



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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www.gov.uk/defra

██████████
████████████████████

Our ref: RFI 6245
Date: 05 March 2014

Dear ██████████

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Cull Contractors

Thank you for your request for information about the use of contractors during the badger cull, which we received on 29 January. 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).

We apologise for the delay in replying to you. This was due to our having to gather information from other organisations.

Your questions and the responses are below.

Q1: In a previous request I was told that Defra and NE walked the area to gather the required information on sett locations and numbers- could you confirm you propose to gather the information if the cull is expanded to existing and new areas. If the cull is extended, you will obviously require more surveyors to complete any new areas.

The decision has not been taken as to how population estimates will be carried out and verified. Ministers are still awaiting the Expert Panel report; therefore it is not possible to comment on whether or not surveyors will be required, the numbers needed or what will be required of them if they are needed.

Q2: If you use contractors to carry out the surveys could you confirm if they have any association with the culling companies or NFU or is it a requirement that they are directly involved as landowners.

As mentioned at question 1, the decision on any future roll-out and surveys has not yet been made and therefore we cannot comment on how surveyors would be appointed.

Q3: If you do use sub-contractors could you tell me if the contracts are open to tender or do you accept the work on a day rate basis.

As mentioned at question 1, the decision on any future roll-out and surveys has not yet been made and therefore we cannot comment on how surveyors would be appointed.

Q4: Would these contracts for surveys require special skills or can people be trained to carry them out quite quickly

And

Q5: If you require training would you tell me how much it would cost approximately to achieve the skill level required?

The personnel undertaking field surveys for the pilot culls were experienced field workers with knowledge of badgers and setts. It is possible that they may have received further training to fulfil this role, but we do not have information on this or the costs involved, if any.

Q6: Could you tell me what scrutiny will be carried out if you do use sub contract. The question relates to your assessments of numbers in 2013 being incorrect so to ensure more accurate numbers will you be validating all staff and contractors.

Population estimation is a highly complex task, and results depend as much on the assumptions made as they do on the quality of data. Population estimates for the pilot areas were improved as new information became available, which is good practice during wildlife management exercises. All data collected by government surveyors and survey repeatability were checked and quality assured by independent assessors. Similar quality processes would maintain these standards for future estimates,

As yet no decision has been made on any roll-out therefore it is not possible to comment on any future survey work although at present there are currently no plans to conduct surveys similar to those undertaken during the pilots.

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

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 have attached an 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

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) 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