



[Redacted]

29 May 2025

Dear [Redacted],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2025/00293**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 11 March in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*Please can I submit a freedom of information request for the STFC all staff webinar transcript held on 26 February?*

**Our response:**

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds information relevant to your request. Please see the information below and attached in "*STFC Webinar Transcript 26 Feb 2025\_Redacted*".

We consider a small part of the information contained within this transcript to fall under Section 36(2)(c) of the FOIA, where disclosure would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

**Section 36 – Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs**

For Section 36(2)(c), the opinion of UKRI's Chief Executive Officer, as UKRI's Qualified Person, was sought on engaging this exemption and the level of prejudice. As this is a qualified exemption, we were then required to consider the public interest both in favour of, and against, releasing the information.

**Outcome of consideration of Section 36 – Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs**

As UKRI's Qualified Person, Professor Leyser confirmed her opinion that Section 36(2)(c) of the FOIA would be engaged as disclosure would otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

This relates to one question and answer concerning a live and ongoing issue which is still in the process of being resolved.

**The Public Interest Test**

As Section 36 is a qualified exemption, a test was required to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure. The public interest test was conducted by a senior manager, who was not directly involved in the discussions that were the subject of your request.

**Public interest in favour of disclosure**

- Disclosure of this information may increase transparency and public understanding about UKRI and the issues raised by its staff.

## Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- It is in the public interest for UKRI to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible and ensure that public funds are used efficiently and responsibly, maximising the value generated for the public. Maintaining an open, free and frank dialogue between staff and senior leadership relating to ongoing and developing activities enables and empowers UKRI to manage resources efficiently and adapt to changing circumstances, in turn enabling UKRI to fulfil its objectives and serve the public effectively over time.
- Employees, partners, and other stakeholders may be adversely affected by premature disclosure of information, which could lead to uncertainty, disruption, or negative impacts to ongoing programmes, diminishing UKRI's ability to deliver an effective public service.
- Sharing incomplete or preliminary information relating to ongoing and developing issues that are still under discussion can lead to misinterpretations, premature conclusions, or misinformation which may influence the outcome in an adverse manner, or mislead stakeholders and the public, causing unnecessary concern or false expectations.
- This is a 'live' issue that requires a safe space for open and collaborative deliberations across the organisation and it is crucial to maintain confidentiality to ensure that deliberations with stakeholders are protected without fear of public scrutiny or misrepresentation to enable UKRI to be fully informed and to make sound decisions.

Overall, UKRI considers that on this occasion the public interest is best served by maintaining the Section 36 exemption, and therefore the relevant information has been withheld from disclosure.

We are also exempting the names of individuals, where they do not relate to the BBSRC Executive Chair or Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation, under section 40(2) of the FOIA. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

Please note, the transcript document is presented as held and its original formatting has not been altered. The transcript was produced automatically using Zoom audio transcript software and therefore contains errors where words spoken by those presenting have been mistranscribed.

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance

Email: [foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org)

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>

  
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