



Cabinet Office

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Sam Hogg
By email: sam@beijingtobritain.com

FOI Reference: FOI2024/00124

1 February 2024

Dear Sam Hogg

We refer to your request where you asked:

"Under the Freedom of Information Act, I am requesting the following information:

- 1. A list of who sits on the *China experts' advisory group**
- 2. A list of which external specialists the group has met with*
- 3. A list and minutes of any meetings of the group that have taken place since it was established*
- 4. When the idea was proposed, and the group created*

I would like you to provide this information in the following format: PDFs

Please do not hesitate to contact me on this email should any aspect of my request require clarification."

We are writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, we have established that the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

We cannot provide a list of who sat on the China experts' advisory group or the external specialists the group met with. This information is being withheld under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. 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, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and

section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. In this case, we believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that processing of personal data must be lawful, fair and transparent.

We consider that disclosure of the information would contravene principle A under article 5(1)(a) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently. We have considered the legitimate interests in disclosure and have found that on balance there is no overriding legitimate interest or necessity in disclosure that override the reasonable expectations of privacy of the individuals concerned.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and the Cabinet Office is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information.

The China experts' advisory group was a pilot project proposed in 2022/23 under the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's (CSSF) China Capability Programme. The purpose of the group was to trial structured engagement with academics on China. The group invited external stakeholders and experts to advise how the Cabinet Office could set up and maintain long-term China expert engagement.

As part of the CSSF China Capability Programme, the Cabinet Office commissioned Open Innovation to deliver two workshops with a select panel of experts. They covered the following agenda items:

- **Workshop 1** (16 December 2022):
 1. Building China literacy in government
 2. Establishing long-term expert input
- **Workshop 2** (31 March 2023):
 1. Exploring China's influencing strategies in the Indo-Pacific
 2. Middle ground countries' responses to China
 3. How should the UK respond?

Further details and the minutes of these meetings can be found in the accompanying attachments to this response. The content of these minutes represent the views and discussions of the expert participants in attendance, and **does not** represent government policy or positions. Some of the information you have requested is exempt under section 27(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 27(1)(a) exempts information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and any other State.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

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 your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J. B. K.', is written over a light grey circular stamp. The signature is fluid and cursive.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office