



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

Our ref: RFI 6022  
Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013

Dear [REDACTED]

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: BADGER POPULATION NUMBERS**

Thank you for your request for information about badger population estimates which we received on 24 October. 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).

Your questions and the answers are below:

### **Question 1. Could you please tell me who assessed the number of badgers in the cull zones prior to the postponed cull in 2012?**

Staff from Government Agencies conducted the field work to establish badger numbers.

### **Question 2. Could you please tell me how long this initial assessment took to assess the number of badger i.e. 1 month or 2 months and the amount of staff involved?**

The fieldwork and data analysis took approximately 3 months and involved up to 50 people. Not all members of staff were operating at the same time and some of them worked part time.

### **Question 3. I understand the cull was postponed in 2012 because the numbers were initially assessed as higher than expected (which were -please input your figures) this was revised up and hence the cull was postponed because you had new figures**



(please input your figures).

**And**

**Question 4. The cull was then assessed using the new figures (larger number) this decided the amount to be culled to achieve a 70% kill rate in each zone. I understand that there were 2 figures a lower and upper figure. What were these upper and lower figures for?**

Please see the Report to Natural England at the following link which contains the background to data collection and analysis and population estimates for 2012 and early 2013:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/files/population-badger-pilot-areas.pdf>

**Question 5. Could you please tell me how you have reassessed the number so quickly, if your staff have been involved in audits, monitoring etc. How long does it take to do the evaluation of numbers considering you are actually killing them as you go?**

Different organisations were responsible for different parts of the pilot culls and their evaluation. Cull companies undertook shooting activities under licence. Defra and its agencies were not undertaking shooting. These staff were responsible for monitoring, data collection and analysis. The estimation of the badger population through hair trapping was carried out just before culling started, and not during the culls themselves. Hair traps were set out in the field for a 3 week period and samples of hair collected daily. The analysis of the badger DNA from the hair, and the statistical estimates of the overall population took approximately 5 weeks.

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](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 also attach 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](mailto: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](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