



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

**Department of Energy & Climate Change**

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Our ref: **FOI2014/16202**

**06 August 2014**

Dear

**RE: Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your email received on 21 July 2014. You requested the following information:

*1. The Civil Service People Survey staff engagement scores for each year between 2009 and 2013 inclusive, broken down at:*

- a) Directorate-General/Group level, and*
- b) Directorate level.*

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).

The information you have requested is exempt under sections 36(4) and 40(2) of the Act because, its disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank exchange of views within the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC).

Section 36 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours release of this material. There is a clear public interest in understanding the quality of management and working conditions in the Civil Service. It is strongly in the public interest that there are effective feedback mechanisms within the Civil Service about the quality of management and working conditions. The Civil Service People Survey constitutes such a mechanism and given this information is statistical in nature, subsection 36(4) applies.

The public interest in understanding the quality of management and working conditions in the Civil Service is already served by the existing publication of results of the Civil Service People Survey at Civil Service and department/agency level. In addition to providing an overall picture of the quality of management and working conditions at the Civil Service level, it also provides information on the variation within the different departments and agencies within the Civil Service. The information requested may further public understanding of these issues, however this needs to be balanced against the public interest in maintain the integrity of the People Survey as an effective feedback mechanism.

Publication of more detailed results from the survey sets a precedent to publish this information in the future. As the Civil Service People Survey is an annual exercise the publication of this information could result in, actual or perceived, pressure from individual managers for staff to answer the survey positively. Alternatively such pressure could increase non-response to the survey. Both of these situations, either individually or in concert, would significantly reduce the quality of the information received through the survey. Reducing the quality of the information received through the survey thereby limits our ability to use the survey as a tool for learning and accountability.

Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of the information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act. In this case, I believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and DECC is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information. The names of Directors General and Directors are readily available. The results of the Civil Service People Survey for specific Director General groups and Directorates can therefore be connected back to these specific individuals. Therefore the results for specific Director General groups or Directorates can be considered to be personal data about these individuals because it pertains to their personal capability as a manager and leader.

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](mailto:foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk)):

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Services)  
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,