

FOI DOF 2026-0263 - Annex L

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST			
Request Ref:	DoF/2026-0263		
Request summary:	Communications between Department of Finance and the Department for Communities regarding the department's draft action plan for the Ulster-Scots and Irish language strategies between 9 April 2025 and today.		
Information details:	Exemption applied	Disclosure	Non-disclosure
(Please complete both columns to show all factors have been considered)			
<p>Emails between DfC and DoF discussing Ulster-Scots and Irish language action plan and strategy development.</p>	<p>Section 35 - Formulation of government policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To show compliance with the FOI Act by disclosing information held by the Department as a Public Authority. There is a general public interest in the accountability, openness and transparency of government, and to promote public understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disclosure would weaken Ministers' ability to discuss controversial and sensitive topics free from premature public scrutiny. Ministers must be able to discuss policy freely and frankly, exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications. The candour of all involved would be affected by their assessment of whether the content of the discussions will be disclosed prematurely. If discussions were routinely made public there is a risk that Ministers may feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result the quality of debate underlying collective decision making would decline, leading to worse informed and poorer decision making. Language policy is still evolving, and positions may change. Since the information reflects developing and provisional views which may change; disclosure risks misleading stakeholders. Further to this, addressing misinterpretation of incomplete material may divert limited resources from policy development.
<p>PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: After weighing up the competing public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld from disclosure under Section 35 exemption - Formulation of government policy, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.</p>			
Signed: Kerri Redmond		Date: 15 June 2026	