

Dear

Complaint in respect of ATISN 24745

Thank you for your email of 20 June sent with regard to our response to your request for information, ATISN 24745, in which you asked for recorded information between the dates 12 May 1999 and 9 February 2000 as follows:

1. Copies of any correspondence and communications written by Prince Charles to the First Minister, Alun Michael, as well as correspondence written by the First Minister, Alun Michael to Prince Charles, regarding.
 - a. Hunting
 - b. The state of rivers and or canals and other water ways in Wales.
 - c. Climate change and or its impact on the UK and or Wales and or the world generally.
 - d. The Welsh government's policies on climate change and or the environment generally.
 - e. Organic food and or organic farming and or the prince's passion for organic food/farming.
 - f. GM crops and or the prince's concerns about GM crops and GM foods.
 - g. Food production and or farming in Wales.
2. Whether the Welsh government ever held correspondence and communication of the kind described above, and whether it may have been transferred and preserved elsewhere.
3. Whether, during the period, Prince Charles and First Minister, Alun Michael held an audience together, and times, dates, and the formal or informal agenda, and any briefing notes held for any such meeting.

Our reply indicated we do not hold the information requested, and you have challenged that view, saying:

Given the then Prince Charles's interest in the topics listed in the original request, I think it's highly likely that the public authority will hold information of relevance to the request.

I have therefore conducted this review.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public the right of access to recorded information held by an authority. This right is for information held by the authority at the time the request is received, and I note that the dates you are interested in are from the early days of the Welsh Government, and over 25 years ago. Whilst Welsh Government retains paper records as well as newer electronic records, all files in Welsh Government have listed retention schedules, and all relevant retention schedules are shorter than 25 years. That is, we do not retain records, except in exceptional cases, that are this old. Officials relied upon this fact and a search of records that are exceptionally retained, to establish that the information is not held.

Because of the nature of the information you are interested in, there would be a strong presumption that the information would have been selected for permanent preservation when any files such information would be found in (if it existed) reached the end of their retention period. If such information was identified, it would, in the

normal case, have been transferred to [The National Archives](#). You can make a Freedom of Information request to the National Archives at this page:

[Make a Freedom of Information enquiry - Contact us](#)

However, I asked our Social Research and Information division to conduct a search to establish answers to the following questions:

1. Whether we have records that any such information was held;
2. Whether any information on this matter was exceptionally retained;
3. Whether we have records of destruction or transfer of any such information.

Searches of our own files, including data on files that were destroyed or transferred, do not indicate that we ever held any such information. The team also conducted searches for you on the online TNA catalogue, but were unable to find any relevant information. We hold no indication that the information was ever held.

It is possible, considering that this was the early days of the Welsh Government, that any such material would not have been considered part of the executive function of the Welsh Government. If these were considered private papers of the First Minister, then Welsh Government would not have held the information, but it is likely that such records would have been transferred to the National Library of Wales, who hold an extensive collection of papers relating to Welsh political figures. Although we have no record that this is the case, you can approach the National Library at this page:

[NLW enquiries - National Library of Wales](#)

Following these extensive searches, I uphold the original response. The information is not held by Welsh Government.

I have considered your complaint 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 internet at:

[Requesting information from the Welsh Government \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

If you remain dissatisfied with this response you 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.

Yours sincerely

Deputy Director
Finance & Governance Division
Local Government, Housing & Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group