



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
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14 October 2011

By email only  
[request-87854-2865f389@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-87854-2865f389@whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Cundick,

**Freedom of Information Request –  
Counsellors of State 1952 – present day**

Thank you for your request for information about Counsellors of State, received 3 October 2011. Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested information on "Councils of State" that are formed when Her Majesty the Queen delegates certain of her powers because she is going to be out of the country or is otherwise indisposed. You also ask for the following specific information;

1. On what dates Her Majesty the Queen has been absent or otherwise indisposed and a Council of State was formed for the period from 1952 until the present day inclusive.
2. Who the specific Counsellors of State were on each individual occasion during the same period.
3. What actions, if any, were undertaken by the Counsellors of State on Her Majesty's behalf, during each individual period of absence (any Privy Council Meetings held, documents signed, addresses from Parliament etc.)

Outside the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, I should explain that responsibility for the appointment of Counsellors of State rests with the Crown Office, and not the Privy Council Office. However, in order to be helpful to you, I can provide the following information:

Counsellors of State are senior members of the British Royal family to whom The Queen delegates certain state functions and powers, specified in the Regency Acts, when she is abroad or unavailable for other reasons. Any two Counsellors of State may preside over Privy Council meetings and the current Counsellors who may be nominated are HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, HRH The Prince of Wales, HRH The Duke of Cambridge, HRH Prince Henry of Wales and HRH The Duke of York.

In response to your specific questions, I should explain that, under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, a public authority is not required to provide information

in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. The information you request regarding Her Majesty's periods of absence from the UK is available on the official website of the British Monarchy:

[www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/RoyalVisits/Outwardstatevisitssince1952.aspx](http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/RoyalVisits/Outwardstatevisitssince1952.aspx)

and the information about the appointment of specific Counsellors of State is set out in Letters Patent which are prepared by the Crown Office and available for public inspection at the National Archives in Kew. For details of access arrangements, please see their web site: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

Information on the actions taken by Counsellors of State at Privy Council meetings (the only area for which we have responsibility) is also exempt under Section 21 as records of Privy Council Meetings can be found on our web site, indexed by date, and historical records of Privy Council Meetings are available for public inspection at the National Archives in Kew (as above).

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to: The Clerk of the Council at the above address.

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

Yours sincerely



Margaret Newell