



Ministry
of Defence

Defence Equipment & Support Secretariat

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Alan

via: request-163548-
bcb295bd@whatdotheyknow.com

Our Reference:
04-06-2013-115119-002

Date: 31 July 2013

Dear Alan,

Request for Information under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Further to my letter of 26 July 2013, I am now in a position to provide you with a substantive response to your request for information regarding nuclear waste disposal at Chatham Docks.

As I confirmed in my letter of 9 July, we do hold information that falls within the scope of your request. I also stated that EIR exception 12(5)(a) (national security, international relations and defence) may apply to the information you have requested. Following a detailed review, this exception is not considered to apply. I shall therefore address each of your questions in turn:

Q1. I would like to know if there is currently any monitoring taking place of the nuclear waste disposed of at Chatham Docks in Pier Road, Gillingham.

Our records show that six monthly routine radiological monitoring is carried out at the disposal site within the wooded area adjacent to Pier Road, Chatham. This schedule was agreed with the then regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, (now part of the Environment Agency) in 1996. This monitoring comprises groundwater sampling and the measurement of surface gamma dose rates in the area.

There is currently no specific Carbon-14 monitoring undertaken of the waste at Chatham.

Q2. I would also like to know if any work has been undertaken to ascertain whether Carbon-14 is present in the waste.

Our records show that work was conducted in 2000 to determine the quantities of Carbon-14 transferred to the British Nuclear Fuels Limited site near Drigg, Cumbria. This work considered the total predicted production of Carbon-14 from the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Programme.

Q3. If this is the case, I would like details of the work, the levels of Carbon 14 detected (if indeed there is any) and what the current situation is.

Although not a specific study of the Pier Road, Chatham Docks site, this work indicates that the waste disposed of at that site contains up to a maximum of 0.95 GBq of Carbon-14.

The value of 0.95 GBq of Carbon-14 has been calculated using a methodology known as Mass Balance Hypothesis, which is based on the amount of Hard Trash and Compactable Wastes disposed of from the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Programme.

If you are not satisfied with this response or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Deputy Chief Information Officer, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

DE&S Policy Secretariat