

Ref no: 13/1393

25 October 2013

Thank you for your email of 9 October 2013 where you requested the following information:

Please provide the following information regarding personnel on secondment from UK energy companies to DECC. Please treat each enquiry item below as a separate Fol request:

1) How many personnel are currently on secondment to DECC from energy companies, including EDF and Centrica?

2) What positions do personnel hold who are on secondment to DECC?

3) How many personnel on secondment to DECC also hold positions or are members of the energy lobbying trade body Energy UK?

4) How many meetings between the Minister of State for Energy and Energy UK have occurred between 28 March 2013 and 27 Sept 2013?

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'). Under the Act you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you have requested and;
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

I can confirm that the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) holds some of the information falling within the terms of your request.

I can confirm that the Department holds the information you have requested in bullet points 1 & 2. However, the information is already in the public domain and is therefore exempt under Section 21 of the Act as we are not required to provide information which is already reasonably accessible to you. The information you requested is available on the following website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/secondees>.

Whilst DECC does hold data on personnel who are seconded from outside organisations, it does not hold centrally the data, as set out in bullet point 3, on any additional responsibilities or associations they may have with Energy UK. From our preliminary assessment to gather information on any associations with Energy UK, it is clear that we

will not be able to answer your request without exceeding the cost limit of £600 provided under s12 of the Act. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the Department holds the information and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit.

In order to provide you with the information on the scale that you have requested would require the department contacting each team where each person is or has been on secondment to DECC to ascertain if any information is held about whether they did or did not have any association with Energy UK.

We estimate that it will take us in excess of 3.5 working days to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request. Therefore, 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, periods of time or specific companies, relevant to the information required.

All meetings between external organisations, as set out in bullet point 4, including meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, editors and senior executives and DECC ministers are published quarterly on the GOV.UK website (under Transparency and Freedom of Information) at this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-of-energy-climate-change&publication_type=transparency-data.

The most recently published list covers the second quarter of 2013. Information on ministerial meetings up to the end of June 2013 is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), because the information is accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain.

However, for the period of July 2013 to September 2013, this information is exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act as the information is intended for publication at a future date on the GOV.UK 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 information about ministerial meetings as this leads to greater transparency in government. 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 located, retrieved, collated and checked prior to publication. Please be assured that the Department is committed to publishing this information. Having considered the public interest test, the Department's decision is to withhold the requested information on ministerial meetings after July 2013.

Appeals procedure

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 the Information Rights Unit (foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk).

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

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 Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.