



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

**Department of Energy & Climate  
Change**

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[www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)

**Our ref: FOI 2015/01113**

**13<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Thank you for your email of 16th January 2015 where you requested the following information:

All correspondence between the department and the following with regards to the falling oil price since June 2014:

1. BP
2. Royal Dutch Shell
3. Oil & Gas UK
4. Tullow Oil
5. BG Group

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).

I am writing to you to confirm the Department does hold information falling within the terms of your request. A copy of the information which can be disclosed is enclosed. The information that has been withheld has been done so under section 35(1)(a) and 40 of the Act.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption, meaning that its application is subject to a test of the public interest balance in each case. Section 35 exempts information that relates to the formulation or development of government policy. Oil price changes over the past year have had and are having an impact on the industry as a whole and the companies subject to your request. It is in the public interest for Government to have a clear and detailed understanding of external players' perspectives on those changes in order to form judgements on the wider implications of these developments for UK consumers and taxpayers. As these organisations' assessments will necessarily include examination of financial issues and implications, we assess that they would be less able to share these assessments with us if they could not have confidence that their assessments would be kept confidential. Moreover, this issue remains live and on-going, therefore these assessments are particularly sensitive at the present time. We judge that disclosing this information would inhibit the



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frankness of future discussions, inhibit policy formulation and development, and our ability to obtain the best outcome in energy policy development which would not be in the public interest. In our view, taking account of these factors, the balance of public interest lies in withholding this information.

Some information constitutes personal data and has been withheld. Section 40 of the Act provides an absolute exemption for personal data which then falls to be dealt with under the Data Protection Act. Personal data of third parties can only be disclosed in accordance with the data protection principles. In particular, the first data protection principle requires that disclosure must be fair and lawful and must comply with one of the conditions in Schedule 2 of the Data Protection Act. We do not think that it is fair to release the names of junior members of staff and do not think that any of the relevant conditions apply.

#### 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 sent to the Information Rights Unit at:

Information Rights Unit  
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET  
E-mail: [foi.requests@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foi.requests@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

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,

International Energy Unit  
DECC