and would be consistent with the Government’s commitment to greater transparency.

Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information

- Premature disclosure of information could lead to an influx of questions and public scrutiny at a stage where the policy is still being developed. Releasing this information may restrict the full consideration of all arguments and is not an effective way to develop public understanding and interest. In addition, this can hinder the decision-making process by diverting attention and resources away from thorough policy formulation.
- Releasing incomplete or preliminary information may present a distorted picture of the policy's final outcome, which is counterproductive to the goal of clear and effective policy communication. This could result in stakeholders being reluctant to engage in the process.

- Release of the Ministerial advice at this stage will compromise the development of the most appropriate policy approach to take. This is a contentious issue. Involvement of stakeholders in the policy development process is essential in mitigating unintended consequences of the ban. Disclosure of information at this stage will hinder the recruitment of the Implementation Group and potentially affect the impartiality and the bias of potential members which will have adverse effect on the long-term impacts of a ban.
- This policy is currently under active discussion regarding its implementation, legislative vehicle, and the potential unintended consequences and impacts, which are yet to be fully understood. Disclosing this information could hinder free and frank discussions, thereby damaging the quality of advice and leading to poorer decision-making.
- The content and sensitivity of this information relate to the future processes of forming the government's implementation group and ongoing policy development. These processes are very much active, and key decisions on the formation of this policy will be hindered by the disclosure of this information as it will lead to an unbalanced level of scrutiny and a disproportionate response which might not reflect the final policy outcomes. Furthermore, releasing preparatory work regarding the formation of any implementation group may dissuade prospective members.

Section 42 Legal privilege

Public interest considerations favouring disclosure

- Disclosure would help the public to understand the decisions that we make. It would also allow the Government to show transparency and therefore build trust between the public and the Welsh Government.

Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information

- The principle behind Legal Professional Privilege is safeguarding openness in all communications between the Welsh Ministers and Welsh Government lawyers to ensure access to full and frank legal advice, which in turn is fundamental to the decision-making process. Release of this information will undermine that process.
- It is essential that maintaining confidentiality is crucial for ensuring candid legal discussions during the development stage of this policy.

Whilst we appreciate the need to allow the public to scrutinise our decision-making process, greater public interest lies in ensuring high quality policy and decision-making, and in the properly considered development of policies and decisions. We reached the view that, on balance, the public interest is better served by withholding this information under Sections 35(1)(a) and 42 of the Act at this time.