

**HOUSE OF LORDS  
APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION**

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**Ref: HOLAC FOI 2026/4**

3 March 2026

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Ref: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST**

I am replying to your Freedom of Information request, which the House of Lords Appointments Commission (HOLAC) received on 13 February 2026.

You asked:

*What propriety advice did the House of Lords Appointments Commission give to the Prime Minister regarding the nominations of Peter Mandelson and Matthew Doyle?*

Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA"). I can confirm that HOLAC holds some information in scope of this request. The Commission does not hold any information relating to the advice it provided regarding Peter Mandelson's appointment in 2008.

In regard to Matthew Doyle, this request relates to an individual who was vetted by the Commission and subsequently awarded a peerage. As such, we consider that this request engages Section 37(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, where the information refers to the conferral by the Crown of any honour or dignity. As a peerage is a dignity, and as Section 37 is a qualified exemption, we have carried out a public interest test on whether this information should be disclosed.

In favour of releasing the information, there is a public interest in understanding how the peerage appointments system works and why specific individuals have been appointed to serve in the House of Lords. There is also an interest in making the peerage appointment system as accountable and transparent as possible, and understanding the process that would lead to an individual not being supported on propriety grounds. In favour of maintaining the exemption, it is important to the integrity of the system that candidates have a right to privacy, and there are legal provisions around confidentiality and personal data. There is an interest in protecting

the confidentiality of the consideration of individual nominees and ensuring that potentially sensitive vetting information can be candidly assessed.

It is acknowledged in this instance that there has been press reporting in relation to this individual's appointment, as well as comments from the individual himself. We appreciate that this may increase the public interest in understanding details relating to this case. Conversely, it would set a dangerous precedent to say that the Commission should publish confidential vetting documents for any case that receives press interest, covering a range of circumstances including where a story has no factual basis. We therefore do not believe that the public reporting supports the release of information in this case.

In the First-Tier Tribunal decision for the case [FT/EA/2024/0108](#) from December 2024, the tribunal ruled that the citations for two appointed peers should be released, but all other confidential vetting information should be disclosed. While we acknowledge that the circumstances are different in this case, which was factored into the public interest test, we believe this enforces the longstanding principle that under section 37 the Commission is entitled to withhold confidential vetting information, and the Commission takes the position that confidentiality must be respected to maintain the integrity of the process. I therefore consider that the balance of the public interest lies in maintaining the section 37(1)(b) exemption for all of the requested information.

This information would also be withheld under Section 41(1)(b), information provided in confidence, which allows public authorities to withhold information, the disclosure of which would give rise to an actionable breach of confidence. At the start of the vetting process the Commission informs nominees and other participants in the process that any information provided by them and any information the Commission obtains in the course of its further enquiries of other bodies will be treated as confidential. This is explicitly stated to include information shared with the Prime Minister, including the provision of the Commission's advice and correspondence with the Prime Minister's Office. The information therefore has the necessary quality of confidence and there is no overriding public interest that would allow it to be disclosed in breach of that confidence. Section 41 is an absolute exemption, therefore there is no requirement to consider whether the public interest in disclosing it outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemption.

If you are unhappy with this response to your request, you may write to the Secretary to the Commission 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

**Secretariat to the House of Lords Appointments Commission**