



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

T: 08459 33 55 77
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Your Ref: RFI 6127
Date: 16 January 2014

Dear [REDACTED],

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Defra's Pilot Badger Cull Costs

Thank you for your request for information about costs of the recent pilot badger cull which we received on 24 December 2013. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Following careful consideration, we have decided not to disclose some of this information.

Your questions and the responses are below:

Q1. Please state all the financial costs for DEFRA before, during and after the pilot badger culls (including the extensions to the pilot culls) in a) Gloucestershire and b) Somerset for surveying (e.g. badger numbers), humaneness monitoring, staff out in the field and any other additional costs. Please provide these figures broken down by county. For each county please provide a description of what the cost was for.

The detailed costs of the pilot culls have yet to be established. Defra and its agencies incurred a variety of costs over a long period of time and they are still being collated. As such, regulations 12(4)(a) (information not held at the time of the request) and 12(4)(d) (material still in the course of completion, unfinished documents or incomplete data) of the EIRs apply.

Q2. Please state the number of staff (e.g. people) working in each pilot area for the duration of the culls (including the extensions). Please provide these figures broken down by county.

Assuming you are referring to monitors working in the field, the breakdown is as follows. The core monitoring team consisted of six permanent staff with existing firearms experience, as well as experience of fieldwork at night and undertaking behavioural observations of wild animals. There were four additional staff on fixed-term contracts who had worked on the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RBCT) and were employed in 2012, plus three staff without RBCT experience. Therefore there was a main group of 13 staff.

Seven further staff with the experience considered necessary to undertake field observations also undertook field monitoring as required. They had experience of undertaking fieldwork at night and varied experience with firearms.

Three staff experienced in welfare assessments worked on collating and assessment of data collected from field observations. A further four permanent staff members were available as a contingency to provide short-term management support in the field if needed. The teams worked across both cull areas as needed, therefore a county breakdown is not available.

The Regulations

Regulation 12(4)(a) (information not held at the time of the request) is a qualified exception, which usually means that a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether or not information should be disclosed or withheld. However, the Information Commissioner, who is the independent regulator for requests made under the EIRs, takes the view that a public interest test in cases where the information is not held would serve no useful purpose. Therefore, in line with the Information Commissioner's view, Defra has not conducted a public interest test in this case.

Regulation 12(4)(d) relates to material which is still in the course of completion or incomplete data, and applies to the costs arising from the culls. Disclosing incomplete data would not meet the purpose of your request which is to ascertain the costs of the pilots.

The Public Interest Test

Regulation 12(4)(d) requires the public authority in question to carry out a public interest test. There is a great deal of interest and strength of feeling around the badger control policy which includes ascertaining its costs. However, Defra has concluded that the public interest in withholding the information sought outweighs the public interest in its disclosure. Releasing information now before it has been finalised and audited would only mislead and confuse the public. It is logical to wait and it is in the public interest to wait until all the details on cull costs have been collected and summarised rather than release the information in a piecemeal fashion.

Therefore, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I also attach an Annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Defra TB Programme

Email: ccu.correspondence@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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