



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

[Redacted]

By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: EIR2021/30034
18 January 2022

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Badger Cull

Thank you for your 4 requests for information of 15 December 2021 about the badger cull. 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.

Can you please provide me with a breakdown of the actual costs to the taxpayer of the badger cull in the years 2020 and 2021. Please also provide a breakdown of the costs to industry for those same years. Can you further provide a breakdown of the payments made to culling companies in those years, along with details on those companies, including the areas they were paid to cull badgers in.

Please can you provide me with all correspondence between Defra and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) via email, text, fax, WhatsApp, etc, that pertains to or mentions the 2020 Next Steps bTB strategy and/or the seven new intensive badger cull areas added in 2021, namely those added in Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and two areas of Shropshire.

Can you please provide me with any analysis you've undertaken that distinguishes between and/or discusses the number of TB breakdowns avoided since 2013 due to a) killing badgers, b) bTB testing and controls on the movement of cows and c) farm biosecurity.

Can you please also provide me with the results of any cost benefit analysis on the badger cull that you've undertaken. I'm aware of your published research on estimated benefits,

based on findings from the RBCT. I am requesting access to any analysis you've undertaken on actual benefits, based on evidence from the cull since 2013.

Please can you provide me with all correspondence between Defra and the National Farmers Union via email, text, fax, WhatsApp, etc, that pertains to or mentions the 2020 Next Steps bTB strategy and/or the seven new intensive badger cull areas added in 2021, namely those added in Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and two areas of Shropshire.

We want to be as open as possible in answering requests. The EIRs also require us to provide advice and assistance to help people obtain the information they are looking for and make good use of the EIRs. Unfortunately, your second request above is very broad and may cover an enormous amount of information. Gathering it together would therefore involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from the Department's other work.

By virtue of regulations 12(1) and 12(4)(b) of the EIRs, Defra may refuse to disclose environmental information if the request for the information is manifestly unreasonable and, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

We consider that your request is manifestly unreasonable under regulation 12(4)(b) on cost grounds and, having carried out the above public interest test, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest falls in favour of maintaining the exemption.

In reaching our decision with respect to the public interest, we considered the following matters:

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning the badger cull and the TB strategy. We understand that release of such information will promote transparency and accountability within government.

On the other hand, there is also public interest in withholding the information requested because of the likely time and resource needed to service your request. Correspondence between Defra the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) is not something that is held centrally. We would need to conduct intensive searches to firstly identify any such information and then secondly establish whether it pertains to or mentions the 2020 "Next Steps" document and/or the seven new intensive badger cull areas added in 2021. Finally, we would then need to identify any harm over the release of such information by way of consultation within Defra and potentially with the named third party. We would therefore have to divert resources from the provision of public services, i.e. the department's core functions, to fully answer your request. On that basis, we estimate it would take well in excess of 24 hours to identify, locate, extract and consider the information requested.

We have therefore concluded that the public interest in withholding the requested information for the reasons outlined outweighs the public interest in its disclosure.

Regulation 9 of the EIRs requires public authorities to provide advice and assistance to applicants where reasonable. We have therefore provided details below to assist you to formulate a request that can be handled at less cost.

The best way we can help you is to ask you to consider narrowing down your request to focus more clearly on the precise information you are seeking. You could, for example:

- specify a limited time period in your request, e.g. 6 months; **and**
- explain more fully what about “Next Steps” do you want the communications to be about.

In relation to the first part of your request, the information on Government badger control costs for 2020 were published on .GOV.UK on 7 September 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-government-badger-control-costs/government-badger-control-costs-2020>. The figures for 2021 will be released later this year. Value for money analyses for 2020 and 2021 can be found on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-badger-control-policy-value-for-money-analysis>

The Government does not make payment to cull companies. Costs to the cull companies from operations are met from within their own budgets. For safety reasons, Defra does not publish cull companies’ details or the areas they operate in.

Please note that we will handle your modified request as a new request. The 20-working-day timescale for responding to requests will therefore commence from the date that we receive the modified request.

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

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 [Redacted], Head of Information Rights via email at 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 can be contacted using the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>