



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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24 August 2016

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0723-16**

Thank you for your email of 28 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and with regards to the package of technical assistance provided to the Kingdom of Bahrain, I ask that you please provide information on funding provided to the following three organisations:*

- *The Causeway Institute*
- *Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas (NI-CO)*
- *HM Inspectorate of Prisons*

*Specifically, please could you confirm how much funding they have each received for project work in Bahrain. Please provide a breakdown of what the funding was for (e.g. travel, workshops, salaries, etc). Please provide this information for the financial year 2015/16, and for the budgeted funds for 2016/17.*

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.

The UK has been providing a range of technical, practical assistance to the Government of Bahrain since 2012. The range of assistance supports the Government of Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and UN Universal Periodic Review recommendations.

We believe that UK support to Bahrain's reform programme is the most constructive way to achieve long-lasting and sustainable reform in Bahrain. While it will take time to see the full results, UK support is having a direct, positive impact on areas of concern.

In particular we welcome the progress made by Bahrain in the areas of youth justice, the establishment and increasing effectiveness of the Ombudsman's office, the Prisoner and Detainees' Rights Commission and the reformed National Institute of Human Rights. We will continue to work with the Government of Bahrain to ensure momentum and progress on its reforms, for the benefit of all Bahrainis.

The funding that the FCO provided to the three organisations for the financial year 2015/16 is as follows:

- The Causeway Institute - £165,864.72
- Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas (NI-CO) - £904,149.79
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons - £26,730.68

The project with the Causeway Institute has ended and there is no contract in place to work with them in financial year 2016/17. We expect to carry on working with NI-CO and HM Inspectorate of Prisons this financial year, but there are currently no contracts in place to do so and we are therefore unable to provide any figures.

After careful consideration, we have decided not to release a breakdown of what the funding was for on each project. We consider the information to be exempt from disclosure under section 43 (2) of the Act, which relates to commercial interests. The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. We consider that releasing this information would pose a risk to the protection of commercially confidential information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information could deter, and therefore limit, the interlocutors and implementers available to the FCO, and in turn limit the FCO's ability to promote the British economy and lobby for the interests of British businesses overseas. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the redacted information outweighs the public interest in its release.

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Yours sincerely,

Head of Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department



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