

6 December 2019
Our ref: FOI081119

Dear ,

Re: FOI request - technical restatement due 7 November

Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, which we received on 8 November 2019.

You requested *the restated forecast due to be published on 7 November 2019, which refers to the technical restatement of the March public finance forecast which would have brought it in line with current ONS statistical treatment, such as the new treatment of student loans.*

I can confirm that we do hold the information you have requested, but we consider the information to be exempt from release under Section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information. This section provides an exemption for information which is intended for future publication. Our intention is to publish the requested information as soon as possible after the General Election on 12 December.

Section 22 is a qualified exemption which requires an assessment of whether the balance of public interest favours maintaining the exemption or disclosing the information. Our judgement is that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. The timing of the release of the information is key to this balance. The application of the Section 22 exemption is designed to protect the orderly publication of information by government departments and public bodies, at the point which we have judged to be most appropriate. The decision to postpone publication until after the General Election was taken following advice from the Cabinet Secretary that to publish in the pre-election period would contravene the Cabinet Office's General Election guidance on the conduct of public bodies during an election period.

Our judgement is that the public interest would not be met by departing from the general principles of the guidance, which is designed to ensure public bodies do not demonstrate political partiality (deliberately or inadvertently) during an election period, and where departing from that guidance risks damage to the established reputation of the OBR.

If you have any other queries about this letter, please send them to our enquiries inbox at obr.enquiries@obr.uk.

Yours sincerely

Office for Budget Responsibility

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Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

If you are not happy with this reply, you may request a review by writing to OBR Enquiries, Office for Budget Responsibility, 14T, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ or by email to obr.enquiries@obr.uk.

Any review request must be made within 2 months of the date of this letter.

It would assist our review if you set out which aspects of the reply concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

If you are not content with the outcome your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the OBR. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.