



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

T: 08459 33 55 77  
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** RFI 5643  
**Date:** 29 August 2013

Dear [NAME REDACTED]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Interdepartmental Resources and Risks Working Group**

Thank you for your request for information about the interdepartmental Resources and Risks Working Group which we received on 8 July. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You requested information regarding the interdepartmental Resources and Risks Working Group as mentioned in the National Adaptation Programme. It may be useful to explain for clarification that the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is the lead Government department with responsibility for considering the physical, economic, resource and security impacts of climate change. The FCO acts as a focal point for domestic and international political dialogue in this area and as a driver of awareness around the world of the impacts of climate change on access to and availability of natural resources. The FCO, along with all other members of the Resources and Risks Working Group has been consulted with regards to your request.

Following careful consideration, we have decided not to disclose some of the information contained within the minutes of the working group's meetings and in the briefing note.

I enclose a copy at Annex C of the information which can be disclosed. The remainder of the information contained in the minutes is being withheld as it falls under the following exemptions of the FOIA:

Section 24: National security;

Section 26: Defence;

Section 27(1): International Relations;

Section 35(1)(a): Formulation of government policy;

Section 43(2): Commercial Interests.



The exemptions are qualified exemptions and we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

The rationale behind use of Section 35(1)(a) 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 decisions to apply Sections 24 and 26 relate to not confirming resource availability that the MOD may or may not have, and how exactly this may affect our military technology; this information could be exploited by those with hostile intent. Section 43(2) has been used where disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice companies' commercial interests. Section 27 is applied where disclosure would be likely to prejudice international relations.

We are aware that there is a general public interest in favour of disclosure of information as greater transparency makes government more open and accountable, increases public confidence in government decision-making and helps to encourage greater public engagement with political life. These public interests have to be weighed against a stronger public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and that policy is fully informed by exploring all options.

Disclosure of the full papers, would affect the 'safe space' needed to effectively develop policy in this area. There is a strong public interest against disclosing the workings of officials as they are attempting to establish policy going forward. Where policy ideas are being raised or have been raised for discussion and views and judgements sought, it is extremely important that officials have a safe space to consider these policy priorities, free from outside pressures, interference or the fear of premature disclosure. If officials are not permitted the required space to consider these policy priorities there is a risk that decision-making will become poorer and recorded inadequately. Given the 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 certain sections of the minutes.

We have decided that the names of officials below Senior Civil Service should be withheld under section 40(2) (third party personal data) of the FOIA, as the information constitutes personal data relating to third parties. Section 40(2) of the FOIA provides that personal data relating to third parties is exempt information if disclosure would breach the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). We consider that disclosure of this information is likely to breach the first data protection principle in Schedule 1 to the DPA, which relates to the fair and lawful processing of personal data, in two ways. First, disclosure would not constitute 'fair' processing of the personal data, and second, disclosure would not satisfy any of the conditions for data processing set out in Schedule 2 to the DPA. Therefore, we have concluded that this information is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOIA.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, 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](http://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 attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

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

I attach Annex C which contains a redacted copy of all minutes for the Resources and Risks Working Group, including: dates of all meetings, names of personnel (where permitted under the FOI Act), the departments represented and the only briefing note produced concerning the group. We confirm that no budget has been allocated to the Working Group.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Tillson', is positioned above a light blue rectangular redaction box.

Jonathan Tillson  
Head of Sustainable Business  
[Jonathan.tillson@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.tillson@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

### **Copyright**

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

Most documents produced by Defra will be protected by Crown Copyright. Most Crown copyright information can be re-used under the [Open Government Licence](#). For information about the OGL and about re-using Crown Copyright information please see [The National Archives website](#).

Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the [Intellectual Property Office's website](#).

---

## **Annex B**

### **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](mailto: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

---

## **Annex C**

**Redacted copy of all minutes of the working group.**