



Joe Rukin
request-421938-6c928e70@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI324979
Date: 26/09/2017

Dear Joe Rukin

I refer to your request where you asked:

"I wish to request the publication of all reports on HS2 produced by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority conducted since it took over the responsibilities of the Major Projects Authority."

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

However our decision is to withhold the information held under the Freedom of information Act 2000 (the FOI Act) with the qualified exemptions that we consider applies to the information you have requested found in section 33(1)(b) and (2) and section 35(1)(a) of the FOI Act.

Section 33(1)(b) and (2) of the Act apply because the information held relates to the IPA carrying out its audit function by examining the effectiveness of DfT in discharging its responsibility in relation to the HS2 programme.

Section 35(1)(a) apply because the information held relates to the formulation or development of government policy. The information held relates to the development of the policy on High Speed 2, which is still on-going.

The exemptions in section 33(1)(b) and (2) and Section 35(1)(a) engage the public interest test. When applying the public interest test, the public authority is simply deciding whether, in all the circumstances of the case, it serves the interest of the public better to withhold or to disclose information.

The public interest considering favouring disclosure is:

- There is a considerable public interest in both understanding government project and programmes, and also in ensuring their success. In this context, I note the considerable public interest in ensuring successful project delivery, to budget, to ensure maximum benefits can be realised so that there is value for public money.
- There is a public interest in transparency and accountability so there can be public scrutiny of whether the Assurance process is effective, particularly in high-risk projects and programmes.

The public interest considerations favouring non-disclosure are:

- There is a clear public interest in maintaining the integrity of the Assurance process as an effective and prompt peer-review process that produces reports based on candid interviews for the benefit of programme Senior Responsible Owners.
- Effective reviews have a demonstrable value for money to the taxpayer. Reports must be prompt and based on candid interviews and full and frank disclosure from project teams. Fear of immediate publication could hamper this disclosure. It would not be in the public interest to have a weakened, less effective review.

I have weighed the public interest in disclosure against a stronger public interest in securing better value for money in the delivery of public services. Taking into account all of the circumstances of the case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this documentation.

You may find it helpful to know that the IPA releases an Annual Report each year covering all the major projects on the Government portfolio. The last such report was published on 18 July 2017. A link to the report can be found on gov.uk website via the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2017>

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the FOI team. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Sharon Carter
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow

Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written on a light blue background.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office