



Professor Raminder Kaur
request-439310-6d785443@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI325309
Date: 09/11/2017

Dear Professor Raminder Kaur

I refer to your request where you asked:

I refer to your request of 17 October asking what action was taken following the recommendation of the Public Administration Select Committee that a new Order, the Order of British Excellence should be founded in place of the Order of the British Empire.

Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the Cabinet Office does hold the information you requested.

In its July 2004 Report "A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System" (HC212-1), the Public Administration Select Committee recommended that a new Order, the Order of British Excellence, should be founded in place of the Order of the British Empire, because of concerns that the name of the Order was out-dated. In response the government said it:

"...does not believe the case has been made for change to the Order of the British Empire. It is regarded with affection and respect by very many people, not only in the United Kingdom. But the government is conscious that for some time the title of the Order of the British Empire feels anachronistic in a different sense to other historic titles. The government will consider the matter further, without prejudice as to whether there should be any change."

The government consulted the Officers of the Order of the British Empire but they did not see a need for change. They believed that the enthusiasm of new members and the dedication to the Order of existing members gave no cause to suggest that change was necessary. Subsequently, some opinion polling was also conducted to establish whether there was a real public desire for change the Order of the British Empire, and whether, if there were to be change, there was agreement as to the likely candidates to replace the Order of the British Empire.

The main findings of the survey were that 47% of those polled thought that the title of the Order of the British Empire reflects our nation's history and should be retained; 15% thought that the title of the Order was inappropriate in post-Empire times and should be replaced; and 38% had no opinion either way. When asked what the new name might be if a change were to be made, there was no clear consensus.

In the light of these findings, the government concluded that the case for change to the Order of the British Empire has not been made. That remains the government's position.

The Order of the British Empire continues to play a well understood and – in terms of numbers – predominant role in the UK honours system. The Order of the British Empire has a distinguished history. It was founded in 1917 to recognise those who had fought in the First World War. The Order is enshrined in Statue and any renaming would require the existing Order to be closed and a new one created.

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

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:

Sharon Carter
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 be 'A. B. Smith', written diagonally across the page.

**FOI Team
Cabinet Office**