

Address for response:
c/o Campaign for Freedom of Information
Unit 109 Davina House
137-149 Goswell Rd
London EC1V 7ET

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

cc The Rt Hon Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office
cc The Rt Hon Lord McNally, Minister of State for Justice

29 October 2013

Dear Prime Minister,

Almost exactly a year ago the government announced a series of potential proposals to make it easier for public authorities to refuse freedom of information (FOI) requests on cost grounds.¹ The stated intention was to focus on requests causing 'disproportionate burdens' as a result of 'industrial use' of the FOI Act.

But the proposals would restrict access by all users, including those making occasional requests of modest scope. They include plans to reduce the limit at which FOI requests can be refused on cost grounds and to allow more activities to be taken into account when calculating whether this limit has been reached - including the time authorities spend considering whether to release information. Many requests of substantial public interest would be refused under these proposals regardless of the benefits of disclosure. They would have a severe effect on the operation of the FOI Act.

This week the UK chairs the international Open Government Partnership (OGP) summit in London to be attended by government and civil society representatives from some 60 countries. In this context, you have previously stated your intention to make the UK "the most open and transparent government in the world".

We find it difficult to reconcile your ambition that the UK should be the world leader in openness with the government's proposals to restrict the FOI Act, which is a critical element of the UK's openness arrangements.

¹ Government Response to the Justice Committee's Report: Post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, November 2012.

We hope that the government will mark that commitment by announcing that it will not be bringing forward proposals to restrict the Act.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Walsh Chief Executive	Action against Medical Accidents
Roger Wicks Director of Policy and Campaigns	Action on Hearing Loss
Davina James-Hanman Director	Against Violence & Abuse
Andrew Tyler Director	Animal Aid
David Banisar Senior Legal Counsel	Article 19
Nick Pickles Director	Big Brother Watch
Pavan Dhaliwal Head of Public Affairs	British Humanist Association
Stephen Bowen Director	British Institute of Human Rights
Nasreen Rehman Chair	British Muslims for Secular Democracy
Gerry Morrissey General Secretary	Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union
Jo Harvey Barringer Chair of Trustees	Broken Rainbow UK
Michelle Thew Chief Executive Officer	BUAV
Ann Feltham Parliamentary Co-ordinator	Campaign Against Arms Trade
Stephen Joseph Chief Executive	Campaign for Better Transport
Maurice Frankel Director	Campaign for Freedom of Information

Barry White National Organiser	Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom
Peter Newell Co-ordinator	Children are unbeatable! Alliance Compact Voice
Marilyn Croser Co-ordinator	Corporate Responsibility Coalition Corporate Watch
Dr Michele Lamb Director	Crucible Centre for Human Rights Research
Charles Garside Assistant Editor	Daily Mail
Anthony Zacharzewski Chief Executive	Democratic Society
Leander Neckles Board Member	Equanomics-UK
Heather Brooke	FOI campaigner
Gita Parihar Head of Legal	Friends of the Earth
Chris Whitwell Director	Friends, Families and Travellers Community Base
Will Moy Director	Full Fact
Bernard Reed Trustee	Gender Identity Research and Education Society
Jan Thompson Managing Editor	Guardian News & Media
Henrietta Doyle Policy Officer	Inclusion London
Andy Whitmore	Indigenous Peoples Links

Jenny Hirst Co-chair	Insulin Dependent Diabetes Trust
Anne Thurston Director	International Records Management Trust
Simon Burall Director	Involve
Jonathan Stevenson Campaigns and Communications Officer	Jubilee Debt Campaign
Ratna Lachman Director	JUST West Yorkshire
Julie Bishop Director	Law Centres Network
Michael Cross News Editor	Law Society Gazette
Joe Duckworth Chief Executive	League Against Cruel Sports
Russell Levy Head of Clinical Negligence	Leigh Day
James Welch Legal Director	Liberty
Doug Wills Managing Editor	London Evening Standard, Independent & Independent on Sunday
Richard Solly Co-ordinator	London Mining Network
Ruth Grove-White Policy Director	Migrants' Rights Network
Paul Farmer Chief Executive Officer	Mind
Tom Steinberg Director	MySociety
Keith Porteous Wood Executive Director	National Secular Society
Michelle Stanistreet General Secretary	National Union of Journalists

Santha Rasaiah Political, Editorial and Regulatory Affairs Director	Newspaper Society
Libby Anderson Policy Director	OneKind
Magnus Nome Editor-in-Chief	Open Democracy
Jonathan Gray Director of Policy & Ideas	Open Knowledge Foundation
Jim Killock Executive Director	Open Rights Group
Chris Taggart CEO and co-founder	OpenCorporates
Louise Hazan Campaigns Manager	People & Planet
Tim Davies Co-director	Practical Participation
Dominic Ponsford Editor	Press Gazette
Nicki Rensten	Prisoners' Advice Service
Cathy James Chief Executive	Public Concern at Work
Andy Rowell Director	Public Interest Investigations
Richard Hawkins Director	Public Interest Research Centre
David Hall-Matthews Managing Director	Publish What You Fund
Andy Gregg Chief Executive	Race on the Agenda
Maurice Wren Chief Executive	Refugee Council
Graham Smith Chief Executive Officer	Republic

Lucas Amin Co-founder and Operations Director	Request Initiative
Susan Bryant Director	Rights Watch (UK)
Amy Aeron-Thomas Executive Director	RoadPeace
Paul Gibbons	Save FOI
Bob Satchwell Executive Director	Society of Editors
Tamasin Cave Director	Spinwatch
Jonathan Isaby Political Director	Taxpayers' Alliance
Gavin Aitchison News Editor	The Press in York
Penelope Gibbs Director	Transform Justice
Alexandra Runswick Director	Unlock Democracy
Vivienne Hayes Chief Executive Officer	Women's Resource Centre