



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Gulf Team

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

03 November 2015

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0745-15

Thank you for your email of 23 July 2015 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. In your request you asked for;

- i. Confirmation of whether or not the Minister submitted a diary for the trip and if it is retained by your Department. If so, as detailed a copy of that diary as your Department is able to provide.*
- ii. Confirmation of whether or not representatives of your Department accompanied the Minister. If so, their identities and/or job titles.*
- iii. Confirmation of whether or not the Minister submitted a list of those attending and if it retained by your Department. If so as detailed a copy of that diary as your Department is able to provide. This includes identities and/or roles of individuals mentioned.*
- iv. Details of cost/expenses incurred by individuals identified in ii. and/or by the Minister which required UK Government approval.*
- v. Details of any meeting or event or similar in Qatar which any individuals identified in ii. attended.*
- vi. Copies of pertinent correspondence between the Minister and your Department before, during, and after the trip. This includes, for instance, requests by the Minister for approval of the trip and subsequent assistance. It also includes if any of these requests were queried or declined.*
- vii. Copies of any other pertinent correspondence in your Department's possession. This includes, for instance, internal correspondence between representatives of your Department as well as with any other UK or Scottish Government Department; and any other individual, organization, or agency (domestic or foreign).*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information you requested. I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you.

Some information has been withheld under Section 28 – relations within the UK. The FCO has to strike a balance between being able to give free and frank advice to Ministers and senior officials in London, while maintaining a good working relationship with

the Scottish Government to promote their interests. Section 28(1)(2)(b) is a qualified exemption, and as such, we have considered where the greater public interest lies. Disclosure could meet the public interest in transparency and accountability. However, the effective conduct of internal UK relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between Governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through internal relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information could potentially damage the relationship between the UK and the Scottish Administration which is not in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Additionally, some information within the scope of your request is exempt under Section 27(1)(b), relating to specific discussion on matters involving the European Union. The disclosure of this would likely to prejudice relations between the UK and the EU as effective conduct of international relations is dependent upon maintaining trust and confidence. For this reason, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27(1)(b).

Some of the information you have requested, is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

The FCO does not hold information in relation to questions i) to iv).

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Yours sincerely,

Gulf Team
Middle East and North Africa Directorate



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