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Ref: 13/922
Mincom: EMAIL/16327/2013

26 September 2013

Dear Sir,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000: BITCOIN

Thank you for your Freedom of Information enquiry of 17 December.

You asked for the following information -

- Minutes for all meetings about Bitcoin or where Bitcoin is mentioned (Bitcoin is an online digital crypto currency)

I can confirm that, after a search of our records, HM Treasury holds a small amount of information relevant to your request.

We consider that the information that we have identified engages the exemptions at section 31(1)(a) (prevention or detection of crime) and section 35(1)(a) (formulation of government policy) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 31 and section 35 are qualified exemptions that are subject to a balancing of the public interest arguments.

The information that you have requested relates to areas where information is being shared and policy discussions are currently ongoing. In favour of disclosure, we recognise the inherent public interest in transparency and accountability of public authorities. We also recognise the broader public interest in promoting public understanding of some of the areas that public authorities and law enforcement agencies are working on at this time.

In favour of withholding, the Information Commissioner has recognised that policy development needs a degree of freedom to enable the process to work effectively. We consider that there is a strong public interest in protecting information that has been shared between government departments in order to develop properly informed policies. We also consider that there is a strong public interest in withholding information where release would be likely to have a detrimental impact on the ongoing formulation of policy in this area. We also consider there is a strong public interest in protecting information where disclosure may undermine the objectives of law enforcement and the governance structures that support those objectives.

Accordingly, we consider the public interest balances in favour of the withholding of this information at this time as disclosure may compromise the policy making process and would or would be likely to lead to poorer decision making.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. It will help us if you quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely
Chrisine Woodrow

Chrisitne Woodrow
Information Rights Unit

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

If you are not happy with this reply, you may request a review by writing to HM Treasury, Information Rights Unit, 2/W1, 1 Horse Guards Road, London SW1A 2HQ.

Email FOI.responses@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk

Any review request must be made within 2 months of the date of this letter.

It would assist our review if you set out which aspects of the reply concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by HM Treasury. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliff House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.