



Department for Business & Trade

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FOI2025/01700
FOI2025/01766
FOI2025/01953
FOI2025/02693
FOI2025/03127

18th March 2025

Dear Conor Chapple,

Thank you for your email of 17 February 2025 where you requested the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the following:

A. Correspondence and Notifications:

All correspondence between DBT (formerly BIS) and UKAS regarding senior staff changes between January 2012 and March 2013.

Any formal notifications from UKAS to DBT regarding the retirements or departures of Jane Beaumont, Graham Talbot, or Alan Hill.

B. Monitoring and Reports:

All records from DBT's monitoring of UKAS under Article 9.2 of EC 765/2008, specifically regarding senior staff changes from January 2012 to March 2013.

Minutes or notes from DBT's meetings with UKAS (including PAC and PAF meetings) referencing senior staff changes during this period.

C. Internal DBT Analysis and Concerns:

Any internal DBT communications discussing or raising concerns about discrepancies between UKAS's reported leadership changes and actual meeting attendances (e.g., regarding Jane Beaumont's continued presence after her reported "retirement" in May 2012).

Any internal DBT reviews, assessments, or inquiries into the accuracy of UKAS leadership reporting following the publication of Lorraine Turner's witness statement to the Inquiry.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you require
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

The Department of Business and Trade (DBT) may hold information in scope of your request; however, the Department is refusing your request under section 14(1) (Vexatious request) of the Act.

A further explanation of our decision is set out below.

Section 14 (Vexatious or repeated requests)

Section 14(1) of the Act states:

“Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious.”

The Upper Tribunal in the case of *Dransfield -v- Information Commissioner and Devon County Council [2015] EWCA Civ 454* stated that four factors should be taken into consideration when determining whether a request or requests are vexatious. These are:

1. the burden (on the public authority and its staff);
2. the motive (of the requester);
3. the value or serious purpose (of the request); and
4. any harassment or distress (of and to staff)

These considerations are not, however, exhaustive and we don't have to find that all of them apply to your FOIA requests. In fact, we consider that the considerations most appropriate to your requests are those of the burden to the Department, the value or serious purpose and any harassment or distress.

We have provided to you in Annex A, a timeline of correspondence received to the Department.

Burden on the Department

In terms of burden on the authority, the effort required to meet the request will be so grossly excessive in terms of the strain on time and resources that the authority cannot reasonably be expected to comply, no matter how legitimate the subject matter or valid the intentions of the requester. The Department has conducted a mailbox search for 'UKAS' with a date range January 2012 and March 2013, this covers FOI requests 01700 and part of 02693, which produced 57,000 results. It is estimated that it would take the Department 4750 hours to review these emails to see if they are in scope of your asks. This is based on 57,000 results taking 5 minutes each to review totalling 4750 hours. FOI requests 01953,01766 and 03127 had no specified dates for correspondence and therefore is likely to return a higher result rate. Complying with these requests is considered to be excessive and would place an unreasonable burden on the Department.

Purpose or Value

In terms of value or serious purpose, this is apparent from the:

- nature of the information requested;
- context of the request; or
- history of the requester's engagement with you.

The Department has received a number of communications from you including but not limited to Freedom of Information requests, complaints and Ministerial Correspondence. We believe that from these communications there is little serious purpose or value in obtaining the information

you are requesting and believe your motive is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.

Continuing to respond to these requests would be likely to cause the Department a significant level of disruption and would have the cumulative effect of causing DBT a disproportionate level of distraction.

The requests received by DBT appear to be a continuation of your long-standing dispute with UKAS. A complaint was raised to NAPIT against you in relation to a non-issue of a certificate for work carried out which resulted in a suspension issue to you by NAPIT after negotiations for a resolution failed. A complaint was raised to NAPIT against you in relation to a non-issue of a certificate for work carried out which resulted in a suspension issue to you by NAPIT after negotiations for a resolution failed.

This resulted in you then raising a complaint about NAPIT to UKAS, as one of its accredited organisations. You then escalated your complaint to EA regarding UKAS's review of NAPIT and conflict of interest with NAPIT and UKAS personnel in the case. EA's review of UKAS's handling of this case and their accreditation of NAPIT concluded UKAS's actions were thorough and objective, ensuring compliance with accreditation standards. EA rejected your complaint and closed the case. In your correspondence with DBT you also submitted a complaint about NAPIT and UKAS to the Building Safety Regulator. After consulting with their Technical Policy Division, BSR confirmed that UKAS had investigated the matter through their complaint process and there was no evidence of NAPIT not meeting their accreditation requirements. Both BSR and EA concluded that UKAS's handling was thorough and in accordance with the standard for accreditation bodies ISO 17011.

There was no evidence of problems within the governance, transparency, and accountability within NAPIT or UKAS. There was no evidence to support your claims of UKAS's accreditation discrepancies. These issues have been thoroughly investigated by different organisations and as such continued correspondence about them serves little purpose or value.

Disruption and Distress

We find that the burden of continuing to deal with this matter would cause feelings of harassment and distress to the individuals involved.

From a public search of your social media, you have stated:

“Always Keep Them Guessing. Never let them know your next throw – will it come from the left or the right, Just like FOI requests... always keep them closed, ready to catch their next breach.”

“To ensure credibility in our processes while preserving key evidence, we're introducing Freedom Fridays (FOIF), with a Mystery Freedom Day (MDOID).”

The Department have found this as supporting evidence to cause a disproportionate level of distraction and disruption to the Department.

We are aware of a number of social media posts where staff have been named and their suitability to the role questioned, disclosing names within OPSS, and the Department, would risk distress to the officers and the Department is keen that these officers do not find themselves targeted with similar accusations.

From a public search of your social media, you have stated:

“Is Leon Wilson an official DBT representative, not suitable for these roles?” You go on to list Craig Watson and other officials,

“If Craig Watson (OPSS) can pretend to be DBT, David Cowburn (former COO) can pretend to still be COO, and Jackie Burton can pretend to be Kevin Belson, perhaps I should go incognito and file a anonymous complaint.”

You have also posted the employment history from LinkedIn of Craig Watson and questioned *“how can this structure claim to be conflict-free?”*

You have posted a picture of Matt Gantley, UKAS CEO, and Craig Watson, Deputy Director in OPSS signing an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a clown emoji.

Public interest considerations

When considering value and serious purpose, the Department has assessed whether there is a public interest in disclosure. This means that the requester’s private interests in the information carry little weight unless they coincide with a wider public interest.

The Department has considered that the public have an interest in understanding whether or not there is a conflict of interest within our National Accreditation Body and knowing what that is if it exists. However this has been investigated, and it has been concluded that no conflict exists. Therefore, we have deemed your requests to only be in your private interests and not in the wider public interests.

Conclusion

As a result, we are refusing your request for information under Section 14(1) of the Act, which does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is found to be vexatious.

We have considered our duty set out in section 16(1) of the Act and suggest that you may wish to consider reducing the amount of correspondence which you send into the Department or substantially change the topic of the ask.

Appeals procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your original request and should be addressed to the Information Rights Unit:

Information Rights Unit
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
London
SW1A 2DY
Email: FOI@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Department for Business and Trade