

**Department of Energy & Climate
Change**

3 Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2AW
T: redactedredacted
www.decc.gov.uk

Our ref: FOI 12/0713

06/06/12

Dear Redactedredacted

**RE: FOI 12/0713 request for correspondence between DECC & Centrica over
talks to arrange supply deals of liquefied natural gas**

Thank you for your email of May 4 where you requested information about correspondence between DECC officials and UK government Ministers and senior executives at Centrica, in relation to supply deals of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar, Angola, Australia, Nigeria and Algeria.

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), you have the right to:

- Know whether we hold the information you have requested and;
- Be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions or exceptions which may apply).

We have now completed searching for the information you requested.

I can confirm that the Department holds information covered by your request. However, some of the information is being withheld as it is exempt under sections 27, 41 and 43 of the Freedom of Information Act. The information we are releasing is attached to this email.

The information requested is of a commercial nature, where Centrica's interests in arranging supply deals from other nations is discussed. Disclosure of such information would give Centrica's competitors a unique insight into their commercial strategies to Centrica's disadvantage. Section 43 of the Act exempts such information from disclosure subject to a test of the public's interest.

Additionally, some of the information has clearly been given in confidence and disclosure has the potential to harm the UK's international relations, for example to the detriment to our trading opportunities with these and other countries, and to our energy security to the extent that disclosure of the information jeopardises successful negotiations for gas supply contracts. Sections 27 and 41 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts disclosure on the grounds of damage to international relations and breach of confidence respectively. With regards to the impact on international relations, any decision to withhold information must also be put to a public interest test.

In weighing up where the public's interest lay in this case we have judged that the public do have an interest in understanding where future gas supplies may be sourced from, and how Government and commercial entities such as Centrica are involved in securing those supplies. Disclosure in this case would therefore improve transparency and raise public awareness of such matters.

However, when companies provide this type of sensitive information to the Department, they need to have confidence that such information will not be released to the public. Disclosing such information could harm the interests of the company and inhibit open and constructive discussions between the Department and industry in the future. In this instance the information relates to discussions over gas supply deals with other countries. Releasing the information could harm relations with those countries and jeopardise Centrica's (and other companies') efforts to secure those supplies. This risks both our energy security and potentially our wider trading relationship with those countries.

On balance, we judge that the public interests lies in favour of withholding some of the information requested.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to: **Information Rights Unit** (foi@decc.gov.uk)

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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

Yours Sincerely,

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