

OCTOBER 2021 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2021	Oct	FOI/21/159	Ransomware incidents and data storage provisions
2021	Oct	FOI/21/164	Spending on home working equipment
2021	Oct	FOI/21/165	The Castlereagh Foundation: funding
2021	Oct	FOI/21/170	Bridge or tunnel project between Northern Ireland and Scotland
2021	Oct	FOI/21/172	Archival file request: lawful Troubles-related deaths
2021	Oct	FOI/21/174	Expense fraud
2021	Oct	FOI/21/175	Border poll in Northern Ireland
2021	Oct	FOI/21/176	IT platforms
2021	Oct	FOI/21/177	Staff discipline: misuse of social media and IT systems
2021	Oct	FOI/21/178	Cyber-attacks
2021	Oct	FOI/21/179	Working from home policy
2021	Oct	FOI/21/180	Promotion of mining in Northern Ireland
2021	Oct	FOI/21/181	Employment of historians
2021	Oct	FOI/21/182	Spending on IT equipment and software
2021	Oct	FOI/21/183	Greenhouse gas emissions
2021	Oct	FOI/21/184	Spending on the Northern Ireland Voucher Scheme
2021	Oct	FOI/21/185	Transparency data: spending over £25,000 in July 2021
2021	Oct	FOI/21/187	Departmental estate: spending on gas and electricity
2021	Oct	FOI/21/188	Meta FOI request on AP/21/12
2021	Oct	FOI/21/189	Sexual misconduct allegations
2021	Oct	FOI/21/193	Special Adviser involvement in FOI handling
2021	Oct	FOI/21/197	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council CEO: honours nomination

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/159
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from Northern Ireland Office. Please can you answer the following questions:</i> 1. <i>In the past three years has your organisation:</i> a. <i>Had any ransomware incidents? (An incident where an attacker attempted to, or successfully, encrypted a computing device within your organisation with the aim of extorting a payment or action in order to decrypt the device?)</i> – <i>If yes, how many?</i> b. <i>Had any data rendered permanently inaccessible by a ransomware incident (i.e. some data was not able to be restored from back up.)</i> c. <i>Had any data rendered permanently inaccessible by a systems or equipment failure (i.e. some data was not able to be restored from back up.)</i> d. <i>Paid a ransom due to a ransomware incident / to obtain a decryption key or tool?</i> – <i>If yes was the decryption successful, with all files recovered?</i> e. <i>Used a free decryption key or tool (e.g. from https://www.nomoreransom.org/)?</i> – <i>If yes was the decryption successful, with all files recovered?</i> f. <i>Had a formal policy on ransomware payment?</i> – <i>If yes please provide, or link, to all versions relevant to the 3 year period.</i> g. <i>Held meetings where policy on paying ransomware was discussed?</i> h. <i>Paid consultancy fees for malware, ransomware, or system intrusion investigation</i> – <i>If yes at what cost in each year?</i> i. <i>Used existing support contracts for malware, ransomware, or system intrusion investigation?</i> j. <i>Requested central government support for malware, ransomware, or system intrusion investigation?</i> k. <i>Paid for data recovery services?</i> – <i>If yes at what cost in each year?</i> l. <i>Used existing contracts for data recovery services?</i> m. <i>Replaced IT infrastructure such as servers that have been compromised by malware?</i> – <i>If yes at what cost in each year?</i> n. <i>Replaced IT endpoints such as PCs, Laptops, Mobile devices that have been compromised by malware?</i> – <i>If yes at what cost in each year?</i> o. <i>Lost data due to portable electronic devices being mislaid, lost or destroyed?</i> – <i>If yes how many incidents in each year?</i>

	2. <i>Does your organisation use a cloud based office suite system such as Google Workspace (Formerly G Suite) or Microsoft's Office 365?</i> a. <i>If yes is this system's data independently backed up, separately from that platform's own tools?</i> 3. <i>Is an offsite data back-up a system in place for the following? (Offsite backup is the replication of the data to a server which is separated geographically from the system's normal operating location site.)</i> a. <i>Mobile devices such as phones and tablet computers</i> b. <i>Desktop and laptop computers</i> c. <i>Virtual desktops</i> d. <i>Servers on premise</i> e. <i>Co-located or hosted servers</i> f. <i>Cloud hosted servers</i> g. <i>Virtual machines</i> h. <i>Data in SaaS applications</i> i. <i>ERP / finance system</i> j. <i>We do not use any offsite back-up systems</i> 4. <i>Are the services in question 3 backed up by a single system or are multiple systems used?</i> 5. <i>Do you have a cloud migration strategy? If so is there specific budget allocated to this?</i> 6. <i>How many Software as a Services (SaaS) applications are in place within your organisation?</i> a. <i>How many have been adopted since January 2020?</i>
Response	I can confirm that some information within scope of your original request is held by the Department. If I may I shall address each of your points: Questions 1a, b,c,d,e,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o For the following elements of your request the Department's answer is, as these are yes/no questions, No. Question 1f The Department follows Her Majesty's Government guidelines with respect to ransomware payment.

Question 1g

The Department has held meetings where ransomware has been discussed.

Question 2

For this element of your request the Department's answer is, as this is a yes/no questions, Yes.

Questions 2a, 3 & 4

Section 31 (law enforcement)

It is the Department's position that the information requested is exempt by way of Section 31 (law enforcement) of the Freedom of Information Act. When relying on this exemption public authorities are required to consider the public interest in the release of the information. I shall therefore set out here the factors considered by the

Department in favour of releasing and withholding the requested information:

Factors in favour of release

- The Freedom of Information Act has an underlying element of openness and transparency.
- The release of this information would engage with the public in the workings and considerations undertaken by the Department.

Factors in favour of withholding

- A release of this information could reveal details of the Department's IT security protocols, methods and current technology.
- Releasing this information could aid skilled, determined malicious parties wishing to target the Department with respect to a cyber-attack.

It is the Department's position, when the above public interest arguments are considered, that it is not within the public interest to release this information as it would likely aid malicious parties in attempting to harm our IT systems.

I should like to take this opportunity to confirm that the Department is relying on the second limb of the Section 31 exemption; would be likely to. Additionally, for clarity, the Department is relying upon the following specific sub-section(s):

S.31 (1)(a) – The prevention or detection of crime

	S.31 (1)(b) – The apprehension or prosecution of offenders S.31 (1)(c) – The administration of justice Finally I should like to assure you that the Department’s reliance on this exemption for the reasons given above does not imply that we believe you to be malicious. Release of information under the terms of the Freedom of Information is considered as “a release to one is a release to all”; the Department is mindful of this and therefore to secure our systems from any likely harm the above exemption has been engaged. For further information on section 31 (law enforcement) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website; Section 31 guidance notes. Question 5 For this element of your request the Department’s answer is, as this is a yes/no question, No. Question 6 0
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/164
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:</i> <i>1. In the calendar year 2020, and in the calendar year 2021 so far, how much money has your Department spent on home-working equipment for employees? (including but not limited to laptops, broadband, chairs, chargers, headphones, and fans)</i> <i>2. Can you provide a thorough breakdown of:</i> <i>a. The equipment that has been paid for</i> <i>b. The amount spent on these items?</i>
Response	1) In the calendar year 2020, and in the calendar year 2021 so far, how much money has your Department spent on home-working equipment for employees? (including but not limited to laptops, broadband, chairs, chargers, headphones, and fans) The total costs for home working equipment for officials in the Department since 2020 to date was £18,769.09. 2) Can you provide a thorough breakdown of:

- a) The equipment that has been paid for
b) The amount spent on these items?

Please find the table below, which provides a breakdown of costs as requested (the figures provided are inclusive of delivery costs and exclude VAT):

Items for calendar year 2020	Total Costs
Chairs	£7,762.00
IT Peripherals (Keyboards/Monitors/Mice)	£9,820.99
Items for calendar year 2021	Total Costs
Chairs	£600.00
IT Peripherals (Keyboards/Monitors/Mice)	£586.80

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/165
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>Thank you for your email and response [FOI/21/142]. I note "no decisions have been taken on the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation itself, this includes decisions on any budgets, funding or governance framework arrangements."</i> <i>However, that appears to be contradicted by a tweet from the chairperson of the CF, Mrs Arlene Foster on 21 May 2021, in which she writes "The Castlereagh Foundation was part of the NDNA agreement, with funding already set aside. The purpose of the Foundation is to encourage academic research & study for future generations. In many ways, it is a Foundation which should have been established many years ago."</i> https://twitter.com/ArleneFosterUK/status/1395778209413730311 <i>I was trying to get a sense of what "funding [has] already [been] set aside", and given this is apparently a matter of record, hoped that it might be released. Given that no decisions have been taken on the establishment of the CF itself, I don't wish to appeal your decision, but I would like to request an indication of the funding that has been set aside, and I now write to ask that you might consider releasing that information to me without the formality of an appeal.</i>
Response	I can confirm that information within the scope of your request is held by the Department, however it is being withheld from release by way of Section 35 (formulation of government policy) of the Freedom of Information Act.

	Section 35 (formulation of government policy) It is the Department's position that the information requested is exempt by way of Section 35 (formulation of government policy) of the Freedom of Information Act. When relying on this exemption public authorities are required to consider the public interest in the release of the information. I shall therefore set out here the factors considered by the Department in favour of releasing and withholding the requested information: <u><i>Factors in favour of release</i></u> • The Freedom of Information Act has an underlying element of openness and transparency. • A release of information would enable the public to engage with the internal workings of a public authority; Northern Ireland Office. <u><i>Factors in favour of withholding</i></u> • Ministers and other departmental officials engaged in sensitive policy discussions require a safe space in which they can debate freely and frankly. • Ministers and other departmental officials must be able to provide relevant advice in a protected space (without fear of future disclosure). • Without this protected space, departmental officials would likely feel constrained in their ability to advise freely, frankly and fully when providing such advice. This, therefore, would likely lead to less informative and candid advice, opinions and decision making, inhibiting the UK Government's ability to deliver on its NDNA commitments It is the Department's position, when the above public interest arguments are considered, that it is not within the public interest to release this information as it relates to the formulation of government policy. For clarity, the Department is also relying upon the following specific sub-sections: 35(1)(a) the formulation or development of government policy. For further information on Section 35 (formulation of government policy) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioner's Office, website: Section 35 guidance
FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/170
Month Issued	October 2021

Request	<i>I am writing in relation to Boris Johnson's plan for a bridge or tunnel from NI to Scotland.</i> <i>Please see this story for context</i> https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/sep/14/boris-johnson-scotland-northern-ireland-tunnel-plans-axed <i>Can you please tell me the total UK government spend on this project to date (e.g. scoping exercises, planning, consultation)</i>
Response	I can confirm that following a review of all electronic and paper based records it has been responsibly determined that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold the information that you have asked for. May I suggest, if you have not already done so, that you contact the Department for Transport, which may hold the information that you have requested: Department for Transport Great Minster House 33 Horseferry Road London SW1P 4DR United Kingdom

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/172
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I refer to the Command Paper on legacy issued in July.</i> <i>At page 21 the document makes the following claim: "Security Forces were responsible for around 10% of Troubles-related deaths - the vast majority of which were lawful."</i> <i>What information does the NIO hold (including the titles of documents and papers) that supports the claim that the "vast majority" of Troubles-related deaths at the hands of the security forces were 'lawful'?</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any records that relate to the statement to which you refer. The statement in Command Paper 498, published 14 July, is based on publicly available information that shows that, of the estimated 10% of deaths caused by the security forces during the Troubles, a very small number have been found to be unlawful.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/174
Month Issued	October 2021

Request	<i>I have some questions for an FOI request I'm making on expense claims which I would appreciate your help with:</i> <i>1. How many total expense claims did you process in 2020?</i> <i>2. How many total expense claims did you process in 2019?</i> <i>3. Have expense claims been rejected between March 2019-March 2020?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>4. Have expense claims been rejected between March 2020-March 2021?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>5. Have there been any investigations relating to expense fraud in your department between March 2019-March 2020?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>6. Have there been any investigations relating to expense fraud in your department between March 2020-March 2021?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>7. How many of these investigations have found a staff member at your department to be in breach of your rules relating to expenses?</i> <i>8. Has anyone who has been found to be in breach of expense rules been dismissed?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>9. Has anyone who has been found to be in breach of expense rules been prosecuted?</i> <i>• If so, how many?</i> <i>10. What was the cost of fraudulent expenses to your department between March 2019-March 2020?</i> <i>11. What was the cost of fraudulent expenses to your department between March 2020-March 2021?</i> <i>12. Do you have a clear set of rules in regards to expenses in place at your department?</i> <i>13. Do managers go through training to enable them to spot potentially fraudulent expense claims?</i> <i>14. Have any invoices been paid that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2019-March 2020?</i> <i>• If so, what was the value of each one?</i> <i>15. Have any invoices been paid that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2020-March 2021?</i> <i>• If so, what was the value of each one?</i>
Response	1. How many total expense claims did you process in 2020? 314 expense claims were processed in 2020. 2. How many total expense claims did you process in 2019? 608 expense claims were processed in 2019. 3. Have expense claims been rejected between March 2019-March 2020? If so, how many?

	I can confirm there was no claims rejected between March 2019-March 2020.
	4. Have expense claims been rejected between March 2020-March 2021? If so, how many? I can confirm there was no claims rejected between March 2020-March 2021.
	5. Have there been any investigations relating to expense fraud in your department between March 2019-March 2020? If so, how many? I can confirm there have been no investigations relating to fraud in the department between March 2019-March 2020.
	6. Have there been any investigations relating to expense fraud in your department between March 2020-March 2021? If so, how many? I can confirm there have been no investigations relating to fraud In the department between March 2020-March 2021.
	7. How many of these investigations have found a staff member at your department to be in breach of your rules relating to expenses? I can confirm no staff member has been found to be in breach of rules relating to expenses.
	8. Has anyone who has been found to be in breach of expense rules been dismissed? If so, how many? I can confirm no staff member has been found to be in breach of rules relating to expenses or been dismissed.
	9. Has anyone who has been found to be in breach of expense rules been prosecuted? If so, how many? I can confirm no staff member has been found to be in breach of rules relating to expenses or been prosecuted.
	10. What was the cost of fraudulent expenses to your department between March 2019-March 2020? There has been no fraudulent expenses and therefore £0 between March 2019 and March 2020.
	11. What was the cost of fraudulent expenses to your department between March 2020-March 2021? There has been no fraudulent expenses and therefore £0 between March 2020 and March 2021.
	12. Do you have a clear set of rules in regards to expenses in place at your department? There is a clear set of rules within the department in relation to expense.
	13. Do managers go through training to enable them to spot potentially fraudulent expense claims?

	Managers do not receive specific training to spot fraudulent expense claims. 14. Have any invoices been paid that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2019-March 2020? If so, what was the value of each one? There has been no invoices that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2019 and March 2020. 15. Have any invoices been paid that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2020-March 2021? If so, what was the value of each one? There has been no invoices that were later found to be fraudulent between March 2020 and March 2021.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/175
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>Has the Northern Ireland Office conducted any planning for the possibility of a Border Poll in Northern Ireland since October 31st 2019 to 31st October 2020?</i> <i>If yes, can you provide details of these plans?</i>
Response	I can confirm that following a department wide review of our records it has been responsibly determined that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information relating to this request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/176
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information. Please may you provide me with the following response to my questions?</i> <i>1. Does your organisation current have deployed or plan to deploy in the next 6 months the Kubernetes container technology?</i> <i>2. Does you organisations currently have deployed or plan to deploy in the next 6 months the Docker or Docker SWARM technology platform?</i> <i>3. Does you organisations currently have deployed or plan to deploy in the next 6 months the Rancher technology platform?</i> <i>4. Does you organisations currently have deployed or plan to deploy in the next 6 months the IBM Open Shift technology platform?</i> <i>5. Does you organisations currently have deployed or plan to deploy in the next 6 months the VMware Tanzu technology platform?</i>

Response	I can confirm that following a review of all electronic and paper based records is has been responsibly determined that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold information that you have asked for. 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. 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/21/177												
Month Issued	October 2021												
Request	<i>I would like to know the following under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>Over the last five years, broken down by year.</i> <i>Number of staff disciplined for misusing social media and IT systems.</i> <i>In each incident please detail the platform e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, work Email, etc</i> <i>Please also detail the nature of the incident e.g. posted confidential data</i> <i>And the outcome e.g. first written warning, final written warning, dismissal etc.</i>												
Response	I can confirm that information within scope of your original request is held by the Department. Number of staff disciplined for misusing social media and IT systems. In response to Q1, please see the table below: <table><tr><td>Year</td><td>2017</td><td>2018</td><td>2019</td><td>2020</td><td>2021</td></tr><tr><td>Number of Staff</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td><5</td></tr></table> <i>Fewer than Five</i> This information is supplied in this format as the release of the actual figure is likely, if placed within the public domain, offer sufficient contextual information which could, in the hands of skilled, committed researchers, when combined with other resources of information, lead to the identification of individuals the present format – fewer than five – is designed to protect. It is the Department’s position that the actual figure is exempt by way of section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. In each incident please detail the platform e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, work Email, etc	Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Number of Staff	0	0	0	0	<5
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021								
Number of Staff	0	0	0	0	<5								

	• Please also detail the nature of the incident e.g. posted confidential data • And the outcome e.g. first written warning, final written warning, dismissal etc. In response to Q2, 3 and 4, it is the Department's position that the information requested is exempt by way of Section 40 (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act. As this additional contextual information relates to fewer than five people, it is considered exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data). If it were released this information in the hands of skilled determined actors (in combination with other publicly available information) could be used to identify the individual(s) the fewer than 5 format is designed to protect. For further information on Section 40 (personal data) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website: Section 40 guidance
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/178
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I would like to know the following please.</i> <i>Number of suspected malicious emails blocked by your organisation over the last three years (September 2021, 2020, 2019) broken down by year. Please categorise the blocked emails e.g. phishing, malware, spam etc</i>
Response	In reply to your request we had no blocked malicious emails during these periods so we hold no information in scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/179
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	1. Are you offering all staff that can work from home/remotely the chance to do so for some of the week? • Yes • No 2. Are you offering all staff that can work from home/remotely the chance to do so for all of the week? • Yes • No 3. On average, how many days are staff working from home/remotely (round to the nearest full day if necessary)? • 1

	• 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 4. <i>How many members of staff have made an application to work from home/remotely?</i> 5. <i>How many members of staff have been granted the ability to work from home/remotely?</i> 6. <i>Are staff that work from home paid less than those who come into the office?</i> • Yes • No 7. <i>If you answered yes to question 6, what is the average disparity between those working at home and those who don't?</i> 8. <i>What versions of Windows are used in your department? Tick all that apply</i> • Windows 2000 or older • Windows XP • Windows Vista • Windows 7 • Windows 8 • Windows 10 9. <i>What collaboration and efficiency tools are used by a majority of staff in your department? Tick all that apply</i> • M365 • Teams • Viva • SharePoint • Workplace Insights • Power Platform • Yammer • Zoom
Response	It has been estimated by the Department that to fully satisfy element four of your information request would exceed the appropriate limit as set out at section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. Your request and all other elements of it (owing to element four likely exceeding the appropriate limit) is, therefore, being refused at this time by way of section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act by the Northern Ireland Office.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, public authorities are not obliged to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would likely exceed the “appropriate limit”. The “appropriate limit” for the purposes of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act has been set at £600 for central government departments.

Flexible working requests are often agreed locally between staff and their direct line managers. The Department’s HR team, therefore, does not maintain a central record of these arrangements.

Therefore to fully satisfy element four of your request would require a manual review of all paper and all electronically held information (staff and shared email inboxes, drives and servers).

It is this lengthy review, in both terms of historical date range [as the request is currently worded this would require a review of all such flexible working requests since the Department was formed] and volume of information, which has been estimated by the Department, would likely exceed the above-mentioned appropriate limit.

It may be that we can provide you with some information within this appropriate limit, if you are able to narrow the scope of your request.

The following may help in your decisions as to the nature of any reframed information request you may wish to re-submit:

- Include a date range within your request
- Limit element 4 of your request to only those flexible working request which have required central guidance from the Department’s HR team.

It should be noted that if you did re-submit a reframed question there is still the possibility that this refined request could also be subject to the application of the section 12 provisions (or in-deed any of the other in-built Freedom of Information Act exemptions). If this is the case then of course we will endeavour to continue to assist you as much as possible in order to bring your request under the appropriate limit.

If you do re-submit a request it will be handled as a new request under the appropriate legislation.

For further information on Section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website: [Section 12 guidance](#)

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/180
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I would like to make a Freedom of Information request on the following question below:</i> <i>Has the Northern Ireland Office ever advertised Northern Ireland on a national and international level as a good location for mining?</i>
Response	Mining policy is devolved in Northern Ireland to the Department for the Economy and the Department for Infrastructure. You may wish to contact them here: Department for the Economy - DfEmail@economy-ni.gov.uk Department for Infrastructure - dfiimu@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk In order for the Northern Ireland Office to satisfy this information request it has been estimated that it would exceed the appropriate limit as set out at section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. Your request, therefore, is being refused at this time by way of section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act by the Northern Ireland Office. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, public authorities are not obliged to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would likely exceed the “appropriate limit”. The “appropriate limit” for the purposes of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act has been set at £600 for central government departments. To fully satisfy your request would require a manual review of all paper and all electronically held information (staff and shared email inboxes, drives and servers) since the Northern Ireland Office formed in 1972. It is this lengthy review, in terms of both historical date range and volume of information, which has been estimated by the Department, would likely exceed the above-mentioned appropriate limit. It may be that we can provide you with some information within this appropriate limit, if you are able to narrow the scope of your request. The following may help in your decisions as to the nature of any reframed information request you may wish to re-submit:

	• Narrowing the date range to a specific range of months or years • Limiting to the most relevant internal team (this is likely to be Economy or Domestic Policy) • Limiting the key word searches to specific terms, e.g. “mining”. It should be noted that if you did re-submit a reframed question there is still the possibility that this refined request could also be subject to the application of the section 12 provisions (or in-deed any of the other in-built Freedom of Information Act exemptions). If this is the case then of course we will endeavour to continue to assist you as much as possible in order to bring your request under the appropriate limit. If you do re-submit a request it will be handled as a new request under the appropriate legislation. For further information on Section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website: Section 12 guidance
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/181
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	1. <i>How many practising historians [staff or freelance contractors] does your Department employ? If your Department does employ historians but you don't know the figure, an approximate figure would suffice.</i> 2. <i>Have you employed any practising historians [staff or freelance contractors] in your Department since 2015-16? If so, please provide a figure for each until the present, e.g. how many you employed in 2015-16, 16-17, 17-18, 18-19, 19-20, 20-21.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department does hold some information relevant to your request. <i>Staff</i> I can confirm that following a review of all electronic and paper based records it has been responsibly determined that the Northern Ireland Office has had no staff historians for the period requested. <i>Freelancers</i> For the period requested the Department has engaged the services of fewer than 5 freelance historians. The information is being supplied in the format ‘fewer than 5’ as the release of the actual figure is likely, if placed within the public domain, offer sufficient contextual information which could, in the hands of skilled committed researchers, when combined with other sources of information, lead to the identification of individuals the present format – fewer than 5 – is designed to protect.

	It is the Department's position, therefore, that the actual number is exempt by way of Section 40 (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act. For further information on Section 40 (personal data) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website; Section 40 guidance notes
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/182
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I would like to know the following over the last 3x years, broken down by year (September 2021, September 2020 and September 2019) and the estimated cost per device.</i> <i>1. Breakdown of the number of new electronic devices purchased by your organisation and the estimated cost for each purchase:</i> <i>a. Laptops</i> <i>b. Tablet computers</i> <i>c. Mobile Phones</i> <i>2. Detail on remote working software/licences purchased and estimated costs</i> <i>a. Number of Zoom accounts created</i> <i>b. Number of new office 365 account purchased</i> <i>c. cyber security software purchased</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to your request. Please find below the information being released to you. 1. Breakdown of the number of new electronic devices purchased by your organisation and the estimated cost for each purchase: a. Laptops @ £1400 each 2019 – 80 2020 – 14 2021 – 131 – It should be noted that this figure is as part of a routine upgrade b. Tablet computers 2019 - 12 @ £550 each including 2 year contract

	2020 - 11 @ £580 each including 2 year contract 2021 - 8 @ £630 each including 2 year contract c. Mobile Phones 2019 - 77 @ £425 each including 2 year contract 2020 - 92 @ £580 each including 2 year contract 2021 - 115 @ 550 each including 2 year contract - It should be noted that this figure is as part of a routine upgrade 2. Detail on remote working software/licences purchased and estimated costs a. Number of Zoom accounts created 2019 – 0 2020 – 0 2021 - 0 b. Number of new office 365 account purchased 2019 – 0 2020 – 0 2021 - 0 c. cyber security software purchased 2019 – 0 2020 – 0 2021 – 0
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/183
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 to request the following information about greenhouse gas emissions data. Please provide this information in excel format, if possible. Within this FOI if the response is <5 and an exact value cannot be provided, please clarify whether the value is zero or non-zero. Hence any response of <5 will be interpreted as 1-4.</i> <i>Over the past 6 financial years (from 2015-2016, to 2020-2021 or until the most recent financial year you have data on), please could you provide me with the following information:</i> <i>1. Greenhouse gas emissions emitted by the Ministry/Department as a whole for each of these financial years (in tonnes Co2e, or in the units the Department typically records them only if this previous metric is not used);</i>

	a. In addition to this data and separately from it, please provide the breakdown of this previous data on emissions for each of these years (in tonnes Co2e, or in the units the Department typically records them only if this previous metric is not used), which fall under: i. Scope 1 emissions; ii. Scope 2 emissions; and iii. Scope 3 emissions.
Response	Your request has being handled under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations. <i>Exception 12(4)(a) (information not held)</i> Following a review of all held electronic and paper information, it has been determined that the Department holds no information within scope of your request. Therefore your request is being refused at this time by way of exception 12(4)(a) (information not held) of the Environmental Information Regulations. The Department has introduced initiatives such as green renewable energy, making use of more energy efficient LED lighting, removal of single use plastic products, investment in new energy efficient boilers, and has taken steps to reduce its energy footprint by cutting down the requirement for staff to travel by making greater use of modern technology to broaden the range of video conferencing facilities.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/184
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<u>Northern Ireland Voucher Scheme</u> • Please provide a breakdown of the costs involved in facilitating the scheme. To include set up costs, running costs and output costs.
Response	The Northern Ireland Office does not run, administer or is in any other way involved with the scheme. Therefore I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold the information you have requested. May we suggest, if you have not already done so, that you contact the Northern Ireland Executive? Their records, being the public authority responsible for this scheme, may better suit your area of interest: foi@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/185
Month Issued	October 2021

Request	<i>I am looking for some assistance with your organisation's Spend/Transparency data, available on the following weblink:</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nio-transparency-data-on-gpc-and-spending-over-25000--2 <i>There appears to be no file available for the month of July 2021. Could you advise when the file will be made available to view online?</i>
Response	I can confirm that information within the scope of your request is held by the Department, however it is being withheld from release by way of Section 22 (information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act. <u><i>Section 22 (information intended for future publication)</i></u> It is the Department's position that the information requested is exempt by way of Section 22 (information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act. When relying on this exemption public authorities are required to consider the public interest in the release of the information. I shall therefore set out here the factors considered by the Department in favour of releasing and withholding the requested information: <u><i>Factors in favour of release</i></u> • The Freedom of Information Act has an underlying element of openness and transparency. • A release of information would enable the public to engage with the internal workings of a public authority; Northern Ireland Office. <u><i>Factors in favour of withholding</i></u> • The information is currently being compiled by Department officials; the information will be uploaded to our website shortly as part of the Department's regular publications. • A release now, as part of this information request to a specific individual, would likely prejudice the value of this information to other researchers and/or interested parties. It is the Department's position, when the above public interest test arguments are considered, that it is not within the public interest to release this information at this time. Please note the release of this information will always be in arrears to allow for Departmental operational needs. For further information on Section 22 (information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website: Section 22 guidance

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/187																																		
Month Issued	October 2021																																		
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act please provide me with the following:</i> <i>How much have you spent on electricity and gas bills for each building occupied by your Department for the years a) 2018 b) 2019 c) 2020 d) 2021 so far</i> <i>What the energy certificates were for each Departmental Building for the year a) 2018 b) 2019 c) 2020 and d) 2021</i>																																		
Response	The Department is based in two leased sites 1 Horse Guards Road, London and Stormont House, Belfast. In London, energy charges are included within the leasing arrangement from the landlord, Her Majesty's Treasury and my Department does not hold any figures for energy usage. In Belfast, the cost of energy usage is as follows: <table><tr><th>Financial Year</th><th>Electricity (kWh)</th><th>Cost (excl. VAT)</th><th>Gas (m3)</th><th>Cost (excl. VAT)</th></tr><tr><td>2018/2019</td><td>687,639</td><td>£66,678</td><td>22,155</td><td>£10,565</td></tr><tr><td>2019/2020</td><td>644,416</td><td>£65,562</td><td>25,304</td><td>£11,518</td></tr><tr><td>2020/2021</td><td>541,960</td><td>£56,495</td><td>29,601</td><td>£12,472</td></tr><tr><td>2021/2022 (Jul/Aug)</td><td>229,041</td><td>£22,171</td><td>8,606</td><td>£4,849</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Total Cost</td><td>£210,906</td><td>Total Cost</td><td>£39,404</td></tr></table> Under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive there is a requirement to have Display Energy Certificates and Energy Performance Certificates for buildings where certain conditions are met. A Display Energy Certificate (DEC) must be provided for a building with a total useful floor area of over 250 m2, which is occupied by a public authority and is frequently visited by members of the public to receive a public service. An Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) is required for buildings that are to be marketed for sale or rent or are newly constructed after 30th September 2008. Horse Guards and Stormont House therefore do not fall under this criteria thus there is no EPC or DEC for these properties.					Financial Year	Electricity (kWh)	Cost (excl. VAT)	Gas (m3)	Cost (excl. VAT)	2018/2019	687,639	£66,678	22,155	£10,565	2019/2020	644,416	£65,562	25,304	£11,518	2020/2021	541,960	£56,495	29,601	£12,472	2021/2022 (Jul/Aug)	229,041	£22,171	8,606	£4,849		Total Cost	£210,906	Total Cost	£39,404
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/188
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>On 11th August 2021 as part of the NIO response to internal review AP 21/12 the department issued information held with redactions making use of s40(2).</i> <i>The department also stated in the response that to release the information would "breach current data protection legislation".</i>

	<i>Further to that I asked the department if they had notified the ICO in relation to their provision of that information to me in full that was attached to the response and I have not received a response.</i> <i>Can the department provide all information held relating to AP 21/12 after this was issued, around the provision of information that should have been withheld?</i> <i>The department had already determined as personal information, therefore if the department can provide the notification or receipt from the ICO of any report.</i> <i>Can the department provide the notifications they have issued to the individuals whom they have released personal information which those individuals would not reasonably expect to be released.</i>
Response	We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I can confirm that following a review of all electronic and paper based records it has been responsibly determined that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold information that you have asked for. <i>Can the department provide all information held relating to AP 21/12 after this was issued, around the provision of information that should have been withheld?</i> Following a review of held case correspondence linked to AP21/12 it has been determined that no additional information was created once the final response was sent. It is normal practice that once a final response to a Freedom of Information request or Internal Review is sent the enquiry is considered closed and no further information is created relating to it. <i>The department had already determined as personal information, therefore if the department can provide the notification or receipt from the ICO of any report.</i> When determining whether personal data is present within held information a public authority is not required to notify the Information Commissioner; therefore the Department holds no such notification (as we were not obligated to create one). <i>Can the department provide the notifications they have issued to the individuals whom they have released personal information which those individuals would not reasonably expect to be released.</i> The Department did not seek consent from the individual(s) whom personal data related as to whether or not their personal data could be released.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/189
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	I would like to make the following Freedom of Information request: 1. how many allegations of sexual misconduct were made in the calendar years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (as far into 2021 as possible) staff employed in your department. By sexual misconduct I mean sexual harassment, indecent exposure, gender-based stalking or online harassment, sexual assault, rape and anything else you would consider as sexual misconduct. For each allegation, please tell me: 2. a description of the alleged behaviour 3. whether the person making the allegations was a member of the public or employed by the police* 4. whether the person making the allegations was male, female or non-binary* 5. whether the accused was male, female or non-binary* 6. the job title of the accused* 7. whether the accused was charged 8. whether the accused was convicted 9. the outcome of any professional misconduct investigation * Please only include if it does not take the request over the cost threshold or reveal identifying personal information
Response	In answer to your question I can tell you that no allegations of sexual misconduct were received from staff employed in the Northern Ireland Office in the calendar years from 2010-2021 inclusive. The remaining elements of your request therefore fall away and I can also confirm that for these elements (questions 2 to 8), as no allegations were received, the Department holds no information.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/193
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. I would like to request the following information:</i> 1. <i>For Q1 2020, please:</i>

	a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i> c. <i>Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
	2. <i>For Q2 2020, please:</i> a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i> c. <i>Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
	3. <i>For Q3 2020, please:</i> a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i> c. <i>Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
	4. <i>For Q4 2020, please:</i> a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i> c. <i>Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
	5. <i>For Q1 2021, please:</i> a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i> c. <i>Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
	6. <i>For Q2 2021, please:</i> a. <i>State how many FOI requests were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i> b. <i>For those FOI requests, please provide their reference numbers.</i>

	<i>c. Please provide copies of the FOI requests that were sent to special advisers for clearance/approval/that they wished to have sight of.</i>
Response	It has been estimated by the Department that to fully satisfy this information request would exceed the appropriate limit as set out at section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. Your request, therefore, is being refused at this time by way of section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act by the Northern Ireland Office. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, public authorities are not obliged to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would likely exceed the “appropriate limit”. The “appropriate limit” for the purposes of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act has been set at £600 for central government departments. To fully satisfy elements of your request would require a manual review of all electronically held information (shared email inboxes and individually held records). It is this lengthy review, in both terms of historical date range and volume of information, which has been estimated by the Department, would likely exceed the above-mentioned appropriate limit. It may be that we can provide you with some information within this appropriate limit, if you are able to narrow the scope of your request. The following may help in your decisions as to the nature of any reframed information request you may wish to re-submit: Such as to narrow the date range to the last 12 months. The Department does not maintain a specific log detailing which Freedom of Information requests were sighted by Special Advisors. Therefore to fully satisfy your request would require a manual review of all held Freedom of Information case correspondence to determine which enquiries were sighted by Special Advisors. Additionally owing to the time period you have requested case correspondence has been migrated to the Department’s central records management system which, owing to the particular search functions, further impacts on the Department’s ability to locate, retrieve and extract, within the above mentioned limit, relevant in-scope information. It should be noted that if you did re-submit a reframed question there is still the possibility that this refined request could also be subject to the application of the section 12 provisions (or in-deed any of the other in-build Freedom of Information Act

	exemptions). If this is the case then of course we will endeavour to continue to assist you as much as possible in order to bring your request under the appropriate limit. If you do re-submit a request it will be handled as a new request under the appropriate legislation. For further information on Section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office, website: Section 12 https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/section-12-requests-where-the-cost-of-compliance-exceeds-the-appropriate-limit/
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/197
Month Issued	October 2021
Request	<i>Under Freedom of Information legislation I respectfully request all communication relevant to the recommendation and subsequent approval of an OBE for the CEO of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Anne Donaghy, to include the identity and comments of the nominating person for same.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within scope of your request. You may want to contact the honours secretariat in the Executive Office who deal with honours nominations at honours@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk