Sent by email:

Dear [Name],

**Freedom of Information request: Names of Referees - ref UKRI – 2018/00002**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request submitted on the 29th March 2018 to EPSRC in which you requested the following:

**Your Request:**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to ask whether it is possible to access, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the names of the Referees who assessed the following proposals I submitted to the EPSRC:

- EP/R010684/1
- EP/M02475X/1
- EP/K032941/1

I have to ask this information because I have reasons to believe there was a serious conflict of interest, at least in one case. Since this is a delicate matter, I am happy to come to Swindon and discuss in person.

Kind Regards,

Since your request was received I should advise you that From 1st April 2018 the seven UK Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC and STFC) Innovate UK and Research England became part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK Government. For more information please visit [www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

Our response:

I can confirm that UKRI (EPSRC) does hold the information that you have requested. Our response is detailed below:

DETAILED RESPONSE

The information that you have requested has been provided in confidence and therefore cannot be released.

Section 41 of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act sets out an exemption from the right to know where the information was provided to the public authority in confidence. Releasing this information would amount to a breach of confidence to which UKRI (EPSRC) would have no defence.

Please note that UKRI (EPSRC) relies on peer review comments being supplied confidentially in order to facilitate the frank exchange of views and thereby providing a robust process for funding decisions.

The 7 UK Research Councils which now make up UKRI have created a Peer Review Framework document which describes the process and outlines the information that is disclosed and be viewed here:


Furthermore, releasing the name of the individuals concerned constitutes personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998. Section 40 (2) & (3) of the FOI Act provides an absolute exemption in disclosing personal data. Although, there is a requirement for UKRI to be open and transparent about how it conducts its business, the individuals involved in this case would not have expected their details to be made publicly available.

Freedom Of Information is not really the appropriate channel for this kind of allegation or concern. Whilst EPSRC cannot release the information requested for the above reasons we would be quite prepared to investigate it should you wish to write in stating your concerns to the panel convenor.

I hope this answers your questions.

If you have any queries about this response please contact me, or if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to request a review of our decision, please write to:
Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the 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:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Enquiry/Information Line: Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at http://www.ico.gov.uk/

Yours sincerely,

[signature]

Corporate Information Manager
UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team
Email: foi@ukri.org