



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

Mr C Ross  
UK Political Correspondent  
The Press and Journal  
(Via Email)

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Ref No: FOI2015/08637

11 June 2015

Dear Mr Ross

Thank you for your *email* of 13 May 2015 where you requested the following information:

- 1. Details of the number of environmental inspectors currently employed by the UK Government relating to UK offshore oil and gas installations.*
- 2. The number of UK offshore oil and gas installations that have been visited by an environmental inspector in the last five years.*
- 3. The number of UK offshore oil and gas installations that have not been visited by an environmental inspector in the last five years.*

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 can confirm that the Department is able to respond to your request and provide the information relevant to Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC), Offshore Environmental Inspectorate Unit (OEI).

However other agencies within UK Government may also carry out inspections and some of these sites may have been visited by those agencies for which DECC does not hold the information. For example, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Environment Agency (EA) may also carry out such inspections; and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) carry out inspections pertaining to Health and Safety regulations.

The information you requested, as it relates to DECC OEI is:

*1. Details of the number of environmental inspectors currently employed by the UK Government relating to UK offshore oil and gas installations.*

The Department of Energy and Climate Change, Offshore Environmental Inspectorate Unit, at the time of your request, employ 17 Offshore Environmental Inspectors to inspect UK offshore oil and gas installations.

*2. The number of UK offshore oil and gas installations that have been visited by an environmental inspector in the last five years.*

The total number of installations which have been visited by an environmental inspector is 171 of which 116 were production installations and 55 were drilling rigs.

It should be noted that whilst 171 installations were inspected, some of these installations have been inspected multiple times during the five year period; therefore DECC OEI have actually undertaken a total of 370 inspections.

*3. The number of UK offshore oil and gas installations that have not been visited by an environmental inspector in the last five years.*

The number of production installations which have not been visited by an Environmental Inspector in the last five years is 132. The vast majority of these are small unmanned gas installations which pose a low environmental risk.

It is not possible to determine how many drilling rigs have not been inspected during this period, as DECC do not hold detailed information on the movements of drilling rigs which have operated within the UK offshore oil and gas sector during this period. Again a number of drilling rigs will have been inspected multiple times during this period.

The number of planned inspections in each calendar year is determined by:

- a risk based assessment which identifies inspection priorities for both drilling and production installations, taking into account factors including, but not limited to, the age and location of an installation/rig, hydrocarbon type, quantity of permitted emissions, time since last inspection, risk of proposed operations and installation/rig regulatory performance; and
- the number of inspectors in post – which has varied from 6 to 17 in the last five years.

An outline of this policy and inspection agenda is available on the DECC website at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/262534/OEI\\_Overview\\_of\\_Inspection\\_Powers\\_Strategy\\_and\\_Aspects.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262534/OEI_Overview_of_Inspection_Powers_Strategy_and_Aspects.pdf)

## **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 (DECC Shared Service)  
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET  
E-mail: [foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foi@decc.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,

Offshore Environmental Inspectorate Team  
Department of Energy & Climate Change  
Aberdeen