



# Department for Business Innovation & Skills

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29 June 2015  
BIS Reference: FOI2015-08218

Dear Mr Heath,

## INTERNAL REVIEW OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST FOI2015/08218

I am writing in response to your request for an internal review of the above case. I have now reviewed the information which was withheld by the Department in its response to your original request. I set out my decision below.

Your original request was made on 1 May and asked for the following information:

- How many computers are still running Windows XP?
- When do you anticipate you will transition all of these XP machines to a new operating system? Which operating system are you switching these machines to?
- What parts of the department are these machines mainly used in?
- How are you securing the XP machines in the interim period before their operating system is replaced?
- Have you taken out an Extended Support deal with Microsoft to update these XP machines?
- What is the cost of this Extended Support deal?
- When does this Extended Support deal expire?

The Department responded to your request on 1 June 2015 (the Response). The Response explained that BIS was using the Section 31(1)(A) exemption in rejecting the request, on the grounds that it could cause potential harm to the security of the Department's IT systems if disclosure of the operating system in use was made available to the public domain.

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), I have conducted an internal review of the original response. In performing this review I have considered whether the original response to your request was correct.

Whilst in principle, the question of whether or not a government department uses specific software may be require only a simple response, a process of elimination could make it easier for a potential attacker using such information to identify weaknesses in a Department's IT infrastructure. The refusal to answer such a question where any vulnerability could be revealed is a standard response and has the support of other agencies whose responsibility it is to advise of matters that can affect national security.

Having considered the information being withheld in the light of your request for an internal review, I have concluded that the exemption should stand as the risk of attacks from malevolent agencies is a real threat to all government departments, as is evidenced by numerous publicised attacks appearing in press publications where IT systems have been breached and data stolen, irrespective of the organisation being public or private sector. In that respect, I am content that the principle set out in Section 31 (1)(A) has been applied appropriately.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Karen Pile  
Deputy Director / Information Technology Directorate  
BIS