

As noted in the Information Commissioner's decision notice, there is a comprehensive system in place to support the Prime Minister in managing his time effectively, both in meetings he undertakes and telephone calls he makes and receives. As you will be aware the Prime Minister has both an official role and political role (Leader of the Labour Party). Party political activities are not disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act, as the Act only applies to public authorities. The same also applies to personal activities of the Prime Minister or his family, details of which are not disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act. The systems in place allow the Prime Minister to manage his time as effectively and efficiently as possible across the full range of his activities (official, political and personal). In order to make most efficient use of time, contacts with external stakeholders may often cover a range of matters (official, political and personal). However, if the fact of every contact were to be disclosed (whatever the nature), it would undermine the integrity of the support systems in place and therefore inhibit the ability of the Prime Minister to use his time efficiently.

For all these reasons and in addition to reasons set out in our earlier responses, we consider that some of the information you requested is not disclosable under the Act. We do, however accept the Information Commissioner's decision to disclose contacts which were clearly official in nature. I hope this explanation is helpful to you.

Thank you also for your e-mail of 4 July which I have seen. We would emphasise that our representations to the Information Commissioner were entirely proper and in line with the scheme of the Act which permit both requesters and public authorities to make representations to the Information Commissioner. The detailed points that you raise are matters for the Information Commissioner.

Yours

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Permanent Secretary, Government  
Communication

6 July 2006

Lord Avebury  
House of Lords  
London, SW1A 0PW

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*Dear Lord Avebury,*

**REQUEST UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

In light of the Information Commissioner's decision regarding your Freedom of Information request for dates of meetings or telephone conversations between Rupert Murdoch and Richard Desmond between September 2002 and 15 April 2005, please find below the list of dates which meet the requirements of the Information Commissioner's decision. These are contacts which we can confirm were of an official nature and are therefore disclosable under the terms of the decision.

**Contacts with Richard Desmond**

Meetings on 29 January 2003 and 23 February 2004

**Contacts with Rupert Murdoch**

Telephone conversation on 13 March 2003

The decision notice also requires us to provide further explanation about information that is not being disclosed, in addition to the reasons we provided in our earlier correspondence with you. We are happy to do so. The information not being disclosed about the Prime Minister's meetings or telephone conversations with Rupert Murdoch and Richard Desmond relates to contacts which were not clearly of an official nature, such as personal or political contacts (which are not required to be disclosed under the Act).

We recognise the public interest in the Prime Minister's contacts with external stakeholders and in his diary. We also consider it important, however, that the Prime Minister has the support necessary to ensure he is able to manage his time effectively and efficiently and that he has confidence in the integrity of the systems in place to support him. In particular, we consider that it is strongly in the public interest that he has the ability to undertake a dialogue with a range of stakeholders and external contacts on a range of issues at the time of his choosing without concern that the timing of every single discussion will be disclosed (whatever the nature of the contact).

