

Reference: IR899

Date issued: 10 November 2023

WG spend on 20mph speed limit implementation

I am writing in response to your request for information dated 17 October 2023 in which you requested information “in relation to the Welsh Government unilateral implementation of 20mph speed limits”. For ease of reference, I have reproduced items of information requested below and set out our corresponding responses.

Item 1. The overall cost to include: new hardware and the labour in placement, including the cost for additional road surface markings, ie red tarmac

We do hold some material relating to your request for the overall cost; however, I am withholding this information for the following reason:

I consider that the information is exempt from disclosure by virtue of section 33(2) of the Freedom of Information Act relating to public audit functions.

Section 33(1) applies to any public authority which has functions in relation to-

(a) the audit of the accounts of other public authorities, or
(b) the examination of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which other public authorities use their resources in discharging their functions.

(2) Information held by a public authority to which this section applies is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the exercise of any of the authority’s functions in relation to any of the matters referred to in subsection (1).

While the AGW has statutory access rights to documents and information that relate to the exercise of many of his functions, such rights operate on the basis that the information provided is identified as necessary by the AGW. However, the effective performance of audit functions is dependent not just on obtaining information that the AGW identifies as necessary for an examination but also ongoing co-operation by the audited body, including the free volunteering of potentially relevant information by the audited body, so as to enable, for example, the effective planning of examinations.

The disclosure of this information would be likely to lead to reduced voluntary provision of information and also most likely resistance, such as through questioning the necessity of access to requested information.

Disclosure of this information would therefore be likely to prejudice the exercise of the AGW's functions in relation to audit by discouraging audited bodies' ready co-operation with auditors. The free and open engagement of audited bodies is critical for maintaining efficient and effective audit processes.

This exemption is subject to the public interest test, which I have applied as shown below:

For disclosure

- Transparency and accountability in the audit process in relation to public money, including enabling wider public understanding and knowledge of the workings of the public audit process.

Against disclosure

- Disclosure would discourage future co-operation with public auditors, and the negative impact on the supply of information would compromise the effectiveness of auditors in conducting their work in order to hold public bodies to account.

I have concluded that the balance of public interest lies against disclosure, and the s33 exemption is maintained.

Item 2. The legal costs of changing the legislation, whether done by council employees or not.

We do not hold this information.

Item3. The cost of consultations with local communities (if any). Including any expenses like travel or food claimed by any member of the Welsh Senedd in anyway linked to the project.

We do not hold this information.

Item 4. The cost of research prior to the decision being taken(if any) as in Item 3.

We do not hold this information.

Item 5. The number of warnings given and fixed penalties issued since its inception, up to the date of your response.

We do not hold this information.

Yours sincerely,

Information Officer