



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

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Reference EIR-1749 & EIR-1752
Date 15 October 2024

NAO REPORT ON CARBON CAPTURE, USAGE AND STORAGE PROGRAMME

Thank you for your two subsequent Environmental Information requests of 17 and 27 September 2024, asking for further information relating to the NAO report on Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage programme. Your request has been handled under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. We can confirm that we hold the requested information. However, after carefully considering the scope of your request, we are refusing to supply you with the information in accordance with *Regulation 12(4)(b) – Manifestly Unreasonable*. Details of our consideration of your EIR and our application of the public Interest Test is explained below.

Referring to the [ICO guidance](#) on handling Manifestly Unreasonable requests, the ICO states that it is permissible to consider a number of EIR requests together when deciding if they are manifestly unreasonable because of cost or burden. Our records show we initially received an EIR request from you regarding the NAO report on CCUS on 7 August 2024 and we responded on 5 September 2024. Then on 17 September 2024 you sent us a further EIR request, and another request on 27 September 2024 relating to the same subject.

During our preliminary searches for the information you requested in relation to the NAO report on Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage programme we identified a significant number of records. The time required to respond to these additional requests would impose a significant burden on the NAO. Furthermore, we are not the owners of the data you have requested, and we would require the owners, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), to provide advice and guidance on what is considered confidential and sensitive information in order for us to redact those details, as it would not be appropriate for us to disclose any confidential information.

The time involved in locating, retrieving, extracting and potentially redacting any exempt information would also have a significant impact on our time and resources. A conservative estimation of the scale of work to complete this undertaking would be 60 hours in total, using the FOI advice on fees regulations of £25 per hour as a guide, which equates to £1,500.00 total cost to the NAO.

While we appreciate the public interest in transparency and accountability, and of the weight of presumption in favour of disclosure when considering Environmental Information Requests, our assessment of your request indicates that the time and resources required to review and collate the information, would be manifestly unreasonable.

The public Interest Test

We have considered the public interest in favour of public authorities promoting greater public awareness and understanding of Environmental decision making, all of which ultimately contribute to a better environment. We recognise that there is a public interest in the governments Carbon Capture project and addressing the challenges to decarbonising the economy. We have supported the public interest in disclosure by responding in full to your first request of 7th August 2024, and provided a list of sources the NAO consulted with in the [Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage programme](#) report. The NAO serves the public interest by putting factual information into the public domain – helping parliament hold government to account, providing transparency on nationally important matters, driving public service improvements and better use of public funds.

We consider that it is in the public interest is in favour of maintaining the exception. The regulation should not be used to distract the resources of the authority from delivering its core services. On balance, we consider the public interest rests with the NAO being able to deliver an effecting and efficient public audit function and reporting our findings.

You may wish to consider submitting a more refined request which focusses on a more limited amount of information. This would be more manageable for us to consider, although it doesn't necessarily mean that the information would be released. As DESNZ are the owners of the information, you may wish to consider directing your enquiries to them. You can make your request to the Information Rights Team on foi.requests@energysecurity.gov.uk.

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk or by post to: FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: <https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>.

Yours sincerely,

NAO FOI Officer