

REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING INFORMATION

1. Exemptions under section 30(b)(i) (free and frank provision of advice) of FOISA apply to some of the information requested. This exemption applies because disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit substantially the free and frank provision of advice for the purposes of deliberation. The exemption recognises the need for Ministers and officials to have a private space within which to give and seek advice and views before reaching a settled public position - which will be given in whatever final press and other public lines are used.
2. This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemptions. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemptions. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open, transparent and accountable government, and to inform public debate. However, there is a greater public interest in allowing a private space within which officials can express free and frank advice to each other, and to Ministers.
3. An exemption under section 38(1)(b) (Personal Data Relating to a Third Party) of FOISA also applies to a small amount of the information requested because it is personal data of a third party, i.e. contact details of individuals.
4. This exemption is not subject to the 'public interest test', so we are not required to consider if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption.