

Mr [REDACTED]

Sent via email only: [REDACTED]

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Official

Ref: FOI-158

Dear [REDACTED]

Internal Review

Summary

1. I write in reference to your email dated 15 January 2018 requesting an internal review of UKAD's response dated 20 December 2017 (the 'Response'), to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') dated 15 November 2017. I can confirm that I have undertaken that review and am writing to notify you that my conclusion is not to disclose the information requested to you. I therefore uphold the decision communicated to you in the Response.

Original request

2. On 15 November 2017, you requested information pertaining to the UKAD investigation into the package delivered to Team Sky in 2011 – specifically, your request was as follows:

I am writing with a request for information relevant to today's announcement – embargoed until 11am - about the UKAD investigation into the Team Sky 'jiffy bag'. I understand UKAD have sent letters to both Team Sky and British Cycling and ask if it would be possible to disclose copies of those letters?

Review undertaken and conclusion

3. When initially considering a request for information, and when conducting an internal review, UKAD is required to consider the circumstances as at the date the request was originally received; in this case, as at 15 November 2017. However, in conducting this review I have considered your original request for information afresh, along with the Response, your email dated 15 January 2018, and whether there have been any material changes in circumstance since 15 November 2017.
4. As you know, on 12 January 2018 British Cycling published on its website a copy of the letter sent by UKAD to its Chief Executive (which, for completeness, I confirm is the letter that you previously requested).¹ We understand that British Cycling took this course of action after BBC Sport informed

¹ The letter is available at <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/about/article/20180112-about-bc-news-British-Cycling-statement-0>.



British Cycling that it was in receipt of a copy of that letter.² In any event, as a result of British Cycling's decision to publish the letter, you obviously have access to it, and (as a consequence) it is now exempt under section 21 of the Act (information available by other means). I have therefore confined my review to your request for UKAD's letter to Team Sky.

5. Having carried out that review, I have concluded that the exemptions originally cited in the Response – i.e., those contained within sections 31, 36, 40 and 41 of the Act – were correctly relied upon for the reasons given in the Response. I expand upon this conclusion in relation to each section below. I have also taken account of section 21 of the Act in respect of any parts of the letter to Team Sky that are already in the public domain. Any such information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to that section.

Section 31(1)(g): prejudice to the exercise of public functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person is responsible for any conduct which is improper

6. In the Response it was stated that disclosure of the requested information "would (or at the very least, would be likely to)" prejudice the exercise of UKAD's functions. It is my firm view that UKAD's disclosure of the requested information would (and so at the very least it would certainly 'be likely to') in fact prejudice the exercise of UKAD's ability to investigate and prosecute anti-doping rule violations (ADRVs) (i.e. to ascertain whether any person is responsible for any conduct that is improper, for the purposes of the Act). I express that view based on my experience as Director of Operations, which position includes responsibility for UKAD's intelligence and investigation function.
7. The Team Sky letter contains and refers to information gathered by UKAD in confidence for the purposes of its investigations into possible breaches of the UK Anti-Doping Rules ("ADR"). UKAD has no powers to compel the disclosure of information from any party and therefore the voluntary provision of such information is absolutely crucial to UKAD's work. If those who might provide information in confidence to UKAD feared that that information could then flow into the public domain as a result of requests under the Act (or howsoever otherwise), the obvious consequence is that such persons would be far less likely to provide confidential information to UKAD – that would in turn have a very significant adverse impact on UKAD's ability to investigate and prosecute ADRVs.
8. That weighs very heavily in the public interest analysis concerning the potential disclosure of the letter to Team Sky, given that UKAD's investigations and prosecutions of potential ADRVs are a critical part of fulfilling the important public policy objective of eliminating doping in sport.
9. In considering where the public interest lies in this instance, I have taken into account your 15 January 2018 email, and particularly your assertion that it is essential for the Team Sky letter to be published (i) due to the high-profile nature of the case (ii) for public confidence in UKAD, and (iii) so that Team Sky is "properly held to account".
10. As evidenced in the Response, UKAD very much recognises the general public interest in disclosure of information that would provide transparency in respect of UKAD's work and/or provide the public with an understanding of the operation of the anti-doping regime, particularly in such a high-profile case. UKAD considers that it respected and met that interest by issuing (i) a public statement (which stated,

² See <https://twitter.com/danroan/status/951904654023188480>.

among other things, that UKAD had written to British Cycling and Team Sky),³ and (ii) a summary in relation to its investigation into the "Jiffy bag".⁴ These things were done as this case already had a public profile, and as an exception to UKAD's usual approach. Ordinarily UKAD would not publish any details of an investigation that did not lead to a charge.

11. It is not the publication of the letter that holds British Cycling to account but the sending of that letter by UKAD, and it simply does not follow from the fact that British Cycling has published its letter (following the BBC obtaining a copy of it) that UKAD should now disclose the Team Sky letter.
12. Further, disclosure of the letter would (as set out in the Response and touched upon below) be a breach by UKAD of the confidentiality provisions of the ADR (specifically, Article 5.9.2(b)). There is a clear and important general public interest in public bodies adhering to the rules which apply to them, and a clear and important specific public interest in UKAD adhering to the confidentiality provisions of the ADR in conducting its investigations and prosecutions. It is a fundamental principle of the ADR (and the World Anti-Doping Code) that anti-doping investigations be conducted in confidence.
13. All things considered, I have concluded that there is a far stronger public interest in the need to protect UKAD's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute potential ADRVs in all cases, not just high profile ones, and so to further the public policy objective of eliminating doping in sport, and in UKAD's adherence to the confidentiality provisions of the ADR, than there is in disclosing the letter sent to Team Sky in the context of one particular case (however interested the public might be in that case).

Section 36: Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs and inhibiting the free and frank provision of advice

14. I have confirmed with the qualified person, Nicole Sapstead that she considers that, for the same reasons as set out above, disclosure of UKAD's letter to Team Sky would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (section 36(2)(c)) – those public affairs being UKAD's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute possible ADRVs and to ensure compliance with the ADR.
15. Further, because disclosure of the letter would in UKAD's view give rise to an actionable breach of confidence (see below), disclosure of the letter would be likely to result in a significant diversion of resources in managing the impact of the disclosure i.e. engaging in legal correspondence with, and possibly defending any claim made by, Team Sky's lawyers. In those circumstances, UKAD's legal resource would be diverted from its core purposes, which include (among other things) assisting UKAD investigations and the prosecution of alleged ADRVs. Whilst the Response addressed this point as an element of the public interest test, I have also confirmed with Nicole Sapstead that she considers that this diversion of resource, and the potential costs, would serve to prejudice the conduct of public affairs within the meaning of section 36(2)(c). This is particularly the case as UKAD has a small legal team with scant spare capacity to divert from its core purposes.⁵
16. As for the public interest for the purposes of section 36(2)(c), I have reached the same view as in respect of section 31(1)(g) i.e. the public interest in disclosure of information that would provide transparency in

³ Available at <https://www.ukad.org.uk/news/article/ukad-statement-after-closing-investigation-into-the-package-delivered-to-tea>.

⁴ Available at <https://www.ukad.org.uk/news/article/ukad-summary-of-its-cycling-investigation-into-the-package-delivered-to-tea>.

⁵ I would refer you to the recently published 'Tailored Review of UK Anti-Doping' in respect of this point, which is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677496/Tailored_Review_of_UK_Anti-Doping_-_Final_Version_for_Publication_.pdf (see in particular pages 28 and 29).

respect of UKAD's work and/or provide the public with an understanding of the operation of the anti-doping regime (to the extent disclosure of the Team Sky letter would in fact do so) is outweighed - and in my view significantly so - by the need to protect UKAD's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute athletes and other persons under the ADR, in all cases, not just high-profile ones, and also the need for UKAD to adhere to the ADR.

17. I have also confirmed with Nicole Sapstead that in her opinion disclosure of the letter would serve to inhibit UKAD's ability to provide free and frank advice to individuals, sporting bodies and other relevant stakeholders in future (section 36(2)(b)(i)). To expand upon this point from the information contained within the Response, it is obviously necessary and desirable for UKAD to provide external advice to stakeholders in relation to anti-doping matters, whether or not it is bringing a charge for an ADRV. UKAD frequently provides this form of advice to stakeholders and, speaking generally, sometimes such advice is put in forceful (i.e. frank) terms in order to seek to ensure it is effective and encourages changes in stakeholder practice. UKAD considers it appropriate, necessary and consistent with the ADR and National Anti-Doping Policy that such advice be given in confidence.
18. In the event that each piece of UKAD's advice were to be subject to publication following requests under the Act, UKAD's ability to provide its advice in a free and frank manner would be severely inhibited. It would mean not only that UKAD would have to consider what advice to give, but it would also have to very carefully consider how it gave that advice and the consequences of publication of the advice, both to the recipient and also to UKAD itself (as, depending on the content of any advice and the profile of the matter to which it related, it could also have potentially significant consequences on resource – in particular to UKAD's legal and communications resource).
19. There is also a danger that – depending on the facts of any case – the publication of UKAD's advice would come to be seen as some form of public censure (i.e. a sanction outside of the ADR). This is not the intention of such advice. Publication would have the potential to be unfair on recipient stakeholders and to damage UKAD's relationship with those stakeholders. This would further serve to discourage UKAD from providing free and frank advice to stakeholders.
20. In considering the public interest in this context, I have taken into account that disclosure of the information would provide transparency in respect of UKAD's work and/or provide the public with an understanding of the operation of the anti-doping regime, particularly in relation to a high-profile case. However, in my view the balance of the public interest in this case lies very clearly in not providing the information sought. I consider that disclosing the letter to you would set a precedent that would serve to inhibit UKAD's future ability to be free and frank in its advice to stakeholders, to such a degree that the utility of UKAD providing such advice would be severely reduced if not eroded completely. UKAD provides this advice towards the important public policy objective of eliminating doping in sport. It is therefore in my view in the greater public interest for UKAD to continue to be able to provide free and frank advice without the inhibition of the additional concerns that would attach to its public disclosure (as set out above).

Section 41(1): Information provided in confidence

21. In relation to Section 41 of the Act, I simply endorse and reiterate the content of the Response. Disclosure of the letter to Team Sky would breach the confidentiality provisions of the ADR and it would also in my view constitute an actionable breach of confidence. The fact that British Cycling chose to publish its letter does not impact upon confidentiality in the Team Sky letter.

Section 40: personal information

22. Again, in relation to Section 40 of the Act, I endorse and reiterate the content of the Response. Parts of the letter to Team Sky contain personal data for which there is no lawful basis for processing (so, whilst the entirety of the letter is being withheld with reference to sections 31, 36 and 41 of the Act, that personal data would be subject to an absolute exemption under section 40 in any event).

I am therefore satisfied that, as at the time of your original request, the information requested was exempt from disclosure. Furthermore, since that time, there has been no change in circumstances that alters that conclusion.

If you are not content with the outcome of this Internal Review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a further review. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely



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