

## Exemptions applied

An exemption under **section 27(2)** of FOISA applies to some of the information you have requested. This exemption applies because the information relates to a programme of research which is being undertaken where a final report on the research will be published.

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 exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. 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 the research to continue to progress unimpeded until such time as the final report is ready for publication. Premature disclosure of information regarding progress could hinder the researchers in encouraging participation in the research, as well as risking that some findings could be misinterpreted where research was based on very limited input at a particular stage. Therefore it is not in the public interest to release partial information about the research before it has been quality checked and various sources of evidence drawn together by the researchers.

An exemption under **section 30(c)** of FOISA also applies to some of the information you have requested. This exemption applies because disclosure would otherwise prejudice substantially, or be likely to prejudice substantially, the effective conduct of public affairs. It is essential that Rocket Science is able to communicate fully with the Scottish Government on the research, including providing draft copies of reports to ensure that we are aware of its progress along with updates on discussions with particular groups or organisations. Disclosing the content of these draft reports is likely to undermine the research as the findings within them are not finalised and are subject to change. Similarly disclosing details of discussions with individual organisations without their consent could harm their willingness to engage in Scottish Government research or policy development in future. This would significantly harm the Government's ability to carry out research effectively.

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 exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. We recognise that there is some public interest in release as part of open, transparent and accountable government, and to inform public debate. However, there is a greater public interest in allowing Rocket Science to provide updates to the Scottish Government in confidence about the progress of the research, including providing updates about discussions with particular organisations. This is essential so that decisions on the research can be taken based on evidence. Premature disclosure is likely to undermine the full and frank discussion on the research between Rocket Science and the organisations it is working with on the research,

which in turn will undermine the quality of the policy making process, which would not be in the public interest.

Finally, an exemption under **section 38(1)(b)** of FOISA applies to some of the information you have requested because it is personal data of a third party, i.e. names and contact details of non-senior staff at Rocket Science and in the Scottish Government and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in data protection legislation.

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.