

**Department of Energy & Climate Change**

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[www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)

14 March 2012

Our Ref. FOI 12/0313

Dear

**Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Request of February 27, 2012 in which you asked the following:

*“I am writing to obtain details of meetings between companies or any external body and senior figures in the Department of Energy and Climate Change.*

*By external body I am referring but not limiting myself to think tanks, charities, lobbying companies, trade unions or campaign groups.*

*In particular, I am looking for acquire details of meetings between companies or any external body and all ministers for your department in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.*

*I am also looking for details of meetings between companies or any external body and the Permanent Secretary for your department in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.*

*Please note I am not necessarily asking for details of what was discussed at any meeting, but I am requesting the name of the company involved and the name of the minister or official.*

*I understand under the Freedom of Information Act I am entitled to a response within twenty working days. I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this request as soon as possible.”*

Meetings between external organisations, DECC ministers and the Permanent Secretary are published quarterly on the DECC website at this link:

<http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/accesstoinform/registers/registers.aspx>

The most recently published list covers up to the second quarter of 2011. The published list for the Permanent Secretary starts from October 2010.

The published information is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, because the information is accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain at the link above.

The information on ministerial and Permanent Secretary meetings with external organisation from July 2011 to 1 February 2012 is exempt under Section 22 of the FOI Act, because the information is intended for future publication on the Department's website at the above 'Transparency and Freedom of Information' web link.

Section 22 is a qualified exemption and we have therefore considered the public interest test. There is a public interest in knowing details about ministerial and Permanent Secretary meetings with external organisations as this leads to greater transparency in government. However, the best use of public resources would be applied in pulling this information together, ensuring the information is accurate and published in a consistent and comprehensive format, rather than issuing it in a piecemeal fashion. This information is still being checked prior to publication. Having considered the public interest test, the Department's decision is to withhold the information at this stage. Please be assured that the Department is committed to publishing this information at a future date.

Details of meetings between the Permanent Secretary and external bodies held between 1 January 2010 and 30 September 2010 do not appear on the Transparency and Freedom of Information' web link. However, from our preliminary assessment, it is clear that we will not be able to answer this part of your request without further clarification. Under section 1(3) of the FOI Act, a public authority need not comply with a request unless any further information reasonably required to locate the information is supplied. If a request is too broad or general in nature, then public authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to the applicant in order to focus the request.

In order to provide you with the information on the scale that you have requested would require a detailed search to identify any meetings in scope of your request covering a period of 9 months.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 24 hours in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

We estimate that it will take us in excess of 24 hours to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request. Therefore, this part of your request will not be processed further.

You may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain, including any dates or period of time relevant to the information required. For example, you may wish to focus on a particular organisation that might have met with the Permanent Secretary.

### **Appeals procedure**

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to request an internal review, please contact me.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,