

Department of Energy & Climate Change

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Our Ref: 12/1401

26 November 2012

Dear NAME REDACTED,

Thank you for your email of 3rd October 2012 where you requested the following information:

The OND workstreams for new nuclear for 2011, 2012, and 2013 including the document "new workstreams prepared for new nuclear" prepared for the September 2011 meeting with EdF.

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). It has been interpreted to cover any OND workstreams for new nuclear for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

I have conducted a search of our records and found one relevant document, 'new nuclear workstreams from 2012 onwards' which is attached to this letter in redacted form as Annex 1. The document contains some information which has previously been disclosed.

The remainder of the information is being withheld under section 35(1)(a) of the FOIA, which provides an exemption for information which relates to the formulation and development of Government policy. This exemption applies as the overall purpose of the workstreams is to map out broad policy objectives and with milestones underpinning those policy objectives setting out the steps that are going to be taken in further refining that policy.

As you will be aware this exemption is subject to the public interest balancing test. In considering this, we recognise that there is an important public interest in the disclosure of information about the process of government policy formulation, particularly in the area of nuclear power. We also recognise that disclosing the information in question may help promote greater transparency and enhance trust in this area and may make the public contribution to the policy making process more effective and broad based.

However, there is also a strong countervailing public interest against the disclosure of this current information. The information in question relates to the refinement of broad policy objectives. There is a very strong public interest against disclosing the workings of officials

as they are attempting to establish policy priorities going forward. When policy ideas are being raised or have been raised for discussion and views and judgments sought it is extremely important that officials have a safe space in which to consider these priorities, free from outside pressures, interference or the fear of premature disclosure.

If officials are not permitted a safe space to consider these policy priorities there is likely to be a negative effect on the conduct of good government and there is a risk that decision making will become poorer and recorded inadequately.

Given the current nature of the information and the importance of a safe space for policy development it is our view that, in this case, the public interest lies in withholding the information.

However we do recognise that publishing information about our priorities will allow stakeholders more generally to examine them and provide views. Some information about new nuclear workstreams is available through our website at http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/nuclear/new/new.aspx, and through the minutes and associated papers of the Nuclear Development Forum, also available on our website (http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/nuclear/forums/develop_forum/develop_forum.aspx).

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:

Information and Security Rights Team (DECC Shared Service)
Department of Business, Innovation & Skills
Victoria 3, 5th Floor
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Email: foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk

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

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

Yours sincerely,

NAME REDACTED
Office for Nuclear Development