



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

27 October 2023

Dear Mr Scott

Our ref: FOI2023/11229

Thank you for your email of 29 September which has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your full request is attached.

This was a meeting with the CEO and the UK Head of Country of BP.

The Cabinet Office holds information in scope of the remainder of your request. This engages sections 35(1)(a), and 43(2) of the Act.

Section 35(1)(a)

This is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of public interest favours releasing or withholding this information.

Public interests in favour of disclosing the information

The Cabinet Office recognises that there is a strong public interest in understanding the government's role in supporting and regulating business.

Public interests in favour of maintaining the exemption

There is a very strong public interest in preserving the confidentiality of Ministerial deliberations because of the contribution the confidentiality of these discussions makes to good government. It is important that the Prime Minister and his Ministers and advisers retain the ability to debate issues relating to policy formulation freely and in confidence and how, collectively, government intervenes to promote a stable macroeconomic framework to foster economic growth and prosperity.

Balance of public interest

This 'live' character of the policy issues strengthens the public interests in withholding the information. Disclosure would be a gross intrusion into the protected space required for Ministers and those they choose to advise them to consider policy. For these reasons, I consider that the public interest strongly favours maintaining the exemption.

Section 43(2)

The exemption relates to information the disclosure of which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). It is engaged because the information in question discloses commercially sensitive information about the outlook of the businesses attending the meeting. This is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of public interest favours releasing or withholding this information.

Public interests in favour of disclosing the information

The Cabinet Office understands that there is a strong public interest in understanding the government's relations with business and how the government works with business to develop appropriate economic policies.

Public interests in favour of maintaining the exemption

There is a very strong public interest in commercial organisations being able to manage their affairs privately and to represent their interests to central government in confidence. These representations are an important source of policy information and advice for the Government. These representations have a positive commercial benefit since they ensure that the Government is able to take their views into account. This helps Government economic policy formulation to the benefit of all UK citizens.

Disclosure of this information so soon after it was provided would make commercial enterprises reluctant to make representations to the Government in the future and this would harm their commercial interests. There is a very strong public interest in the success of UK businesses.

Balance of public interest

The information you requested had only recently been created at the time your request was received. The fact that the information is closely connected to 'live' policy issues further strengthens the public interests in maintaining the exemptions and diminishes the public interest in disclosure. For these reasons, I consider that the public interest strongly favours maintaining the exemption.

Yours sincerely

NS Howard

NICHOLAS HOWARD

Mr Russell Scott

Incoming request

Please can you answer the following FOI request.

BACKGROUND INFO:

On the 09-01-23 Rishi Sunak meet with BP plc to discuss "BP's investment in energy security and net zero transition".

The meeting was recorded in the cabinet office ministerial transparency data.

link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-march-2023>

MY REQUEST:

- 1 - Please confirm if you hold a copy of meeting minutes for this meeting?
- 2 - If the answer to question 1 is yes, please provide a copy.
- 3 - Please also provide a copy of the meeting attendance list, agenda and a copy of any ministerial briefing documents issued to Rishi Sunak prior to the meeting.



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If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received from this office in relation to any aspect of your request, you may ask for an internal review.

You should contact:

Head of Freedom of Information
Cabinet Office
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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