

FEBRUARY 2021 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2021	Feb	FOI/20/194	Correspondence with HRH The Prince of Wales
2021	Feb	FOI/21/001	Northern Ireland Centenary Forum and Historical Advisory Panel: meeting minutes and expenditure
2021	Feb	FOI/21/002	Northern Ireland Centenary Forum: Seamus Heaney and Mary Peters
2021	Feb	FOI/21/003	Learning management system
2021	Feb	FOI/21/004	Spending on ministerial office renovations
2021	Feb	FOI/21/005	Legal affairs: oversight and staff support
2021	Feb	FOI/21/007	Personal data breaches
2021	Feb	FOI/21/008	Unpaid advisers
2021	Feb	FOI/21/009	Spending on advertising campaigns
2021	Feb	FOI/21/010	Focus group research for the Northern Ireland centenary
2021	Feb	FOI/21/011	Missing IT equipment
2021	Feb	FOI/21/012	Loyalist Community Council meeting: correspondence and documentation
2021	Feb	FOI/21/013	Social media content policy
2021	Feb	FOI/21/014	Correspondence with Lord Coe and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
2021	Feb	FOI/21/015	Spending on external law firms and barristers
2021	Feb	FOI/21/016	IT infrastructure: personnel, software, devices and contracts
2021	Feb	FOI/21/017	Archival file request: Meeting with Lord Mountbatten
2021	Feb	FOI/21/018	Correspondence with the Northern Ireland Centenary Forum
2021	Feb	FOI/21/019	Correspondence with the UK Government Vaccines Taskforce

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/194
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations.</i> <i>My request has been inspired by a revelation by Peter Hain, the former Northern Ireland Secretary that he and the Prince of Wales corresponded on the issue of complementary health/complementary medicine. Mr Hain told a 2014 Radio 4 documentary that he was able to implement measures supported by himself and the Prince.</i> <i>Please note for the purposes of this request I am only interested in information generated between 28 June 2006 to 28 June 2007. But if you are aware that the two men corresponded on the issue outside this time frame, can you let me know the relevant dates and I will submit another relevant request for information.</i> <i>Please note that the Environmental Information Regulations cover information 'which relates to the state of human health and safety and the conditions of human life.'</i> <i>Please note that the reference to the Prince of Wales in the questions below should include the Prince (irrespective of which of his official titles he is using), his Principal Private Secretary (ies), his Assistant Private Secretary (ies), his private secretary (ies) and anyone in his private office and the Royal Household able to correspond and communicate on his behalf.</i> <i>Please note that the reference to Mr Hain should include Mr Hain himself, his Principal Private Secretary and anyone in his private office and the department able to correspond and communicate on his behalf.</i> <i>Please note that the reference to written communications in the questions below should include traditional forms of correspondence such as letters, faxes and memos, all emails irrespective of whether they were sent through private or official accounts and any messages sent through encrypted messaging services.</i> <i>Please note that I would like to request copies of actual correspondence and communication and not just excerpts from those correspondence and communications. So in the case of a letter, I would like to request an actual copy of the letter complete with the letter head and any other design features, the date, and the actual signatures. If you need to redact material from the letter, please redact it at the point it appears in the letter. This way I will be able to understand the location and extent of the redaction.</i>

	1. <i>During the aforementioned period did the Prince of Wales write to Mr Hain about the issue of complementary medicine and complementary health? If the answer is yes can you please provide copies of this correspondence and communications?</i> 2. <i>During the aforementioned period did Mr Hain write to the Prince of Wales about the issue of complementary medicine and complementary health? If the answer is yes can you please provide copies of this correspondence and communication?</i> 3. <i>If the relevant material has been transferred to an archive can you please identify the archive? Can you state when the transfer occurred. Can you please provide the relevant file name or reference number for the transferred material.</i> 4. <i>If relevant material has been destroyed can you state when it was destroyed? And why. If destroyed material continues to be held in another form can you please provide copies of that material?</i>
Response	We confirm that no environmental information is held. <u>Parts 1 and 2 of the request</u> The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) can neither confirm nor deny whether it holds information relevant to your request, by virtue of section 37(1)(aa) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). Section 37(1)(aa) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if it relates to communications with, or on behalf of, the heir to the Throne. Section 37(2) provides that the duty imposed by section 1(1)(a) of the Act to confirm or deny if information is held by a public authority does not arise in relation to information which is, or if it were held by the public authority would be, exempt information by virtue of section 37(1)(aa). Section 37(2) is an absolute exclusion, and is not subject to the public interest test. The NIO neither confirms nor denies that it holds information falling under section 40(2) of the Act (personal data). The duty in section 1(1)(a) of the Act does not apply, by virtue of section 40(5B)(a)(i) of the Act. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption, and so there is no requirement to consider the public interest in providing a 'neither confirm nor deny' response. We consider that confirming or denying that the requested information is held would contravene one of the data protection principles under article 5(1)(a) of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). In this case, our view is that confirming whether the requested information is or is not held would breach principle A of Article 5 (1) (a) of the GDPR, which requires that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently. We have considered the legitimate interests in

	confirming or denying whether the requested information is held. We consider that, on balance, to confirm or deny that information is held is outweighed by the reasonable expectations of privacy of the data subject. We neither confirm nor deny whether we hold information you have requested under section 41(2) of the Act – information provided in confidence. Section 41(2) provides that the duty imposed by section 1(1)(a) of the Act to confirm or deny if information is held by a public authority does not arise in relation to information which, if it were held by the public authority, would be exempt information by virtue of section 41(1). Although, for the purposes of the Act section 41 is an absolute exemption, we can confirm that we have taken into account the public interest test inherent within the common law duty of confidence in reaching this decision. This response should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the Department. <u>Parts 3 and 4 of the request</u> We are unable to provide a response to these parts of the request, as to do so would undermine the ‘neither confirm nor deny’ responses above.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/001
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request details in relation to the Northern Ireland Centenary Forum and Historical Advisory Panel.</i> <i>More on these bodies can be found here:</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/centenary-bodies-meet-to-discuss-plans-for-northern-irelands-anniversary <i>Please disclose the following for the Centenary Forum, and separately, the Historical Advisory Panel:</i> <i>1. A copy of the minutes of any online or in-person meetings held so far.</i> <i>2. The overall amount given so far in remuneration to forum/panel members for their participation; and if possible a breakdown of this per individual.</i> <i>3. The overall amount claimed so far in expenses to forum/panel members; and if possible a breakdown of this per individual.</i> <i>4. A breakdown of any other costs incurred, such as administration, staffing, etc.</i>
Response	Centenary Forum Minutes

In relation to Question 1 and minutes of any online or in-person meetings held so far by the Centenary Forum, the department holds information you have requested. We have conducted a public interest test to consider arguments both in favour of, and against, disclosure of the information requested.

Public interest considerations

There is a general public interest in the way in which government decisions are made, and how relationships with other stakeholders are conducted. 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 decisions Ministers make may have a significant impact on the lives of citizens.

Ministers and officials also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes, including considerations of the pros and cons, without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options. There needs to be a free space in which it is possible to “think the unthinkable” and use imagination, without the fear that policy proposals will be prematurely disclosed.

We are not obliged to provide information if it relates to the formulation of government policy. In this case, the information sought is exempt under section 35 (formulation of government policy) of the FOI Act and the public interest test weighs against disclosure of the information.

This is on the basis that while there is a public interest in the way in which government decisions are made, and how relationships with other stakeholders are conducted, good government depends on good decision-making, and this needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options without fear of premature disclosure of matters that are subject to the ongoing formulation of government policy.

After careful consideration we have concluded that s35 (1)(a) is engaged and it is in the public interest to withhold these documents.

If you require further guidance on S.35 please refer to the guidance at the end of this letter and the ICO guidance on section 35 at: <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf>

Centenary Panel Minutes

In relation to Question 1 and Centenary Panel minutes, the information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication.

	Section 22 is a qualified exemption and we have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. Public Interest Considerations Section 22 requires a public interest test. The information you have requested can be found in a subset of the total information to be published by/about the Panel. There is a risk that responding to your request and producing this subset would delay production and publication of the larger set of information thereby delaying public access to the full range of the Panel's work. Taking into consideration the government's transparency aims, we feel the public interest lies in ensuring publication in full at the earliest opportunity and therefore in applying this exemption. You can learn more about s22 on the Information Commissioner's website here: ICO lo Information intended for future publication and research information (sections 22 and 22A) Further information on the Panel and their work is now available on the Creative Centenaries website which can be found here: https://www.creativecentenaries.org/about/partners/centenary-historical-advisory-panel https://www.creativecentenaries.org/news/creative-centenaries-website-launches-as-information-hub-around-1921-centenary Remuneration Claimed or Paid In response to questions 2 and 3 of your request, we can confirm that no remuneration has been given to any members of the Centenary Forum or Historical Advisory Panel, nor have any expenses been claimed by any of their members. Breakdown of other Costs In relation to question 4 of your request around a breakdown of any other costs incurred, such as administration and staffing - we do not hold this information in the format that you have requested.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/002
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Could I request the following under the Freedom of Information Act?</i>

	• all documents from the Northern Ireland centenary forum where Seamus Heaney is mentioned • all documents from the Northern Ireland centenary forum where Mary Peters is mentioned
Response	We have checked our records and can confirm that we hold no documents from the NI Centenary Forum in which either Seamus Heaney or Mary Peters are mentioned. The NI Centenary Forum were briefed and consulted on the approach to the brand “Our Story in the Making, NI Beyond 100”

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/003
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	Under the Freedom of Information Act, please could I request the following information: We would like to know more about your L&D/HR systems, specifically used for training staff, whether that be for basic compliance or the upskilling of staff. 1. Do you use an LMS (Learning Management System) within your organisation? If yes, which organisation supplies this product/service to you? 2. Is your LMS supplied on a contract basis? If yes, please confirm when the current contract comes to an end? 3. Do you receive any other services from your LMS supplier? E.g. eLearning content 4. Who is the key decision-maker for the aforementioned products/services? If possible, please provide their contact details
Response	In response to question one. The Northern Ireland Office utilises a cross-government platform known as the Learning Platform for Government (LPG). The Crown Commercial Service suggests the platform was developed and designed by Kainos Software Limited, details of the tender process can be found utilising the following link: https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/digital-outcomes-and-specialists/opportunities/5201 The actual platform is relatively new and replaces the Civil Service Learning platform. The new platform was rolled out centrally by Civil Service HR and KPMG in late 2020. In relation to question two, as the Northern Ireland Office is only a user of the platform, we would not retain this information. In response to question three, the LPG supplies E-Learning content along with courses to be booked for in-house training.

	In relation to question four. The Northern Ireland Office is only a user of the platform, we are not a decision maker or influencer surrounding the content of products or services provided within the platform.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/004																	
Month Issued	February 2021																	
Request	Could you please give me a full list of expenditure on ministerial offices in your department since July 2019? This includes wallpaper, furniture, artworks and all other associated costs and refers to just those offices occupied by the Secretary of State and their ministerial team. Could you please give me a breakdown of the date and items purchased if there are any relevant costs?																	
Response	The Northern Ireland Office occupies two office locations, one in Stormont House, Belfast and another in 1 Horse Guards Road, London. Expenditure since July 2019 on ministerial offices was £8,404.55. This includes those offices occupied by support staff to ministers and all departmental ministers in both locations in the Northern Ireland Office. The expenditure includes wallpaper, furniture, artworks and all other associated costs but excludes IT. A breakdown is set out in the table below:- <table><tr><th>Location</th><th>Item Description</th><th>Purchase Price</th><th>Date of purchase</th></tr><tr><td rowspan="2">London</td><td>Conference table which facilitated safe working arrangements</td><td>£1,738.55</td><td>25/03/20</td></tr><tr><td>Office Chairs</td><td>£6,666.00</td><td>25/03/20</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Total</td><td>£8,404.55</td><td></td></tr></table>			Location	Item Description	Purchase Price	Date of purchase	London	Conference table which facilitated safe working arrangements	£1,738.55	25/03/20	Office Chairs	£6,666.00	25/03/20	Total		£8,404.55	
Location	Item Description	Purchase Price	Date of purchase															
London	Conference table which facilitated safe working arrangements	£1,738.55	25/03/20															
	Office Chairs	£6,666.00	25/03/20															
Total		£8,404.55																

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/005
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	1. Which department or departments are responsible for overseeing legal affairs when your Ministerial Department is a party to a legal hearing e.g. Legal Services, HR? Legal hearings such as High court, criminal proceedings, Public Inquests etc. or internal matters like Employment Tribunals. (I) please can you provide the name and contact details of the people managing and coordinating this department(s)?

	(II) <i>within this department(s), please, can you provide the details of staff who are responsible for day-to-day managing of the following legal areas; Commercial Litigation, Crime, Crime-Fraud, Employment, Intellectual Property, Litigation General.</i> 2. <i>Which department or departments are responsible for managing/supporting staff who are giving evidence at a legal hearing i.e. providing time off to attend court or providing support with training.</i> (I) <i>please can you provide the name and contact details of the people overseeing this department(s)?</i>
Response	In response to your first question I am able to confirm that the department for overseeing legal affairs in the Northern Ireland Office is the Home Office Legal Advisers (HOLA). The HOLA form part of the wider Government Legal Department. If you would like to know more about the GLD you can find further information on their website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-legal-department In respect of question one part (i) and (ii) I can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure. In response to your question 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 relation to question two I am able to confirm that the Northern Ireland Office would, in line with MOJ HR policy, support and manage staff internally if required to give evidence at a legal hearing. In respect of question 2 (i) I can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure. In response to your question 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.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/007
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>I hope you are well. I am writing to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i> <i>Defining a data breach as per the ICO's guidance, I am requesting the following information: Pertaining to the activities of the Northern Ireland Office, can you please provide the following information from the date 1 Jan 2019 to the 31 Dec 2020 inclusive:</i> <i>1. The number of personal data breaches</i> <i>2. The number of personal data breaches in each of the following categories:</i> <i>• Device lost/stolen (encrypted)</i> <i>• Device lost/stolen (unencrypted)</i> <i>• Disclosure-unauthorised</i> <i>• Hacking</i> <i>• Inappropriate disposal of paper</i> <i>• Malware</i> <i>• Paper lost or stolen</i> <i>• Phishing</i> <i>• Other</i> <i>3. The number of personal data breaches reported to the ICO</i> <i>4. The number of personal data breaches deemed "high risk" which resulted in individuals being informed.</i> <i>5. The number of data subjects that have been actively kept informed of any investigation(s) made.</i> <i>6. Please provide the mitigations put in place to reduce or remove any future incident occurring following each data breach.</i> <i>7. The amount of compensation paid as a result of a data breach. Please break this down by incident and data subject affected.</i> <i>8. The number of personal data breaches that resulted in a criminal investigation. Please show whether or not this was with UK police/Action Fraud/NCA/security services and/or a foreign police force or intelligence contractor.</i>
Response	1. The number of personal data breaches 1 January 2019 - 31 December 2020 10 3. The number of personal data breaches reported to the ICO 0 4. The number of personal data breaches deemed "high risk" which resulted in individuals being informed. 0

5. The number of data subjects that have been actively kept informed of any investigation(s) made.

0

6. Please provide the mitigations put in place to reduce or remove any future incident occurring following each data breach.

All devices are encrypted to minimise risk of data loss. Policies and guidance are also in place and include Remote Working guidance, Incident Reporting Policy and guidance on Information Handling/GDPR.

7. The amount of compensation paid as a result of a data breach. Please break this down by incident and data subject affected.

£0.00

In respect of question 2. The number of personal data breaches in each of the following categories:

The Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information that you have requested.

We are not obliged to confirm or deny whether we hold the information you have requested as if held, this would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders or the exercise by any public authority of its functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person has failed to comply with the law. Section 31(3) of the Act provides that there is no duty to confirm or deny whether we hold the information.

The fact section 31(3) of the Act has been cited, should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the department.

In respect of question 8: The number of personal data breaches that resulted in a criminal investigation.

8 incidents were reported for further investigation.

Please show whether or not this was with UK police/Action Fraud/NCA/security services and/or a foreign police force or intelligence contractor.

The Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information that you have requested. The duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) does not apply, by virtue of Section 23(5) - Information concerning security bodies and Section 31(3) as stated above. Please note this response should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the department. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and therefore we do not need to consider the public interests here.

	Public interest considerations The exemption in section 31(3) is a qualified exemption and we have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this information. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and we recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. We also recognise a public interest in assuring the public that effective arrangements are in place for the prevention and detection of crime. We have weighed these public interests against a strong public interest in the prevention and detection of crime. It is contrary to this public interest to disclose information which would facilitate the commission of crime or hinder its detection. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/008
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act:</i> <i>1. A list of all unpaid advisers to the department (or to ministers at the department) since 24th July 2019, with the start and (where relevant) end dates of their advisory roles. This includes those who were appointed prior to 24th July 2019</i> <i>2. An outline of what each adviser was advising on</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has not had any unpaid advisers since 24 July 2019 to date.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/009
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from the Northern Ireland Office.</i> <i>1. The amount of money the Northern Ireland Office has spent each year on advertising (including TV, radio, internet and print advertising) over the past 10 years (since 2011).</i> <i>2. The amount of money spent on each Northern Ireland Office advertising campaign over the past two years (please specify the name of each campaign)</i> <i>a. If possible, could you please specify the aims of each campaign</i>
Response	In response to your query I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds some of the information that you have asked for. However, we cannot disclose this information because the cost of complying with your request would exceed the limit set by the Freedom of Information Act. Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we

	estimate it would cost us more than £600 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 locate, identify and retrieve the information would cost over £600. 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 locate, open and read 1000s of archived records, 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 time frame bearing in mind we are only obliged to keep accounting records for 7 years. We cannot guarantee that a revised request will fall within costs limits. 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/21/010
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, please provide</i> <i>The names of companies contracted to carry out focus group research on communities in Northern Ireland ahead of the Northern Ireland 2021 Centenary commemorations</i> <i>The number of focus groups conducted in 2020 and 2021 in relation to the Northern Ireland 2021 Centenary commemorations</i> <i>Copies of slides used in those focus group</i>
Response	Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). 'Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100' was created to recognise the stories of the people of Northern Ireland from all communities, past and present. We consulted with stakeholders and the wider community in Northern Ireland to ensure the brand respects the diverse range of perspectives in Northern Ireland on the centenary.

	I can confirm that we hold information within the scope of your request, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure as section 43 (commercial interest) is engaged. Section 43 provides that information held by a government department is exempt if its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests. The exemption is qualified, which means it is subject to a public interest test. In deciding whether to disclose the information held, we have considered the following public interest reasons in favour of disclosing the information: • increase public knowledge about the public relations role • increase public knowledge about internal press and communications expenditure We have balanced this argument in favour of disclosure against the need to: • ensure the interests of third parties are protected in a commercial environment • ensure third parties are not discouraged from engaging in future projects • ensure that officials can have free and frank conversations in respect of communications and public affairs services We have concluded in this case that the harm that would result from disclosure of the information outweighs the public interest arguments in favour of disclosure. ICO lo Commercial interests (section 43) We regret to advise that your request has been declined on these grounds.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/011
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	1. <i>I would like to know the total number of laptops, phones and tablets belonging to this ministerial department that went missing in 2020.</i> <i>a. I would like to know the reason they went missing, e.g. reported lost, reported stolen, unknown etc.</i> <i>b. I would like to know whether they were encrypted or not, e.g. encrypted, not encrypted, unknown.</i>
Response	1. The total number of laptops, phones and tablets belonging to this ministerial department that went missing in 2020 Nine items

	In respect of 1a & 1b. The Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny whether it holds the information that you have requested. We are not obliged to confirm or deny whether we hold the information you have requested as if held, this would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders or the exercise by any public authority of its functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person has failed to comply with the law. Section 31(3) of the Act provides that there is no duty to confirm or deny whether we hold the information. The fact section 31(3) of the Act has been cited, should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the department. Public interest considerations The exemption in section 31(3) is a qualified exemption and we have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this information. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and we recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. We also recognise a public interest in assuring the public that effective arrangements are in place for the prevention and detection of crime. We have weighed these public interests against a strong public interest in the prevention and detection of crime. It is contrary to this public interest to disclose information which would facilitate the commission of crime or hinder its detection. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/012
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Under FOI legislation, please provide me with minutes of the meeting between NIO officials and the Loyalist Communities Council held last week.</i> <i>Please also provide any/all other documents which related to this meeting (agenda etc) and all internal and external correspondence regarding the meeting.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds information which falls within the scope of your request. After careful consideration, we have provided you with copies the following documents but please note that these have been redacted in line with section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Redacted copies are attached.

- Email from David Campbell requesting a meeting dated 4th January 2021
- Email responding to meeting Request dated 4th January 2021
- Email from David Campbell sharing statement for information
- Email to David Campbell acknowledging receipt of statement
- Internal Email circulating David Campbell email re: statement

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.

We have however not provided you with copies of the following documents as exemptions apply under section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the conduct of public affairs).

- Internal Briefing Document for Permanent Secretary
- Note of Meeting

It is the reasonable opinion of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the qualified person under section 36, that disclosure of the information would inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation. The Secretary of State has also considered whether or not it would be in the public interest to provide you with this information. In making this decision, the following factors were considered:

Public Interest Considerations in Favour of Disclosure

The information held by the NIO is an Internal Briefing Document of a meeting between the NIO officials and representatives of the Loyalist Communities Council and a note of that meeting. It is accepted that there is a general public interest in knowing the contents of discussions between Government officials and community groups, as this would have a positive effect on transparency, accountability and the public understanding of how government policy is formulated.

Public Interest Considerations in Favour of Non-Disclosure

Officials and community organisations must be able to exchange their views on topical issues without fear of such views being disclosed. If such views were to be disclosed, there would be an impact on the frankness or candour with which persons are

	able to provide their views in the future. This would adversely affect the ability of Ministers and officials to engage with organisations on matters which affect their communities, in order to develop Government policy in these areas. It is the Secretary of State's view that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosure. While we have withheld some information under section 36 we are happy to provide you with the following, additional information regarding the meeting, that falls outside of our duties under the Act. The meeting was primarily to allow us to listen to concerns about the NI Protocol, gain a greater understanding of the impact these are having within communities and address those directly where possible. It also afforded an opportunity to highlight some aspects of the backing which the UK Government is providing to Northern Ireland including over £1 billion of investment to deliver the Trader Support Service, new technology, our contribution to the PEACE PLUS Programme, and further support for businesses and communities as part of the New Deal for Northern Ireland. The statement issued by the Loyalist Communities Council accurately reflects their positioning during the meeting.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/013
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to:</i> <i>1. Request a copy of the NIO's social media content policy/policies covering all departmental and ministerial accounts.</i> <i>2. Request a list of all social media accounts managed by the department (please break down into platforms - e.g. Facebook, Twitter - if possible).</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office has accounts on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn - each of which are managed by NIO civil servants in the NIO Communications Directorate. All social media and digital activity is carried out in accordance with The Civil Service Code of Conduct.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/014
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to request copies of, and access to, any relevant correspondence/information on the subject matter below. I would be grateful for your response as soon as is permissible, including any relevant disbursements.</i> <i>Correspondence between Lord Coe (Conservative peer), the Northern Ireland Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office</i>

	<i>Between 1st January 2020 and 25 January 2021 (today)</i> <i>Subject matter: Athletics, Olympics, GB and Northern Ireland, Ireland</i> <i>For context, Lord Coe is also President of World Athletics (formerly International Amateur Athletics Federation) and a member of the International Olympic Committee Executive Council.</i>
Response	We have conducted a search of our records and I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within the scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/015
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to know:</i> <i>The amount of money your department spent on the services of external law firms and barristers for the year ending March 31st 2020</i> <i>Please exclude legal services provided by the Government Legal Department. However, please include legal services that the Government Legal Department has outsourced to a third party.</i> <i>You can approximate spending levels, i.e. if you are not able to provide the exact figures, please give us your best estimate.</i> <i>Please note that the figure we have requested should exclude spending by your department on the GLD (Government Legal Department) and its predecessor the TSoL (Treasury Solicitor's Department).</i>
Response	The total figure paid by the Department in the year ending 31 st March 2020 towards legal services, excluding services provided by Government Legal Services was £643,806.16.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/016		
Month Issued	February 2021		
Request	Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) I would like to request some information.		
	1. Table 1		
	Contact details for the following or most senior equivalent roles:	Name	Email
	CIO or Director of ICT		

	<i>Head of Digital</i>					
	<i>IT Operations Manager</i>					
	<i>IT Strategy Manager</i>					
	<i>Head of Procurement</i>					
	<i>CFO or Director of Finance</i>					
	<i>Director of Transformation</i>					
	2. What primary software systems do you use?					
	Deployed Systems	Product Name	Vendor	Version	Contract end date	Number of licenses
	<i>Human Resources</i>					
	<i>Finance</i>					
	<i>Other Business Specific Systems</i>					
	<i>Contact Centre</i>					
	<i>Email and Collaboration</i>					
	3. What computing devices do you provide for your staff					
	Computing Devices	Number of Devices		Operating System version		
	<i>MS Windows</i>					
	<i>Apple Mac</i>					
	<i>Chrome Devices</i>					
	<i>Android Phones</i>					
	<i>Apple iPhones</i>					
	<i>Apple iPads</i>					
	4. Table 4					
	Infrastructure Services	Supplier		Contract Type and expiry		
<i>Details of any software Enterprise Agreement.</i>						

	Who provides your data centre?					
	Do you have an outsourced IT function, and if so who with?					
	What Software as a Service packages do you use?					
	Do you use any public Cloud infrastructure services (AWS/Azure/Google/UKCloud)?					
Response	In response to your request in table one for contact details, 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 it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.					
	For the request in table two, please see below; -					
	Deployed Systems	Product Name	Vendor	Version	Contract end date	Number of licenses
	Human Resources	SOP	MoJ	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Human Resources utilise a system provided by the Ministry of Justice. This information may be available from the Ministry of Justice who can be contacted at data.access@justice.gov.uk .					
	Finance	Account NI	DoF	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Finance utilise a system provided by the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland. This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk .					
	Other Business Specific Systems	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	The Northern Ireland Office does not use other business systems.					
	Contact Centre	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	The Northern Ireland Office does not use a contact centre.					

Email and Collaboration	Google G suite	Google	n/a	n/a	390
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In relation to the request in table three:

Computing devices provided to staff as at 10/02/2021.

Computing devices	Number of Devices	Operating System Version
MS Windows	209	n/a
Apple Mac	9	n/a
Chrome Devices	0	n/a
Android Phones	1	n/a
Apple iPhones	204	n/a
Appel iPads	26	n/a

Regarding your request for operating system versions, Information you have requested is exempt under section 31(1)(a)(b) and (g) of the Freedom of Information Act. The relevant parts of section 31 exempt information if its disclosure would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders or the exercise by any public authority of its functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person has failed to comply with the law. The information contains details about the detection and prevention of crime which would assist criminals to plan and execute criminal acts and to avoid detection. Disclosure would thus make the prevention of certain crimes more difficult and reduce the effectiveness of the police service in detecting the perpetrators.

The exemption in Section 31 is a qualified exemption and whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing 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 also recognise a public interest in assuring the public that effective arrangements are in place for the prevention and detection of crime. I have weighed these public interests against a strong public interest in the prevention and detection of crime. It is contrary to this public interest to disclose information which would facilitate the commission of crime or hinder its detection. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Regarding Table 4, the Northern Ireland Office receives managed ICT services from IT Assist (ITA), which is a service provided by Enterprise Shared Services, a body within the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland. The information requested is,

	therefore, not held by this Department. This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk .
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/017
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>Please release the minutes of the meeting held in Northern Ireland Office 11th September 1979 regarding Lord Mountbatten possibly referenced NIOM(79) 5</i>
Response	We have conducted a search of our records and I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within the scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/018
Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act in relation to events to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-55296473)</i> <i>I would like to request the following information:</i> <i>A copy of all correspondence and communications between the Department and NI Centenary Forum. This could include emails, briefing notes, presentations, research or any other documents created in relation to the forum.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds some information that you have asked for. However, we cannot disclose this information because the cost of complying with your request would exceed the limit set by the Freedom of Information Act. Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 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 locate, identify and retrieve the information would cost over £600. We might be able to answer a revised request if you can reconsider the scope of your FOI request, for example by identifying specific topics and a shorter time-frame. However, please note that a revised request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit. You can find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/019
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Month Issued	February 2021
Request	<i>This is a request under Freedom of Information legislation.</i> <i>I would like to request the following information:</i> • <i>From October 1 2020 to the date that this request was received, a copy of all correspondence and communications between the Department and the UK government Vaccines Taskforce (VTF).</i> <i>Correspondence and communications could include, but not be limited to, emails, briefing notes, presentations, research or any other relevant documents.</i>
Response	We have searched our records and taken all reasonable steps to locate the information asked for. We can confirm that we hold information within scope of your request however the information you have requested is exempt under section 35(1)(a) and section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 35(1)(a) provides that information is exempt if it relates to the formulation or development of government policy. Section 43 (2) provides that Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). Both Section 35(1)(a) and Section 43(2) are qualified exemptions and we have considered the public interest in disclosing this information. Public interest considerations in favour of disclosure: We recognise there is a general public interest in disclosure of information and that the decisions Ministers make may have a significant impact on the lives of citizens especially in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Public interest considerations against disclosure: However, the public interest in the way in which government decisions are made, and how relationships with other stakeholders are conducted has to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. This needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options. This includes the discussion of policy both freely and frankly, to exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications, without fear

of premature disclosure of matters that are subject to the ongoing formulation of government policy. As part of these discussions, commercially sensitive information is also considered..

After careful consideration we have concluded that s35(1) (a) and s43(2) are engaged and it is in the public interest to withhold these documents.

If you require further guidance on S.35 please refer to the guidance at the end of this letter and the ICO guidance on 'section 35' at <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf>