ANNEX A

FOI DOF/2025-0303

Request

1. **Departmental Oversight and Governance**
   - Has the Department of Finance participated in any project boards, steering groups, or oversight committees relating to the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project?
   - If so, please provide the names and positions of DoF representatives and the periods during which they served.

2. **Assurance and Project Management**
   - What assurance or project management frameworks (e.g., business case review, gateway reviews, PRINCE2, etc.) has DoF applied or required for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project?
   - Please provide any DoF guidance or documentation issued to project partners regarding project management or assurance processes for this project.

3. **Budgetary Oversight**
   - Has DoF received or reviewed budget updates, financial reports, or expenditure summaries for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project?
   - If so, please specify the frequency of such updates and provide copies of the most recent budget and expenditure reports submitted to DoF.

4. **Risk Management**
   - Has DoF received or reviewed risk registers or risk assessments for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project?
   - Please provide the latest risk register or a summary of key risks identified by DoF in relation to this project.

5. **Communications and Decision-Making**

Please provide copies of all correspondence (including emails, meeting minutes, or briefing notes) between DoF and the following parties regarding the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project over the past six months:

- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Belfast Region City Deal Programme Office or Steering Group
- Belfast City Council (as Accountable Body)

6. **Landowner Permissions and Project Approvals**
   - Has DoF been involved in discussions or decisions regarding landowner permissions, including those relating to Kilbroney Forest Park or the proposed gondola in Rostrevor, as part of its BRCD oversight role?
   - If so, please provide details of these discussions, including dates and outcomes.

7. **Request for Documentation**

Please provide copies of the following documents, if held by DoF:

- The current risk register or summary of risks for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project
- The most recent project budget and expenditure data reviewed by DoF
- Relevant guidance or assurance documentation issued by DoF for BRCD projects

DoF Response

I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested.

Some of the information you have 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 Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

Q1: (**Departmental Oversight and Governance)**
A DoF official attended DfE's Casework Committee for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project on 30 September 2021 in an observer capacity and did not participate.

Q2: (Assurance and Project Management)
Standard NICS assurance and project management frameworks applied, guidance on which is publicly available online.

This is where Section 21 has been applied, For convenience links below:

Business case followed BBCNI Better Business Cases NI | Department of Finance; the business case review refers to following CPD strategy and guidance in respect of procurement strategy (Procurement policy and guidance | Department of Finance) and PRINCE2 in respect of project management (Programme and Project Management | Department of Finance).

Q3: (Budgetary Oversight)
In the Opening budget position for 2024-25, £570k was allocated for the Mournes Gateway project. In the 2024-25 January monitoring exercise, this was reduced to £500k. (*Annex B*)

As part of DoF's expenditure approval role, DoF reviewed the financial/budget forecast profiles included within the business case submission to DoF in December 2021 and subsequent business case addendum submission to DoF in March 2024.

On an annual basis, DoF receives profiles per project per Deal. (*Annex C*). The City and Growth Deals Division has oversight of all City and Growth Deal funding, including adjustments required throughout the year. Budget allocations and in-year adjustments are managed by DoF's Central Expenditure Division through the normal Budget and In-Year processes.

Q4: (Risk Management)

In DoF's expenditure approval role, DoF Supply reviewed the risk assessment submitted via DfE as part of the business case and business case addendum submissions in December 2021 and March 2024, respectively.

DoF does not hold the latest Project Risk Register nor has DoF identified key risks in relation to this project. DoF has an oversight role of the City and Growth Deals initiative and does not receive or review project-level risk registers or assessments.

Q5: (Communications and Decision-Making)
No information held.

Q6: (Landowner Permissions and Project Approvals)
No information held.

Q7: (Request for Documentation)
Please provide copies of the following documents, if held by DoF:

- The current risk register or summary of risks for the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project

Not held by DoF.

- The most recent project budget and expenditure data reviewed by DoF

See response to Q3 above, documents at Annex B and C.

- Relevant guidance or assurance documentation issued by DoF for BRCD projects

See response to Q2 above.