From: FOI
To: [redacted]
Subject: FOI 139/18 - Sir John Holmes correspondence - response
Date: 17 September 2018 15:13:59

Dear [redacted]

Our Ref: FOI 139/18

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated **22 August 2018.**

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and has done so within the statutory timeframe of twenty working days.

Your request is in bold below followed by our response.

1. **I have concerns relating to several individuals working at and managing the Electoral Commission. These questions relate to its chairman John Holmes.**

Please outline whether there has been any liaison, contact or correspondence between Mr Holmes and the following people following the beginning of his appointment as chairman of the Electoral Commission. If so, please describe in each case the extent of that communication and whether it was of a political nature or related to the work of the Electoral Commission.

a. His friend, the former Prime Minister Tony Blair or his institute, family or private office.
b. His friend and former colleague at FCO and the No10 office of Tony Blair, Angus Lapsley,
c. His friend and former colleague from Ditchley, New York and the FCO Mark Malloch-Brown.
d. His friend and former colleague from Ditchley, New York and the FCO David Miliband.
e. His friend and former colleague at the Ditchley Foundation, Lord Adonis.
f. The Cabinet Office or Number 10 or agencies feeding into either.

Our response is as follows:

We hold some of the information you have requested.

In his capacity as Chair of the Commission and during days worked for the Commission Sir John has not had any liaison, contact or correspondence with

Tony Blair or his institute, family or private office
Angus Lapsley
David Miliband
Lord Adonis

He has been in contact and correspondence with Mark Malloch Brown and the

Cabinet Office or “agencies feeding into it”.

Sir John has attended meetings with

- Lord Malloch Brown for lunch and a general catch up mainly around UN and humanitarian issues, but discussion also touched on Lord Malloch-Brown’s role as Chair of The SGO Group and its smartmatic voting machines

- Chris Skidmore MP, Minister for the Constitution to discuss the work of the Electoral Commission

- Chloe Smith MP, Minister for the Constitution to discuss the work of the Electoral Commission

- Sir Mark Sedwill, National Security Advisor to discuss the work of the Electoral Commission

- Charles Farr, Chair of the Joint Intelligence Commission to discuss the work of the Electoral Commission

A list of all the Chair’s external meetings can be found on our website: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/who-we-are/the-commissioners.

Sir John has exchanged correspondence with

- Chris Skidmore MP, Minister for the Constitution, relating to the work of the Commission

- Chloe Smith MP, Minister for the Constitution, relating to the work of the Electoral Commission

- Mark Sedwill, Acting Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser, relating to the work of the Electoral Commission

I trust that this information satisfies your request. The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority, but in some circumstances we cannot responsibly release requested information, and we ask for your understanding in this regard.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information-requests/how-do-I-make-an-foi-request

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review

procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: https://ico.org.uk/

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Access to Information Officer (FOI and DPA)

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