Freedom of Information request: 2018/0135

Thank you for your Information request that has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations (2004).

Your Request:

1. Information about NERC and DFID’s partnership

Specific documents:
- Research Council and DFID concordat documents (I know that DFID and Research Council organisations have had partnerships in the 1990s and earlier but I only want to see any concordat document that would have applied at the time ESPA was developing from 2006 onwards up to the present day. If there have been multiple versions of concordats in the period after 2006 then I would like to see them please)

General information relating to:
- Any Memorandum of understanding or concordat type documents that are specific to NERC and DFID relationship
- Notes/minutes/agendas of meetings between DFID and NERC discussing working together on research funding

2. Information relating to the ESPA programme

Specific information:
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the Programme Executive Board
- Notes/minutes/agendas of Programme Management Group meetings (the group established in 2006 to work on development and design of ESPA programme)
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the Programme Advisory Group meetings (the advisory group established during the development and design phase of ESPA programme)
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the International Programme Advisory Committee
- Notes/minutes/agendas of Programme Management Unit meetings (the unit established to oversee running of ESPA once established).
3. Information relating to the UPGRo programme

Specific information:
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the Programme Executive Board
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the Programme Management Unit
- Notes/minutes/agendas of the international advisory board

General information:
I currently have a less detailed understanding of how UPGRo developed and the names of any groups set up to design the programme. Could I please see any information about meetings, including minutes/agendas/notes, within NERC and/or between NERC and DFID that related directly to the design and development phase of UPGRo. And any relevant notes or information relating to any consultations or town hall style meetings that were held during the development and design phase of the programme.

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation hold information relevant to your request.

After a review of the volume of information that may fall within the scope of your request, we are refusing this request under Regulation 12(4)(b) as manifestly unreasonable on the grounds of the cost or burden to the authority in responding. Our searches have uncovered 300 documents that we believe may fall in scope of your request, each document will need examining individually to consider exemptions for example Personal Data, or if they contain any Commercially Sensitive information etc. We have estimated that this would take in excess of 18 hours to complete.

We have carried out a public interest test and appreciate that there is a public interest in transparency and disclosure of this information, which would provide further insight into NERC and DFID’s partnership. The cost and burden to the authority could divert resources from delivery of our core activities. On balance, we consider the public interest to be in favour of withholding the information.

In refusing the request we are obliged under the regulations to provide you with advice and assistance in refining your request. If possible, please could you consider refining your request, which could be achieved by narrowing the date range, or focusing on a particular area of most interest etc.

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:

Complaints Officer
UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
SN2 1FL
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 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,

UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team

Email: foi@ukri.org