

Our ref: DE00000766568

Dear

Thank you for your request of 11 March under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Your exact request was:

I am requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) on meetings held between tobacco companies and department officials this year. By way of background, tobacco companies separately attended meetings with department officials and analysts in recent months to discuss the impact assessment of proposals to introduce standardised tobacco packaging. For each meeting please disclose:

- 1. all notes taken by officials*
- 2. the name and title of each individual in attendance*
- 3. the date*
- 4. the location*

I can confirm that the Department of Health holds information relevant to your request.

Q1 & 2 - notes of meetings and names of attendees

Department of Health officials held meetings with 4 tobacco companies (listed below) which fall in the scope of your request. These meetings were held to discuss whether they could provide any further information to inform the impact assessment on tobacco packaging. The agreed note of the meeting with Imperial Tobacco on 9 January, including details of those attending the meeting is disclosed with this letter.

Please note that some of the information has been removed from the disclosed documents in accordance with Section 40 of the FOI Act. This exemption relates to the protection of personal information, which would not otherwise be available in the public domain. The Department considers that this information, particularly the names of third parties and officials in the Department of Health and other Government Departments who are not at Senior Civil Servant rank, is exempt from disclosure under section 40.

With regard to the meetings with the 3 other tobacco companies, the Department believes that the notes to those meetings are exempt from release under section 22 of the FOI Act. Section 22 provides that public bodies are not obliged to disclose information that is intended for future

publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and we are required to assess as objectively as possible whether the balance of public interest favours disclosing or withholding the information.

In general, there is a strong public interest in information being made as freely available as possible. However, we also recognise a strong public interest in allowing sufficient time for the Department to properly consider and analyse information before it is placed in the public domain. The Department is still agreeing and finalising the notes of these meetings and we do not think it is in the public interest to release them now as it runs the risk of incomplete information being placed in the public domain which could mislead. For this reason, we have concluded that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in its release. The minutes of these 3 meetings should be available by the end of April.

Q 3 & 4 - dates and location of meetings

Department of Health officials held the following meetings with representatives of tobacco companies:

Company	Date of meeting	Location
Imperial Tobacco	9 January 2013	Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH
British American Tobacco	25 January 2013	Wellington House, 133 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG
Philip Morris International	30 January 2013	Wellington House, 133 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG
Japan Tobacco International	5th February 2013	Wellington House, 133 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

I hope this reply is helpful. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Head of the Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health
Room 317
Richmond House

79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

Email: freedomofinformation@dh.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Department. The ICO can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health