



Sent by email: [REDACTED]

16 June 2026

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00347

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 21 April in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to request information relating to public funding provided to Imerys British Lithium Ltd and/or Reserach by British Lithium Ltd (Company Registration Number: 12725402).

Specifically, I request:

- *Copies of grant award summaries and funding decisions relating to Imerys British Lithium Ltd or Research by British Lithium Ltd.*
- *The total value of Innovate UK funding awarded to these entities since 2017.*
- *Non-confidential sections of grant applications submitted by these companies.*
- *Project evaluation reports, progress reports, or completion reports produced as part of grant monitoring.*
- *Any internal Innovate UK assessments of the technology readiness level (TRL) of lithium extraction technologies proposed by the company.*

If any material is considered commercially sensitive, I request that the non-exempt portions still be disclosed with appropriate redactions. If the request exceeds cost limits, please prioritise the release of grant summaries and evaluation reports.

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

Some of the information you have requested, such as total funded values and project abstracts, is publicly available on the projects listings on Gateway to Research. Under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, the information you have requested is already reasonably accessible on the Gateway to Research website at the following links:

- [British Lithium Limited](#)¹
- [Imerys British Lithium Ltd](#)²

Section 21 is an absolute exemption so there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Commercial Interests - Section 43(2)

We have exempted some information, such as contracts, agreements and project monitoring scores as we believe it falls under the scope of Section 43(2) of the FOIA. This exemption is used where disclosure would likely result in

¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/organisation/A78CE48D-D045-40C9-B494-62C397CF7EE2>

² <https://gtr.ukri.org/organisation/3D618AB0-994F-4DBA-8205-D75C33288EE5>

a person's (an individual, a company the public authority itself or any other legal entities) commercial interests being prejudiced.

This is a qualified exemption, and a test was carried out to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- There is general public interest in the disclosure of this information to ensure transparency and openness of a public organisation.
- There is also a public interest in transparency in order to ensure the accountability of public organisations and how they spend public funding.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- The requested materials (including applications, monitoring reports, and contracts) contain commercially sensitive information such as business plans, financial data, pricing, technical approaches, and project delivery strategies which are disclosed to UKRI in confidence. The agreement we have with participants in our programmes is that we will not release any confidential information without their permission. Releasing the information requested could be taken advantage of by competitors in planning competing strategies for further business opportunities. Applicants complete the application form knowing that if they achieve success only a brief overview of their successful bid will be publicly available, everything else will remain confidential.
- Innovate UK's competition process is highly competitive and composing a successful bid requires expertise and skill in providing quality information as well as understanding the most advantageous content to present in order to succeed. The applicant must also have the ability to support and justify the strength of their application. The applicant must do this whilst adhering within the strictly enforced scope and eligibility requirements of a particular competition. This knowledge is proprietary to the applicant. In addition, there are companies and consultancy groups that specialise in selling a grant writing service based on their grant writing expertise and knowledge. This exemplifies the commercial advantage and value that such expertise and skills deliver. As such disclosing the information requested is likely to reduce Imerys British Lithium Ltd and/or Research by British Lithium Ltd's commercial advantage and thereby harm its commercial interests in a highly competitive field. We believe disclosing this information confers an advantage to competitors which would likely materially disadvantage and harm the interests of the applicants, particularly in their ability to compete for grants.
- Releasing information provided in confidence to UKRI is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships with other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their commercial information will remain confidential when held by UKRI.
- Breaching the commercial interest may also adversely affect future negotiation opportunities for UKRI. UKRI may be seen as a 'confidentiality' risk if it routinely releases information relating to business arrangements into the public domain, particularly where this is third party information
- Contracts contain information commercially sensitive to the supplier such as payment schedules and pricing information, which if released may harm their ability to compete for future commercial opportunities.
- Contracts contain information that the supplier would not anticipate UKRI releasing into the public domain.
- We follow the government guidance on [managing public money](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742188/Managing_Public_Money_MPM_2018.pdf)³. Standards expected of all public services include integrity, reliability, spending money in the public interest and achieving value for money. Our current thorough process ensures that only the best projects receive public monies. Releasing this information could jeopardize the fair and transparent competition process and undermine our function to

fund the best projects. In turn, undermining this process would go against our responsibilities to manage our use of public funds.

- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information of companies we engage and work closely with were disclosed. We believe it would damage the trust in UKRI and likely impact our ability to carry out our role and manage our current and future investments.

Taking the above arguments into account, we have concluded that the need for commercial confidentiality outweighs the public interest in disclosure; therefore, the information is exempt from disclosure.

Section 40 - Personal information

We consider that some information, such as project correspondence, is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOI act as we consider that this is personal data. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response, please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

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 procedure](#).⁴

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>