

1 February 2018

Ref: FOI2017/23154

Freedom of Information Act 2000: Correspondence between Treasury Ministers or the Permanent Secretary and Portland Communications or the National Farmers Union

Thank you for your Freedom of Information enquiry of 5 December 2017 in which you asked for the following information:

"All correspondence and/or details of meetings between Ministers and/or the Permanent Secretary and the following organisations between October 2016 and July 2017:

** Portland Communications (public affairs firm)*

** National Farmers Union."*

We wrote to you on 5 January 2018 to explain that we had identified information in scope which we believed may engage section 43(2) – commercial interests – of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOI Act). We added that by virtue of section 10(3) of the FOI Act, where public authorities have to consider the balance of the public interest in relation to a request, they do not have to comply with the request until such time as is reasonable in the circumstances.

This letter sets out our conclusions.

Having considered the public interest balances, we have concluded that the public interest lies in disclosure of a letter from the President of the NFU to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury dated 13 June 2017 and the Chief Secretary's reply dated 29 June 2017.

We have redacted personal data – contact details and signatures – from the letters because they engage sections 40(2) and 40(3)(a)(i) of the FOI Act. Personal data of third parties can only be disclosed in accordance with the data protection principles. In particular, the first data protection principle requires that disclosure must be fair and lawful and must comply with one of the conditions in Schedule 2 of the Data Protection Act. We do not think that it is fair to release this information and do not think that any of the relevant conditions apply. We have also redacted some out of scope information which does not form part of the letter of 13 June.

No other information in scope is held.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us. Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Information Rights Unit

Enclosures:

- letter dated 13 June 2017 from the NFU President to the Chief Secretary
- letter dated 29 June 2017 from the Chief Secretary to the NFU President

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