

FOI DOF/2026-0263

Request

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from the Department of Finance. Please may you provide me with:

- Any communications between the department 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.

Please provide the information as a PDF attachment sent to this email address.

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds the information requested.

Information for release can be found at **Annexes C-J**.

Some of the information you have requested is exempt under section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects the formulation of policy and communications between Ministers.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material.

Taking into account all the circumstances of this case (public interest test included as a separate attachment – **Annex L**), I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

With regard to the information being released, some details are withheld (redacted) as this information is exempt under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act because such disclosure would contravene the first principle of the Data Protection Act 2018, which requires that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would be unfair, because the sole trader would not expect that this information would be made available to others.

Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant and if disclosure of that information would contravene one of the data protection principles in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (or certain other provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018).

Having considered all the information contained within the Lawfulness, Fairness and Transparency Test (which we are providing as a separate attachment – **Annex K**), the department has established that, on balance, there is no lawful

basis for the disclosure of third-party personal data falling within the scope of the request of which the requester is not the data subject.

Annex B - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request challenges the response given, based on exemptions applied, the adequacy of the search, and the timeliness of the response. It is not the following which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

What to do

- **Submit a request:** Clearly state that you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX