

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 21 July 2022

Public Authority: The Royal Mint
Address: Llamtrisant
Pontyclun
CF72 8YT

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested from The Royal Mint information relating to current policy in regards to the bulk repatriation of UK coinage from outside the UK.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that The Royal Mint does not hold any recorded information falling within the scope of the request.
3. The Commissioner does not require The Royal Mint to take any further steps.

Request and response

4. On 19 June 2021, the complainant made the following request for information under FOIA:

"Please describe fully the Royal Mint's current policy on accepting the bulk repatriation of UK coinage from outside UK, including all denominations, and the effective date of this policy."
5. On 16 July 2021, the Royal Mint responded stating that its policies were updated in September 2019 to reflect that it no longer accepts the return of coins from outside the UK banking system and that this included any overseas coin return deposited via the UK banking system.
6. The complainant requested an internal review on 22 July 2021, stating that the response was "devoid of detail" and that it does not explain what has happened to the coins that continue to be imported from outside the UK and deposited into the UK banking system.
7. The Royal Mint provided its internal review response on 17 September 2021 and maintained its original position.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 28 September 2021 to complain about the way their request for information had been handled.
9. The scope of this case is to consider whether, on the balance of probabilities, the Royal Mint holds any information within the scope of the complainant's request.

Reasons for decision

Section 1 (Held/Not Held)

10. Section 1(1) of FOIA states that:

Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled-

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.

11. Where there is a dispute between the information located by a public authority, and the information a complainant believes should be held, the Commissioner follows the lead of a number of First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights) decisions in applying the civil standard of the balance of probabilities.
12. In cases where a dispute arises over the extent of the recorded information that was held by a public authority at the time of a request, the Commissioner will consider the complainant's evidence and arguments. He will also consider the actions taken by the authority to check that the information is not held, and any other reasons offered by the public authority to explain why the information is not held. Finally, he will consider any reason why it is inherently likely or unlikely that information is not held.
13. For clarity, the Commissioner is not expected to prove categorically whether the information is held, he is only required to make a judgement on whether the information is held on the civil standard of the balance of probabilities.

The Complainant's position

14. In correspondence to the Commissioner the complainant stated that since 2019 retail outlets have refused to take current and old UK coins as the Royal Mint will not accept them and that this has severely affected the complainant's business.
15. The complainant believes that the Royal Mint should provide clear and detailed guidance on which banks and post offices will accept current and past coins and that this "should be freely available and updated as coins enter and exit circulation."

The Royal Mint's position

16. In its response, the Royal Mint explains that in September 2019 its policies were amended to no longer accept the return of coins from outside the UK banking system and that this includes any overseas coin returns deposited via the UK banking system.
17. The Royal Mint further explained that it has an objective to maintain public confidence in UK coinage and "protect the integrity of the currency by removing coins which are deemed no longer fit for circulation through general wear and tear."
18. In its internal review, the Royal Mint maintained its original response, however, it did provide further details in response to questions asked of it by the complainant.

19. It explained that the policy applies to current circulating denominations of UK coins and demonetised UK coin. It also directed the complainant to the list of banks, compiled by the Bank of England, and reminded the complainant that the Post Office also accepts permitted returns.

The Commissioner's view

20. The Commissioner is mindful that the change in policy has affected the complainant's business.
21. However, the Commissioner accepts that the Royal Mint changed its policy in 2019 to no longer accept the repatriation of UK coinage from outside UK.
22. Therefore, on the balance of probabilities, the Commissioner is satisfied that the Royal Mint does not hold any information falling within scope of the complainant's request.

Right of appeal

23. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

24. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
25. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Phillip Angell
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