

Xxxxxx xxxxxx
(reply via e-mail)

Email:- xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Web site:- xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Our Ref: E0008944

6 July 2012

Dear xxxxxxxx,

I am writing to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information you requested on 23 May, which has been considered under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004.

You requested the following information:

- i) Details on the assumptions, data, methodology and calculations used to arrive at the £960m estimate for landscape impacts mitigation measures;
- ii) A breakdown of landscape costs along the line of showing in particular the landscape costs for the Chilterns AONB;
- iii) Copies of all DfT/HS2 Ltd e-mails that discuss this estimate so as to gain an understanding of the rationale used in reaching this valuation; and
- iv) Whether the estimate does not just represent the market costs of acquiring the land on which to build HS2.

Taking your four requests in turn:

- i) The following information has been found and is being released to you which provides full details of the assumptions, data, methodology and calculations used to arrive at the £960m estimate for landscape impacts mitigation measures.
 - A document titled 'Assessment of Landscape Impacts for High Speed 2'
 - A spreadsheet titled 'gisu1112j004'
 - Presentation DfT gave to the Interdepartmental Analyst's Group on 10 November 2011.
- ii) The attached spreadsheet also isolates the Landscape Impacts on the Chilterns area. The analysis was done on the consultation route which informed the Secretary of State's January 2012 announcement after which significant additional mitigating measures were put in place – such as additional tunnelling.
- iii) I can confirm that we hold information in relation to this part of your request but regret to inform you of my decision not to disclose this information. The information you

requested is being withheld as it falls under the exceptions under Regulation 12(d) of the Environmental Information Regulations as the information in question was incomplete. I would add however that full details of the way the Department carried out this work is described in the other materials being released to you.

This exception is subject to a public interest test. This means that we have had to consider in relation to the exception relied upon whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the relevant information. The public interest test is set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

- iv) Details of the costs of acquiring land are contained in the economic case for HS2. The Landscape Impacts value of £960m is additional and counted as a negative benefit in the Value for Money Assessment.

Table 2 of the HS2 Value for Money statement (January 2012) available at the hyperlink below informs that the impacts of HS2 upon landscape for London to West Midlands have been estimated at £1.0 billion. This value is deducted from the Net Benefits in the numerator of the BCR for the HS2 London to West Midlands section of line. No estimate was made for the impact upon landscape for the full Y network in the latest update to the economic case in January 2012.

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/hs2-economic-case-value-for-money/hs2-economic-case-value-for-money.pdf>.

Table 6 of the HS2 Economic Case (January 2012) available at the hyperlink below informs that 'land costs/compensation' (for the full HS2 Y network) is estimated at £1,490 million.

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/hs2-economic-case-appraisal-update/hs2-economic-case-appraisal-update.pdf>

It should be emphasised that the estimate of landscape and the estimate of 'land costs/compensation' are distinct, that is to say estimated landscape impacts does not reflect the cost of acquiring the land. Further Details of the methodology for appraisal of landscape can be found in the report "Valuing the external benefits of undeveloped land: main document" available at;

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/158136.pdf>.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within 40 working days of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/04
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA

E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner. If you have any queries about this letter please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXX XXXXX

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within 40 working days of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

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

Annex A

EIR exceptions: 12(4)(d) - information incomplete	
<p>Regulation 12(4)(d)</p> <p>... the request relates to material which is still in the course of completion, to unfinished documents or to incomplete data</p> <p>It is subject to a public interest test.</p>	
Public interest test factors for disclosure	Public interest test factors against disclosure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater transparency makes Government more accountable to the electorate and increases trust; • promotes accountability and transparency in the proposed spending of public money; • the substance of the information may relate closely to a matter of public importance about which public debate could be informed by its disclosure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in order to be able to provide Ministers with robust advice, Government officials need to be able to make suggestions and discuss ideas which may subsequently be rejected; • the impartiality of the civil service might be undermined if advice was routinely made public as there is a risk that officials could come under political pressure not to challenge ideas in the formulation of policy, thus leading to poorer decision making; • ministers and officials also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options; • there needs to be a free space in which it is possible to 'think the unthinkable' and present policy proposals made at an early stage without the risk that they will be held up to ridicule.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Decision</u></p> <p>There are strong public interest considerations in withholding the policy advice and information related to your specific request. It is in the public interest that:</p>	

- information release which relates to Government's policies should be as complete as possible to avoid confusion;
- decision making should be based on the best advice available and a full and frank consideration of all the options;
- advice should be broadly based - there may be a deterrent effect on experts or stakeholders who might be reluctant to provide advice if it is felt that it might be prematurely disclosed;
- the impartiality of the civil service is protected - it might be undermined if advice was routinely made public in its formative stages as there is a risk that officials could come under political or public pressure not to challenge ideas in the formulation of policy, thus leading to poorer decision making