

Dear [REDACTED],

I write further to the letter we sent to you on the 15 November 2018. This letter outlined a number of your request for information. Within our letter we advised you a number of your requests do not fall within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act.

Regarding: Your request for information, reference number FOI 177/18 about:

- 1. Have any Electoral Commission staff had meetings with Russian officials?**
- 2. Is it possible that Electoral Commission 'useful idiots' have been given lines by Russia without them knowing?**
- 3. What precautions did the Electoral Commission take to prevent being duped into a Russian misinformation effort?**
- 4. Was the electoral Commission aware of the risks in this issue?**
- 5. If the Electoral Commission was aware of the risks in this area, why did it still happen?**
- 6. If the electoral Commission was not aware of the risks, why not?**
- 7. The Electoral Commission knowingly conducted a sustained campaign against British pro-NATO groups which were doing unique and crucial work to expose the anti-NATO tendencies of the EU regime. What conversations were held internally on this or was the Electoral Commission clueless about the pro-Putin and anti-NATO effects of its work?**
- 8. To what extent were the Electoral Commission's staff aware of Russia opposition to NATO and Russian determination to see it deconstructed?**
- 9. What dialogue if any was conducted between the Electoral Commission and groups in the UK which were anti-NATO or anti-US such as the European Commission, European Parliament and pro-EU Labour MEPs?**
- 10. Was the Electoral Commission's campaign against pro-NATO groups in the UK in any way coordinated with the activities of foreign powers in Europe or outside or with the European Commission or any anti-NATO/pro-EU intelligence services or officers?**
- 11. Please outline all contact between the Electoral Commission and the European Commission since the Brexit vote.**
- 12. Please outline to the best of your ability all contact between the Electoral Commission's officials and the Russian regime or Russian citizens in the UK or EU.**
- 13. Please describe in detail all contact between the Electoral Commission and staff feeding into the EU Military Staff, the EU Military Committee or the Macron Government.**
- 14. Please outline all contact between the Electoral Commission and Dominic Grieve, Manfred Weber MEP, Martin Selmayr and Guy Verhofstadt.**
- 15. Please explain why the Electoral Commission's discredited campaign against Leave groups was described by the Electoral Commission's chairman as being 'like getting blood out of a stone' and whether this type of comment is normal and appropriate for a regulator.**

The Commission initially reviewed your request for information and advised you that questions 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were considered to fall under the FOI Act. This however is not the case. Upon reviewing each request again, the only requests which fall within the scope of the FOI Act are 1, 11, 12 and 14.

Before we can respond to these requests we first require clarification. Please see below.

Question 1:

We consider this request to seek information about any meetings Electoral Commission staff has had with Russian officials? Please clarify if this is what you mean and the type of information you seek e.g. dates of meetings, correspondence regarding meetings etc. Please also indicate any keywords, or phrases which may assist us to complete your request.

Question 11:

We consider this request to seek correspondence between the Electoral Commission and the European Commission. Please clarify if this is what you mean? Please also indicate any keywords, or phrases which may assist us to complete your request.

Question 12:

We consider this request to seek correspondence between the Electoral Commission and those groups/individual's you have identified. Please clarify if this is what you mean. Please also indicate keywords, or phrases which may assist us to complete your request.

Question 14:

We consider this request to seek correspondence between the Electoral Commission and those individual's you have identified. Please clarify if this is what you mean. Please also indicate keywords, or phrases which may assist us to complete your request.

Should clarification not be received by the 11 December 2018, your request will be closed.

The other requests you have submitted cannot be considered as requests for information under the Act. FOI does not cover requests for an opinion, the undertaking of research or the creation of data. The FOI Act is only applicable to information we hold which has been produced or held by us to allow us to carry out our role and responsibilities.

Your requests also indicates that the Commission holds data in relation to activities outside the role of the Commission. Because of this I have briefly explained the role of the Commission below. I have included below a link to a section on our website which explains our role in elections should you wish to read further about what we do.

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/roles-and-responsibilities/our-role-in-elections-and-referendums>.

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity by:

- enabling the delivery of free and fair elections and referendums, focusing on the needs of electors and addressing the changing environment to ensure every vote remains secure and accessible
- regulating political finance – taking proactive steps to increase transparency, ensure compliance and pursue breaches
- using our expertise to make and advocate for changes to our democracy,
- aiming to improve fairness, transparency and efficiency

Should we continue to receive requests that do not fall within the scope of the FOI Act we will not reply.

In relation to your new request for information submitted today at 00:17 today. You asked:

1. What precautions has the Electoral Commission taken since the referendum to ensure it is not a corrupt and utterly politically biased pro-EU organisation. Specifically any precautions taken to root out anti-British sentiment and prevent the wholesale recruitment of pro-EU individuals.

Also any precautions to ensure that the recruitment of staff from FCO and Treasury or similar departments of state does not inadvertently or intentionally import cognitive or political biases from those institutions.

2. Please provide all materials which can be provided relating to dialogue between Electoral Commission officials and externally with other agencies pertinent to accusations of institutional bias levelled at the Electoral Commission following its persistent hounding of individual campaigners on unevidenced and ultimately flawed accusations.

For the reasons already discussed we do not consider this a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act and as such it will not receive a reply from us.

You are entitled to contact the Information Commissioners office should you believe we have not complied with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 correctly.

Kind regards,


The Electoral Commission
Access to Information Officer (FOI & DPA)
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