Ms Ellen Fay
By email: ellen@sustainab\lesoils.org

Our ref: FOI2018/27296
22 January 2019

Dear Ms Fay,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Cost on assessing/monitoring air, water and soils

Thank you for your request for information of 20 December 2018. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The information you requested and our response is detailed below.

“The respective cost of spending on assessing/monitoring air, fresh water (non-marine water), and soils in England in one recent year, e.g. 2017.”

Soils:

Defra spend on monitoring soils in England was £35,000 in 2016/17 and £90,180 in 2017/18.

Fresh water:

We are writing to advise you that the information that you have requested here is not held by Defra. The monitoring of fresh water would fall within the remit of the Environment Agency (EA), and drinking water would the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI).

The information is therefore exempt under regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIRs, which relates to information which is not held at the time when an applicant's request is received. Regulation 12(4)(a) is a qualified exception, which usually means that a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether or not information should be disclosed or withheld. However, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who is the independent regulator for requests made under the EIRs, takes the view that a public interest test in cases where the information is not held would serve no useful purpose. Therefore, in line with the ICO's view, Defra has not conducted a public interest test in this case.

Air:

We are writing to advise you that the information that you have requested here is not held by Defra. The monitoring of air would fall within the remit of the Environment Agency (EA), and of Local Authorities.
The information is therefore exempt under regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIRs, which relates to information which is not held at the time when an applicant’s request is received. Regulation 12(4)(a) is a qualified exception, which usually means that a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether or not information should be disclosed or withheld. However, the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), who is the independent regulator for requests made under the EIRs, takes the view that a public interest test in cases where the information is not held would serve no useful purpose. Therefore, in line with the ICO’s view, Defra has not conducted a public interest test in this case.

Information disclosed in response to this EIRs request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs and the government’s Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

D Lynch
Information Rights Team
InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Annex A

Copyright

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Nick Teall, Head of Information Rights, Area 4a, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra’s complaints procedure are on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra’s own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner’s Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF