



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

**Department of Energy & Climate
Change**

3 Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2AW
www.decc.gov.uk

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Our ref: FOI2015/01698

5 March 2015

Dear **Redacted**

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your request of 26 January in which you asked the following:

"I would like to know on how many days the following ministers were in their central London departmental offices during the following weeks:

Edward Davey, Matthew Hancock, Amber Rudd,

Week commencing 8th December
Week commencing 15th December
Week commencing 12th January
Week commencing 19th January

Please provide figures for each individual for each week."

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you require
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

This information is withheld under section 35(1)(d) of the Act: Information related to the operation of any Ministerial private office.

Section 35(1)(d) protects information relating to the administration of a ministerial private office. The information sought in this case engages this



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exemption, relating as it does to administrative matters within the Minister's private office, namely the working patterns of the Minister, and the set up of his or her diary. Section 35(1)(d) is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material. 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 there is a public interest in understanding how the ministerial private offices operate, however this information on its own will not add anything to the sum of public knowledge in terms of the way in which ministerial private offices are run, or in respect of the administrative support provided to Ministers. By contrast to this minimal public interest in disclosure, we are of the view that disclosure would prejudice the effective running of the ministerial private office. The generic public interest in transparency must be weighed against a stronger public interest that ministerial private office must be free to make arrangements for the minister's diary to facilitate the most efficient and effective carrying out of ministerial business. Further, ministers must be able to rely on these arrangements, and must be confident that these staff members remain independent, and do not allow extraneous considerations such as presentational concerns, or possible public perception of any diary arrangements, to affect their judgement in administering the private office. In addition, there is a strong interest in ensuring that there is sufficient protected space around ministers to ensure good decision-making is supported. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I consider that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Appeals procedure

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 the Information Rights Unit (foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk).

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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 Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.



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Yours sincerely,

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