



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

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Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2AW

www.decc.gov.uk

Our ref: FOI2014/15428

7 August 2014

Dear **Redacted**

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email of 10 July in which you requested the following:

“This is a Freedom of Information request for details of correspondence (emails, letters) and details of meetings (including dates, agendas, minutes, and internal Ministerial briefing papers) between Ministers and the Permanent Secretary (including an Acting Permanent Secretary) at DECC (including their official special advisors) and senior executives at the following companies:

** iGas;*

** Dart Energy*

Concerning unconventional oil and gas extraction in the UK, including fracking and Coal bed Methane, from 1st January 2013 until 31 June 2013.

If this request is deemed too large, please do not wait 20 days to reply”

We have considered your request in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (‘the EIRs’) as some of the information you have sought disclosure of, may in our view, fall within the definition of ‘environmental information’ as stated in the EIRs. However to the extent that any of the information requested is not environmental, we have also considered your



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request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Accordingly, your request has been dealt with under the terms of the EIRs and the FOIA.

The Department wishes to be as open as possible in answering requests, and to help people obtain the information they are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, from our preliminary assessment, it is clear that to determine whether the Department holds the information you have requested and to locate, retrieve and extract the information would require a substantial volume of work.

After careful examination of your request under the EIRs, we have determined that Regulation 12(4)(b) would apply. Regulation 12(4)(b) states that a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that the request for information is manifestly unreasonable.

In applying this exception, we have considered the public interest in disclosing the information. In this respect we recognise that disclosure could enhance public understanding of the Government's engagement with external organisations and facilitate the accountability and transparency of Government decisions. However, we consider the balance of the public interest lies in favour of withholding the information. This is because your request would place a substantial and unreasonable burden on the resources of the Department and on balance, therefore, we consider that the public interest would be better served deploying our resource in undertaking core work of the Department.

Your request is broad and voluminous. Gathering the information you requested would be likely to involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from the teams concerned and the Department's other work. In order to provide you with the information on the scale that you have requested would require a search of all the records, computer drives and email accounts of all DECC Ministers past and present, their private office staff, Special Advisors, the Permanent Secretary and an Acting Permanent Secretary for the duration of the period specified in your request. Therefore, we will not process your request as currently drafted at this stage.

To the extent that any information held may not be environmental, your request is also refused in accordance with Section 12 of the FOIA. From our preliminary assessment, we estimate that complying with your request would exceed the cost limit of £600 provided under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. This represents the estimated cost of spending 3.5 working days: (i) determining whether the department holds the information, and (ii) locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit.



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You may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain. You could for example, in addition to stating the subject, specify a particular minister or Permanent Secretary who may have met or corresponded with the organisations you've mentioned above, and provide a shorter period of time.

You may wish to be aware that details of all DECC Ministers and the Permanent Secretary's meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis on the www.gov.uk website at the following link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-of-energy-climate-change&publication_type=transparency-data

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 two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the Information Rights Unit (foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk).

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

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,

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