



UK Government Llywodraeth y DU

Office of the Secretary of State for Wales
Swyddfa Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

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Our ref: 19FOI172
8th January 2020

Dear S Rhosier,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 18 December 2019 requesting information from this office. You asked for information on:

- 1) What orders have been issued to Mr Hart, by whom and upon what date, as a matter of public interest in his latest appointment;
- 2) Whether Mr Hart was present at a meeting with the Countryside Alliance at 10 Downing Street on 29 November 2019;
- 3) What protocols, policies, and procedures exist to ensure that ministerial appointees satisfactorily acquire and demonstrate aptitude in a new post as is the case in customary 6-month probationary periods;
- 4) What protocols, policies, and procedures exist to ensure that ministerial appointees satisfactorily acquire and demonstrate aptitude in a higher-level post without completing a minimum of at least 6 months satisfactory service in a prior entry-level cabinet role; and
- 5) What government protocols, policies, and procedures are in place to ensure that Mr Hart will be monitored for impartiality as liaison for all of Wales, not just particular interest groups.

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We have conducted a thorough search of our paper and electronic records and can confirm the Wales Office holds some information relevant to your request.

- 1) Mr Hart refers to the Prime Minister's invitation to fulfil the role of Secretary of State for Wales, when appointed on Monday 16 December 2019.
- 2) Mr Hart was not present at the meeting in question on 29 November 2019.
- 3) Under the constitutional settlement of the United Kingdom, recommending the appointment of Ministers is a prerogative of the Prime Minister, who will take into account a range of factors as he sees fit.

- 4) As above, recommending the appointment of Ministers is a prerogative of the Prime Minister, who will take into account a range of factors as he sees fit.
- 5) Under the terms of the Ministerial code, which applies to all Ministers, those serving in ministerial office are expected to observe the Seven Principles of Public Life, including selflessness, integrity, and objectivity. The latter requires that holders of public office 'must act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias'.

You may ask for an internal review if you are unhappy with our response to your request. The internal review would be carried out by someone who did not deal with your request, who would re-assess how the Department handled it. Requests for an internal review should be received within two months of our response. If you wish to do this, please write to:

Freedom of Information Team
Wales Office
Gwydyr House
Whitehall
London SW1A 2NP

Email: walesofficefoi@walesoffice.gsi.gov.uk

If you remain dissatisfied after an internal review decision, you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner's Office under Section 50 of the Act. You can contact the Information Commissioner's Office at the following address:

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

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me at the above address. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team