

25 September 2025

Dear

ATISN 25169 - Protection for municipal bus companies when the Bus Services (Wales) Bill becomes law

Information requested

Thank you for your request which we received on 19 September 2025. You asked for correspondence and documents relating to the future of existing municipal bus companies should the Bus Services (Wales) Bill become law.

Our response

I can confirm that information is held relating to correspondence and meetings that have taken place between Welsh Government officials and Cardiff and Newport City Councils on this issue. However, these documents are considered exempt from disclosure under section **35(1) (a), formulation of government policy** of the **Freedom of Information Act** and are therefore withheld. The reasons for applying this exemption are set out in full at Annex A 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 A

Application of exemption

The Freedom of information Act provides 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.

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of section 35 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’ of the Freedom of Information Act

The information in question relates to information and options under consideration by officials which will ultimately inform recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary in order to develop the Welsh Government’s policy on this issue.

As the information is related to the formulation of our policy on this matter, the exemption is engaged.

Public Interest Test

In order to satisfy the public interest test in relation to the exemption, it is necessary to conclude that the public interest arguments in favour of withholding the information are sufficient to *outweigh* the public interest arguments in favour of release.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

There is a public interest in the future of existing municipal bus companies should the Bus Services (Wales) Bill become law.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

Discussions with Cardiff and Newport City Councils on the future of existing municipal bus companies are ongoing, and to make this information public would compromise the confidentiality of those discussions and prejudice future policy development.

The release of partial information relating to policy development in a sensitive area which is likely to generate strong feelings from a range of stakeholders may be easily taken out of context. Disclosure could illustrate a range of options that are being considered in the formulation of the policy based only on the information currently available and without the benefit of the further work currently underway and so present an incomplete picture.

Balance of public interest test

The Welsh Government believes that, on balance, the wider public interest lies in withholding the information.

To compromise the confidentiality of discussions with key stakeholders while policy is currently in development could damage the relationship between Welsh Government and its stakeholders, including public sector partners. It could also jeopardise the ongoing policy and lead to uncertainty in the wider sector.

As such, we believe the balance lies in favour of maintaining the exemption.