



27 October 2017

Dear ,

Request for Information – ATISN 11622

I wrote to you on 19 October regarding your request for information. You asked for:

1. The name of the person and job title of the Welsh Government representative who undertook the feasibility study recommended by Dr Winckler on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.
2. How much has the Welsh Government spent to undertake the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.
3. What conclusions were reached after the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.
4. What recommendations were made after the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth
5. On what date the recommendation on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth was turned down, and who within the Welsh Government made the decision . Where was the decision publicised and which County Councils were informed of the decision.
6. Where I can access the report on the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.



BUDDSODDWYR | INVESTORS
MEWN POBL | IN PEOPLE

E&I FOI Team
Welsh Government
Treforest - QED Centre
Main Avenue
Treforest Industrial
Estate
Pontypridd
CF37 5YR

EconomyandInfrastructureFOI@wales.gsi.gov.uk

7. What documentation does the Welsh Government hold relating to the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth. ie memos, meeting notes, data gathering exercises, etc.
8. Which County Councils were involved in the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.
9. The person and job title of the Ceredigion County Council officials who were involved in the feasibility study on operating the T3 Trawscymru service from Wrexham to Aberystwyth instead of from Wrexham to Barmouth.
10. When the decision was taken by the Welsh Government to allow the T3 West to East route from Wrexham to Barmouth to take precedence over the T2/T1 North to South route from Bangor to Carmarthen.
11. Who in the Welsh Government allowed the T3 West to East route from Wrexham to Barmouth Dolgellau to take precedence over the T2/T1 North to South route from Bangor to Carmarthen.
12. On what date Trawscymru agreed that the Southbound T2 departure time in Dolgellau could be delayed by an extra 5 minutes (10 minutes in all) between 17.25 and 17.35 to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham.
13. What monitoring of boarding and alighting numbers was carried out on passengers transferring between the T3 from Wrexham and the Southbound T2 in Dolgellau before it was decided that the T2 could be delayed by an extra 5 minutes (10 minutes in all) at 17.25 to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham.
14. The average number of passengers that alight from the T3 from Wrexham and embark on the Southbound T2 at 17.35 in Dolgellau.
15. On what date Trawscymru agreed that Gwynedd Council who manage both T2 and T3 contracts could have a Quality Partnership agreement to further delay the Southbound T2 beyond its departure time in Dolgellau by an extra 10 minutes resulting in a wait of 20 minutes from 17.25 and 17.45 to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham.?
16. What investigations were carried out by Trawscymru to assess the impact on London train connections in Machynleth and Trawscymru services South of Aberystwyth by the introduction of the Quality Partnership agreement to further delay the Southbound T2 beyond its departure time in Dolgellau by an extra 10 minutes to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham.
17. What documentation the Welsh Government officials hold relating to investigations that were carried out by Trawscymru to assess the impact on London train connections in Machynleth and Trawscymru services South of Aberystwyth by the introduction of the Quality Partnership agreement ie memos, meeting notes , investigative reports, data gathering excercises.

18. On what date Trawscymru decided the 18.40 T2 arrival from Bangor into Aberystwyth would not be a connecting service with the 18.40 T1 departure to Carmarthen.
19. What monitoring of boarding and alighting numbers was carried out on passengers transferring between the T2 from Bangor at 18.35 and the Southbound T1 departing from Aberystwyth at 18.40 before it was decided that the T2 could be delayed in Dolgellau by an extra 5 minutes (10 minutes in all) at 17.25 to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham.
20. The average number of passengers that alighted in Aberystwyth at 18.35 from the T2 from Bangor and embarked on the Southbound T1 at 18.40 before it was decided that the T2 could be delayed in Dolgellau by an extra 5 minutes (10 minutes in all) at 17.25 to wait for a T3 service from Wrexham thereby destroying the T2/T1 connectivity in Aberystwyth.
21. What progress has been made in restoring connectivity of the Southbound T2 with the London train in Machynlleth at 18.05 which is being destroyed by the unnecessary delays to the T2 in Dolgellau to wait for T3 services from Wrexham.
22. What monitoring of punctuality of the T2 service arrival times into Aberystwyth has been carried out in the years 2013 to 2017.
23. Has monitoring of punctuality of the T2 service arrival times into Aberystwyth been carried out in the years 2013 to 2017 both before and after delayed departure times of the T2 were employed in Dolgellau.

I will firstly address the timeliness of your request. I note you submitted your FOI request to the Welsh Government on 7 September, 2017. The statutory deadline for responding to your request was therefore 5 October, 2017. On this occasion your request was not registered until you sent us a reminder on 9 October, stating "*The 20 working days to reply have now expired*". Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, unless an extension has been legitimately applied then we are obliged to respond to requests for information within a statutory 20 working day timeline. On this occasion, I regret that we have breached this deadline and for this I apologise.

I will now address your requests for information, as given above.

Feasibility Study

Whilst Dr Winckler's report does indeed make a recommendation for further work to be done in advance of the introduction of the proposed T3 service on the feasibility of its operation to Aberystwyth rather than Barmouth, I can advise that no such feasibility study was undertaken. We do not, therefore, hold any recorded information in relation to your requests about the suggested feasibility study and the route, namely requests 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Bus Route Monitoring, Passenger Numbers and Timetable Information

You make numerous requests for information about monitoring of bus routes, passenger numbers and timetable information, namely requests 13, 14, 19, 20, 22 and 23. The monitoring of routes across the TrawsCymru network is undertaken by the Bus Compliance Officers employed by Bus Users Cymru. We do not hold the information you describe. This is because the role of the Welsh Government is to review trends and specific issues.

T3 West and T2/T1 Services

In relation to questions 10, 11 and 18, we do not hold information as you describe. TrawsCymru is the brand name for Welsh Government funded long-distant bus services. The routes you refer to are tendered routes managed by local authorities and are the responsibility of the relevant local authorities. Routes are tendered as and when contracts are due for renewal.

T2 and T3 Services

In relation to questions 12 and 15, the Welsh Government does not hold this information. This is a matter for Gwynedd Council.

Bus Connections at Machynlleth Railway Station

For requests 16, 17 and 21, I confirm that we hold some information. I have concluded, however, that the information we hold is exempt from disclosure under Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, policy in development. Full reasoning for applying this exemption is given at Annex A to this letter.

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 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.

To close, we recognise the concerns you continually raise with us regarding North/South journey opportunities for passengers on Traws Cymru bus services. I can assure you we are working hard with our delivery partners and bus operators to provide more north to south journey choices for all passengers and hope to make

some further improvements within the next 12 months, subject to successful competitive tendering exercise. If successful, these improvements will be widely publicised by Traveline Cymru and the Traws Cymru websites.

Yours sincerely

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

The information caught by this exemption relates to questions 16, 17 and 21 regarding London train connections. Decisions relating to non-disclosure of this information have been taken with due consideration of the exemptions identified under sections 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of information Act 2000. This exemption states that:

(1) information held by a government department is exempt information if it relates to (a) the formulation or development of government policy.

Section 35 is a qualified (public interest tested) exemption. This means that in order to engage it, I must show that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the public interest in releasing it. I have therefore given consideration to the effects of disclosure of the information to the world at large as the information is made available to anybody and everybody, not just the requestor.

I recognise the public has an interest in understanding the Government's considerations in relation to the development of policy of bus connections at Machynlleth railway station and the impact train connections may have on those bus services. I also recognise that to release information now regarding this matter would promote awareness of the issues that Government is currently considering, as well as enhancing transparency in policy making decisions.

However, good government depends on being able to produce the best advice available and to discuss all the options without fear of premature disclosure. Policy and priorities in this area continue to be developed to ensure the effective delivery of the Welsh Government funded TrawsCymru bus service. Officials are still in dialogue with Cyngor Gwynedd regarding the possible impact of train connections on some bus services and are yet to provide advice to Ministers. They are also in dialogue about a current competitive tendering exercise. Officials are exploring a variety of options in a free and frank exchange of ideas and experiences. It is likely that some individuals would be less likely to engage in this way if they thought their thoughts would be revealed, and this would lead to a less strenuous and in depth exploration of options and potentially less robust and effective policies.

I am aware that as a general rule, the sensitivity of information is likely to reduce over time so that the age of the information or timing of the request may be relevant in determining whether to apply the exemption, or where the public interest may lie. In this case, however, the information captured is very much current information and relates to policy which is still in development.

The Welsh Government regularly publishes on its website information regarding the funding and key issues relating to the TrawsCymru bus service. Information is also available on the Trawscymru website. These publications include amendments to the existing bus services. I believe this information goes some way to satisfying the public

interest in this area. I believe therefore that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding information relating to bus connections at Machynlleth railway station as this information relates to a policy that is still in development.