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**Our ref:** RFI 6597/6615  
**Date:** 18 June 2014

Dear ██████████

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Gassing Trials**

Thank you for your requests for information about badger gassing trials, which we received on the 20 and 27 May. We have handled your requests 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).

Your questions and the responses are shown below.

**RFI 6597**

**1. You stated that the trials began in the summer of 2013, can you tell me the exact date the request was made to the scientific establishment to commence the trials and on which date the trials actually started?**

New research into alternative methods of culling badgers was commissioned in August 2013. The initial step involved reviewing and updating the 'Review of effectiveness, environmental impact, humaneness, and feasibility of lethal methods for badger control' published in 2005. The review was completed in September 2013. In October and November 2013 we carried out initial trials of nitrogen-filled foam to understand dispersal of the material. These trials did not involve the use of active setts or tests on live animals. This method is not currently being pursued. Further research is now planned into the use of carbon monoxide as a potential method of humane culling.

**2. You state that no animals are involved in these trials. I wish to know have plans been discussed or considered to use live animals in the future?**

There will be some preliminary tests to investigate the dynamics of carbon monoxide dispersal in a sett environment to determine whether any available delivery mechanisms have the potential to achieve humane and effective outcomes in real sett situations. These preliminary tests will not involve the use of active setts or tests on live animals.

Whether or not we proceed with further work involving live badgers is dependent on the outcome of these preliminary tests.

**3. If the answer to 2 is yes, which animals (species or sub species) have been considered and where would they be sourced from?**

See 2

**4. What is the allocated budget for these trials? If there is no set budget please explain how the finance has been allocated and how it is being controlled to avoid an overspend.**

The current approved budget for work on alternative culling methods is £61,397 since August 2013 although this budget may be increased depending on the progress of the research. Financial control of the research project follows Defra's general terms and conditions for research projects.

**5. How much of this budget has so far been used or accounted for?**

The project is on course to spend its budget.

**6. How are the trials assessing the dynamics of gas dispersal through a sett environment, i.e.; how have they calculated sett volume, and how are they measuring gas concentrations throughout this environment?**

The precise methodology of which scientific approaches will be used to measure gas dispersal in a sett are still being developed

**7. You state that Nitrogen Oxide foam was used in an artificial sett, but you did not make that claim for CO. Can you confirm whether or not a real sett is being used for these trials and if so what measures are in place to ensure no protected species are taking refuge in there at the time of the trials?**

In October and November 2013 we carried out initial trials of nitrogen-filled foam to understand dispersal of the material. These trials did not involve the use of active setts or tests on live animals. We have not yet carried out trials involving carbon monoxide.

## **RFI 6615**

Owen Paterson is quoted as saying "Defra was also looking at 'other methods of removal" of Badgers.

**Please can you supply answers to the following questions:**

**1. Please list all other methods of removal that have been considered and confirm that these involve the culling of badgers.**

The methods considered are those listed in the report published in 2005 and referred to in Q.1 of RFI 6597 with the addition of gas-filled foam. All of these methods involve culling badgers as physical translocation of badgers is not practical on a large scale and could cause significant welfare issues.

**2. Please detail against this list whether any trials or investigation has taken place and whether this was desk based, field trials or some other controlled environment.**

See the answer to Q.1 in RFI 6597

**3. Please detail how the effectiveness and humaneness are to be assessed and whether any independent body will be reporting on these trials or investigations.**

Precise details of how effectiveness and humaneness are to be assessed will depend on which approaches are suitable to be taken forward for use in the field and/or on live animals. There are currently no plans to set up an independent body.

**4. Please detail which company or agency was requested to look into these methods.**

This information is not being released on the grounds of the security of the relevant staff and organisations under 12(5)(a) of the EIRs, relating to public safety.

**5. Please list any allocated budgets against any and all of these methods.**

See the answers to Q.4 and 5 in RFI 6597

**6. Please detail exact start and finish dates of these trials, if no finish date is available, please state projected finish.**

See the answers to Q.2 in RFI 6597. This is expected to be a long-running programme on research and therefore the end-date will depend on when the research is completed successfully or ended if it appears the research will not be successful.

**7. Please detail when the outcomes of these trials will be reported, and when any decision to continue or abandon these trials will be made.**

The outcome of the trials will be published when the full programme of work is completed. Decisions on when to continue or abandon different parts of the research are dependent on the scientific progress of those different parts.

### ***The regulation and public interest argument***

#### **RFI 6615- Question 4**

**Regulation 12(5)(a), public safety:** The safety of the people carrying out the research is important and they could be identified from details of their employers. This may result in them being subjected to harassment or intimidation by groups opposing badger culling. Such activities have taken place during the pilot culls in 2013. There is no justification for placing individuals at risk.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning the work around the badger culls, given the controversial nature of the policy and the wider interest from the general public, parliament and interested NGOs in how culling is carried out.

However, the work should be allowed to proceed without interference and that includes the team undertaking the research being secure at their workplace. Disclosing details of organisations connected with this work would identify them as targets for anti-cull groups. Such activity took place in the build-up and during the pilot badger culls in 2013. For that reason, details of the organisations or agencies requested to look into these methods have been withheld under the legislation.

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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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