



Cabinet Office

Room 401
70 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2AS

foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Dennis Fallon

By email: request-735622-d3e9ddef@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI2021/05474

5 May 2021

Dear Dennis Fallon

We refer to your request where you asked:

“FOI Q1. David Thompson has spent most of his career in Manchester, outside of the West Midlands, and he has listed Stockport as his home address, so please clarify who put forward his nomination for a knighthood and from what region of the Country did it originate, also when was the nomination made and who scrutinised and approved it? End of FOI Q1.

FOI Q2. When and where was David knighted and who performed the sword ceremony of knighting and gave him his medal? End of FOI Q2.”

I can confirm that the Cabinet Office holds some of the information that falls under the scope of this request.

In relation to Q1, the Cabinet Office holds most of the information requested. I consider that most of the information you have requested relating to the source of the nomination should be withheld because it is exempt from release under section 37(1)(b), section 40(2) and section 41(1) of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 37(1)(b) of the Act (information related to the conferring by the Crown of any honour or dignity) is clearly engaged, given the nature of the information requested. Section 37(1)(b) is a qualified exemption, and I have therefore considered whether the public interest favours disclosure. Having carried out this exercise, I have concluded

that the public interest favours withholding the information held, for the following reasons. The Cabinet Office recognises the public interest in transparency, and the public's awareness of how the honours system works, and the way in which such decisions are taken, and indeed it is for those reasons that we have withheld the information.

Against these considerations, however, it is necessary to balance the public interests in favour of maintaining the relevant exemptions. In this respect, the Cabinet Office considers that it is not in the public interest for the general public to be made aware of the details of individual honours cases. This information is in the main kept confidential in order to protect the integrity of the honours system.

Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act. In this case, I believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and the Cabinet Office is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information.

Section 41(1) exempts information where disclosure would constitute an actionable breach of confidence. Section 41(1) is an absolute exemption for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act but, in reaching our decision to withhold this information, the Cabinet Office has taken into account that there is a public interest defence to an action for breach of confidence. I am satisfied that disclosure of the information requested would constitute an actionable breach of confidence and that the Cabinet Office could not rely on the defence that an overriding public interest justified breaching its duty of confidence. The courts have maintained that there is a very strong general public interest in protecting confidences and this could only be superseded by an overriding public interest in disclosure. I do not consider that there is such an overriding public interest in disclosure of the information withheld, for example if the information revealed iniquity or fraud or disclosure was necessary to protect the public from harm. These are among the conventional public interests that the Courts have accepted as outweighing the public interest in maintaining a confidence. Though other public interests may also outweigh the public interest in maintaining confidences, I do not consider that the general public interest in having information made available is a compelling public interest capable of overriding the very strong public interest in maintaining the confidentiality of this information.

For your information, the location listed publicly when an honours list is published is the correspondence address for the recipient, and not necessarily their home address.

Nominations for honours are considered by one of ten independent honours committees (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/honours-committees>). Their recommendations are scrutinised by the Main Honours Committee before being submitted to the Prime Minister and HM The Queen for approval.

In relation to Q2, following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the Cabinet Office does not hold the information you requested. The presentation of the award insignia for each honours recipient happens at an Investiture. The Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood in St James's Palace, which is a department of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, is responsible for the organisation of each investiture.

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 'J. B. K.', is written on a light blue background.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office