RITM0335265 - Freedom of Information Request (FOI8) - Funding from Arms Companies

From: foi@soton.ac.uk <foi@soton.ac.uk>

To: ltheanine29@protonmail.com <ltheanine29@protonmail.com>

Date: Thursday, November 12th, 2020 at 11:58 PM

Dear ltheanine29 protonmail.com,

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Request for information: response

Date of request: 16-10-2020 12:49:30 BST
Due date: 13-11-2020 12:49:30 GMT
Ref: RITM0335265

We refer to your request for information dated 16-10-2020 12:49:30 BST.

Further to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "Act"), [please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to you].

Please find below your question, with the University's corresponding response.

In accordance with section 1(a) of the Act, we confirm that the University holds information of the description specified in your request. The answers to your questions are as follows:

Question:

Good afternoon, I am writing to request information regarding your univerisity's funding from certain manufacturing companies, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Has the university received funding from any of the following companies since 2013: BAE Systems, Babcock International, Qinetiq, Rolls-Royce; Serco; Cobham and Raytheon UK, Airbus, DXC Technology, General Dynamics UK, Leonardo MW UK, Lockheed Martin UK? If so, please include the following details: a.Total funding supplied by the company b.The titles of the projects it is associated with c.Descriptions of the projects it is associated with Please provide the information in digital form. If it is not possible to provide the information requested due to the information exceeding the cost of compliance limits identified in Section 12, please provide advice and assistance, under the Section 16 obligations of the Act, as to how I can refine my request. If you can identify any ways that my request could be refined I would be grateful for any further advice and assistance. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me via email or phone and I will be very happy to clarify what I am asking for and discuss the request, my details are outlined below. All the best, Murray Jones

Answer:

In accordance with Section 1(a) of the Act, we confirm that the University holds information of the description specified in your request but we are unable to provide it, as it is exempt from disclosure by virtue of Section 43(2) of the Act, entitled Commercial Interests.

The release of such information would likely prejudice the commercial interests of the University and other companies. The information requested contains data, which would give insight into a University activity that would be likely to prejudice its commercial interests. To disclose this detailed information into the public domain at this stage would be

likely to affect its future commercial negotiating position. The University needs to maintain excellent working relationships with collaborators while successfully negotiating new contracts, enabling us to have competitive prospects in the higher education sector.

It is important that contractual negotiations allow the University to secure its future sustainability in the higher education sector. Releasing the requested information would undermine the University's negotiating position by giving insight into its commercial strategy and corporate relationships.

As Section 43(2) is a qualified exemption, the University has considered the public interest test:

Factors favouring disclosure

- Openness and Transparency: it is in the public interest that the University, as public authorities, is as open and transparent as possible in the way that we operate and the way in which we make decisions are made, and how the University spends public money.

Factors favouring non-disclosure

- Commercial Interests: it is not in the public interest to share information that would undermine the ability of the University to compete with other universities for funding opportunities and undermine our ability to operate with the confidence of commercial collaborators. Higher education providers are in a highly competitive market; sharing the requested information may harm the University's operational sustainability by undermining our ability to secure strategic funding in the future.

- Anticompetitive Activity: It is not in the public interest to disclose information that would reduce competition between universities.

Given the above considerations, the University concludes that it is in the greater public interest not to disclose the information at this time. We hope you understand that there is a need to balance Freedom of Information with the release of information, which may hinder our ability to operate.

However, the University publishes the following procurement related contract details: contract name, dates, total contract value, type of supply, and supplier name and address on the Contracts Finder website. This is a government website for advertising contract opportunities and contracts awarded, including the overall contract value. The University advertises all tender opportunities on our e-procurement portal called In-Tend, which is accessible to any suppliers that register on the following link: https://in-tendhost.co.uk/universityofsouthampton/aspx/Home. Procurement contract information is also published on the EU portal for advertising tender opportunities and contracts awarded, called SIMAP. Information related to publicly funded research projects involving commercial partners is also available via our website, and research council websites.

If you do not feel that we have dealt with your request in accordance with the requirements of Part I of the Act, you may request a review. Your request for a review should specify in what respect you consider that the requirements of Part I have not been met. Please address your request to the Chief Operating Officer at the following address: foi@soton.ac.uk.

In accordance with section 5.3 of the Code of Practice, a request for a review must sent within 40 working days of the date of this email. The University is not obliged to accept any requests for a review beyond 40 working days.

We will endeavour to respond to your request for a review within 20 working days of receipt.

The Information Commissioner is responsible for enforcing rights of access to information and the operation of the publication scheme. You may apply to the Information Commissioner in writing (FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF) or electronically for a decision whether, in any specified respect, your request for information has been dealt with by the University in accordance with the requirements of Part I of the Act. The Information Commissioner will not normally take action unless they are satisfied that the University's review procedure has been exhausted.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Office

email: foi@soton.ac.uk

Ref:MSG11556204

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