



28 February 2017

Dear ,

ATISN 11086 Welsh Government representation on the 'Safeguarding Animal Welfare at Slaughter Task and Finish Group

Thank you for your request which we received on Wednesday 1st February 2017 concerning the Safeguarding Animal Welfare at Slaughter Task and Finish Group.

You asked for details of the Welsh Government representation on the group including details of any past Welsh Government officials that have been replaced during the lifetime of the group.

We have decided that this information is exempt from disclosure under the s38(1)(a)&(b) exemption provided by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

When considering whether information should be released or withheld we have to consider the effects of disclosure of the information to the world at large and not just to the requester as information released in response to a request is not just released to the requester but to the wider world. As such, whilst the requester may have a perfectly innocent and legitimate interest in obtaining the information, we have to largely ignore those and consider the likely effects of making the information more widely available, where it can be used by any individual.

s38(1)(a)&(b)

This exemption allows a public authority to withhold requested information where it is believed that disclosure of the information would, or would be likely to, (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b), endanger the safety of any individual.

The officials involved were from the teams of Andrew Slade (Director Agriculture, Food and Marine) and Dr Christianne Glossop (Chief Veterinary Officer). On consulting officials, they intimated that they would not be happy for their details to be released as they are aware that there are some individuals who may be prepared to resort to targeting any individuals, and potentially, their families.



We have considered these representations and have concluded that there is a basis for those fears as there are a number of recorded, and publicised, attacks by extremist activists on those involved in work with which they disagree or who they believe do not share their values. As such we have concluded that there is a real risk to these individuals, or their family members, from persons unknown and that disclosure would be likely to greatly increase the risk to these individuals.

This exemption is a qualified exemption. That is, it is subject to the test of Public Interest.

There is a strong public interest in the public being assured that advice to Ministers, whether that be from officials, Task and Finish Groups, or other sources, is fair and balanced, so that the public can rest assured that decisions made are based upon a fair consideration of all options.

There is a strong public interest in animal welfare issues and there have been a number of media articles relating to various practices at slaughter houses across the UK evoking strong responses. As such there is a clear public interest in matters relating to the welfare of animals within this industry.

Against this, there is a very strong public interest in government protecting individuals from harm. It is not in the wider public interest for government to release information which has the very real potential to allow individuals to be targeted and harmed.

We also do not believe that identifying individual officials will actually add anything to the public assurances of a fair and balanced representation. All Civil Servants are bound by the Civil Service Code to provide a balanced and impartial assessment of options.

On balance we have decided in this case the risk of harm to individuals clearly outweighs any benefit to knowing which officials were members of the group and, as such, we believe the s38(1)(a)&(b) exemptions should be employed.

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: FreedomOfInformationOfficer@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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

Welsh Government Food Policy Team