

21 April 2026

Dear

## **ATISN 26827 - Community cohesion monitoring**

### **Information requested**

Thank you for your request which I received on 24 March 2026. You asked for:

1. *"In document SC33 submitted by Cardiff University to the Senedd, a testimonial is provided under the heading "Welsh Government Inclusion and Cohesion Communities Division" on use of the HERO Detect Dashboard. That testimonial includes the following sentence:*

*"The Cohesion Teams provide monthly monitoring reports to Welsh Government but will also send ad hoc updates if the matter is urgent or could potentially escalate." Please provide the correspondence, including attachments, in which that testimonial text was requested, drafted, discussed, approved and/or sent for inclusion in SC33. To locate it, please search for the exact sentence quoted above.*

2. *Second, I refine Part 1 of ATISN 26756.*

*In your response, you say that complying with Part 1 would require reviewing correspondence and documentation over a period of more than four years and assessing whether each item represents a "monitoring report" or an "update". Yet the existence of such reports and updates has already been described by Welsh Government itself, in those terms, in the testimonial provided for and published in SC33.*

*Accordingly, I am not asking you to identify only those documents which you consider to be "monitoring reports" or "updates".*

*Instead, please provide all correspondence and attachments sent by the Community Cohesion teams to the Welsh Government's Inclusion and Cohesion Team from 1 October 2021 onwards, in chronological order.*

*This includes emails and their attachments by which material was submitted or forwarded. I will sift the material myself for the monthly reports and ad hoc updates referred to in SC33."*

### **Our response**

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, we have established that the information you require for the first part of the request is not held by the Welsh Government.

We have decided that the information described in second part of the request is exempt from disclosure under sections 36(2)(b)(i) and 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex 1 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](mailto: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**

### **Application of exemptions**

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.

The Welsh Government has decided to withhold the following information:

*All correspondence and attachments sent by the Community Cohesion teams to the Welsh Government's Inclusion and Cohesion Team from 1 October 2021 onwards, in chronological order.*

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of sections 36(2)(b)(i) and 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

#### **Engagement of Section 36(2)(b)(i) (inhibiting the free and frank provision of advice) of the Freedom of Information Act.**

#### **Engagement of Section 36(2)(c) (otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act.**

Section 36 of the Act requires that a qualified person must give their reasonable opinion that the exemption is engaged. As set out in Section 35(5) of the Act the qualified person is means the Welsh Ministers or the Counsel General to the Welsh Government.

The qualified person is of the opinion that these exemptions are engaged. Releasing the requested information would harm the ability of officials and Ministers to deliver community cohesion policy work effectively. It would impact the quality of decision-making, policy development, the ability to give and receive honest advice, relationships with partners, safety of community members, and the overall administration of the Programme. Disclosure would make officials and the cohesion teams less willing to provide frank advice, raise concerns, and communicate community tensions.

#### **Public Interest Test**

In order to satisfy the public interest test in relation to the exemptions, 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**

- Disclosure of information about cohesion activity would have some public interest and could support increased public understanding of related community tensions which have been considered over time. However, the information requested would not provide complete understanding of this, as cohesion reports are snapshots in time reflecting on emerging (and unclear) situations, produced by partners, and represent only one element of our considerations.
- Disclosure could provide additional transparency and increased public awareness about the range of work delivered via the Community Cohesion Programme funded by the Welsh Government. The Programme aims to strengthen community cohesion and foster good relations in Wales. It could highlight the level of engagement with communities and community support organisations which help Welsh Government and local authorities to better understand community views and concerns, particularly in relation to issues which may affect whether communities can get along peacefully and effectively. Reports are utilised to inform awareness of community issues and policy direction, as well as informing whether cross-sector responses are needed to various emerging and ongoing sensitive situations.
- Disclosure may help convey some of monitoring and preventative actions taken within the Programme, through mitigation of community concerns and issues before issues escalate to a critical point. However, the reports will not, in themselves, provide readers with any clear understanding of this work.

## **Public interest arguments in favour of withholding**

- There is a strong public interest in protecting the safe space for candid reporting to Welsh Government and options-testing on live and sensitive issues affecting community relations by Cohesion Teams and those organisations and community members they engage with. Disclosure of these reports would have a chilling effect on any future disclosure of reports to the Welsh Government, jeopardising the effectiveness of our community cohesion policy formulation, and our ability to implement the most appropriate and agile national responses to address emerging or long-standing contentious community cohesion tensions.
- We continue to observe an escalation in online and offline abuse and harassment of specific third sector organisations that promote equality and inclusion in Wales. This has taken a range of forms including hate speech and threats, spreading of harmful mis/disinformation, intentional misrepresentation of the organisations work, and the doxxing of staff (the sharing an individual's private information so as to enable them to be easily identified).
- Publication of these monitoring reports would provide an extensive list of third sector organisations and individuals who work with marginalised and vulnerable communities from across Wales. The reports would be published

online for anyone to see and not just available to the requestor. In the majority of cases, these are not organisations in receipt of Welsh Government funding, they include organisations who have engaged with the Programme in some way. Such disclosure could bring direct harm to community members and community support organisations, as well as hindering any future partnership work and disclosures.

- It is fundamental that regional cohesion teams can report community tensions and interventions to prevent harmful outcomes to us candidly. Disclosure of the requested information would erode the safe space for this full and frank provision of advice and prejudice effective conduct of public affairs.
- It would not be in the Public Interest to impede free exchange of information for the purposes of supporting community cohesion within the Programme through disclosure. The information provided to the Welsh Government can include views and information gathered from community members that would otherwise not be available to the Welsh Government. To ensure Welsh Government can make better decisions and develop policy, we need community members and cohesion teams to feel they can express open and honest views and opinions about Welsh Government policy and actions, or about live community tensions. Disclosure would have a chilling effect on the willingness of community members or community support organisations to engage with the cohesion teams and a subsequent chilling effect on the ability of community cohesion teams to share information and views with the Welsh Government.
- It would not be in the Public Interest to hinder the preventative work of the Programme. The chilling effect of reduced candour of information provided through the Programme would significantly impact cross-sector working to identify and de-escalate situations before reaching a point which increases strain to resources across sectors. It would also hamper the ability of Welsh Ministers to be able to provide messages of reassurance or messaging which is informed by the best available emerging information.

### **Balance of public interest test**

In this case, the Counsel General ('qualified person') has decided that the above prejudicial effects are sufficient to trigger the application of the exemptions contained in section 36 of the FOIA.

On balance, the public interest in favour of withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the reasons set out above. The requested information will therefore be withheld.