



Scotland Office

An Oifis Albannach

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London
SW1A 2AU

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Website: www.scotlandoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Our ref: FOI/DB 358

12 January 2012

Dear [REDACTED]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your email sent to the Scotland Office on 9 December 2011 which was received on 9 December 2011.

You asked for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

All emails, documents or internet pages containing ministerial preferences for briefings, speeches, submissions and letters between May 2010 and December 2011.

I am writing to confirm that the Scotland Office has now completed its search for information and a copy of the information requested is enclosed at the Annex to this letter, in the format you requested.

Please note that the guidance contained within the Annex was written by Scotland Office officials for the benefit of the rest of the Office; it was not commissioned by Ministers, was not submitted to Ministers for approval and does not necessarily reflect individual Ministers' views or preferences. Rather, this guidance follows civil service good practice about what would be expected when preparing briefing, speeches and correspondence for Ministers.

I hope you find this helpful.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made in relation to your request you may ask for an internal review. A request for an internal review should be addressed to:

FOI Officer
1 Melville Crescent
EDINBURGH
EH3 7HW

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 contact details are:

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

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

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[Redacted name]

Senior Private Secretary to the Secretary of State of Scotland
Scotland Office

Annex

Ministers' Preferences

Please

- provide all text in arial font size 12 for both Ministers
- spell out all acronyms in full on first use in document
- be consistent in use of capitals
 - Devolved Administrations
 - financial / service / retail or other sector
- do not use split infinitives – eg 'To boldly go'
- avoid 'I hope you find this helpful' in correspondence if the content of the letter is not particularly helpful
- use tables/graphs instead of lists where appropriate
- refer to Ministers by their correct titles in documents ie Rt Hon Michael Moore MP, Rt Hon David Mundell MP, Rt Hon Dr Vince Cable MP, Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox
- indicate when response is needed by to define what you mean by urgent; ie Urgent, response required (i) by close of play, (ii) within 24 hours, (iii) ahead of meeting on x.

Briefing and deadlines

If the Minister agrees to attend, their diary secretary will commission the appropriate policy officials to provide briefing. The private office will make every effort to inform policy officials as soon as a meeting is set up and certainly when it goes into the diary. Sometimes, however, meetings are set up at extremely short notice so there maybe some tight timescales but again private office will endeavour to inform policy officials with as much notice as possible.

Your briefing must be with Private Office well in advance of the event – at least a week for speeches and external events, and 48 hours for internal meetings. **The event or meeting may be cancelled if you fail to provide adequate briefing in time.**

Guidelines

- Keep the briefing as concise as possible with clear recommendations on any actions officials require from the Minister. The main body of the submission should be no more than two or three pages – **the Minister will often have limited time to read it before the event.**
- Use short focused sentences including key facts, figures, good news stories.
- Please number the pages.

- On the first page clearly highlight if there are speaking notes, quotes for the Minister to clear, and if appropriate, media handling arrangements which should have been agreed with the communications team ahead of insertion.
- Any relevant background material should be contained in annexes.
- If you think you will not be able to provide the briefing within the deadline, please speak to Private Office as soon as possible.

Speeches

Please provide prepared speeches with sufficient time built in to look over. All speeches should be provided in verbatim, in short blocks/paragraphs, font size 20 (SoS) and 16 (PUSoS), 1.5 line spaced.

SoS : please also provide a distillation of the key speaking points.

Correspondence

Please send all draft letters to SofS/PUSoS and SO MinCorr. A short and precise style is preferred with the text justified. Correspondence is a key output of the Scotland Office and has a reputational impact for our Ministers. Ministers are taking a keen interest in our correspondence statistics. If you have concerns that you may not meet the deadline set by SO Min Corr then please call the private office to discuss handling to ensure the **deadline is not missed**.

Please refer to Ministers by their correct titles in correspondence ie 'I am copying this to the Rt Hon Dr Vince Cable MP, the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox'

Scottish Government (SG) Correspondence : It is essential that correspondence to the SG upholds the culture of mutual respect that the PM would like to build with the SG. Ministers would like the letters acknowledged as soon as possible and for rebuttals to be provided only if needed.