



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Overseas Territories Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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16 March 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0719-16

Thank you for your email of 23 June 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1) *What contact has there been between officials or ministers at the Foreign Office and ministers or officials in governments in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on the issue of public central registers of beneficial ownership information?*
- 2) *Has there been contact between the foreign office and representatives of every one of the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on the issue of public central registers of beneficial ownership?*
- 3) *Can you provide copies of any correspondence between any UK Government ministers and officials or ministers in Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on the issue of public central registers of beneficial ownership information?*
- 4) *What steps is the department taking to fulfil the anti-corruption agenda as set out during and after the Anti-Corruption Summit held in London earlier this year?*

Question 3 of your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. I apologise for the delay in completing this request.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request and attach copies of this correspondence

Some of the information we hold is accessible by other means, and is therefore exempt information under Section 21 of the FOIA. The letter on beneficial ownership that the former Prime Minister sent to the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on 22 April 2014 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-ministers-letter-on-beneficial-ownership>

Attached is the information that we can release to you: copies of letters sent to Overseas Territories by the Prime Minister, the Commercial Secretary to the Treasury and an FCO Minister of State, and replies from the Chief Minister Gibraltar and Premiers of British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

Although questions 1, 2 and 4 of your e-mail are not being handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), I would like to take this opportunity to respond. In response to your first and second questions about contact between ministers and officials from the Foreign Office and ministers and officials in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, I can confirm that there was regular contact between FCO Ministers or officials and Ministers or officials in the governments of the Overseas Territories with financial centres on the issue of public central registers of beneficial ownership information in the period from November 2013, after the UK had decided to establish a publicly accessible register of beneficial ownership, to February 2015. Her Majesty's Treasury and Cabinet Office led the UK Government discussions with the Crown Dependencies on the issue of beneficial ownership.

The Foreign Office does not have responsibility for the Crown Dependencies, where the Ministry of Justice leads on the Constitutional relationship. Her Majesty's Treasury and Cabinet Office led the UK Government discussions with the Crown Dependencies on the issue of beneficial ownership.

In your last question regarding what steps the department is taking to fulfil the anti-corruption agenda as set out during and after the London Anti-Corruption Summit, this is an area for which the Cabinet Office has lead responsibility. I can confirm that the Cabinet Office is working with a range of government departments to develop a cross-Government anti-corruption strategy, which will set the framework for future UK anti-corruption activities. The FCO is providing support on the international aspects of implementing the summit commitments. For example, we are working closely with the Overseas Territories on the implementation of the bilateral arrangements that were concluded before the Summit on reciprocal exchange of beneficial ownership information.

Yours sincerely,

Overseas Territories Directorate



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