



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

T:  
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**Your ref:** Freedom of  
Information request  
**Our ref:** RFI 5561  
**Date:** 09 July 2013

Dear ,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:** How many households in England and Wales were spending a) more than 3% of their income and water and sewerage bills and b) more than 5% of their income on water and sewerage bills for every year between 2005 and the present.

Thank you for your request for information about the percentage of households in England and Wales spending more than 3% or more than 5% of their income on water and sewerage bills, which we received on 13 June 2013. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I enclose a copy of the information you requested:

- Annex A: How many households in England and Wales were spending a) more than 3% of their income and water and sewerage bills and b) more than 5% of their income on water and sewerage bills for every year between 2005 and the present?

I must advise you that Defra does not hold all of the information that you have requested. You asked for this information for every year between 2005 and the present. We only hold this information for 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. I can confirm that to the best of our knowledge the information is not held by another public authority.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex B, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex C 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

Bertie Archer

T: 020 7238 1526

M: Bertie.Archer@defra.gsi.gov.uk

## Annex A

**Requested information: How many households in England and Wales were spending a) more than 3% of their income and water and sewerage bills and b) more than 5% of their income on water and sewerage bills for every year between 2005 and the present?**

This was asked as a Written Parliamentary Question by Gavin Shuker MP, answered on 19 November 2012. The answer can be seen here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121119/text/121119w0006.htm#1211201001485>, and is copied below for your convenience.

“In 2011, Ofwat reported that 23% of households in England and Wales spent more than 3% of their disposable income on water and sewerage bills; 11% spent more than 5%. This was published in Ofwat’s ‘Affordability and Debt 2009-10 – Current Evidence’ report, which can be found online at:

[http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/future/customers/metering/affordability/pap\\_tec201105afevid.pdf](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/future/customers/metering/affordability/pap_tec201105afevid.pdf).

“For 2007-2008, 22% of households were spending more than 3% of income, and 10% of households were spending more than 5%. These figures are from ‘Ofwat’s Analysis of Family Resource Survey, 2007-2009’, and were not published.

“Every five years Ofwat sets price limits for the water and sewerage companies at its Price Review. The most recent, in 2009, set price limits for 2010-2015. The next Price Review will take place in 2014, and Ofwat will publish its methodology for setting price caps post-2014. All companies have a charges scheme, which must be approved by Ofwat on an annual basis. Therefore, data for future years are unavailable.

“While water and sewerage services are relatively cheap and good value, costing on average £1 per day, some households struggle to pay their water bill, either because they are on a low income or because they live in an area where bills are higher than average.

“The Government wants everybody to have access to an affordable water supply. We have published guidance to companies on the introduction of social tariffs, which enable water companies to offer more support to customers at risk of affordability problems. Companies will need to work closely with their customers in designing social tariffs so that they reflect local circumstances and local views. Companies will be able to introduce social tariffs from April 2013.”

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## Annex B

### Copyright

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Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the [Intellectual Property Office's website](#).

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## Annex C

### 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 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.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 for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

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