



[REDACTED]

19 June 2023

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00330

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 2 June in which you requested the following:

Your request:

*I am writing under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the release of information relating to NERC's funding of the Seabed Mining And Resilience To EXperimental impact project, Smartex (NERC Reference NE/T003537/1)
http://gotw.nerc.ac.uk/list_full.asp?pcode=NE%2FT003537%2F1&cookieConsent=A*

The expedition blog for the Smartex expedition JC241, conducted February - March 2023, states one of its key aims is to: "Understand the remaining impact of a realistic mining test on the seabed environment and its fauna after 44 years. We plan to revisit the OMCO (Ocean Minerals Company) test mining area where an experimental mining system was tested in 1979 creating tracks on the seafloor. Using a wide range of techniques we hope to map, photograph and sample this area to see how the tracks and the adjacent areas subjected to plumes have recovered in 44 years" <https://blogs.noc.ac.uk/jc241-smartex/introduction>

Your response to a previous request, EIR2023/00097, confirmed that UKRI does not hold the images relating to the 1979 tests.

This new request relates to the NERC-funded expedition on the RRS James Cook in February-March 2023. Please release photographs taken of the revisited OMCO test mining area on the JC241 expedition.

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) do not hold any information relevant to your request.

We can confirm that the requested photographs of the revisited OMCO test mining area on the JC241 expedition are not held by NERC. We can advise that the information, if available, would be held by the National Oceanography Centre.

As part of our duty to advise and assist under the FOIA, you may find the following publicly available information of interest:

Information about the project on [Gateway to Research](#)¹ and [Grants on the Web](#)²

¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=NE%2FT003537%2F1#/tabOverview>

² http://gotw.nerc.ac.uk/list_full.asp?pcode=NE%2FT003537%2F1&cookieConsent=A

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact within the next 40 working days:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


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UK Research and Innovation
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