

11 May 2007

Dear xxxx,

Freedom of Information Request for Further Detail of Eddington Evidence Base

Firstly may I apologise for the delay in sending this to you. I am writing to confirm that the Department does hold the majority of the information you requested on the 13th March 2007. I enclose the data on:

- User benefits to business travel
- User Benefits to freight
- User benefits to commuters
- User benefits to other users (defined in the attached as 'consumers')
- Costs to the public sector (defined in the attached as 'PVC' or Present Value Costs)

As set out in previously disclosed information on the BCR of these schemes, the evidence set out here relates to that available to the Eddington Study as of May 2006. Appraisal information is regularly reviewed, for example at key decision points and so some of this information may have since been updated.

You should also note that where information was not available to the Eddington Study, we have estimated the information using assumptions set out in Annex E of the published document 'Transport Demand to 2025 & the Economic Case for Road Pricing and Investment'. This is available on the Eddington Study website at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/38C/E4/eddington_researchannex3.1_011206.pdf.

I have also corrected two errors in the previously published BCR information. These are:

- The A63 Castle Street has a BCR of 1.5, not 1.7 as previously reported;
- The A228 Main Road to Ropers Lane has a BCR of 3.3, not 2.4 as previously reported.

Some of the information you requested has been withheld.

The Eddington study did not look at the indirect taxation impacts separately from Present Value Costs. Whilst some of this information is held by the Department in individual appraisals, collecting this information would exceed the cost threshold of £600 for identifying and producing the information in an acceptable format.

Similarly the Study did not look explicitly at 'other benefits' (except in analysis of the Present Value of Benefits). I have for convenience included a column which looks at the difference between total user benefits and the PVB. This includes benefits such as safety, ambience and quality improvements. A more detailed breakdown would be incomplete and again would exceed the cost threshold of £600.

Furthermore, information on two specific schemes has been withheld under the exemptions in sections 35 and 41 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The information you have requested on the Stansted Surface Access scheme used in the Eddington study relates to information provided to the department in confidence, and which may prejudice commercial interests. Information provided in confidence is exempt under section 41 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Although I cannot disclose the information specifically in the Eddington Study on this scheme, you may wish to note that the Highways Agency have subsequently completed their own appraisal of this scheme, which has recently been published.

As set out in the information released on the 15th January 2007, we withheld information on one scheme which was subsequently considered for the Productivity Transport Innovation Fund. It would have been inappropriate to release this information in advance of a final decision on these schemes.

We have reviewed this decision. In this case Section 35 (1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act (formulation of government policy) applies. After carrying out a Public Interest Test, we have come to the conclusion that the public interest remains in favour of withholding this data. The factors considered in this public interest test are outlined at Annex A.

The information provided may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to me at the above address. Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

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

Yours sincerely,

XXXX

Your right to complain to [DfT/Agency] and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

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

Annex A

GENERAL FACTORS RELEVANT FOR A PUBLIC INTEREST TEST UNDER SECTION 35 EXEMPTION (FORMULATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY)

Exemption in full	
<p>Information is exempt if it relates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the formulation or development of government policy (b) Ministerial communications (c) the provision of advice by any of the Law Officers or any request for the provision of such advice, or (d) the operation of any Ministerial private office 	
Public interest test factors for disclosure	Public interest test factors against disclosure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General public interest in disclosure - Greater transparency makes government more accountable to the electorate - There is a public interest in being able to assess the quality of advice being given to Ministers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice should be broadly based. There may be a deterrent effect on experts or stakeholders who might be reluctant to provide opinions because they might be disclosed, or less likely to input into future policy development because of the relative priority they perceive is given to their area of expertise. - Ministers and officials also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options
<p><u>Decision</u></p> <p>On the balance of the arguments for and against disclosure, it is concluded that releasing the information would be against the public interest because it would seriously impact on the quality of advice provided to Ministers and more generally the decision and policy making process.</p>	