

Reference:	FOI.20867.26
Subject:	Surgery cancellations
Date of Request:	30 June 2026

Requested:

Last week, there were Met Office “amber” and “red” weather warnings in place for much of Wales, covering the period 22-25 June.

Please provide me with the following information for this NHS health board, for the dates listed above:

1. How many elective surgeries were cancelled by hospitals during these periods? If available, please provide a list that includes:
 - a. What each surgery was for.
 - b. The reason given for each cancellation, if one was provided – including whether heat was a factor, if this is recorded.
2. How many emergency surgeries were cancelled by hospitals during these periods? If available, please provide a list that includes:
 - a. What each surgery was for.
 - b. The reason given for each cancellation, if one was provided – including whether heat was a factor, if this is recorded.

In addition, if the following information is available for this NHS health board, can you also tell me:

3. How many surgical operations that were already underway were disrupted or forced to stop due to heat during these periods?
 - a. Please provide the reason why the surgery was disrupted or halted, if this information is available.
4. Please also indicate if any of these disruptions or cancellations detailed above resulted in medical complications and/or fatalities.

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with the information requested for question 4, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In order to provide you with the data requested, the UHB would need to retrieve the raw data from the Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS) and then share this with the relevant services to undertake a clinical review of the medical records for those patients whose surgery was cancelled during the 4 day period, to identify any information that would fulfil this part of your request, as this is not recorded centrally.

The UHB cancelled two hundred and eleven (211) surgeries during the period 22 June to 25 June 2026. It is estimated that a manual search of these records would exceed the 18 hours stipulated within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). Based on the number of records identified, conducting a search of patient records taking ten (10) minutes per digital record, would far exceed the 'appropriate limit', costing the UHB the following:

211 @ 10 minutes per item = 35 hours and 10 minutes
35 hours and 10 minutes @ £25 per hour = £879.17

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the FoIA, which provides an exemption from a public authority's obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

However, under Section 16 of the FoIA, we are required as a public authority, to provide advice and assistance so far as it is reasonable to individuals who have made a request under the FoIA, this can include assisting a requestor to further refine their request.

Unfortunately, the UHB is unable to provide advice on how you can refine your request further. This is due to the UHB still requiring a manual trawl of the records for all patients whose operation was cancelled.

Additionally, the UHB is unable to provide you with some of the requested information as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding the following details under Section 40(2) of the FoIA:

- The information requested for questions 1a and 2a broken down by the specific surgery, due to the low number of cases (less than 5). The UHB has therefore provided the information by surgical speciality.
- Additionally, where there is an asterisk (*) the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number of patients, due to low numbers (less than 5).

This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), as its disclosure would constitute unfair and unlawful processing and would be contrary to the principles and articles of the UK GDPR. This exemption is absolute and therefore, there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

In reaching this decision, the DPA and UK GDPR define personal data as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified solely from that data or from that data and other information, which is in the possession of the data controller.

However, whilst operating in accordance with the Section 45 Freedom of Information Code of Practice, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance and provides the information it holds below.

1. The UHB confirms that theatre logs recorded the cancellation of forty-three (43) planned elective surgeries during the 24 and 25 June 2026 due to adverse weather. In addition to this, WPAS recorded the cancellation of two hundred and three (203) planned elective surgeries, during the period 22 to 25 June 2026 for all reasons.

1a&b. The UHB does not hold the information exactly as requested as it does not routinely record a reason for cancellation as 'due to adverse weather conditions'. Additionally, the UHB is

unable to provide with you with the specific surgery type due to low numbers. Therefore, the UHB provides within the table below, the number of elective surgeries cancelled by speciality, along with the recorded cancellation reason on WPAS.

Speciality	Number of surgeries cancelled	Reason
Colorectal	*	Hospital cancelled due to adverse weather, unfit for surgery
	7	Hospital cancelled, specific reason unknown as not recorded on WPAS
General Surgery	*	Hospital cancelled due to adverse weather, unfit for surgery
	18	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O)	6	Hospital cancelled due to adverse weather, unfit for surgery
	39	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
	*	Hospital cancelled as theatre staff were unavailable
	*	Surgery cancelled due to equipment failure/unavailable
Breast	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Cardiology	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Dermatology	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)	5	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Gastroenterology	29	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Gynaecology	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
	*	Hospital cancelled as appointment was inconvenient
	*	Cancelled due to an administrative error
	*	Cancelled as the list was overrun
Obstetrics	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS

Ophthalmology	32	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Pain Management	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Respiratory Medicine	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Urology	35	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
	*	Hospital cancelled as pre-op guidance was not followed
	*	Patients cancelled as surgery no longer wanted
	*	Did not Attend
Vascular	5	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
Total	203	

2. The UHB confirms that eight (8) planned emergency surgeries were cancelled during the period 22 June to 25 June 2026 as recorded on WPAS.

2a&b. The UHB provides within the table below, the number of emergency surgeries cancelled by speciality, along with the recorded cancellation reason on WPAS.

Speciality	Number of surgeries cancelled	Reason
T&O	*	Cancelled due to other reasoning
	*	Cancelled as the list was overrun
Gastroenterology	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
General Medicine	*	Hospital cancelled, unfit for surgery, specific reasons unknown as not recorded on WPAS
General Surgery	*	Cancelled due to other reasoning
Total	8	

3. The UHB confirms that no surgical operations have been identified via WPAS as being disrupted or forced to stop due to the heat, during the period 22 June to 25 June 2026.

4. Section 12 exemption applied.