



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Department of Energy & Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

E-mail:

www.gov.uk/decc

Our ref: EIR 14/0112

12 February 2014

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 16th January 2014, where you requested the following information:

1) I am seeking information on correspondence between DECC and the following government departments:

- I. HM Treasury**
- II. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**
- III. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
- IV. Environment Agency**

Relating to the economics of shale gas, including:

- I. Assessments of and projections for the shale gas market**
- II. Cost benefit analyses of shale gas industry**
- III. The financial costs of shale gas exploration, drilling or extraction**
- IV. The impact of shale gas extraction on the market price of gas in the UK including price forecasting scenarios of UK gas price that consider low, medium and high levels of shale gas extraction**
- V. Gas price assumptions at which shale gas extracted in the UK will be profitable**
- VI. The impact of shale gas on UK household energy bills**

I am requesting documents in the period beginning 01/01/2013 and continuing up to the present day, or as close as possible.

We have considered your request in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulation 2004 (EIRs) because the information you sought falls within the definition of "environmental information" as stated in EIRs

I can confirm that the Department holds information falling within the scope of your request. This involves correspondence between its officials and counterparts from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The Department holds no information on this subject with the other Departments mentioned in your request. For the avoidance of doubt, we have searched for information dated between 1st January 2013 and 16th January 2014, the date of your request.

This information qualifies for consideration under regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs which relates to material which is in the course of completion, to unfinished documents, or to incomplete data; and regulation 12(4)(e) of the EIRs, which relates to the disclosure of the internal communication, and we have therefore carefully considered the case for disclosure.

Both categories of exception from disclosure are subject to the public interest test. The key public interest considerations we have taken into account are set out below. In considering the public interest we have applied a presumption in favour of disclosure as required by regulation 12(2) of the EIRs.

We recognised that there is a public interest in disclosing information to enable the public to assess the quality of policy formulation, advice and guidance, to ensure transparency in the decision-making process and to make Government more accountable.

However, it is not in our view in the public interest if information is released prematurely and out of context. Releasing information prematurely and without the benefit of the necessary analysis or consideration could mislead the public.

The rationale behind the exceptions in regulation 12(4)(d) and 12(4)(e) is that it is often in the public interest for public authorities to have a “safe space” within which to think through and develop policy.

The Government is still in the process of evaluating the UK’s shale gas resources and potential integration into energy policy. Disclosure of related information would affect the “safe space” needed to effectively consider all aspects relating to the “economics of shale gas” and make it more difficult and time consuming to bring any policy formation to a proper conclusion.

There may also be a “chilling effect” if the information requested is released. If released, officials advising on this policy area (aspects of which remain under development) may be less frank and candid in giving their views. This could have an adverse impact on the conduct of Government business and in the quality of decision making or testing policy options. We judge that given the nature of the communications within the scope of the request, this would be likely to prejudice the conduct of public affairs.

After detailed consideration we have decided that, the public interest lies in withholding the information.

For your information, we have already received a similar request

A link to the published document is attached here for your information
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economics-of-shale-gas>

Appeals procedure

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter. If you wish to request an internal review, please contact: The Information Rights Unit, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0ET. Email foi@bis.gsi.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, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Office for Unconventional Gas and Oil (OUGO)