

ANNEX 4

DRIVERS BEHIND PARTICIPATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

This short paper describes the drivers behind participation in the Environmental Protection Expenditure Survey 2013. It considers both motivating and de-motivating factors for the current as well as for future surveys.

As in previous years all the feedback from the 2013 correspondence (phone calls to the Helpdesk, phone calls through the dedicated Top Company follow-up, e-mails and letters returned to explain company's non-participation) was recorded. The correspondence often highlighted the different reasons why companies did not wish to participate and also their opinions on the survey form itself. The main findings, which should be taken into consideration when deciding on incentives for future surveys, are discussed below.

2 GENERAL DRIVERS BEHIND PARTICIPATION

An understanding of the general drivers for participation in the survey has been developed over a number of years of involvement in the survey. Key factors driving participation in 2013 were similar to 2012, as summarised below:

- **The topic of the survey**, Environmental Protection, is an issue that is of concern to many people. As such, the completion of the questionnaire is viewed as a way to help the environment.
- **Defra is a well-known government department**. The connection of the survey to Defra increases participation.
- **The reminder letter** caused a significant increase in the number of phone calls to the help desk during the subsequent period. The reminder letter was an efficient way of boosting the response rate and allowed the extension to the deadline to be communicated.
- **The annual nature of the survey** is another clear driver. If companies know that they will be contacted again next year regarding the survey they are more likely to record their responses and in some instances companies have changed their accounting systems to include the information required to fill in the survey. This is where the pre-survey email is particularly important and why it was introduced.
- **The provision of a Helpdesk** encouraged participation as it is a quick and easy way to get help with any elements of the survey that were proving difficult to complete. The Helpdesk also supplies companies with survey resends as they are often requested by phone and e-

mail. Companies are directed firstly to download a copy from the website, then an e-mail copy is suggested and finally a postal copy is sent if no other means are appropriate.

- **Explanation about the survey** to callers of the Helpdesk reduced the number of smaller companies that were self-excluding and either did not think that the survey was applicable to them or claimed that they had insufficient resources. The Helpdesk was able to encourage more companies to provide information or talk them through the questions. Common responses to the 2013 survey include:

We are not willing to waste resources on this as it is not mandatory

In this case the Helpdesk tried to persuade the company to spend only five to ten minutes on the crucial parts of the survey (waste water and solid waste costs and contact details and classification details). The Helpdesk emphasised the importance of their participation and how the results of the survey would be used to help government make more informed policy decisions as well as benefits to the company itself.

The form is too complicated or the information is not available

In this case the Helpdesk was able to talk the respondent through the key sections of the questionnaire and in some instances to complete a form on their behalf when the information. When the respondent claimed information wasn't available, sometimes by talking through the form with them, the helpdesk was able to draw out the necessary information.

The form does not relate to my company

In this case the Helpdesk was able to determine whether the company had made any environmental protection expenditure and talk through the form with the respondent or even complete it on their behalf if appropriate.

3 REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION

The key reasons for non-participation have remained fairly similar throughout the years. These include the following:

- Data was not available (due to reorganisation of the company for example) and that no manufacturing facilities were present because it was an office only site.
- This year a number of companies continued to mention the current economic situation in their response to the survey. For example, some respondents stated that the recession was continuing to lead to staff shortages and more pressure on available resources. Additionally

and possibly as a result of this, several companies stated that they have a company policy in place and will not respond to non-mandatory surveys.

- A lack of resources and being too busy to complete the survey are key reasons given for non-participation among large and small companies alike.
- Accounting procedures were not set up to collect the necessary information or collected it in such a way as to be incompatible with the structure of the survey. A few companies wished to know whether they would be asked to participate next year so as to have the information ready and to be prepared.
- Data was not available because the company has ceased trading. This includes companies that ceased trading, are dormant, that are due to close, are in liquidation / receivership and sold. All these reasons are fairly common and could be avoided if more accurate company information was available.
- Amongst the top companies (defined on the basis of number of employees and turnover) the most common reasons for non-participation were that resources were not available and that the survey was not mandatory, as seen in previous years.