



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Your ref:
Our ref: RFI 6693
Date: 17 July 2014

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: JUNK MAIL / BANK STATEMENTS / PATIO HEATERS

Thank you for your emails of 26 June to the Department of Energy & Climate Change, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and the Department for Communities & Local Government about environmental issues. They have been passed to Defra and I have been asked to reply. As you know we have handled we have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

1) In respect of junk mail, I understand that my colleague has already replied to you on 3 July. However, I can supply the following background information for interest.

Defra currently has a voluntary agreement in place with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). The objectives of the agreement are aimed at waste prevention, sustainable production and distribution, and recycling. Further details can be found here: dma.org.uk/news/dma-signs-defra-agreement-cut-dm-waste.

The commitment to cutting waste has been set out in a new Voluntary Producer Responsibility deal. By the end of 2014, the direct marketing industry aim to achieve a 25 per cent increase on the industry's current use of suppression files, launch an 'all-in-one' consumer preference service for unaddressed mail, maintain public awareness of the consumer preference services and retain established direct mail recycling rates. Forty per cent of all direct mail produced will have to conform to the requirements of a new industry environmental standard that will replace PAS 2020.

Defra's objectives for cutting waste in the production of printed direct marketing communications focus on waste prevention, sustainable production, and distribution and recycling. Defra had a meeting with the DMA in December last year to ascertain progress with the implementation. Although implementation for some of the key actions has not met



the deadlines outlined, they are progressing and we expect that they will be implemented. However, the DMA has confirmed that it has not delivered one key aspect, namely the launch of the Single Preference Service by April 2012 – a single opt-out system that consumers could complete online to stop unaddressed direct marketing mail, as opposed to the DMA and Royal Mail separate systems currently being used. As it is a voluntary agreement, progress with aspects of the deal are for the DMA to address.

However, the deal only applies to members of the DMA and does not cover junk mail distributed by local businesses and items such as paper directories and free newspapers. Defra recognises the measures imposed on the industry could result in junk mailers cancelling their membership of the association in an attempt to continue business as usual, hence the emphasis on making such material recyclable.

Consumers who wish to stop receiving unsolicited mail should register with the DMA at: www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/. Royal Mail operates a separate system and further details can be found at: www.royalmail.com/personal/help-and-support/how-do-i-stop-receiving-any-leaflets-or-unaddressed-promotional-material.

2) Production and format of bills and bank statements are a matter for the individual firms who issue them. Some of the information they contain will be required by codes of practice and guidance from regulatory bodies. However, the purchase cost of paper for such items translates into reduced profits, so firms will, no doubt, be continually considering ways in which such costs could be reduced. We do not feel that this is a matter for further regulation.

3) The UK is unable to ban patio heaters unilaterally. Such a move would only be possible if the EU made the necessary regulations under the Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products Directive. The European Commission is currently considering the shortlist of products to be considered in its 2015-17 work plan and patio heaters are being considered for that shortlist, which will be finalised early next year.

We appreciate that there may be local air quality considerations in relation to barbecues, bonfires and stubble burning,. Local authorities are responsible for reviewing and assessing air quality in their areas against national objectives, and must take remedial action where objectives are not met. The Government supports local authorities in England to deliver local measures and works with the Devolved Administrations to improve air quality across the UK.

We recognise the significant public health impacts arising from poor air quality and is determined, through close working with other Government departments, to make air cleaner across the UK and to reduce these health impacts. As part of this, the Department of Health has established an Air Quality Indicator as part of the new Public Health Outcomes Framework. Local authorities will be expected to deliver against 68 measurable outcomes (indicators) for health, including for air quality.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, 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 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 A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B 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

T:
M:
F:

Annex A

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Annex B

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) 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