

DECEMBER 2020 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2020	Dec	FOI/20/181	Special Advisers' WhatsApp groups
2020	Dec	FOI/20/182	Correspondence with HRH The Prince of Wales
2020	Dec	FOI/20/183	Protection of public sector data
2020	Dec	FOI/20/185	IT equipment
2020	Dec	FOI/20/186	Band A posts
2020	Dec	FOI/20/189	Contact details of senior staff
2020	Dec	FOI/20/190	Spending on Common Purpose training courses
2020	Dec	FOI/20/191	Departmental vehicles
2020	Dec	FOI/20/192	Archival file request: murder of Lord Mountbatten
2020	Dec	FOI/20/193	Covid-19 pandemic: ministerial meetings with the Northern Ireland Executive
2020	Dec	FOI/20/196	Spending on Brexit promotional items
2020	Dec	FOI/20/197	FOI requesters and media monitoring
2020	Dec	FOI/20/198	Research funding

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/181
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I request:</i> <i>The titles of WhatsApp Groups that Special Advisors at the NI Office are in.</i>
Response	Unfortunately the Northern Ireland office does not hold the information that you have requested. For the purposes of the FOIA, UK Government departments only hold information that is relating to the business of the department. No personal information is held.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/182
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I request:</i> <i>All correspondence your department has sent or received from Charles Philip Arthur George Mountbatten-Windsor - commonly known as Charles, Prince of Wales - in the calendar year 2020.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/183
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act to request the following information from your IT department.</i> <i>We are conducting research on the protection of data stored within the public sector and wish to know the following:</i> <i>How many cloud data breaches have occurred within your organisation in 2019 and 2020?</i> <i>How many cyberattacks have occurred within your organisation in 2019 and 2020?</i> <i>How many ransomware attacks have occurred within your organisation in 2019 and 2020?</i> <i>How many data loss incidents have occurred as a result of lost or stolen devices storing your organisation's data (such as USB flash drives, Hard Drives, Solid State Drives, mobile phones or laptops) within your organisation in 2019 and 2020?</i> <i>Please split any data supplied separately for 2019 and 2020.</i>

Response	For items 1 – 3, The Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested as the duty in section 1(1)(a) of the FOI Act does not apply, by virtue of both section 24(2) that relates to national security and sections 31(1)(a) and 31(3)(a) that relates to law enforcement and the prevention of crime. However, this should not be taken as conclusive evidence that the information you have requested exists or does not exist. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and so we have considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to confirm or deny whether we hold the information. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours neither confirming nor denying whether the requested information is held. Section 31 is a prejudice based exemption and is subject to the public interest test. With regard to your request, we recognise the public interest in knowing whether the government holds particular information. Balanced against this, is the public interest in not releasing information that would aid a criminal intent on launching cyber-attacks on the Department's IT systems. In this case we consider that the wider public interest lies in neither confirming nor denying that information, which may have been disclosed in an unauthorised manner, is held. For item 4, in 2019 there were two incidents relating to lost or stolen devices and four in 2020. All devices were encrypted and no data loss occurred as a result of these incidents.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/185
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to know</i> <i>The number of laptops, mobile phones and tablet computers (iPads etc) issued to employees within your organisation</i> <i>The cost of the laptops, mobile phones and tablet computers (iPads etc) issued to employees</i> <i>If possible I would like this data broken down quarterly for each of the last five years, with a year-end of September 30 or whatever year-end is used internally.</i> <i>If you are unable to provide five years of data, please provide three years of data, otherwise please provide data for the last two years.</i>
Response	Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for in a request (section 12 FOIA).

	In relation to your request, we have made the decision to decline your request on this basis, as to comply with the request officials would be required to open and read a range of documents held by the Department in order to extract and categorise the information, and this would involve a large amount of different records individually stored in a number of locations. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to reconsider the scope of your FOI request and submit a revised and more targeted request by providing a shorter timeframe/date range or more specific types of key phrases. You can find out more about Section 12 of the FOIA by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/186
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):</i> <i>A full analysis of all Band A posts which existed in the Northern Ireland Office at 31 October 2020. I would like the information in tabular format showing the number of posts at grade 6 and grade 7 separately in each of the Department's operating groups/sections.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office as of 31 October 2020 did not retain any Grade 6 roles. In answer to your question regarding the number of posts at grade 6 and grade 7 the NIO has a combined Band A grade which covers these grades. The information you have requested is contained in the table below. Please note, four operating areas have not been included in this table as there are fewer than five Band A staff members in these areas and there is a risk that individuals could be identified. This information therefore is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOIA. We are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing it would contravene any of the Data Protection Principles under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In this instance we believe that the release of this information would contravene the first data protection principle and therefore

section 40(2) is engaged. The terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.

Operating Group/Sections	Band A Posts: Civil Service Equivalent – Grade 7
Communications & External Relations	5
Constitution & Rights	5
Corporate Operations Group	7
Legacy	5
Protocol and FTA Group	6
Strategy Unit	6
Emerging Priorities Team	7

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/189
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information regarding your organisation.</i> <i>Could you please provide up to date Names, Job Titles, telephone numbers and email addresses for the following;</i> <i>1. Chief Executive</i> <i>2. Deputy Chief Executive</i> <i>3. Ministers and Ministerial team (if applicable)</i> <i>4. Chair</i> <i>5. Chief Information Officer</i> <i>6. Chief Digital Officer</i> <i>7. Senior Information Risk Owner</i> <i>8. Director of IT / ICT / IM&T / Digital / Information / Technology</i> <i>9. Director / Head of Finance</i> <i>10. Chief / Deputy Chief Operating Officer</i> <i>11. Head of Cyber Security</i> <i>12. Head / Director of People</i>

	13. Heads of change / Transformation / Improvement 14. Department Directors / Heads 15. Board members (if applicable) 16. Or the equivalent job titles in your organisation. <i>In addition if you have an up to date 2020 senior staff organisation or structure chart could you please forward a copy to me in either Excel or pdf format.</i>
Response	In questions one to sixteen you have asked for telephone numbers and emails addresses. The information you require is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOIA. We are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing it would contravene any of the Data Protection Principles under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In this instance we believe that the release of this information would contravene the first data protection principle and therefore section 40(2) is engaged. The terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information. In addition to these questions, you've asked for an up to date 2020 senior staff structure. I can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, however this is exempt from disclosure under Sections 21 and 22 of the FOIA. Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts disclosure of information that is reasonably accessible by other means, and the terms of the exemption mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information. This information can be found at the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-ireland-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-20 We are not obliged to provide information that is intended for future publication (Section 22 of the Act). In line with the terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act, we have considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information ahead of publication, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, I have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/190
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>Please can you send me details covering the last five years for which the information is available of:</i>

	1. The amount spent in each year on courses provided by Common Purpose? 2. The number of members of staff sent on such courses each year? 3. The names of any senior members of staff who attended the courses in those years?
Response	In response to your questions, there have been no members of staff from the Northern Ireland Office, who have attended any courses provided by Common Purpose in the last five years.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/191
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:</i> <i>A list of the vehicles operated by the department or its agencies including</i> 1. Make and model (Inc. year) OR if not available, the vehicle type (i.e. van, car etc.) 2. Engine and fuel type 3. Emissions class (i.e. ultra-low emissions) 4. Purchase date. 5. The agency of unit which operates the vehicle 6. Please include as much of this information as is available. <i>If it is not possible to compile a full list, for whatever reason, I would consider a breakdown of all the vehicles by points (2) and (3) to fulfil the request.</i>
Response	Please see below details of NIO cars as requested <u>Hire Car 1</u> 1. Make and model (Inc. year) OR if not available, the vehicle type (i.e. van, car etc.): Mercedes A Class 2017 2. Engine and fuel type: 2.1 Diesel 3. Emissions class (i.e. ultra-low emissions): Class B 4. Purchase date: 2017 Hired 5. The agency of unit which operates the vehicle: NIO <u>Hire Car 2</u> 1. Make and model (Inc. year) OR if not available, the vehicle type (i.e. van, car etc.): Mercedes GLC 2017

	2. Engine and fuel type: 2.1 Diesel 3. Emissions class (i.e. ultra-low emissions): Class D 4. Purchase date: 2020 Hired 5. The agency of unit which operates the vehicle: NIO <u>Lease Car 1</u> 1. Make and model (Inc. year) OR if not available, the vehicle type (i.e. van, car etc.): Ford Mondeo 2018 2. Engine and fuel type: 2.0 Diesel 3. Emissions class (i.e. ultra-low emissions): Class D 4. Purchase date: 2018 Leased 5. The agency of unit which operates the vehicle: NIO
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/192			
Month Issued	December 2020			
Request	<i>May I have a list of all files or dossiers ever held relating to the death of the 1st Earl Mountbatten, including the full titles, dates and reference numbers of such files/dossiers, and the current location thereof.</i>			
Response	Having searched our database three files fall in the scope of your request. Details of the files are in the table below:			
	NIO Reference number	Data range of files	File title	Status of Location of file
	101768/1996-1	27/08/1979 - 20/07/1988	Murder of Lord Mountbatten	Destroyed File in January 2016 in line with departmental retention schedules under the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967
	101768/1996-1	27/08/1979 - 20/07/1988	Murder of Lord Mountbatten	Destroyed File in January 2016 in line with departmental retention schedules under the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967
	5855/1979-1	27/08/1979 - 14/08/1980	'Bloody Monday', 27 August 1980: death of Lord Mountbatten and the Warrenpoint massacre	The National Archives (TNA) – CJ 4/3133

In order to provide some context, I thought it would be useful to provide details around the destruction of the two files. Upon reviewing the files as part of our appraisal and selection policy, our expert sensitivity reviewers identified the majority of the documents in these two files were copies originating from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Therefore, I would suggest your request be directed to the FCO, as their records may contain documents relevant to your request. As some of these document dates fall in line with records that should be in the public domain you may wish to consult The National Archives catalogue discovery as the files are likely to be in the public domain and accessible to you. Please see below details for the FCO FOI team should you wish to redirect your request, I have also provided a link to TNA's discovery catalogue for your convenience.

FCO FOI team details

Information Rights Unit
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
Room WH2.177
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
United Kingdom

Email

information.rights@fcdo.gov.uk

TNA's Discovery Catalogue

Website URL: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

The other file relevant to your request is open at TNA with the reference CJ 4/3133, therefore you should be able to access it by attending TNA or contacting them for copies of the records.

Further details of TNA opening their reading room can be located [here](#) or alternatively details on how to request a copy of a file can be located [here](#).

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/193
Month Issued	December 2020

Request	<i>I am writing to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act. I would like to request:</i> <i>The dates and topics of all meetings that have taken place so far in 2020 between ministers from the UK government and ministers from the Northern Irish government relating to the coronavirus pandemic</i> <i>I would like this to include meetings held virtually and in person.</i>
Response	Since March 2020, the Secretary of State has scheduled weekly meetings with the First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland to discuss Northern Ireland issues, including the coronavirus pandemic - "Weekly Secretary of State/First Minister/deputy First Minister." The Secretary of State has convened a virtual "Quad" meeting with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, which includes the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Northern Ireland health and Ireland health ministers on 31 March 2020, 9 April 2020, 30 April 2020, 19 May 2020, 9 June 2020, 12 October 2020. The Secretary of State has also met, or spoken with, the Northern Ireland Health Minister - "Secretary of State/Health Minister" - on 19 March 2020, 2 April 2020, 6 April 2020, 23 April 2020, 3 June 2020, 11 June 2020, 5 October 2020. The Secretary of State has also spoken with the following NI Executive Ministers and has discussed the impact of the coronavirus pandemic: - Minister Dodds - 4 March 2020, 2 April 2020, 6 April 2020 - "Secretary of State/Minister Dodds" - Minister Murphy - 2 April 2020, 6 April 2020- "Secretary of State/Minister Murphy" - Minister Mallon - 6 April 2020 "Secretary of State/Minister Mallon" - Minister Long - 2 April 2020, 3 June 2020, 7 August 2020, 16 October 2020, 13 November 2020, 30 November 2020 "Secretary of State/Minister Long" This is underpinned by engagement by UK Government ministers and departments with the relevant NI Executive ministers and departments. As well as this, Northern Ireland Executive Ministers have attended various UK Government Cabinet Committees throughout the coronavirus pandemic, however the NIO does not hold the information on these attendances.
FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/196
Month Issued	December 2020

Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. My request relates to the amount of Brexit promotional items or memorabilia (such as clothing, stationary, stickers or mugs) commissioned or created by the government since 2016.</i> <i>I would like request the following information, categorised by the type of item and the year, from June 2016 to September 2020.</i> <i>1. How much has the department spent on promotional items for Brexit?</i> <i>2. How many promotional items for Brexit were commissioned or created by the department?</i> <i>3. How much did the government spend on promotional items for Brexit stating that the UK will leave the EU on October 31 (2019)?</i> <i>4. How much did the government spend on promotional items for Brexit stating that the UK will leave the EU on March 29 (2019)?</i>
Response	Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office has incurred no costs relating to promotional items for Brexit since 2016. We can also confirm that the Department has not commissioned or created any promotional items for Brexit.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/197
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	<i>I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:</i> <i>1. Does your office record any information about FOI requesters' background, in particular, their occupation (e.g., journalists, academics, civil society, MPs etc.)?</i> <i>2. If this information is being recorded, can you please provide me with the statistics about the submitted FOI requests and their proportion by requesters' background for the current year 2020? If this information is not available in this form, please, provide it in any held form.</i> <i>3. Does your office carry out general media monitoring (how the office has been mentioned in the media)?</i> <i>4. If yes, can you please provide the media monitoring outputs for the current year 2020?</i> <i>5. Does your office follow and record whether FOI requests submitted to your office were used in the media?</i> <i>6. If yes, does your office record how FOI requests submitted to your office were used in the media? Can you please, disclose this information/records in any digital form in which you hold it?</i>

Response	Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for in a request (section 12 FOIA). We have made the decision to decline your request on this basis, as to comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials would be required to open and read a large amount of different records individually stored in a number of locations, and given the broad scope of your request we consider this would cost over £600. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to reconsider the scope of your FOI request and submit a revised and more targeted request by providing a shorter timeframe/date range or more specific types of correspondence. You should not infer from this that the Northern Ireland Office holds a large amount of information relating to the subjects you have asked about, only that we would need to search through a large number of records in order to find out whether we hold any information relevant to your request. You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12. Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/198
Month Issued	December 2020
Request	This is an information request relating to research funding by your department. I would like to request the following information: a. What has been the cost to your department on research funding for the financial years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20? b. Please include: 1. The total cost of research funding for each financial year 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. 2. The list of entities receiving research funding from your department over this period. (e.g. UKRI, Research Councils, Combined Authorities, National Academies and individual universities, both in the UK and abroad) 3. The amount each entity received in research funding in each period

Response	Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and I can confirm there has been no cost to the Department on research funding for the financial years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.
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