



Ally Tibbett

request-596063-eaf89e77@whatdotheyknow.com

6 September 2019

Dear Mr Tibbett

**Freedom Of Information Request DB 1827**

Thank you for your email sent to the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland which we received on 8 August.

You asked for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- *How much has the Scotland Office spent on commissioning research or polling into UK citizen's attitudes toward the union, Scottish devolution and Scottish independence in the last three years? Please use a broad interpretation of research. For example, this should include, but should not be limited to, consultation, focus groups, desk research, social listening, persona development or other qualitative methods, as well as more formal surveys and polling.*
- *Please provide an itemised breakdown of any expenditure where one or more studies or polls have been commissioned. This should include details of the supplier, the date commissioned, the cost, and a short summary of the work undertaken.*
- *Please supply any outputs of research into the topic of the Union, Scottish Devolution and Scottish Independence, held by the Scotland Office - even if it was commissioned by another public sector body or government department. This could include reports, statistical tables, electronic presentations, or audio and video recordings of interviews.*
- *Wherever possible, I would prefer not to receive the requested information in pdf format files. Please supply data in a machine readable format such as MS Excel or CSV.*
- *To be clear, I do not seek any records that relate to the internal policy response or discussions civil servants may have generated in relation to these research materials. Just the research itself.*

Some of the information you requested is exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and the Office is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has not commissioned its own research or polling in the last three years.

However, it contributed £14,750 to social research into attitudes towards devolution conducted through the Cabinet Office which reported in May 2018. All central government contracts over £10,000 are published through transparency data at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

The other information you requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act), as it relates to the formulation or development of government policy.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and we have considered the public interest for and against disclosing the information. The Office recognises the decisions ministers make may have a significant impact on the lives of people across the UK. These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. For this reason it is important that Ministers make high quality decisions informed by full consideration of the available data.

Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made in relation to your request you may ask for an internal review. A request for an internal review should be addressed to:

FOI Officer  
1 Melville Crescent  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7HW

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 contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

**FOI Officer**  
**Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland**