

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]

FOI Reference: FOI2021/07501

11 May 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

We refer to your request where you asked:

“1. Copies of all written correspondence that the Secretary of State has had with former Prime Minister, David Cameron at any point during 2020.

2. Copies of all written correspondence that the Permanent Secretary has had with former Prime Minister, David Cameron at any point during 2020.”

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established the Cabinet Office does hold information within the scope of your request. Specifically, the Cabinet Office holds an email from David Cameron to Maurice Thompson, Chairman of Greensill, on which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is a copied recipient, dated 18 May 2020.

In the interests of transparency, the Cabinet Office is also releasing the related communications, including the original email from Maurice Thompson to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 May 2020 to which David Cameron replies, and the onward transmission of Maurice Thompson’s email by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 May 2020, as the Minister responsible for the issues raised in the correspondence.

The original email from Maurice Thompson followed an informal call between him and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 May 2020, on which the Covid Corporate

Financing Facility (CCFF) was mentioned but not discussed in any detail. Maurice Thompson's email then seeks to provide further detail on the CCFF, including material already shared by Greensill with HM Treasury officials. Given this information pertained to policy responsibilities outside of his remit, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster forwarded the correspondence to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as the Minister responsible, who was already aware of the points raised and that his officials were in discussions with Greensill. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had no subsequent engagement on CCFF. Maurice Thompson also references a possible call between Bill Crothers and a Cabinet Office special adviser. This call did not take place.

Consistent with previous Freedom of Information requests, some redactions have been made to the material under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 43(2) allows us to withhold information where disclosure would be likely to prejudice commercial interests. This is a qualified exemption, and the public interest balance considerations in release and non-release of the information are set out below.

We recognise that there is a public interest in greater understanding around the Government's dealings with industry participants, and how those interactions take place, in order to inform the public debate on these issues.

Balanced against this, the Government, and the Cabinet Office in particular, relies on information provided by a range of stakeholders to better understand the impact of policies on different sectors. Engagement and feedback with representatives of different industries is central to policy decision making. We consider that disclosure of information that is likely to have a negative impact on the commercial interests of particular companies would be likely to inhibit the future engagement of stakeholders with the department, to the detriment of future policy making. We consider that in this case, the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

In addition, and again in the interests of transparency, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is releasing all informal communications with David Cameron from 2020 that could be perceived to relate to Government business. These amount to ten SMS messages sent between 3 April and 5 April 2020, in which David Cameron and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster arrange a telephone call, which took place on the evening of 5 April 2020. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is releasing these messages because they include reference to discussions between David Cameron and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and therefore it appears that the purpose of the call may have been to discuss Government business. When the call did take place, no substantive Government business was discussed.

We would normally withhold the communications sent by David Cameron to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, on the basis that these communications were made by David Cameron with an expectation of confidence, and hence would be exempt from disclosure under section 41(1) of the Freedom of Information Act (information provided in confidence). We are however including them in our release on the basis that they have been placed into the public domain.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Rachel Anderson
Head of Freedom of Information
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. K. M.', written in a cursive style.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office