



Cabinet Office

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Dr Emma L Briant

By email: request-732147-56f49caf@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI2021/04392
29/03/2021

Dear Emma L Briant

I refer to your request where you asked:

"Dear Cabinet Office,

Please could I make a freedom of information request for information about sponsored articles one of which mentions the Department for International Trade, and promotes brexit in the Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9294945/How-three-British-businesses-flourishing-forge-new-relationship-EU.html>

I would like to know please:

Was this article sponsored by a Cabinet Office budget or another department?

How many such sponsored articles have been budgeted for in the Daily Mail and how much budget spend is allocated for this? Are third party companies/contractors involved in creating or distributing this PR?

The article describes a 'partnership with the UK Government' and the Daily Mail - please could I see any correspondence or other documents relating to this partnership held by the Cabinet Office."

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that some of the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

Cabinet Office only holds information relating to spending on Brexit-related advertising that the department itself has undertaken.

The focus of the Transition campaign has always been on getting the country ready for the changes that came into force on 1st January. The campaign has reached 99.7% of UK adults, and we know that the vast majority of businesses and citizens are taking the steps we need them to take and we continue to support them to do so.

You have asked if this article was sponsored by the Cabinet Office or another department. You have also asked if third party companies/contractors are involved in creating or distributing this PR?

The Government has negotiated a unique and unprecedented partnership with the newspaper industry, providing essential funding to these much-loved publications. The Government recognises their vital role, including those of the independent sector, in supporting communities and isolated individuals, and in ensuring the provision of reliable, high-quality information during this time.

The partnership comprises over 600 titles, reaching communities throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and includes over 50 BAME publications. The partnership has been structured so that the majority of the funding (at least 60%) goes to the smaller regional and local titles. All of these titles have been selected independently by our media planning and buying agency, OmniGOV.

The content within the article is 'sponsored' - it is not a UK Government advert - and is the ultimate responsibility of the publications themselves.

The Government possesses a variety of media channels that are essential for communication with the public. We book a variety of advertising assets from media owners, on a case by case basis, in line with campaign objectives and to maximise reach. Our guidance spans paid, owned and earned media channels. The company responsible for media spend for this campaign is OMD. All contract documentation is available as attachments on Contracts Finder here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/1fa38cfe-35a6-4787-9e35-57b739400572>

You have also asked how many such sponsored articles have been budgeted for in the Daily Mail and how much budget spend is allocated for this.

The Cabinet Office regularly publishes expenditure monthly on a rolling basis as part of routine government transparency here:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-spend-data. This will include expenditure on this campaign and will be broken down by supplier.

Therefore, the information requested regarding budgeting and spend is being withheld under Section 22(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 22(1)(a) states that Information is exempt if the information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not).

Finally, you have also asked to see any correspondence or other documents relating to this partnership held by the Cabinet Office.

The information that you have requested regarding these documents is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 43(2) exempts information whose disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

Disclosing the requested information would be likely to prejudice or harm the commercial interests either of the agency in question or of the Cabinet Office itself in any subsequent negotiations with other third parties. Information about the procurement of goods and services by a public authority is usually considered to be commercially sensitive. This can include information provided during any transaction with a third party.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption. This means that a public authority has to consider the public interest if the exemption is engaged because of prejudice to commercial interests, or because the information is a trade secret.

The Cabinet Office recognises that there is a strong public interest in openness and transparency in government. However, this does not outweigh the strong public interest in allowing public authorities to withhold information which, if disclosed, would reduce its ability, or the ability of third parties, to negotiate or compete in a commercial environment. It also does not outweigh the public interest in allowing public authorities to withhold information which, if revealed, could be detrimental to a public authority or third party's negotiations on other contracts and procurements.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the FOI Team quoting the reference number above.

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 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 read 'R Anderson', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office