

Mr Mike Post

Sent via e-mail

[request-152314-  
e3d9bac6@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-152314-e3d9bac6@whatdotheyknow.com)

Our ref: WT/ 9936 / 9698

Date: 22 May 2013

Dear Mr Post

**RE: Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) /  
Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)**

Thank you for your enquiry with regard to hydropower which was received on  
1 May, 2013 and your additional questions of 5 May, 2013.

Requests for information that is recorded are generally governed by the Freedom of  
Information Act 2000 (FOIA). The information you have requested is environmental and it is  
therefore exempted from the provisions of FOIA by FOIA s.39(1). We have therefore  
considered your request under the provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations  
2004 (EIR).

I enclose answers to your specific questions with regard to an article by SEPEL'S chief  
Executive in the October 2012 edition of the magazine "International Water Power and  
Dam Construction". Within this article he wrote that in 2007 with the encouragement of the  
Environment Agency who assigned him one of their electrical engineers to assist and  
provide access to their weirs. SEPEL studied the 45 weirs of the River Thames and created  
the first hydroelectric potential report for the river.

I hope that we have correctly interpreted your request. Please see the Standard Notice for  
details of permitted use.

1. *You request a copy of the SEPEL report for the Thames – We suggest you to  
contact SEPEL as we do not hold a copy of the report.*
2. *Did the SEPEL report form part of the basis of the high level screening process  
referred to in request WT/8892 on how the weirs were selected for hydropower? –  
The SEPEL report did not form part of our basis for weir selection.*
3. *You ask us to confirm the process by which SEPEL was appointed to study  
hydropower potential on the Thames? – SEPEL was not appointed by us to  
undertake a study. They undertook the study for their own purposes. SEPEL*

approached us and asked for our cooperation with access. As an organisation interested in climate change and renewable energy we were willing to provide access to our weirs. One of our officers arranged access to our land to assist SEPEL in their study.

4. *You ask for confirmation that the relevant engineering or scientific qualifications and past experience of practical hydropower projects that SEPEL and its officers possessed when it was employed by us to create the first hydroelectrical report for the Thames?* – As mentioned in question 3, SEPEL were not appointed to undertake a study for us on hydropower potential.
5. *You ask how much SEPEL was paid for its hydropower potential report?* – No payment was made. Please see question 3.
6. *You request confirmation that, apart from water flow characteristics of each weir, we do not consider any other aspects of the environment such as situation in the green belt or effect on the setting of a listed building or conservation areas when considering hydropower development?* - We looked at environmental designations such as SSSI status to indicate if there were any specific conditions that would affect a scheme. Any specific approval for development at a location would need to be identified by a developer and the necessary permission obtained. In most cases the suitability of a development in landscape would be dealt with during planning approval.
7. *Apart from Romney Weir project, can we supply you with the names and locations of any of the hydropower projects worldwide, progress or successfully completed, with which SEPEL or its chief executive have been involved?* – We do not hold information on individual projects involving SEPEL; please contact the company direct who may be able to provide this information.
8. *You ask for confirmation when the “up to 24 months” exclusive development rights for Marlow run out. Will it be August 2013? What must the developer have achieved by the time these rights run out?* - The offer of exclusive rights was issued on 1 September 2011 and would normally extend for 24 months. As this is a simple arrangement between ourselves as landowner and SEPEL we can extend this if we consider it appropriate. We would normally expect the developer to have made some clear progress towards designing a scheme in order to extend the agreement. It is quite likely that we would extend the arrangement as the requirements for environmental studies can require more than 12 months of data gathering prior to scheme design.
9. *Romney weir project is over three years behind SEPEL’s first projected completion date of late 2009, which is the correct “operational date” for Marlow?* – It is more likely to be 2014 or later. We would expect to undertake studies to look at potential environmental impact on the weir pool prior to submitting a fully application for an impoundment licence.
10. *You request to see the outline plans that SEPEL was required to submit to us to be awarded the exclusive rights to develop Marlow weir?* – No specific outline plans were required for the proposal from the developer. A description of the size and number of screws being considered for the development were required for the development in order to assess if the scale of the proposed scheme was appropriate with the location and flows available. These details are very general as a successful developer will need to undertake more detailed analysis of the

Red Kite House, Howbery Park, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 8BD

Customer services line: 03708 506 506

Email: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

potential site to confirm the configuration of the scheme. The position on the weir and the configuration of the scheme forms part of the application process for obtaining a water resources licence. We are bound by Government procurement rules when agreeing a disposal, whether that is a sale or letting and must ensure that a market value and commercial terms are achieved. The market value will be agreed by an independent valuation once a scheme has progressed to approval stage.

#### Additional questions

*You ask how many developers were involved in the process to replace npower? How many developers submitted expressions of interest and how many went forward to the final interview selection process?* – SEPEL was already working with npower on the design proposal to install hydropower at Ronmey. When npower withdrew financial backing for the proposed scheme SEPEL secured funding from another source and continued with the project.

*You also ask, were bidders to replace npower at Romney weir subject to the same process that was used to select developers for Marlow weir?* - No, this was a proposed pilot project and was therefore not part of an expression of interest.

If you are not satisfied with our response to your request for information you can contact us to ask for our decision to be reviewed. If you are still not satisfied following this, you can then make an appeal to the Information Commissioner, who is the statutory regulator for Freedom of Information. The address is: Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF .

Tel: 01625 545700.

Fax: 01625 524 510.

E-mail: [mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk).

Website: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>

Yours sincerely



**Melinda Crosfield**  
**External Relations Officer**  
**Environment Agency, Thames Region, West Area**  
**Direct dial:** 01494 828511  
**Direct e-mail:** [wtenuquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:wtenuquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Attachment