



Department for Business Innovation & Skills

UK Trade & Investment
Strategic Relationship Management
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David Hough

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BIS reference: 13/0108
Date: 18 February 2013

Dear Mr Hough

Freedom of Information Request – Reference: 13/0108

Thank you for your email of 19 January where you requested information about the meetings which 'ministers' and 'others' have had with companies as part of the Strategic Relations initiative since June 2011. I can confirm that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills holds information on part of your request relating to meetings with ministers between June 2011 and July 2012.

For reference, the list of companies which are included in the Strategic Relations initiative can be found on the UK Trade and Investment website:
<http://www.ukti.gov.uk/uktihome/item/203560.html>.

The Department publishes information about the meetings its Ministers have had after each quarter. Information that is already in the public domain is exempt from Freedom of Information requests under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act. However for your convenience I have attached details on the ministers' meetings you have requested.

Please note that information relating to ministers' meetings from August 2012 to the present has not yet been cleared for publication but will be published in the near future at the following website:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=&publication_filter_option=transparency-data&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=department-for-business-innovation-skills&direction=before&date=2013-02-01.

Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts information which a public authority intends to publish at a future date, therefore information on meetings between August 2012 and the date of your request is withheld. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and we have therefore considered the public interest test. There is a public interest in information about who Ministers are meeting with regarding Government initiatives as this leads to greater transparency in government. However, the best use of public resources would be applied in pulling this information together, ensuring the information is accurate and published in a consistent and comprehensive format, rather than issuing it in a piecemeal fashion. This information is still being

checked prior to publication. Please be assured that the Department is committed to publishing this information. Having considered the public interest test, the Department's decision is to withhold the requested information. Meeting information is usually published within three to four months after the end of a quarter

With regards to the other part of your request, relating to information on meetings which 'others' have had with companies as part of the Strategic Relations initiative since June 2011. It is difficult for me to complete this part of your request because it is not clear precisely who you mean by 'others'. If by 'others' you are referring to everyone in the Department who is not a Minister, then in order to provide you with all the information falling within the scope of your request I would need to ask all officials and Special Advisors in the whole Department to confirm whether they have had meetings with the companies in question since June 2011. From our preliminary assessment, due to the number of individuals this would involve this would exceed the cost limit of £600 provided under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. This represents the estimated cost of spending 3.5 working days: (i) determining whether the department holds the information, and (ii) locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit.

It would be helpful if you could refine your request by providing more specific details as to the information you particularly wish to obtain. Options for refining this request could include, for example, narrowing it down to special advisors only, or specify only civil servants at Grade 2 (Director General) and above. We would be happy to consider whether any revised request could be dealt with within the cost limit.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to: foi.requests@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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,

UKTI Strategic Relationship Management