



# Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Department for Business, Energy &  
Industrial Strategy  
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FOI2018/17049

20 August 2018

Mr Richard Bales  
[request-501243-d5bf8b8f@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-501243-d5bf8b8f@whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Bales,

Thank you for your email of 24 July where you requested the following information:

In a Parliamentary debate on July 10th 2018, Claire Perry, Minister for Energy and Clean Growth referred to a “very effective Shale Industry round-table” which she had held.

Would you please provide details of attendees and agenda for said meeting (and any similar group discussions with shale gas operators and the industry trade body) together with any and all minutes and other notes taken as a record of the meeting(s).

This information is requested in order that I and other interested members of the public may have full visibility and transparency of discussions that have influenced the Government’s policy decisions in relation to shale gas exploration and development.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you require
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

We have taken your request to mean the Shale Roundtable that the Minister of State hosted on 21 May 2018. After completing a search of our records, I can confirm the department holds some information in scope of your request.

The information held by the department is:

1. The agenda for the meeting – disclosed as attached
2. Draft notes of the event – partially withheld under S35(1)(a) and S41 of the Act

The information not held by the department is:

1. The list of attendees to the event

## Section 35 – Formulation of Government Policy

Section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act sets out exemptions designed to protect good government and provide a safe space for policymaking.

Section 35(1)(a) exempts information from being released if it relates to the formulation or development of government policy. The information you have requested relates to the formulation and development of policy regarding shale gas extraction.

The use of section 35(1)(a) is subject to a public interest test. Whilst there is a public interest in favour of disclosing information relating to the Government's policy, we consider that releasing this information also poses a risk to the protection of the decision-making process and the Government's preparation of the review.

There is a public interest in ensuring that government has a safe space to develop ideas, debate live issues, and reach decisions away from external interference and distraction, as well as ensuring that the UK can obtain the best possible outcome for our policy regarding Shale Gas extraction. We judge that disclosing this information would inhibit the frankness of future discussions, inhibit policy formulation and development, which would not be in the public interest. In our view, taking account of these factors, there is a strong public interest in withholding information.

## Section 41 – Information Provided in Confidence

Section 41(1) applies where information was provided to the Department from any other person (including another public authority), and, the disclosure of the information to the public would constitute a breach of confidence. Section 41 confers an absolute exemption from disclosure and as such no public interest test is required.

## Appeals procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original request and should be addressed to the Information Rights Unit:

Information Rights Unit  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET  
Email: [FOI.Requests@beis.gov.uk](mailto:FOI.Requests@beis.gov.uk)

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

**Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**