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Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

FOI-requests@dsit.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dsit

Owen Boswarva

Our reference:

FOI2024/00041

owen.boswarva@gmail.com

Your reference:

8 August 2024

Our response to your freedom of information request

Dear Mr Boswarva,

Thank you for your information request which we received on 23 July.

Your request

I understand from published minutes of the Geospatial Commission's Board of Commissioners meeting on 30 January 2024 that Paddy Vanderpant, a member of the Commission Unit, presented a paper on Measuring Impact, which "set out the approach that the Geospatial Commission takes to assessing its impact." The minutes further state: "The paper and introduction gave an overview of the Commission's achievements and commitments met since 2018. The paper also discussed the framework the analysis team use when considering impact."

Link to minutes: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geospatial-commissionboard-of-commissioners-meeting30-january-2024>

I would like to request a copy of the Measuring Impact paper (or all information in the paper).

Thank you for your attention to this information request.

We have responded to your request for recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Our response

We can confirm that the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (the department) does hold the information in scope of your request. Please see **Annex A** attached for the document entitled - Measuring Impact, which was written in January 2024.

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Section 35: Government policy

Some of the information is exempt from disclosure under section 35 of the FOIA.

Section 35 states:

(1) Information held by a government department or by the Welsh Assembly Government is exempt information if it relates to-

(a) the formulation or development of government policy,

(b) Ministerial communications,

(c) the provision of advice by any of the Law Officers or any request for the provision of such advice, or

(d) the operation of any Ministerial private office.

Some of the information falls into the category described in section 35(1)(a). Section 35 is a qualified exemption. With this in mind, we have considered the public interest for and against disclosure.

Annex A - Public interest test in relation to section 35(1)(a)

Factors for disclosure

- Public interest in the disclosure of information to ensure transparency and visibility of public bodies being held to account regarding decisions made and use of funds.
- Providing the public with information to help their understanding of decisions which affect them.
- The general interest in transparency, which can support the public to understand how government policy is formulated.
- Disclosure may serve to widen the base of stakeholder and public engagement which may in turn assist in the development and scrutiny of policy formulation.

Factors against disclosure

- The limited areas that have been redacted in this paper are for one of two reasons:
 1. They contain unpublished analysis that seeks to quantify the value of benefits. Although useful for internal policy discussions, the bar for publishing this analysis would be much higher than it would be for supporting internal discussions.
 2. They contain subjective assessments of impact, discussions relevant to policy development and internal prioritisation of resources.
- The public interest in maintaining a “safe space” in which government officials can develop their thinking and explore different options through discussions. The information from which are used to inform the active ongoing development of government policy.
- Good government depends on good decision making and this needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options - there may be a deterrent effect among policy officials and analysts who might be reluctant to

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provide advice or analysis because it might be disclosed, hampering policy development and decision making.

- The removal of this safe space could lead to a “chilling effect” where policy officials may be less willing to engage in the exploration of new policy ideas. In addition, analysts may be less willing to undertake analysis to support policy aims. This then creates an environment where policy making and supporting analysis is limited.

Having considered these factors, we are satisfied that it is appropriate to withhold the information.

Section 40(2): Personal data of third parties

Some of the information is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) because of the condition at section 40(3A) of the FOIA.

Section 40(2) and (40(3A) state:

(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if-

(a) it constitutes personal data which does not fall within subsection (1), and

(b) the first, second or third condition below is satisfied.

(3A) The first condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act-

(a) would contravene any of the data protection principles, or

(b) would do so if the exemptions in section 24(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018 (manual unstructured data held by public authorities) were disregarded.

The department has obligations under data protection legislation, and in law generally, to protect personal data. This exempts personal data from release if disclosure would contravene any of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. Release would breach the first data protection principle since it would be unlawful and unfair to disclose the information.

As section 40 is an absolute exemption, the department is not required to carry out a public interest test.

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Next steps

You can ask us to review our response. Please let us know in writing if you want us to carry out a review. Please do so within 40 working days. You can contact us by emailing FOI-requests@dsit.gov.uk or by post at:

Information Rights Team
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If we perform a review but you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the [Information Commissioners Office](#) (ICO).

You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review through the ICO website: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints.

Your information

Our [privacy notice](#) explains what we do with the personal information which you provide to us. Our [personal information charter](#) sets out the standards you can expect from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology when we collect, hold or use your personal information.

Yours sincerely,

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

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