



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Via Email

Department of Energy & Climate Change
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www.gov.uk/decc

Our ref: FOI2014/12662

11 July 2014

Dear,

Thank you for your letter dated 11 June 2014 in which you requested the following:

We write to submit a freedom of information request to the Department of Energy and Climate Change in terms of sections 1 of both Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002.

Please Provide a copy of all recorded information held by DECC relating to:

- 1. The Policies which are relevant for the purposes of DECC determining, whether, when and how frequently a fixed, oil producing platform in the central or northern sectors of the North Sea should be subject to inspection by DECC;*
- 2. DECC's implementation of, or reliance on, any of the policies covered by the request detailed above at paragraph 1;*
- 3. Details of any circumstances in which (by way of reliance on any relevant policy or otherwise) DECC will consider, or has in the past pursued, any departure from such policy(ies); and*
- 4. Details of the number of inspections carried out within the last five (5) years immediately preceding the date of this request of platforms of the type and nature described at section 1, together with the reasons for any such inspections and the dates of such inspections, and the number of inspectors attending and the duration of each offshore inspection.*

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

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

I can confirm that the Department holds the information you have requested. Taking each of your points in turn:

1. *The Policies which are relevant for the purposes of DECC determining, whether, when and how frequently a fixed, oil producing platform in the central or northern sectors of the North Sea should be subject to inspection by DECC;*

DECC determine when and how frequently a fixed, oil producing platform in the central and northern sectors of the North Sea should be inspected by utilising the following policies:

- Each inspector maintains a portfolio of operators and is required to conduct at least 10 offshore visits per year, which may involve inspections, investigations or other enforcement activities. On average approximately 60-70% of planned visits are production installation inspections and will include platforms of the type and nature described in section 1 of this request.
- Secondly DECC use a risk based assessment which identifies the production installation inspection priorities for the coming calendar year. Factors which influence the priority of an inspection include, but are not limited to, the age and location of an installation, hydrocarbon type, quantity of permitted emissions, the time since last inspection and installation performance.

An outline of this policy and inspection agenda is available on the DECC website at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262534/OEI_Overview_of_Inspection_Powers_Strategy_and_Aspects.pdf

2. *DECC's implementation of, or reliance on, any of the policies covered by the request detailed above at paragraph 1; and*
3. *Details of any circumstances in which (by way of reliance on any relevant policy or otherwise) DECC will consider, or has in the past pursued, any departure from such policy(ies); and*

These policies are implemented and used on an annual basis. However there are circumstances in which the prioritisation may change during the year on a particular installation which require it to be inspected.

Factors which may influence inspection frequency include, but are not limited to, commissioning of new installations, new operator, change of key third party contractors, significant changes to infrastructure or operations, performance of the installation during the year or follow up action from previous inspections. In addition, an installation may be inspected at the same time as a connected drilling installation, or where shuttle flights between installations are more convenient than arranging separate inspection plans.

4. Details of the number of inspections carried out within the last five (5) years immediately preceding the date of this request of platforms of the type and nature described at section 1, together with the reasons for any such inspections and the dates of such inspections, and the number of inspectors attending and the duration of each offshore inspection.

I have attached a spreadsheet which details all information requested as per paragraph 4 of your request. This spreadsheet has a separate tab for each year preceding the date of your request; i.e. 10 June 2009 – 9 June 2011.

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 2 months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service) at the following address:

Information Rights Unit
Department for Business Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0ET

foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk.

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 Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Energy Development Unit