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Our ref: FOI 2015/00484
Your ref:

10 February 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 12 January 2015 requesting the following information:

What provision has been made within MOD for the inevitable loss of many subject matter experts in the field of energetic materials when Dstl leaves the Fort Halstead site for the following (5) questions?

We are treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and we can confirm that all of the information in scope of your request is held.

For ease of reference our responses are provided against each of your five questions in turn below:

1. Is MOD likely to prevent the departure of DSTL from this site if the loss of capability seems too large?

Current estimates do not indicate an unmanageable loss of staff capability when Dstl transfers its energetic materials capability from Fort Halstead to Porton Down. Therefore there are no plans to change the scope of Dstl's relocation from its Fort Halstead site. By bringing together its people and expertise from Fort Halstead with the new facilities currently under construction at Porton Down, Dstl will be able to offer more resilient and sustainable support to MOD and wider Government in the field of energetics materials. The project to move facilities and staff from Fort Halstead to Dstl's other core sites is known as Helios.

2. Why are 'scarce discipline retention' awards not under consideration for energetic materials workers (they have been awarded to commercial staff)?

Dstl plans to sustain its energetic materials capability through well-practised business and succession planning arrangements. Fort Halstead managers are undertaking specific succession planning through the Helios migration. Dstl is not currently considering scarce discipline retention awards for energetic materials workers.

3. What funding options are under consideration for rebuilding the capability in the future?

The migration of Dstl's energetic materials capability from Fort Halstead to Porton Down is a key component of Dstl's Helios project. The project, including the construction and commissioning of new infrastructure, is built to the latest standards. Dstl is offering relocation assistance to enable its permanent workforce, including energetic materials specialists, to relocate to Porton Down to support Dstl's future business.

4. What are the original and current estimates for the cost of DSTL moving from Fort Halstead?

The current full project estimate, to completion for Helios is £115m in 2013 prices. The initial estimate for this project in 2011, prior to design work and excluding risk, was some £70m. The cost benefit analysis continues to show significant savings from relocating Dstl's operations from Fort Halstead to Porton Down and Portsdown West.

5. Any other factors that is germane to DSTL leaving Fort Halstead

Helios, relocating all of Dstl's activities from the Fort Halstead site, is Dstl's largest corporate investment project and a critical enabler in the delivery of Dstl's Corporate Plan, helping to achieve Dstl's strategic goals and protect Dstl's technical capability in the long term.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you 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, <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Dstl Secretariat