

Jen Persson
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6 October 2015

Dear Jen Persson,

Thank you for your request for information from the British Museum. Your request has been dealt with in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Your request, received in the Museum on 8 September 2015, was:

Please provide copies of communications since April 2015 and any associated documents on the future plans, confirmed or potential, for your collections housed at Blythe House and expected wider impact changes will have on archives, public access and other activity. This should include business case and timeline for the contents (collections) and infrastructure (building /site).

Please confirm the total number of British Museum objects housed/affected and/or staff affected by plans. (ref:
https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/departments/prints_and_drawings/facilities_and_services/study_room.aspx)

These should be from or between the following parties in which you are involved:
The British Museum or responsible parties The Department of Culture, Media and Sport Blythe House Third parties which may be involved in decision making, rehousing or sales Third parties such as other affected museums.

In response I can confirm the Museum holds information within the scope of your request. This comprises communications and associated documents dated from April 2015 on the future plans, confirmed or potential, for the Museum's collection at Blythe House and on the expected wider impact changes will have on archives, public access and other activity including any business case and timeline for the for the contents (collections) and infrastructure (building /site) between the Museum and any third parties which may be involved in decision making, rehousing or sales including the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and other affected museums.

This information is exempt from disclosure under section 36 (2) (b) (i) and (ii) of the Freedom of Information Act where, in the reasonable opinion of the qualified person, disclosure would, or would be likely to inhibit the free and frank provision of advice and the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation. Some information is also exempt from disclosure under section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act as its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the British Museum, other affected museums and HM Government.

Section 36 is a qualified exemption and in applying the public interest test to this exemption in this case, the Museum acknowledges that there may be public interest in promoting transparency about how decisions are made by public bodies, to remove any suspicion of manipulation of the facts and to ensure that public money is being managed and used

effectively. However this is outweighed in this case by the need for the Museum and the parties involved in this project to have a safe space in which to fully consider their policy options to enable them to reach impartial and appropriate decisions. Potential disclosure of such information would inhibit the ability of staff and others to express themselves openly, honestly and completely and to explore extreme options when providing advice or giving their views as part of the process of deliberation. Any loss of frankness and candour would damage the quality of advice and deliberation and may lead to poor decision-making. The Museum therefore concludes that the public interest in maintaining this exemption in this case outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 43 is also a qualified exemption and in applying the public interest test to this exemption in this case, the Museum acknowledges that there may be public interest in facilitating the accountability and transparency of public authorities for decisions taken by them and in the spending of public money. However this is outweighed in this case by the need for the Museum and the parties involved in this project to be able to negotiate in private between themselves and with commercial third parties. Whilst negotiations are on-going between the parties involved, disclosure of commercially sensitive financial information relating to this project would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the Museum, the other affected national museums and the government in any such negotiations. The Museum therefore concludes that the public interest in maintaining this exemption in this case outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

In response to the second part of your request, we do not hold information on the total number of Museum items housed at Blythe House, nor on the number of objects or the number of staff who may be affected by any plans for the future of Blythe House as plans have not yet been finalised.

This concludes the response to your request. I hope this information is helpful. If you are dissatisfied with this response and you wish to make a complaint about how we handled your request, please contact me in the first instance. Your complaint will be handled under our internal complaints procedure and you will receive a response within 20 working days of receipt.

If you remain dissatisfied with the way your request has been handled following the outcome of our internal review, you have a further right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. To make such an application please contact

FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

You can also contact the ICO Helpline on 0303 123 1113 or complete the online complaint form at: <http://www.ico.gov.uk/complaints/getting.aspx>

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Denvir
Information Manager
Legal Services