

03 October 2014



Ms Young  
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Dear Ms Young

**Access to information – Request No RFI 2657**

Thank you for your request for the information detailed below which we received on 10 September 2014. Your request has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You specifically requested the following information:

- 1. If the lower target of 316 for W Somerset is 70% of the badger population this would mean you estimate there are only 451 live badgers in total and the maximum number to be killed - 785 - would not be possible as it would mean wiping out the entire local population 1.7 times. Can you please say what percentage of the population 316 represents if not 70%?**

Please see Defra's advice to Natural England on '[Setting the minimum and maximum numbers for Year 2 of the badger culls.](#)' We suggest that you may wish to pay particular attention to page 5; Limitations of Population Estimates which gives some simple calculations.

The year 2 targets are not estimates of 70% of the current badger population. They are estimates of how many badgers need to be culled in order to reduce the population by at least 70% from what it was before culling began in Year 1.

- 2. If 316 is estimated to be 70% of the population it is hard to see how you are ensuring there is no local extinction which would be in contravention of the Bern Agreement?**

Please see our response to Q1.

316 is not estimated to be 70% of the population.

- 3. On the other hand if the upper target, 785, is 70% of the total number of badgers, this means there are 1,121 live badgers in West Somerset Killing and only 316 of them would be less than 30%, well below the 70% target. At this level wouldn't perturbation and disease spread be a likely outcome?**

Please see our answer to Q1.

785 is not estimated to be 70% of the population.

- 4. If so why are you setting targets that are likely to spread disease?**

The assumptions behind your calculations are incorrect. Please see our answer to Q1.

5. **Perhaps you have however estimated 70% of the population as being somewhere between 316 and 785? If you have estimated 70% of the population at 550.5 (midway between the lowest and highest targets), this means you think the population is 786. In this case if you killed your lower target number of 316 this would be only be 40%; again isn't this far too few to avoid high risk perturbation?**

The assumptions behind your calculations are incorrect. Please see our answer to Q1.

6. **On the other hand if you thought there 550.5 badgers was 70% of the population and you killed your upper target of 785 you would still be killing ALL the badgers EXCEPT ONE.**

The assumptions behind your calculations are incorrect. Please see our answer to Q1.

7. **In fact there is no 70% population estimate for this target range without allowing for the killing of either far too few or far too many badgers, according to the government's own criteria for the pilots. Please therefore explain why you have adopted these targets and how you have derived the target range.**

Please see our answer to Q1.

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Yours sincerely

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