



Ministry
of Defence

XXXXXXX
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XXXXXXXXXXXX

Via: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Our Reference:
FOI2014/00576

Your Reference:
MOD 2/14

Date: 11 December 2014

Dear XXXXXXXXXX,

Request for Information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act

Further to our letter of 13 November 2014, I am writing to provide you with a response to your Freedom of Information request, in which you ask for the following information:

Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Annual Review of Safety meeting, July 2013 - with safety regulators, ONR, HSE's Hazardous Installations Directorate, and the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator. Please would you supply full minutes to this meeting including any background and support papers referenced at the meeting.

I can confirm that the information you have requested is held and I apologise for the time taken to review the information in scope.

Please therefore find enclosed the following document:

Environment, Safety, Health and Quality Function, Annual Review on Safety to the Regulatory Community (CY¹13)

The MOD does not hold any information in scope of the part of your request concerning 'any background and support papers referenced at the meeting. You will see that page 9 of the Review, however, includes, 'References –

¹ CY = Contract Year

Meeting Terms of Reference (TBC).’ I can confirm that no ‘Meeting Terms of Reference’ were produced as it was later decided that these were not required as a decision was taken to adopt the management review process and its associated terms of reference.

I must inform you that some of the information has been withheld under qualified exemption Section 24 (National Security) and Section 26 (Defence). In my previous letters, I informed you that the information relating to your request was potentially subject to qualified exemption Section 43 (Commercial Interests). Following consideration of the information in scope of your request, we have concluded that no information requires to be withheld under Section 43. However, we did find that some of the information was subject to qualified exemption Section 26 (Defence). I apologise that I did not notify you of this previously.

Some of the information is exempt under Section 24(1) which has been engaged because its release would prejudice national security. It is recognised that the UK’s nuclear weapon activities are a matter of significant public interest and release of the information would demonstrate the MOD’s commitment to openness and transparency and our commitment to safe operation of the AWE sites.

There is, however, a stronger public interest in maintaining the safety and security of the population by not putting into the public domain any information which could be used by hostile parties, including terrorists that would result in harm to national security or information which would be likely to undermine the UK defence capability.

The document contains material which relates to AWE’s programmes and production processes, specific processes undertaken within facilities, hydrodynamics experiments, specialised equipment, past production and forward programmes for operational facilities, risk factors and future facility availability. Some of this information has been withheld under Section 26 (Defence).

It is recognised that the UK’s nuclear weapon activities are a matter of significant public interest and release of the information would demonstrate the MOD’s commitment to openness and transparency and our commitment to safe operation of the AWE sites. However, disclosing knowledge of this nature would be likely to allow means by which systems and/or programmes could be disrupted. If this led to programme delay or disruption of operations, defence of the UK could be prejudiced.

The enclosed document has been redacted where information is exempt.

Under Section 16(1) of the FOI Act, Public Authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to people who request information. I can confirm that the Annual Review on Safety to the Regulatory Community took place on 10 July 2013.

If you are not satisfied with this response or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance Team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

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Defence Equipment & Support Policy Secretariat