

08 April 2020

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) REQUEST

Thank you for your enquiry, received on 19 March 2020.

Specifically you requested:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I seek the following information about the Committee on Climate Change Backup Policy for the Committee on Climate Change's Office 365 deployment.

1. Can you please confirm if you are using the Microsoft Office 365 solution in your IT environment?
2. If so, how you currently back up your Office 365 data? If it is backed up please confirm which software or service solution you currently have in place.
3. If a system or service is in place to backup Committee on Climate Change's Office 365 environment can you confirm the retention period the data is stored for?
4. Who in Committee on Climate Change is responsible for the protection of your critical data?

Our response

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) use the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) IT services.

The answers for questions one to three will therefore be answered by Defra.

1. Yes.
2. Microsoft publish details of Office 365 resilience here:
<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/office365/Enterprise/office-365-data-resiliency-overview>
The platform provides for recycling of content and for backup and recovery, which have been designed into our service.
3. Backup data is retained solely for short/medium term recovery purposes; for restoring data in the event of system or user errors resulting in data loss or corruption. Backup data is duplicated and dynamic, changing as new backups are

taken and, as such, is not part of the department's formal records retention schedules published in line with the Public Records Act. Detailed backup configuration information forms part of the core technical design of Defra's critical systems.

The information withheld on detailed backup configuration settings for our systems falls under the exemption in section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA, which relates to the prevention or detection of crime and is therefore being withheld. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in disclosing the information, against the public interest in withholding it.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information around the systems, services and retention periods in place to backup government systems, as this will promote openness and transparency within Government, and also show whether the data held by government is adequately protected.

However, there is a stronger public interest in withholding information about backup configurations, as it could aid potential attackers by exposing any potential weaknesses in government systems and thus provide them with the information necessary to consider hacking into our systems and causing harm. Any attempt to carry out a cyber-attack against an IT system is a criminal offence.

This exemption is engaged because releasing the information will prejudice the prevention of crime by facilitating the possibility of a criminal offence being carried out. We have therefore decided that the information should be withheld.

4. Penny Seera is responsible for the protection of critical data at the CCC.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. If you are not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision.

In keeping with our transparency policy, the information released to you will be published on www.theccc.org.uk. Please note that this publication will not include your personal data.

Kind regards,

Committee on Climate Change