



Oil & Gas
Authority

21 Bloomsbury
Street
London WC1B
3HF

Ruth Hayhurst

By email to: request-665968-5f4c2e76@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: FOI-2020-0029

15 July 2020

Dear Ms Hayhurst,

Thank you for your email of **19 May**, in which you requested:

"This is a follow-up to my request

https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.whatdotheyknow.com%2Frequest%2Fextension_to_initial_term_of_14t%23outgoing-1024619&data=02%7C01%7Cfoirequests%40ogauthority.co.uk%7C2b9e75b29f5a47577cf208d7fbd38180%7Ce681c59d868e488780face36f1f21b0f%7C0%7C0%7C637254758140601211&sd=00GxssKxBsLqGce%2B8zd2CfEbmWLOTY6y2UoBNL6Ydc%3D&resend=0 to which you responded on 13 May 2020.

Please identify any 14th round licences where the OGA refused requests by operators for a time extension beyond that agreed when the licence was issued.

Please also list any time extensions granted since the information the OGA provided on 13 May 2020.."

We have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**FOIA**) and, where relevant, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (**EIR**).

The OGA has refused requests for extensions on 12 PEDLs.

The OGA has not granted any extensions on PEDLs since 13 May 2020.

The OGA is withholding, the information regarding the identity of those licenses under Section 43(2) FOIA and Regulation 12(5)(e) EIR.

Section 43 FOIA and Regulation 12(5)(e) EIR (Commercial Interests)

Section 43(2) FOIA provides that information is exempt from disclosure if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). Regulation 12(5)(e) of the EIRs provides that a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent the



Oil & Gas Authority

confidentiality of commercial or industrial information where such confidentiality is provided by law to protect the legitimate economic interest.

Disclosure of any companies whom have been unsuccessful in their application to have their initial term extended would, or would be likely to, lead to speculation as to the financial viability of each of the companies. In addition, disclosure of the withheld information would, or would be likely to, call into question the companies' ability to meet their licence and other commitments, undermining their respective commercial positions. Speculation as to the financial viability and ability to meet licence commitments could lead to a decrease in those companies share price, at least in the short term, leading to a sharp correction later. It could also lead to third parties deferring the provision of goods or services necessary for operations or changing the terms on which the good or services are offered.

Further, disclosure of the requested information may undermine those companies' ability to obtain credit, making obtaining credit more expensive and difficult. All of this would affect these companies' ability to operate in a highly competitive environment.

Finally, disclosure would be likely to impair the efforts of some of the companies concerned to build investor confidence and assemble the consortium of interest required to deliver the potential of this petroleum resource as a fuel and longer term as a feedstock for the local manufacture of hydrogen for local industry when conditions allow.

Public Interest

In withholding the requested information, the OGA has considered whether the public interest in withholding the information is outweighed by the public interest in disclosing the requested information.

The OGA acknowledges that disclosure of the requested information can lead to greater transparency and enhanced scrutiny of public authorities. However, the need and desire for greater transparency must be balanced against the need to protect the commercial interests of the companies and the OGA's objective of having an effective system of regulation and energy supply. The OGA considers that disclosure would likely impact negatively on the ability of the UK to attract investment in hydrocarbon exploration as companies would, or would or would be likely to, have concerns about commercially sensitive or otherwise confidential information from their discussions with the OGA being disclosed. The OGA also considers that disclosure would or would be likely to affect the stable system of onshore regulation.

This concludes the OGA's handling of your request.

Appeals Procedure



Oil & Gas Authority

If you are unhappy with the way the OGA has handled your request, you may request an internal review. A request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your request and should be addressed to: FOI Manager, Oil and Gas Authority, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3HF Email: foirequests@ogauthority.co.uk

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications with regard to this request.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the internal review, you may contact the Information Commissioner at www.ico.org.uk or at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

FOI Officer.