[redacted]

From: FOI
Sent: 14 December 2023 07:54
To: [redacted]
Subject: FOI 170-23 - Response

Dear [redacted],

Our Ref: FOI-170-23

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated 16 November 2023.

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 shown below followed by our response.

What investigations have you done into the Centre for Economic Education and Training who have contributed significant sums to a third party political grouping called Scotland Matters, yet the former have no details listed as to who is behind them? Nor do they have a website, nor is it clear where the money is coming from. Scotland Matters refuse to elaborate as to who these people are or where the money being donated comes from. Can you answer these questions please?

Our response is as follows:

We do not hold the information you have requested.

The Commission has specific powers under Schedule 19B of the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) to conduct investigations where it has reasonable grounds to suspect potential failures to comply with PPERA. The Commission has considered the status of the Centre for Economic Education and Training (CEET) but has not investigated because it has not had reasonable grounds to suspect non-compliance.

Scotland Matters has reported two donations from CEET, and has reported CEET to be an unincorporated association. Unincorporated associations are required to notify the Electoral Commission as and when they donate in excess of £25,000 to specified entities within a single calendar year. Those entities include registered non-party campaigners. The notification must include the address of the association and the name of the individual authorised by the association to make the notification. There are further duties following from this notification, including to report funds received by the association for a period before, and after, the notification is made.

The first donation was accepted on 3 February 2021. At that time Scotland Matters was not a registered non-party campaigner and CEET was not therefore required to make a notification to the Commission. The second donation was accepted on 27 April 2021. At this time Scotland Matters had registered as a non-party campaigner (on 1 March 2021) but the donation made by CEET was below the threshold at which a notification to the Commission from CEET was required.

The regime put in place by the UK Parliament requires transparency as to the funding of various types of organisations in specific circumstances. To date CEET, as an unincorporated association, has not been required to disclose its funding, and there has been no basis for the Commission to investigate.

The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority and I trust that this information satisfies your request.

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: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/freedom-information/make-a-freedom-information-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

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The Electoral Commission
electoralcommission.org.uk