

HOUSE OF LORDS
APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION
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General Enquiries: 07872 828699
Internet: <http://lordsappointments.independent.gov.uk>
E-mail: enquiry@lordsappointments.gov.uk

Ref: HOLAC FOI 2023/1

28 February 2023

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

I am replying to your Freedom of Information request, which the House of Lords Appointments Commission (the Commission) received on 2 February 2023.

You asked:

1) Since 2019 (inclusive), how many peerage nominations have been put forward by the Prime Minister (successful and unsuccessful)?

(a) Of those nominations, how many times has the Commission written to the Prime Minister stating that it is unable to support a nomination?

(b) Of those nominations, how many times has the Commission been unable to support a nomination on more than one occasion?

(c) Of those nominations, how many individuals, previously rejected by the Commission, have been successfully re-nominated and taken seats as peers in the House of Lords?

(2) Since 2019 (inclusive) of all the nominations that have come before the Commission from the Prime Minister:

(a) how many has the Commission asked the security and intelligence services (MI5, MI6, GCHQ etc) for an assessment on eg. an assessment on the suitability of the individual to be awarded a peerage.

(b) how many has the Commission asked the Serious Fraud Office for an assessment on eg. an assessment on the suitability of the individual to be awarded a peerage.

We are writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, we have established that the information you requested is held by the House of Lords Appointments Commission.

All of the information that you have requested falls within section 37(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act, which relates to the conferral of honours and dignities. A peerage is a dignity for the purposes of the Act. Section 37 is a qualified exemption which is subject to a public interest test. In favour of disclosing information, there is a strong public interest in knowing that the appointments process is accountable and transparent, and in maintaining public confidence in the system. In favour of maintaining the exemption, there is a strong public interest in protecting the confidentiality of the consideration of individual nominees. We judge that the balance of public interest favours disclosure of overall figures.

In regards to question 1, from 2019 (inclusive) to 2023, there were 99 nominations put forward by the Prime Minister and 10 unsuccessful nominations. Of those nominations, the Commission has written to the Prime Minister to advise that they cannot support a nominee 6 times (for 5 distinct nominees), with the vetting unable to be completed for the remaining nominees. The Commission is an independent advisory body and does not have any power to veto a nomination, they can only opt to offer their support to a nominee.

In regards to 1(b) the Commission was unable to support a nomination on more than one occasion once. In response to 1(c), 2 individuals have successfully been re-nominated and taken seats as peers in the House of Lords after not being supported by the Commission.

The Security Service provides an assessment of all nominees (which is to say, a total of 109 nominees for the relevant period) as part of the standard vetting processes carried out by the Commission. There was one instance in the relevant period in which the Serious Fraud Office was contacted.

If you are unhappy with this response to your request, you may write to the Secretary to the Commission, Alison Bennett, to ask for an internal review by another person not involved with this request. Please note that we 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 HOLAC.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane

Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Secretariat to the House of Lords Appointments Commission