

contact@taxpayersalliance.im  
https://taxpayersalliance.im  
@manxtaxpayers  
07624 323 552



Merchants House  
24 North Quay  
Douglas IM1 4LE  
Isle of Man

Thursday, 1 September, 2022

Information Commissioner  
First Floor, Prospect House  
Prospect Hill  
Douglas IM1 1ET  
**By email to ask@inforights.im**

Dear Information Commissioner,

**RE: Former Minister Alleges Destruction of Government Documents**

As you may be aware, this week the former Minister for Health, the Hon. David Ashford MBE MHK, allegedly wrote a letter to a tribunal investigating the unfair dismissal of Dr Rosalind Ranson. That letter has been published online by Gef the Mongoose<sup>1</sup>, a website that we understand to be owned and operated by Tindle Newspapers Ltd, which also publishes the Isle of Man newspapers, the Courier, Examiner and Independent. A copy of the alleged letter is attached.

I draw your attention to the following extract from the letter allegedly written by Mr Ashford:

*“As I stated under oath during my evidence the government e-mail system limits the size of e-mail (to 2.2gb) after which messages have to be deleted or archived. As an example in 2020 I received 28,000 e-mails and sent 13,000 and in 2021 I received 29,000 e-mails and sent 15,000, so over 85,000 e-mails sent and received over the two year period. Wherever possible I seek to archive messages but it is not a fool proof (sic) process and that message is one of a number from around that time that are not appearing in the archive and so would not show up in any search for the disclosure as it was not in my possession or on my system at the time disclosure was requested.”*

(Highlighting by me)

This description of the Government email system reportedly written by Mr Ashford appears to make the extraordinary allegation that Government documents (in the

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<sup>1</sup> See online here: <https://gef.im/2022/09/01/ashford-disputes-alleged-failure-to-comply/>

form of electronic messages) are routinely destroyed and unable to be provided in response to legally-mandated requests for such documents.

Further, the letter appears to make the shocking – but not entirely unsurprising – claim that Isle of Man Government email accounts are limited to just 2.2 gigabytes of record keeping. When operators such as Google offer email hosting of up to 15gb for free, or two terrabytes for under £80/year<sup>2</sup> to consumers, it is concerning that the Isle of Man Government imposes such an arbitrarily restrictive limit on record keeping. Given that electronic storage space costs a trivial amount, it beggars belief that the Isle of Man Government is unable to afford sufficient storage for emails.

As you may be aware, prior to the establishment of the Manx TaxPayers' Alliance, I helped to uncover previous document destruction by the Department of Health and Social Care<sup>3</sup> and it is concerning that further documents may be being destroyed routinely and on an on-going basis without proper regard for appropriate document retention policies.

Consequently, could you please investigate:

- a) the breadth of the Isle of Man Government's deletion and destruction of Government documents in this context, specifically emails, as alleged by Mr Ashford; and
- b) the possible breaches of record-keeping requirements, including but not limited to, the Freedom of Information Act and other internal Government codes of practice for record-keeping.

Thank you in advance for giving this request all due consideration.

Yours sincerely,



**MICHAEL JOSEM**

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://one.google.com/about/plans?hl=en\\_GB](https://one.google.com/about/plans?hl=en_GB)

<sup>3</sup> See <https://michaeljosem.com/iom-health-minister-claims-to-have-destroyed-his-anonymous-letter/>