



[REDACTED]

2 December 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00836

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 18 September and subsequent clarification, received 30 October, in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to request access to any documents retained/archived by the Natural Environment Research Council covering the period 1998 to 2000 pertaining to the decision to establish a new national interdisciplinary climate change research centre and to do so through an open competition amongst UK higher education institutions. (This centre was eventually established in 2000 as the Tyndall Centre, based at the University of East Anglia (UEA)). I believe Sir John Krebs was chief executive of NERC at the time.

These documents, including minutes or relevant meetings, might include the following:

- *Allocation of funding to such a centre, in relation to ongoing and new Government allocations*
- *Decision to collaborate with the EPSRC and ESRC in supporting the competition*
- *The terms of reference for the new centre (the open competition for the centre was announced in about May 1999)*
- *The constitution of the expert evaluation panel commissioned to review proposals (this panel sat between summer 1999 and March 2000)*
- *The recommendations of the evaluation panel in both Phase 1 (to decide on short-list) and Phase 2 (to decide on the winner) of the competition.*

Our clarification response:

I wanted to reach out to provide you with some background information and explain the steps we have taken to this point in addressing your request.

Due to the time period of your request, it was necessary to search our archives for relevant information, both those held in paper form and that of digitised paper files. Initial searches identified 24 files, containing over 5,100 pages of information that may have been in scope of your request.

In order to narrow this down, we conducted various keyword searches of the scanned documents. We also determined from information held in the files that the centre was not named the "Tyndall Centre" until after the final award had been made to the University of East Anglia. As your request pertains to the decision to establish the centre and the open competition to do this, we discounted files that were identified using only references to "Tyndall Centre". This reduced the potential scope of the information down to just over 1,000 pages.

An initial review of these remaining documents has resulted in us reaching the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA, which for UKRI is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of 18 hours of staff resource on locating, retrieving and extracting the information requested. Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to continue processing your request.

However, given that this review has enabled us to identify the type and range of information that is held and also reduced the volume requiring further review down to approximately 250 pages, under Section 16 of the FOIA; our duty to provide advice and assistance, we would like to offer you the opportunity to narrow the scope of your request to specific areas that may be of particular interest.

Of the information held, it can be broadly grouped into eight categories:

- Initial concept notes and discussions about establishing a climate change centre (~70 pages) - between October 1998 & February 1999
- Extracts of meeting minutes and papers that mention the climate change centre or discusses the proposal for it in some way (~18 pages) - between November 1998 & October 1999
- Discussions on collaboration between NERC, EPSRC, ESRC and funding of the centre (~45 pages) - predominantly from after the final award was made in April 2000
- Constitution of the expert evaluation panel and review meeting/documents discussing the final 2 proposals (~25 pages) - March 2000
- Notifications of the final outcome (~15 pages) - March/April 2000
- General information (e.g. synopsis and summary documents) on the centre and press releases (~20 pages)
- Tyndall Centre Agreement between UEA, NERC, EPSRC & ESRC (~60 pages)
- Bid information (~10 pages)

It should be noted that during the course of our searches, we were also able to establish that the original bid submissions are no longer held and were destroyed in 2020, along with any information relating to phase 1 of the evaluation process. Limited supplemental information relating to the successful bid from UEA is included as part of documents reviewed by the expert panel in phase 2, where late changes or additions were made to the submission. Therefore, bid information held is not complete.

Bearing in mind that it would be necessary to review any requested information in more detail to determine if it is appropriate for release, if you can advise us of which of the above areas you would like us to focus on, we will review your request and confirm that we are able to proceed with collating the relevant information.

Your clarification:

I have ranked the eight general areas of paperwork held in priority order for the purposes of the inquiry. The final two areas listed below are not of interest to me. The other six areas are of interest, but ranked in priority order (and ranked within each sub-category as well).

High priority interest

- Initial concept notes and discussions about establishing a climate change centre (~70 pages) - between October 1998 & February 1999
- Extracts of meeting minutes and papers that mention the climate change centre or discusses the proposal for it in some way (~18 pages) - between November 1998 & October 1999
- Constitution of the expert evaluation panel and review meeting/documents discussing the final 2 proposals (~25 pages) - March 2000
- Notifications of the final outcome (~15 pages) - March/April 2000

Lower priority interest

- Discussions on collaboration between NERC, EPSRC, ESRC and funding of the centre (~45 pages) - predominantly from after the final award was made in April 2000
- Bid information (~10 pages)

Not of interest

- General information (e.g. synopsis and summary documents) on the centre and press releases (~20 pages)
- Tyndall Centre Agreement between UEA, NERC, EPSRC & ESRC (~60 pages)

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds some information relevant to your request. Please see the information below and the following attached files:

- *“FOI2024_00836 Initial Concept Notes_Redacted”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Extracted Meeting Notes_Redacted”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Expert Panel & Assessment Criteria”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Expert Panel Review Meeting_Redacted”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Outcome Notifications_Redacted”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Funding & Collaboration_Redacted”*
- *“FOI2024_00836 Supplementary Bid Information”*

Under section 40(2) of the FOIA we are exempting the names of any individuals that were not:

- part of the Expert Panel as indicated in the *“FOI2024_00836 Expert Panel & Assessment Criteria”* document which was circulated to all bidders for the centre
- members of the NERC Council during this period
- acting as Chief Executive of NERC, ESRC and EPSRC during this period
- publicly named as the Executive Director of the successful bid

We are also exempting personal signatures and contact information, such as email and home addresses, as well as the identity of living individuals expressing personal views and opinions as part of the Expert Panel Review Meeting.

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.

Additionally, in order to simplify our response and reduce the volume of unrelated information supplied, we have collated extracts from meeting minutes and papers held that reference the decision to establish the climate change centre into a single document; *“FOI2024_00836 Extracted Meeting Notes_Redacted”*.

We have also redacted and removed information that is contained within these extracts and the documents *“FOI2024_00836 Initial Concept Notes_Redacted”* and *“FOI2024_00836 Funding & Collaboration_Redacted”* that is not in scope of your request.

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](#)¹.

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>

Yours sincerely,


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