

Public Interest Test – FOI

Reference Number – DAERA/26-325

Requested Information

On 12th May 2026, Councillor Sheamus Greene (Fermanagh and Omagh) submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), requesting the following information;

- all correspondence between DAERA, the Food Standards Agency, and DEFRA relating to hormone-treated Brazilian beef since 1 March 2026;
- any briefings, internal notes, or advice provided to the Minister regarding this matter; any assurances, assessments, or responses received concerning whether hormone-treated Brazilian beef has entered supply chains in the North of Ireland.
- This request relates in particular to correspondence references COR-0196-2026, COR-0268-2026, and COR-0287-2026.

Exemption / Exception under consideration

Section 35(1) (a) – Formulation of Government Policy

Reasons why the public interest would favour disclosure:

- The Department's default position is to disclose information held unless an appropriate exemption applies.
- Access to official information can improve public confidence / trust and Departments have a duty to operate transparently.
- Disclosure may enhance public understanding of the DAERA's engagement and working relationship structures with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Reasons why the public interest would favour withholding:

- **Safe space and candour:** There is a strong public interest in maintaining a safe space for officials to engage in free and frank internal deliberations; disclosure would likely inhibit candour and undermine the quality of advice and decision-making provided to Ministers.
- **Policy development process:** The information relates to ongoing policy formulation, at a time when options were still being explored and refined; release of this information could disrupt and weaken future government decision-making in similar matters.

- **Draft / misleading risk:** The material at the time was not final and reflected evolving positions; disclosure could mislead the public by presenting incomplete or unrepresentative information.

Conclusion

On balance the reasons for withholding outweigh the reasons for disclosing and therefore the information in question has been redacted under Section 35(1)(a) – Formulation of Government Policy

Windsor Framework Implementation Directorate