



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Your ref: [REDACTED]

Our ref: RFI 6751

Date: 28 July 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: CORRESPONDENCE COVERING THE ECONOMICS OF SHALE GAS

Thank you for your request for information on correspondence between Defra and any of DECC, HMT, BIS and the Environment Agency relating to the economics of shale gas which we received on 30 June 2014. Your specific request was to resubmit in identical terms your earlier request received on 10th December 2013. 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).

As you know I responded to your original request and I refer you to my letter reference RFI 6089 of 10th January in respect of the information requested from 1st January 2013 until 10th December 2014.

It is worth outlining here that Defra's responsibility in respect of shale gas is primarily in respect of mitigation of potential environmental impacts and not to consider the economics of shale gas development. DECC are the overall lead Department for Shale Gas. In considering possible shale gas development scenarios to inform policy development on mitigating potential environmental impacts we very much rely on two reports which will be of interest to you and which are in the public domain:

- DECC/AMEC (2013) 'Strategic Environmental Assessment for Further Onshore Oil and Gas Licensing' <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/environmental-report-for-further-onshore-oil-and-gas-licensing>
- Ricardo-AEA (2014) produced for the Environment Agency. <http://www.ricardo-aea.com/cms/assets/Uploads/Misc-uploads/ED58661-scenarios030214v14.pdf>



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

In respect of your resubmission I note you asked for information up to the 'present day' so I have considered your request to cover the additional period 11th December 2013 until 30 June 2014.

Following careful consideration, we have decided not to release some of this information.

I enclose a copy of the information which can be disclosed:

'Shale Gas Rural Economy Impacts report': Excerpts from a draft internal document which we shared with the Environment Agency and which considered the potential impact of shale gas development on the rural economy.

The remainder of the information requested is being withheld as it falls under the exception in regulation 12 (4) (e) of the EIRs, which relates to formation of government policy. Information contained in any internal communication of a public authority including correspondence between officials in any public authority may be protected under this exception.

In applying this exception we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning policy development in relation to shale gas. On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information because it is important that officials can consider implications of potential impacts and scenarios around the development of the shale gas industry and to develop options without the risk that disclosure of early thinking, could close down discussion.

Therefore, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, some of the information should be withheld.

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 attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I attach Annex B 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



Annex A

Copyright

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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) 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