



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Department of Energy & Climate Change

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Our ref: **13/0270**

22 March 2013

Dear

RE: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email of 22 February 2013 where you requested the following information:

“Could you please supply me with details of all meetings and telephone conversations between Ministers or/and Officials with representatives of news publications between 1 October 2012 and today, 22 February 2013.

By “details” we mean dates of meetings, who was present and a summary of what was discussed.

By ‘news publications’ we mean national and local newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

By ‘representatives of news publications’ we include proprietors of national and local news publications, editors of national and local news publications, and public affairs officers, lobbying teams, consultants and lawyers who represent news publications.

This includes meetings for both political and governmental business.

Please include copies of material that you hold in the form of paper and electronic records including emails.

I would be grateful if you would supply this information in the form of text-only (Word for example) documents (not PDFs).”

All meetings between external organisations, including meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, editors and senior executives and DECC ministers are published quarterly on the GOV.UK website (under Transparency and Freedom of Information) at this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-of-energy-climate-change&publication_type=transparency-data

The most recently published list covers the third quarter of 2012. Information on ministerial meetings up to the end of September 2012 is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), because the information is accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain.

However, for the period which you seek, October 2012 to February 2013, this information is exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act as the information is intended for publication at a future date on the GOV.UK website at the above 'Transparency and Freedom of Information' web link. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and we have therefore considered the public interest test. There is a public interest in knowing information about ministerial meetings as this leads to greater transparency in government. The best use of public resources would be applied in pulling this information together, ensuring the information is accurate and published in a consistent and comprehensive format, rather than issuing it in a piecemeal fashion. This information is still being located, retrieved, collated and checked prior to publication. Please be assured that the Department is committed to publishing this information. Having considered the public interest test, the Department's decision is to withhold the requested information on ministerial meetings after September 2012.

May I also inform you that the department does not record any meetings by DECC ministers that may be deemed political. This information can be sought from the respective ministers Constituency or Parliamentary Offices.

With regard to your request for details of meetings and telephone conversations between DECC officials and representatives of news publications I can inform you that from our preliminary assessment, we estimate that complying with this request would exceed the cost limit of £600 provided under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. This represents the estimated cost of spending 3.5 working days: (i) determining whether the department holds the information, and (ii) locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit.

In order to establish whether the Department holds this information it would be necessary to conduct a trawl of the records of every official in the department for details of any meeting they may have had with any representative of any unspecified news publication. It would be helpful if you could refine your request by providing details as to the information you particularly wish to obtain. This might include a specific area of the Department and a particular news publication. We would be happy to consider whether any revised request could be dealt with within the cost limit.

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 addressed to the Security & Information Rights Unit (foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk).

Security & Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

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