



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Nobel House  
Area 1E  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

T: 03459 33 55 77  
helpline@defra.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

[Redacted]

By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: FOI2020/08951  
10 July 2020

Dear [Redacted]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Found Dead Surveys Edge Areas of England**

Thank you for your request for information of 14 April 2020 about badger found dead surveys Edge Areas of England. We apologise for the delay responding to you. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

*Edge Area Epidemiology reports reference the forthcoming report on the Badger Found Dead Surveys carried out within the Edge Areas of England. This report is now long overdue, confirmed by my previous correspondence and your reply 21/3/19.*

*It is widely known that the prevalence of bovine Tb in the Edge Areas is negligible, confirmed by individual wildlife trusts who have already received the data. The excuse of peer review is no longer valid, the results are in the public domain.*

*Bovine Tb in badgers is of enormous public interest and I now urge to cease withholding the information on Edge Area Badger Found Dead Survey conducted 2016/2017.*

*There is no scientific evidence to justify implicating badgers in the transmission of bovine Tb from badgers to cattle in the Edge Areas of England. This has clearly been demonstrated via the misuse of risk pathway analyses which have greatly overemphasised the attribution of badgers to Tb breakdowns within the Edge Areas.*

*A reservoir of disease in badgers is also not supported by badger found dead surveys in the respective Edge Area counties (Cheshire excepted, published December 2018, I have noted the caveats ).*

*There is no justification for rolling out future culls in the Edge Areas of England.*

*I eagerly await your response together with the BFD report in full*



The information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exception in regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs, which relates to material that is still in the course of completion, unfinished documents and incomplete data.

In applying this exception, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

Although the Wildlife Trusts had been informed of the original findings of the Edge Area survey, the data was shared exclusively in confidence by the Universities who conducted the research. The results from the survey and further analysis will be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Peer-review is a mandatory step for a publication of this type, and early release of the data can impinge the ability to pass peer-review and lead to further delays in publication.

Defra recognises that there is a public interest in understanding the work of Government and the accountability there may be. We also understand that information in relation to bovine TB surveillance in badgers is an extremely debatable subject and providing such information would show the transparency of Government and when it comes to funded research.

However, releasing information before all of the research has been fully reviewed and finalised would likely mislead the public, if they have to be revised as part of the process. This includes establishing whether any further work is necessary before drawing the research to a close. This would not be in the public interest especially when the funding itself came from Defra and the public purse. The research still needs to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal and any early release of this information may compromise the ability to publish any of the research in a peer-reviewed publication. Moreover, as mentioned above, Defra will be publishing in due course which may take some time, so there would not be any further public interest to be served by early disclosure of the information which will be available to all interested parties as soon as possible.

Therefore, we have concluded that in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

We attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

**Information Rights Team**

[InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)

## **Annex**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter.

Please write to <sup>[Redacted]</sup>, Head of Information Rights via email at [InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO's offices are currently closed so please visit their website on how to contact them during this period, here:

<https://ico.org.uk>