

# Security Arrangements

03 December 2015



## Request for Information.

Thank you for your request received 11 November in which you asked:

*I am requesting the following information under the provisions set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which requires a response within 20 working days:*

- 1. The number of full-time equivalent security staff employed at the National Assembly's estate (including, but not limited to, the Senedd and Tŷ Hywel), whether these are employed directly by the National Assembly or via a contracted company, in the 2014-15 financial year*
- 2. The total amount spent during the 2014-15 financial year on security measures (including, but not limited to, wages of staff and/or payments to the contracted company, maintenance of security equipment etc)*
- 3. The number of visitors you get annually to the Senedd?*

We have answered your questions below.

- 1. The number of full-time equivalent security staff employed at the National Assembly's estate (including, but not limited to, the Senedd and Tŷ Hywel), whether these are employed directly by the National Assembly or via a contracted company, in the 2014-15 financial year*
- 2. The total amount spent during the 2014-15 financial year on security measures (including, but not limited to, wages of staff and/or payments to the contracted company, maintenance of security equipment etc)*

Having given careful consideration to the information captured by your request, the National Assembly for Wales ("National Assembly") is of the view that this information is exempt from disclosure under section 24 (1) of the

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Freedom of Information Act 2000. The purpose of this exemption is to prevent disclosure of information which is necessary for the safeguarding of national security, and the reasoning for the engagement of the exemption is set out below.

Section 24 (1) of the Act provides:-

- *Information which does not fall within section 23(1) is exempt information if exemption from section 1(1)(b) is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security.*

We consider it necessary to withhold this information in order to prevent harm, or the risk of harm, occurring to Assembly Members, Assembly Members Support Staff, Assembly Commission staff, and visitors to the National Assembly estate, as well as the infrastructure and buildings of the National Assembly itself. The information covered by the request deals in general with arrangements for the security of the National Assembly estate, and the substantial risk in the disclosure of this information is that there is a genuine likelihood it will damage the effectiveness and integrity of those arrangements in the future.

This exemption is a qualified exemption, and as such, the public interest in upholding the exemption must be considered. The public interest consideration for disclosure is that the public have a right to know and be satisfied that there are adequate security arrangements in place in the devolved administration. It is our considered opinion however, that the release of this information is likely to materially damage the integrity and effectiveness of the National Assembly's security arrangements and therefore, in this instance, the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in its disclosure.

At present the current threat level from international terrorism in the UK is assessed as severe, which can be viewed at:-

<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/the-threats/terrorism/threat-levels.html>

Events in Paris over the weekend of 14 November have been taken into account when weighing up the balance of public interests. The National Assembly has a strong record of openness and accountability. Information of the nature requested has, in the past, been made available to the public. In view of recent events however, and in consideration of continuing security exercises and precautionary measures being adopted in some major cities, the public interest argument for withholding the information has been strengthened further.

In addition to the above, the information requested is withheld under Section 38(1) (b) of the Act which provides:

- *Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to endanger the safety of any individual.*

The information includes details of the numbers of full time security staff that are employed at the National Assembly estate together with further information concerning the contractual basis upon which they are retained. Such information, in itself, would not be likely to endanger the health and safety of any individual. However, in the hands of extremists and/or terrorists, it is likely to be utilised to construct an overview of the potential vulnerability of the National Assembly estate.

As Section 38 is a qualified exemption, we are required to conduct a public interest test.

There is a public interest in providing information to make public authorities more accountable and, in this case, to identify and justify levels of expenditure on specific operational issues. Disclosure can of course raise awareness of current issues and raise the standard of public debate. The National Assembly is an advocate of transparency and indeed information of the nature now being requested was previously placed into the public domain, as stated previously.

We again refer to the events in Paris over the weekend of 14 November. Such matters have understandably given the National Assembly cause to re-evaluate the position in respect of how certain information is handled and whether or not that information should be disseminated to the public.

The National Assembly is of the view that disclosure of the information requested would be likely to endanger the safety of those individuals who participate in Assembly proceedings and those who work at or visit the National Assembly estate.

The public interest in greater scrutiny of public spending is satisfied by the annual publication of financial reports and [Statement of Accounts](#). Further disclosure of specific operational spending and the numbers of security staff employed would not further the National Assembly's accountability as an establishment.

Further, whatever public interest exists in the disclosure of supplemental information, beyond that already available, is outweighed by the public interest that individuals should be protected against threats to their mental and physical health and safety. In addition, there is a strong and specific

public interest that Assembly Members should not be deterred or impeded from engaging in making laws for Wales and holding the Welsh Government to account.

*3. the number of visitors you get annually to the Senedd?*

The information request is published in our [Key Performance Indicator Reports](#).

As this information is available on our website your request is subject to section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which exempts information that is already reasonably accessible by other means.

Your request has been considered according to the principles set out in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information. The code is published on our website at [http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about\\_us-commission\\_assembly\\_administration/abt-foi/abt-foi-cop-pub.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-foi/abt-foi-cop-pub.htm)

If you have any questions regarding this response please contact me. If you feel you have cause for complaint, please follow the guidance at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

**Buddug Saer**  
**Freedom of Information and Project Support Officer**  
**National Assembly for Wales**

Cause for concern or complaint with your FOI response?

If you believe that I have not applied the Code correctly or have not followed the relevant laws, you may make a formal complaint to the Chief Executive and Clerk at the National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay. Details of the Assembly's complaints principles are set out in the Code of Practice on Complaints available on the Internet at <http://www.assembly.wales/en/help/contact-the-assembly/con-complaint/Pages/con-complaint-procedure.aspx>. Please advise me if you wish to receive a printed copy.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF