



Date issued: 05 December 2017

NRW Complaints and Investigations

I am writing in response to your request for information below dated 31 October 2017, as clarified by your email dated 06 November 2017, in which you requested information regarding NRW Complaints and Investigations.

For ease of reference, I have reproduced your questions below and set out our corresponding responses.

1. Details of the number of complaints made in respect of NRW for the years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 (or calendar year, whatever is most convenient); clarified to mean the number of expressions of concern received by the Auditor General for Wales (or the Wales Audit Office) in respect of NRW.

We hold some information in respect of expressions of concern received by the Auditor General for Wales or the Wales Audit Office as correspondence. This is recorded in a correspondence log by financial year from January 2016, and prior to this as part of a wider correspondence database, from which we have extracted the following information regarding the numbers of expressions of concern received.

16/17 – 5

15/16 – 2

2014 – 2

2. A breakdown of the nature of those complaints for the years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 (or calendar year, whatever is most convenient) into the categories:

- a) Breaching the data protection [information] act**
- b) Corporate Espionage**
- c) Breach of commercial confidentiality**
- d) Breach of due diligence**
- e) Breach of the tender and procurement process.**

We hold information regarding the concerns raised, though the descriptions do not precisely match the categories set out above. I have, therefore, set out below the types of matters raised, which I hope will be of use to you.

16/17 – 2 procurement/tendering, 1 financial management, 1 management of a natural habitat, 1 management of natural resources.

15/16 – 1 procurement/tendering; 1 operational/financial management

2014 – 1 financial matters related to wind turbines, 1 procurement/tendering

3. Details of any investigations into NRW with regard to the above categories (a-e) for the years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 (or calendar year, whatever is most convenient).

4. If concluded, details of the outcomes any of the above investigations.

Both of the above questions refer to 'investigations' which you have confirmed should be taken to mean examination, either as part of the audit of accounts or as part of study under section 145A of the Government of Wales Act 1998, and 'details' are taken to mean an outline description of the work undertaken.

We do not hold records of any examinations undertaken specifically in response to the expressions of concern referred to above, although two of the concerns relating to procurement/tendering matters in 2016/17 made reference to timber sales contracts which are referred to below.

We hold a report published by the Auditor General for Wales in 2016, 'The Development of Natural Resources Wales' and this is available through the publications pages of the Wales Audit Office Website, at: <https://www.audit.wales/publications>. This was the outcome of work undertaken as part of our planned programme of examinations and not in response to specific concerns.

The Auditor General also published a supplementary memorandum on timber sales contracts to the Public Accounts Committee (available through the Wales Audit Office website) which expands on issues relevant to his report on the 2015-16 NRW accounts. The accounts, including the report on the accounts, were laid before the National Assembly in March 2017 and are available at:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s61639/Natural%20Resouces%20Wales%20Annual%20Accounts%202015-16%20March%202017.pdf> The National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee took evidence itself on the issues relating to the timber sales contracts. Details of that work, and the Committee's own report, are available here: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=17295>

If you have any queries, or questions about my handling of your request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely