



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Parliamentary Relations Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

4 December 2014

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0676-14**

Thank you for your email of 10 July 2014 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*'I would like to make a request for the following information: The official diary of*

*The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for 24 June 2013*

*The Senior Minister of State for 24 June 2013*

*The Minister of State (Hugo Swire MP) for 24 June 2013*

*The Minister of State (Hugh Robertson) for 24 June 2013*

*The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for 24 June 2013*

*The Minister of State for Europe for 24 June 2013'*

Please note that the Minister of State was Alistair Burt MP not Hugh Robertson MP on 24 June 2013.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please also note Mr Simmonds was in his constituency so not on FCO business, therefore the following does not apply to his diary.

Some of the information is being withheld under section 21 (information accessible to the applicant by other means) of the FOIA. We are not required to release information if it is reasonably accessible to you in another way. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and not subject to a public interest test.

Information on Ministerial meetings, hospitality and travel that falls within the scope of your request is published on the FCO website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office/series/minister-data>

This applies to the Foreign Secretary's attendance at the United Nations in New York, Mr Lidington's attendance at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg and Mr Swire's official visit to Hong Kong.

Baroness Warsi's attendance at the House of Lords and meeting with the President of Kosovo are also in the public domain.

Some of the information that you have requested is exempt under Section 35(1)(d) of the FOIA, which protects information related to the administration of a Ministerial Private Office. Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours disclosing or withholding this information.

There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and I recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government, I recognise that the actions that elected representatives make may have a significant impact on the lives of citizens and there is a public interest in their actions being subject to public scrutiny. These public interests have to be weighed against a stronger public interest in the confidence of Ministers in the arrangements that his or her support staff make. In order to be confident in the independence of their support staff, Ministers must be sure that they are not allowing external considerations, such as the possible public reception of any arrangements, to affect their judgement in administering the Private Office. If these arrangements were routinely to be made public there is a danger that Ministers would not feel certain of this high quality of administrative support. Furthermore, as Ministers publish their external meetings regularly this also diminishes the public interest in favour of disclosure. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I consider that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Some of the information is personal data relating to third parties. It is our view that disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which states that personal data should be processed and lawfully. Section 40 (2) and (3) of the FOIA therefore apply. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which we think would be breached by disclosure in this case. In such circumstances, section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. We do not therefore have to apply the public interest test.

Some of the information within the scope of your request is exempt under Section 27 (1) and (2) of the Freedom of Information Act as it relates to confidential Government to Government discussion with other states and international organisations.

The application of 27 (1) and (2) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing

information would increase public knowledge about our relations with the relevant countries and international organisations. However 27 (1) and (2) recognise that the effective conduct of international 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 international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information detailing our relationship with the relevant Governments could potentially damage the bilateral relationship. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

Yours sincerely,

Parliamentary Relations Department



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.