

SEPTEMBER 2021 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2021	Sep	FOI/21/048	Archival file request: Royal Ulster Constabulary
2021	Sep	FOI/21/109	Stonewall diversity champions and workplace equality index
2021	Sep	FOI/21/132	Staff pay and grading
2021	Sep	FOI/21/134	Meta FOI request on FOI/21/86 and AP21/15.
2021	Sep	FOI/21/139	Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings: letters of assurance
2021	Sep	FOI/21/140	Redundancy payments
2021	Sep	FOI/21/141	Staff travel: domestic and international flights
2021	Sep	FOI/21/142	The Castlereagh Foundation: budget, funding and constitution
2021	Sep	FOI/21/144	Grants and loans to charities and third sector organisations
2021	Sep	FOI/21/145	Flying of the Union flag
2021	Sep	FOI/21/146	Courier service contracts
2021	Sep	FOI/21/147	Spending on home working equipment over £1,000
2021	Sep	FOI/21/148	Spending on home working equipment
2021	Sep	FOI/21/149	Staff sick leave
2021	Sep	FOI/21/150	Bullying complaints
2021	Sep	FOI/21/151	Sexual harassment complaints
2021	Sep	FOI/21/152	Working from home policy
2021	Sep	FOI/21/153	Telephone maintenance contract
2021	Sep	FOI/21/155	IT Software contracts
2021	Sep	FOI/21/156	Ministerial vehicles
2021	Sep	FOI/21/158	Sperrin Mountain goldmine: ministerial engagement with Dalradian
2021	Sep	FOI/21/160	Northern Ireland border poll
2021	Sep	FOI/21/161	Executive Car Services contract
2021	Sep	FOI/21/162	Ministerial travel: domestic and international flights
2021	Sep	FOI/21/163	Electric vehicles

2021	Sep	FOI/21/167	Staff with criminal records: sex offences and drug-related convictions
2021	Sep	FOI/21/168	Ministerial travel: domestic and international flights
2021	Sep	FOI/21/169	Northern Ireland border poll

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/048
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I wish to submit FOI request for record CJ4/5609. RUC (1984-85).</i> <i>This was retained by your department in December 2015. It was due for re-consideration in 2018. Was it re-considered?</i>
Response	I can confirm that information within the scope of your original request is held by the Department. I should like to take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in this substantive response and thank you for your patience during this difficult times. It has now become possible for the Department to locate the record and review it. Upon review it is the Department's position that the majority of the record can be open to the public. <u>Information to be made publically available shortly</u> The Department is therefore in the process of arranging transfer of this record to The National Archives so that it may be available for public viewing. When these internal administrative processes have been completed the majority of the information within CJ 4/5609 will be a public open record available for viewing at The National Archives. May we suggest that you routinely monitor The National Archives on-line catalogue to determine the progress of this transfer. <u>Section 40 (personal data)</u> In order to facilitate the transfer of this record to The National Archives for public access some information within it has been considered exempt by way of Section 40 (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act. This small amount of information consists of personal information. The Department, therefore, considers it exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act and will therefore not be part of the majority of the information which will be shortly made publically available. The information is considered exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) as these person(s) could not reasonably expect that their personal information would be disclosed; therefore, in doing so would breach current data protection legislation. Therefore this exempt information will not be released. 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.
FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/109

Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Please provide any information that you hold answering to any of the following descriptions:</i> <i>1. Any application you made in 2019 or 2020 to be a "Stonewall Diversity Champion" or to be included on Stonewall's "Workplace Equality Index," including any attachments or appendices to those applications. Please redact personal details if necessary.</i> <i>2. Any feedback you received in 2019 or 2020 from Stonewall in relation to either application or programme.</i> <i>3. Any other communication you have received from Stonewall in 2019 or 2020 unless privileged or otherwise exempt from disclosure (but if you claim privilege or exemption in relation to any material, please say in broad terms what the material is and the basis on which you claim to be entitled to withhold it).</i> <i>4. Full details of any equality impact assessment you carried out connected with any of these applications (including any equality impact assessment carried out prior to an earlier application of the same kind, if no further assessment was done).</i> <i>5. Details of the total amount of money you paid to Stonewall (i) in 2019; (ii) in 2020, whether or not as payment for goods or services.</i> <i>Whether you intend to continue your membership of any Stonewall scheme in the future, and if so which.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information relevant to your request. If I may I shall address of our points in turn: <i>1. Any application you made in 2019 or 2020 to be a "Stonewall Diversity Champion" or to be included on Stonewall's "Workplace Equality Index," including any attachments or appendices to those applications. Please redact personal details if necessary.</i> The Department applied to be a Stonewall Diversity Champion in 2020. We do not hold any information on a Workplace Equality Index application for 2019 or 2020 as we were not members of the Diversity Champions scheme in 2019 and the Index didn't run in 2020 due to Covid. A membership proposal form was not completed and the membership was obtained using e-mail correspondence. <i>2. Any feedback you received in 2019 or 2020 from Stonewall in relation to either application or programme.</i> We do not hold any feedback from Stonewall on this application or arising from our membership of the Diversity Champions Scheme

3. *Any other communication you have received from Stonewall in 2019 or 2020 unless privileged or otherwise exempt from disclosure (but if you claim privilege or exemption in relation to any material, please say in broad terms what the material is and the basis on which you claim to be entitled to withhold it).*

It is the Department's position that the information is exempt by way of the following Freedom of Information Act exemptions:

- Section 31 (law enforcement)
- Section 40 (personal data)
- Section 41 (information provided in confidence)
- Section 43 (commercial interests)

I shall set out here the reasons for each applied exemption:

Section 31 (law enforcement)

It is the Department's position, that a small amount information – bank details supplied to the Department by Stonewall - 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 to determined malicious parties wishing to target ourselves or Stonewall details which would enable them to a crime.

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.

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; [guidance notes section 31](#)

Section 40 (personal data)

It is the Department's position that some of the information request is exempt from release by way of section 40 (2) (personal data).

The exempted information consists of personal information – names and contact details and other contextual personal identification. The Department, therefore, considers it exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act.

The information is considered exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) as these person(s) could not reasonably expect that their personal information would be disclosed; therefore, in doing so would breach current data protection legislation.

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; [guidance notes section 40](#).

Section 41 (information provided in confidence)

The comments provided by Stonewall to the Department are confidential and provided in confidence. The relevant test regarding breach of confidence are met in this case. The comments have the necessary quality of confidence, given their nature and the private forum in which they were made.

They were imparted in circumstances of confidence as Diversity Champions undertake not to disclose confidential information in their agreement with Stonewall.

I can confirm that the Department has taken into account the public interest test inherent within the common law duty of confidence in reaching this decision.

We are satisfied that disclosure of the information requested would constitute an actionable breach of confidence and that we could not rely on the defence that an overriding public interest justified breaching the duty of confidence inherent in the information and how it was obtained.

The courts have maintained that there is a very strong general public interest in protecting confidences and this could only be superseded by an overriding public interest in disclosure.

It is not considered that there is such an overriding public interest in disclosure of the information requested.

For further information on section 41 (information provided in confidence) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office website; [guidance notes section 41](#)

Section 43 (commercial interests)

It is the Department's position that information is exempt by way of Section 43(2) (commercial interests) 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.

Factors in favour of withholding

- The Department has contacted Stonewall in order to determine whether they feel their commercial interests would likely be prejudice as a result of any potential information release; Stonewall have confirmed there would likely be prejudice caused to their commercial interests.
- If the information is released, by way of a Freedom of Information request, then the unique (and successful) business model of Stonewall (namely Diversity Champion's) would be made publically available; this information could then be used by competitors to undermine or otherwise 'out-bid' for future commercial opportunities. Thus likely harming Stonewall's commercial, but also their charitable, objectives.
- A release of this information would likely allow competitors access to Stonewall's expertise and insights in relation to inclusion. There are a wide range of workplace development organisations who deliver training, guidance and/or accreditation on LGBT inclusion. Organisations providing similar services are likely to do market research around their competitors, and would be likely to use any information gained in relation to Stonewall to their advantage and thereby to Stonewall's detriment.
- A release of this information would likely allow other organisations that are considering becoming Diversity Champions the benefit of Stonewall's expertise without becoming Diversity Champions themselves. This deprives Stonewall of the income from such organisations (and in turn the opportunity to assist with the improvement of their inclusion practices, and more widely impacts on Stonewall's ability to achieve its charitable objects).

I should like to take this opportunity to confirm that the Department is relying upon the second limb of this exemption – would be likely to – and that it is the commercial interests of Stonewall which would likely be prejudiced. I should also like to confirm that Department has sought the opinion of the relevant companies. They have confirmed that a prejudice is likely to occur to their own commercial interests should this information be released.

For further information on Section 43(2) (commercial interest) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioners Office website; [guidance notes section 43](#).

4. *Full details of any equality impact assessment you carried out connected with any of these applications (including any equality impact assessment carried out prior to an earlier application of the same kind, if no further assessment was done).*

	We have not been required to carry out any Equality Impact Assessments prior to joining Stonewall so therefore do not hold any information. 5. <i>Details of the total amount of money you paid to Stonewall (i) in 2019; (ii) in 2020, whether or not as payment for goods or services.</i> The Department was not a member of Stonewall in 2019 but in 2020 when we joined a membership fee of £2,500 + VAT was paid. This is not for goods or services but for a membership fee. 6. <i>Whether you intend to continue your membership of any Stonewall scheme in the future, and if so which.</i> We have recently renewed our participation in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme and intend to retain that membership.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/132
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	1. <i>Please could you supply the settlement date upon which your organisation's pay remit year commences</i> 2. <i>For each grade below the Senior Civil Service (SCS) in your organisation, please could you supply</i> <i>The name by which the grade is known in your organisation.</i> <i>The broad equivalent civil service grade (Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative Officer (AO), Executive Officer (EO), Higher Executive Officer (HEO), Senior Executive Officer (SEO), Grade 7, Grade 6). This may be multiple if grades have been merged.</i> <i>A brief description of the grade and how it differs from broadly equivalent grades.(e.g. National, London, Fast stream, Specialist requiring particular qualifications).</i> <i>The amount and area of any regional pay allowances that are paid on top of basic pay for this grade.</i> <i>The pay range minimum following the 2020 pay award. If the award is still pending, please supply the current minimum and the year to which this relates.</i> <i>The pay range maximum following the 2020 pay award. This may be the same as the minimum. If the award is still pending, please supply the current maximum and the year to which this relates.</i> <i>While progression is subject to pay negotiations each year and is paused for 2021, if the 2020 pay award was repeated, how many years it would take to go from minimum to maximum.</i>

	<i>Please indicate if the maximum is not achievable if the 2020 progression arrangements were repeated.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to your request. Please find below the information being released to you. 1. Please could you supply the settlement date upon which your organisation's pay remit year commences The settlement date upon which the organisation's pay remit year commences is 01 August, annually. 2. For each grade below the Senior Civil Service (SCS) in your organisation, please could you supply a. The name by which the grade is known in your organisation. b. The broad equivalent civil service grade (Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative e. The pay range minimum following the 2020 pay award. If the award is still pending, please supply the current minimum and the year to which this relates. f. The pay range maximum following the 2020 pay award. This may be the same as the minimum. If the award is still pending, please supply the current maximum and the year to which this relates. In response to question 2 a, b, e, f please refer to appendix A below. c. A brief description of the grade and how it differs from broadly equivalent grades. (e.g. National, London, Fast stream, Specialist requiring particular qualifications). The Northern Ireland Office utilises the Ministry of Justice grading structure which is the equivalent to the Civil Service grade structure as detailed in appendix A. d. The amount and area of any regional pay allowances that are paid on top of basic pay for this grade. The Northern Ireland Office provides a recruitment and retention allowance for staff based in Belfast at grades 6/7 and Band B. Band B staff can receive an allowance of up to £4,000 on their basic salary and grades 6/7 up to £6,000. 3. While progression is subject to pay negotiations each year and is paused for 2021, if the 2020 pay award was repeated, how many years it would take to go from minimum to maximum. Please indicate if the maximum is not achievable if the 2020 progression arrangements were repeated.

Time served progression was removed from the Civil Service in 2015 as part of the Spending Review, therefore there is not a set period of time it would take an individual to move from the minimum to the maximum of a pay range.

Appendix A – Departments response to questions 2 a,b,e,f

Pay Settlement - 2019/2020						
Grade	CS grade equivalent	CS grade description	Pay band minimum	Pay band maximum	Pay band minimum	Pay band maximum
			National	National	London	London
Band F	AA	Administrative Assistant	£17,209	£17,278	£19,058	£20,599
Band E	AO	Administrative Officer	£18,884	£20,420	£22,677	£24,312
Band D	EO	Executive Officer	£21,170	£25,350	£26,411	£30,324
Band C	HEO	Higher Executive Officer	£24,002	£31,973	£30,845	£38,373
Band B	SEO	Senior Executive Officer	£30,989	£41,095	£36,798	£47,591
	Grade 7		£43,958	£59,000	£52,845	£63,500
	Grade 6		£52,119	£72,000	£60,295	£76,000

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/134
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is a FOI request for all information relating to the handling of FOI request FOI/21/86 and internal review AP21/15.</i>
Response	I can confirm that information within scope of your original request is held by the Department. Please find attached information which is being released to you. As you can see some information has been redacted so as to facilitate this information release. Information has been redacted by way of section 40 (personal data) and some by way of section 36 (effective conduct of public affairs). Please also note that whilst some information is being released with redactions applied other information is being withheld in its entirety. This information is, as with the redactions, being withheld by way of section 40 (personal data) and section 36 (effective conduct of public affairs). <u>Section 36 (effective conduct of public affairs)</u> It is the Department's position that information relevant to your request is exempt by way of Section 36 (effective conduct of public affairs) 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

- Department Officials engaged in sensitive discussions require a safe space in which they can debate freely and frankly.
- Department Officials must be able to provide relevant advice in a protected space (without fear of future disclosure).
- Without this protected space Department officials would likely feel constrained in their ability to advise freely, frankly and fully when providing such advice. This, therefore, would likely to lead to less informative and candid advice being supplied in future Freedom of Information requests.

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 prejudice the Department's effective conduct of public affairs.

I should like to take this opportunity to confirm that the Department is relying on the second limb of the Section 36 exemption; would be likely to. Additionally, for clarity, the Department is also relying upon the following specific sub-sections:

36(2)(b)(i) the free and frank provision of advice

36(2)(b)(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation

36(2)(c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

For further information on Section 36 (effective conduct of public affairs) exemption under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioner's Office website: [Section 36 guidance notes](#).

Section 40 (personal data)

It is the Department's position that information relevant to your request is exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act. The information requested consists of personal information – names, contact details and

	other contextual information. The Department, therefore, considers it exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) of the Freedom of Information Act. The information is considered exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) as these person(s) could not reasonably expect that their personal information would be disclosed; therefore, in doing so would breach current data protection legislation. 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 Commissioner's Office website; Section 40 guidance notes.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/139
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is a freedom of information request to the Northern Ireland Office</i> <i>Please state:</i> <i>1. How many letters of assurance have been issued in relation to the Guildford pub bombings on 5 October 1974 and</i> <i>2. How many letters of assurance have been issued in relation to the Woolwich pub bombing on 7 November 1974.</i>
Response	Your request has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). 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.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/140
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is an information request relating to redundancy payments made by your department since the £95,000 ceiling was revoked on 12th February 2021.</i> <i>Please provide the following information:</i> <i>• How many redundancy payments over £95,000 have been made since the 12th of February 2021 and what was the total amount awarded in each case?</i> <i>• Was any non-monetary compensation awarded to supplement these payments, and if so could these forms of compensation be listed?</i> <i>• Were there any retrospective redundancy payments (above £95,000) made in this period, i.e. further payments made to civil servants who retired before February 2021?</i>

Response	I can confirm, following a review of all held information, that since 12 February 2021, the Department did not make any redundancy payments to any Departmental staff member.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/141																																																			
Month Issued	September 2021																																																			
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from your office. Please can you provide me with; how may flights were taken by your staff in the year 2019, and, where possible, what the air mileage was and to what countries these flights were taken? If air mileage is too costly to collate, please ignore this.</i>																																																			
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information relevant to your request. Please, therefore, find below the information being released to you. Please note The Department does not hold information in relation to air mileage. Flights taken by Northern Ireland Office staff in the year 2019 <table><tr><th>Departing</th><th>Arriving</th><th>Total of Flights</th></tr><tr><td>Aberdeen</td><td>Belfast</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Barcelona</td><td>Geneva</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Aberdeen</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Birmingham</td><td>57</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Bristol</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Cardiff</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Edinburgh</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Exeter</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Glasgow</td><td>11</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Isle Of Man</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Leeds Bradford</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Liverpool</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>London</td><td>1289</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Manchester</td><td>21</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Nottingham</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast</td><td>Southampton</td><td>3</td></tr></table>	Departing	Arriving	Total of Flights	Aberdeen	Belfast	1	Barcelona	Geneva	1	Belfast	Aberdeen	1	Belfast	Birmingham	57	Belfast	Bristol	1	Belfast	Cardiff	6	Belfast	Edinburgh	20	Belfast	Exeter	2	Belfast	Glasgow	11	Belfast	Isle Of Man	1	Belfast	Leeds Bradford	1	Belfast	Liverpool	5	Belfast	London	1289	Belfast	Manchester	21	Belfast	Nottingham	2	Belfast	Southampton	3
Departing	Arriving	Total of Flights																																																		
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Belfast	Southampton	3																																																		

	Birmingham	Belfast	55
	Birmingham	Dublin	1
	Bristol	Belfast	1
	Brussels	Dublin	1
	Brussels	London	2
	Cardiff	Belfast	4
	Dublin	Birmingham	1
	Dublin	Brussels	1
	Dublin	Edinburgh	1
	Dublin	Frankfurt	1
	Dublin	Glasgow	1
	Dublin	Isle Of Man	1
	Dublin	London	56
	Dublin	Paris C .d Gaulle	1
	Edinburgh	Belfast	19
	Edinburgh	Dublin	1
	Edinburgh	London	4
	Exeter	Belfast	1
	Exeter	Dublin	1
	Exeter	Manchester	1
	Geneva	London	2
	Glasgow	Belfast	13
	Glasgow	London	4
	Isle Of Man	Belfast	1
	Isle Of Man	Dublin	1
	Isle Of Man	London	1
	Lille	London	1
	Liverpool	Belfast	5
	London	Aberdeen	1
	London	Belfast	1247
	London	Brussels	2
	London	Dublin	63

	London	Edinburgh	4
	London	Glasgow	4
	London	Isle Of Man	1
	London	Lille	1
	London	Londonderry	7
	London	New York	5
	London	Newquay	1
	London	Washington	4
	Londonderry	London	8
	Londonderry	Manchester	1
	Manchester	Belfast	21
	Manchester	Exeter	1
	Manchester	Londonderry	1
	Milan	London	1
	New York	London	1
	Newquay	London	1
	Nottingham	Belfast	1
	Paris C .d Gaulle	Dublin	2
	Rome	Genoa	1
	Southampton	Belfast	3
	Washington	London	5
	Overall Total of Flights		2991

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/142
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Information sought:</i> 1. Records created after 1 January 2020 until 12 August 2021 relating to the budget and funding and constitution of “The Castlereagh Foundation”
Response	To clarify, the announcement made by the Secretary of State on 21 May 2021 concerned his intention to appoint an advisory committee to provide advice on the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-to-appoint-advisory-Committee-for-the-establishment-of-the-castlereagh-foundation>

Currently, 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 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:

Factors in favour of release

- 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.

Factors in favour of withholding

- 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 https://ico.org.uk/pmedia/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/22/144
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is an information request relating to payments made to charities and third sector organisations.</i> <i>Please provide the following information for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21:</i> <i>• The value of grants made to each of the organisations listed below. Please provide the information for each of the three financial years separately, and list all grants separately.</i> <i>• The value of loans made to each of the organisations listed below. Please provide the information for each of the three financial years separately, and list all loans separately.</i> <i>The payments made to charities and third sector organisations relate to the following only:</i> <i>• Operation Black Vote</i> <i>• U.K. Black Pride</i> <i>• Mermaids</i> <i>• Ozanne Foundation</i> <i>• Gendered Intelligence</i> <i>• British Medical Association</i> <i>• ActionAid UK</i> <i>• Hope Not Hate</i> <i>• Led by Donkeys</i>

	• <i>Extinction Rebellion</i> • <i>Migrants Organise</i> • <i>CLASS</i> • <i>Black Lives Matter</i> • <i>Action on Smoking and Health</i> • <i>Action on Smoking and Health Scotland</i> • <i>Action on Smoking and Health Wales</i> • <i>Breath 2025</i> • <i>Association of Directors of Public Health</i> • <i>Improving Performance in Practice (previously Public Management Associates)</i>
Response	I can confirm that the department has not made any grant and/or loan payments to these organisations in the years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/145
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request details of when Northern Ireland Office (NIO) buildings now fly the Union flag.</i> <i>DCMS changed its guidance on flag-flying so that UK government buildings are "encouraged to fly the Union flag all year around" rather than just designated days. This came into effect this summer from June 24:</i> https://www.gov.uk/guidance/designated-days-for-union-flag-flying#history <i>In Northern Ireland, designated days for flying the Union flag from government buildings are enshrined in law under Flags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.</i> <i>However, the Northern Ireland government buildings to which these regulations apply do not include the NIO's headquarters, Stormont House in the Stormont Estate. The regulations only mention Castle Buildings in the Stormont Estate:</i> https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2000/347/schedule/made <i>Therefore in light of this, please disclose the following:</i>

	1. <i>When will NIO's headquarters at Stormont House fly the Union flag now that this updated guidance has come into effect? Will it be flown every day, or how often and when?.</i> 2. <i>When did NIO's headquarters at Stormont House fly the Union flag under the previous guidance in place before this summer?</i> 3. <i>Please provide answers to Qs 1 and 2 in relation to any other NIO buildings which fly the Union flag.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested. Please find our responses to your questions below: 1. When will NIO's headquarters at Stormont House fly the Union flag now that this updated guidance has come into effect? Will it be flown every day, or how often and when? The Department is currently finalising its flag flying policy. As the information held relates to the formulation of government policy, it is the Department's position that this 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 have set out 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, the 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, other departmental officials would likely feel constrained in their ability to advise freely, frankly and fully when providing such advice. This would likely lead to less informative and candid advice, opinions and decision making.

	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 under sub-section 35(1)(a) Freedom of Information Act: Section 35(1)(a) - the formulation or development of government policy For further information on Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the website of the Information Commissioner's Office: https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf 2. When did NIO's headquarters at Stormont House fly the Union flag under the previous guidance in place before this summer? Stormont House is a UK Government Building, and therefore is not specified for the purpose of the Flags Regulations. A complete list of dates when the Union Flag was flown at Stormont House is not held by the Department. However, the Union flag was flown on dates specified in the Flags Regulations and additionally on certain national occasions in accordance with notifications issued to UK Government Departments by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. These have included Pride Month, Armed Forces Day, and other exceptional days for example, in recent memory the funeral of Captain Sir Tom Moore. 3. Please provide answers to Qs 1 and 2 in relation to any other NIO buildings which fly the Union flag. Following a review it has been reasonably determined that the Department does not hold this information.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/146
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000</i> <i>Please send me details for the period 2020-2021 on the following:</i> <i>a. The total value of the courier service contracts that were outsourced</i> <i>b. The name of your primary courier supplier</i>

	c. <i>The value of your primary supplier's contract</i> d. <i>The expiry date of that contract</i> e. <i>The total cost of the courier services that were not outsourced but managed in-house?</i> f. <i>The number of staff employed in managing the in-house contracts</i> g. <i>The number of vehicles either owned or leased to meet the in-house courier requirement</i> h. <i>The name and email of the person responsible for the management of courier services</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office does not have any courier service contracts.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/147
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Please find my request for information under the 2000 Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>Please send me a list of all items for home working in your department since March 2020 which cost more than £1,000.</i>
Response	Your request has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). I can confirm that following a review of all held information it has been determined that, for the period requested, there were no home working items that cost more than £1,000.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/148
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Please find my request for information under the 2000 Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>Please send me the total costs for home working equipment for officials in your department since March 2020.</i>
Response	Your request has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to your request. The total costs for home working equipment for officials in the Department since March 2020 was £22,688.99. It should be noted that this figure is calculated with only that equipment designated as for use by staff undertaking home working. Other costs, such as Department wide IT upgrades/infrastructure, has not been included as these are considered out of scope of this request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/149
Month Issued	September 2021

Request	Could you please tell me how many sick days civil servants in your department have taken each month per month since March 2020?																																				
Response	I can confirm that information within scope of your original request is held by the Department Please see the table below which sets out the number of days of sick absence taken per month since March 2020 up to and including June 2021. The department’s sick absence is reported to the Cabinet Office quarterly in arrears and the last absence figures reported were to June 2021: <table><tr><th>Month</th><th>March 2021</th><th>April</th><th>May</th><th>June</th><th>July</th><th>August</th><th>September</th><th>October</th></tr><tr><td>No of days</td><td>30</td><td>22</td><td>21</td><td>28</td><td>18</td><td>12</td><td>22</td><td>28</td></tr><tr><th>Month</th><th>November</th><th>December</th><th>January 2021</th><th>February</th><th>March</th><th>April</th><th>May</th><th>June</th></tr><tr><td>No of days</td><td>7</td><td>2</td><td>Fewer than 5</td><td>Fewer than 5</td><td>46</td><td>31</td><td>21</td><td>27</td></tr></table> <i>Fewer than 5</i> As can be seen some information is supplied in the format Fewer than 5. It is the Department’s position that a 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.	Month	March 2021	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	No of days	30	22	21	28	18	12	22	28	Month	November	December	January 2021	February	March	April	May	June	No of days	7	2	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	46	31	21	27
Month	March 2021	April	May	June	July	August	September	October																													
No of days	30	22	21	28	18	12	22	28																													
Month	November	December	January 2021	February	March	April	May	June																													
No of days	7	2	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	46	31	21	27																													

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/150
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>I am looking for information about bullying complaints made by civil servants. Please could you provide me with the following:</i> <i>1. How many civil servants in the department have made complaints that they have been bullied by another civil servant/staff member (note, this should include special advisers and politicians) in the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2021)? To be clear, I'm asking for information for 2019, 2020 and 2021. Please could you break this information down by year and gender?</i> <i>2. How many civil servants/staff in the department have faced civil service disciplinary investigations as a result of an accusation of bullying made against them by another civil servant in the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2021)? Please could you break this information down by year, gender? In each case, please could you state whether</i>

	<i>any misconduct was found and, if so, what type of disciplinary action was taken including verbal/written/final warnings, suspension, dismissal etc.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office operates a zero tolerance policy towards bullying behaviour. The policies and procedures followed by the department are designed to ensure all staff are treated with dignity and respect, to which the department is fully committed. In response to question one, I can confirm that the Department holds information within scope of your original request. As the number is fewer than five, the information is considered exempt by way of Section 40(2) (personal data) as these person(s) could not reasonably expect that their personal information would be disclosed; therefore, in doing so would breach current data protection legislation. <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 the resources of information, lead to the identification of individuals the present format – fewer than five – 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 In respect of question two, no civil servant/staff in the department has faced disciplinary investigations as a result of an accusation of bullying made against them by another civil servant, in the last three calendar years, up to and including August 2021.
FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/151
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>I am looking for information about sexual harassment complaints. Please could you provide me with the following:</i> <i>1. How many civil servants in the department have made complaints that they have been sexually harassed by another civil servant/staff member (note, this should include special advisers and politicians) in the last three calendar years (up to and</i>

	<i>including August 2021)? To be clear, I'm asking for information for 2019, 2020 and 2021. Please could you break this information down by year and gender?</i> <i>2. How many civil servants/staff in the department have faced civil service disciplinary investigations as a result of a sexual harassment claim made against them by another civil servant/staff member in the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2021)? Please could you break this information down by year, gender? In each case, please could you state whether any misconduct was found and, if so, what type of disciplinary action was taken including verbal/written/final warnings, suspension, dismissal etc.</i> <i>3. Please could you state in any of the cases above whether the police was notified of the staff member's sexual harassment complaint/if any investigation/charges were brought? Please could you break this information down by year?</i>
Response	In response to your questions for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 (up until the 24 August 2021, the date the Department received your request) - no civil servant in the department has made a complaint that they have been sexually harassed by another civil servant/staff member (this also includes, as requested, special advisers and politicians). As a result, no information is held in respect of questions two and three.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/152
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act and would like to know the following:</i> <i>1. Which percentage of the department's employees are currently working from home?</i> <i>2. Will the department's employees be expected to return to the office?</i> <i>If yes;</i> <i>3. When will employees be expected to return to the office?</i> <i>4. Will employees be returning to the office full-time or part-time?</i> <i>5. Does the department plan to offer hybrid working permanently?</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to your request. Please find below the information being released to you. 1. Which percentage of the department's employees are currently working from home? In August 48% of our employees worked from home. Please note that this figure fluctuates, on a monthly basis, but this is the current percentage of staff working from home.

	2. Will the department's employees be expected to return to the office? In line with other Civil Service departments, the NIO is moving towards a hybrid working model. This means that most colleagues will be spending between 40-60% of their time in the office and working at home for the remainder. 3. When will employees be expected to return to the office? In line with the easing of Covid restrictions, our employees in England and the completion of health and safety assessments, staff have begun to return to the office in line with our hybrid model. In Northern Ireland the current guidance is work from home where possible. 4. Will employees be returning to the office full-time or part-time? Hybrid working enables people to work part of their time from a workplace and part from home. Some roles require staff to be in the office all of the time but the majority of our staff will spend 40-60% of their time in the office and the remainder working from home. 5. Does the department plan to offer hybrid working permanently? Hybrid working is an informal, non-contractual arrangement, blending workplace and home working. These arrangements will be in place for the foreseeable future but will be subject to review from time to time.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/153
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I would like to request information under the Freedom of Information Act. The information that I require relates to a specific telephone maintenance contract.</i> <i>The contract information sent by the organisation previously has now expired please can you provide me with a new update of the telephone maintenance contract:</i> <i>Please can you send me the following contract information with regards to the organisation's telephone system maintenance contract (VOIP or PBX, other) for hardware and Software maintenance and support if all the information is still the same besides the contracts dates please send just the new contract dates. It would be much appreciated.</i>

1. *Contract Type: Maintenance, Managed, Shared (If so please state orgs)*
2. *Existing Supplier: If there is more than one supplier please split each contract up individually.*
3. *Annual Average Spend: The annual average spend for this contract and please provide the average spend over the past 3 years for each provider*
4. *Hardware Brand: The primary hardware brand of the organisation's telephone system.*
5. *Number of telephone users:*
6. *Contract Duration: please include any extension periods.*
7. *Contract Expiry Date: Please provide me with the day/month/year.*
8. *Contract Review Date: Please provide me with the day/month/year.*
9. *Application(s) running on PBX/VOIP systems: Applications that run on the actual PBX or VOIP system. E.g. Contact Centre, Communication Manager.*
10. *Telephone System Type: PBX, VOIP, Lync etc*
11. *Contract Description: Please provide me with a brief description of the overall service provided under this contract.*
12. *Go to Market: How where these services procured, please provide me with either the tender notice or the framework reference number. Please specify if procured through other routes.*
13. *Contact Detail: Of the person from within the organisation responsible for each contract full Contact details including full name, job title, direct contact number and direct email address.*

If the service support area has more than one provider for telephone maintenance, then can you please split each contract up individually for each provider?

If the contract is a managed service or is a contract that provides more than just telephone maintenance please can you send me all of the information specified above including the person from within the organisation responsible for that particular contract?

If the maintenance for telephone systems is maintained in-house, please can you provide me with:

1. *Number of telephone Users:*
2. *Hardware Brand: The primary hardware brand of the organisation's telephone system.*
3. *Application(s) running on PBX/VOIP systems: Applications that run on the actual PBX or VOIP system. E.g. Contact Centre, Communication Manager.*

	4. <i>Contact Detail: Of the person from with the organisation responsible for telephone maintenance full Contact details including full name, job title, direct contact number and direct email address.</i> <i>Also, if the contract is due to expire please provide me with the likely outcome of the expiring contract.</i> <i>If this is a new contract or a new supplier please can you provide me with a short list of suppliers that bid on this service/support contract?</i>		
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested. Please find our responses to your questions below:		
	Item No.	London	Belfast
	1	Supplied by MOU with Cabinet Office	Supplied by SLA with IT Assist
	2	Information not held	Information not held
	3	Information not held	Information not held
	4	Avaya	Cisco
	5	80	204
	6	Information not held	Information not held
	7	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract
	8	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract
	9	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract
	10	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract	See annexe A This information is not held due to no contract
	11	Managed telephone service including handsets	Managed telephone service including handsets
	12	See annexe A	See annexe A
	13	See annexe B	See Annexe B
	1	Information not held as there is no in house maintenance team	Information not held as there is no in house maintenance team
	2		
3			

	4		
	5		
	<u>Annexe A</u> The Northern Ireland Office received 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 and The Cabinet Office (CO). 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 and Cabinet Office at foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk <u>Annexe B</u> Personal data may be disclosed in response to an FOI request if its disclosure will not contravene any of the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act. Where disclosure would be inconsistent with any of those data protection principles, the personal data is exempt from disclosure by virtue of section 40 of the FOIA. The relevant principle to consider in this instance is the first data protection principle, which states that personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless a condition in schedule 2, and for sensitive personal data, also a condition in schedule 3 of the DPA is met. In this case I judge it would be unlawful/unfair to disclose this personal data because those concerned would not be aware of the disclosure or that their data was to be disclosed in this manner. All individuals have a clear and strong expectation that their personal data will be held in accordance with the DPA and not disclosed to the public under the FOIA. The first data protection principle would therefore be breached therefore the schedules or further principles do not need to be considered. For general information, please contact enquiries@nio.gov.uk		

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/155
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>The information I'm requesting is regarding the software contracts that the organisation uses, for the following fields.</i> • Enterprise Resource Planning Software Solution (ERP): • Primary Customer Relationship Management Solution (CRM): For example, Salesforce, Lagan CRM, Microsoft Dynamics; software of this nature. • Primary Human Resources (HR) and Payroll Software Solution: For example, iTrent, ResourceLink, HealthRoster; software of this nature. • The organisation's primary corporate Finance Software Solution: For example, Agresso, Integra, Sapphire Systems; software of this nature.

	1. Name of Supplier: Can you please provide me with the software provider for each contract? 2. The brand of the software: Can you please provide me with the actual name of the software. Please do not provide me with the supplier name again please provide me with the actual software name. 3. Description of the contract: Can you please provide me with detailed information about this contract and please state if upgrade, maintenance and support is included. 4. Please also list the software modules included in these contracts. 5. Number of Users/Licenses: What is the total number of user/licenses for this contract? 6. Annual Spend: What is the annual average spend for each contract? 7. Contract Duration: What is the duration of the contract please include any available extensions within the contract. 8. Contract Start Date: What is the start date of this contract? Please include month and year of the contract. DD-MM-YY or MM-YY. 9. Contract Expiry: What is the expiry date of this contract? Please include month and year of the contract. DD-MM-YY or MM-YY. 10. Contract Review Date: What is the review date of this contract? Please include month and year of the contract. If this cannot be provide please provide me estimates of when the contract is likely to be reviewed. DD-MM-YY or MM-YY. 11. Contact Details: I require the full contact details of the person within the organisation responsible for this particular software contract (name, job title, email, contact number).
Response	The Northern Ireland Office does not use ERP or CRM solutions The primary HR and payroll software used by the Northern Ireland Office is provided by the Ministry of Justice. The information requested is, therefore not held by this department. This information may be available from the Ministry of justice who can be contacted at data.access@justice.gov.uk. The Northern Ireland Office receives their managed corporate finance solution 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

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/156
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act please provide me with the following:</i>

	1. The number of Ministerial cars operated by the Department including: 2. The make and model of the Ministerial cars operated by the Department. 3. The type of fuel each Ministerial car uses, including if any are hybrid, electric or alternative fuel vehicles. 4. The year each Ministerial car was brought into operation.
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and it has been determined that the information you have asked for is not held by the Department as we do not operate Ministerial cars.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/158
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Please provide all documentation held by former Northern Ireland Secretary of State Karen Bradley that pertains to the company Dalradian and its planning application for a goldmine in the Sperrin Mountains.</i> <i>This should include, but not be limited to, correspondence, calendar events, minutes of meetings and any reports/memos regarding the company and its plans during her time with the NIO from January 2018 to end of July 2019.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and it has been determined that no information within scope of your request is held by the Department.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/160
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Has the Northern Ireland Office conducted any planning for the possibility of a Border Poll in Northern Ireland since the EU referendum of 2016?</i> <i>If yes, can you provide details of these plans?</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 your request would require a manual review of all paper and all electronically held information. It is this lengthy review, in terms of both historical date range and potential 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. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that this refusal notice should not be taken to mean that the Department has a large volume of in-scope relevant information relating to your original request. Rather, it is the Department's position that we have estimated that to undertake a system-wide review of held information for the time period requested would likely exceed the limit set out at section 12 (appropriate limit). Furthermore, it cannot be taken to mean that, in fact, the Department holds any in-scope information relevant to your request. One possible option to bring your request under the appropriate limit would be to narrow your timeframe to the most recent 12 months. It should be noted that if you re-submit a reframed question, this will be handled as a new request under the appropriate legislation, and there is still the possibility that this refined request could also be subject to the application of the section 12 provisions (or indeed any of the other 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. For further information on Section 12 (appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act please visit the independent regulators, the Information Commissioner's Office, website: Section 12 guidance
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/161
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am aware that the current contract to supply Executive Car Services to the NIO is due to expire on the 31/10/2021.</i> <i>Can you advise of any plans to retender this contract and how the tender will be advertised?</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Department holds information relevant to your request. Please find below the information being released to you. In relation to your request, the method of ongoing procurement for this service has not yet been agreed.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/162
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to request under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) information about flights taken by department ministers.</i>

	<i>Please would you disclose for the last six financial years:</i> <i>1. Number of flights taken by ministers – if possible, broken down by a. domestic and b. international</i> <i>2. Number of air miles accrued by ministers – if possible, broken down by a. domestic and b. international</i> <i>3. Of the above flights/air miles, how many were taken in private jets?</i> <i>4. How tonnes of CO2 or CO2e from the flights were offset?</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 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 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: Removing the request for the air miles accrued by ministers or the amount of CO2 that the flights produced as we do not hold this information. Instead, focussing on the number of flights taken and the proportion of these that were in private jets. Also, by narrowing the time frame to 12 months. 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 guidance
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/163
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).</i> <i>I would like to be provided with the following information regarding electric vehicles:</i> <i>1) How many electric vehicles are currently in your fleet?</i> <i>2) How many vehicles (both electric and internal combustion engine vehicles) in total make up your fleet?</i> <i>3) Please share any plans to acquire more electric vehicles</i>
Response	Please see response to your questions below, 1) At present the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) have no electric vehicles in our fleet. 2) The NIO currently have 2 internal combustion engine cars in our fleet. 3) We plan to investigate the possible feasibility of electric vehicles when our current car contract is up for renewal.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/167
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to make an request for all the information for which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000</i> <i>Please send me:</i> <i>• The number of registered sex offenders, if any, working in your department</i> <i>• The number of people with drug related convictions, if any, working in your department</i>

Response	It has been estimated by the Department that to fully satisfy element two of your 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 element two of your request would require a manual review of all paper and all electronically held information (namely personal files and returned security vetting forms). All staff are subject to security vetting before taking up employment and any criminal convictions are assessed during this process. Where a conviction is assessed to be low risk because of the age of the conviction, the minor nature of the offence, etc., an offer of employment will still be made. This decision is recorded however the specifics of the offences are not. Therefore, to definitively determine whether anyone working for the Department has had any sort of “drug related conviction” would require a manual review of all personal records to locate relevant information. 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. As your request is rather broad, wide reaching in nature and we are not sure of the type or focus of the information you are interested in it is difficult, at this stage, for us to be able to offer any advice or assistance (as required by section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act) to you as to how to narrow your request under the above mentioned appropriate limit. Therefore it maybe help if you are able to narrow the scope of your request down and indicate the type of information you are interested in. 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
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	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 notes.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/168
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>The number of internal flights, including any return flights, taken by the Secretary of State or Junior Ministers between December 2019 and July 2021 including:</i> <i>1. The Minister(s) who took the flight and the number of people who accompanied them.</i> <i>2. The destination of the flight and the airport where the flight took off from.</i> <i>3. A short summary of the reason for the flight.</i> <i>4. The cost of the flight for each passenger.</i> <i>5. The class of the flight, i.e. standard, business, first, private or charter</i> <i>I am after all flights within the United Kingdom, so including Northern Ireland.</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 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 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: -Limit the date range of your request to the last 12 months -Limit your request to just one person; the Secretary of State or a Junior Minister for example -Remove the second element to point one; “and the number of people who accompanied them” 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 notes.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/169
Month Issued	September 2021
Request	<i>Has the Northern Ireland Office conducted any planning for the possibility of a Border Poll in Northern Ireland since 1st November 2020 to 14th September 2021?</i> <i>If yes, can you provide details of these plans?</i>
Response	We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. 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.