



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending watchdog

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Reference FOI-1759

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APHA WHISTLEBLOWING

Thank you for your emails on 17 and 22 October 2024 asking for information relating to the 'Animal and Plant Health Agency,' and your earlier correspondence with us. Your request has been handled under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and details of your specific request is set out in **Annex A**.

We have searched our records and can confirm that we do not hold any of the information you requested as it does not fall within the scope of our remit. The NAO is not a member of APHA's Audit and Risk Committee (ARAC), but attend ARAC meetings in our role as external auditors. We are not involved in the assessments conducted by APHA's ARAC and therefore do not hold any of their information.

We have checked our financial audit files from the period in question to consider whether we hold any relevant information. We have also checked our correspondence folders, including the enquiries we made of APHA when you contacted us in January 2023. We are not aware of or party to any assessments carried out by the APHA ARAC in relation to your whistleblowing disclosures in 2021 and 2022, and have found no information on our files relating to such an assessment.

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. I hope this information is helpful and you are happy with the way we have handled your request. 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. 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 Team

Annex A

Request for information:

I made a Protected Disclosure in 2021

That was investigated via your association with DEFRA (APHA is part of DEFRA as you know)
DEFRA's Annual Report and Accounts 2021–22 clearly confirms that only one Whistle blowing was received by APHA and that **"Following an investigation the allegation of wrongdoing was not upheld"**

It is published that the APHA Audit and Risk Committee is responsible for:

Assessing the agency's performance, reviewing the agency's financial management and reporting the results of the internal and external audits to the Steering board

It is clearly shown that the Members of the Committee making the assessments includes the National Audit Office

I am therefore specifically asking urgently the **National Audit Office via this FOI for:**

- **Copies of the assessment you made in 2021**
- When exactly was it undertaken
- by whom.
- What was the type and scope of the assessment
- What was the published results in terms of Money and Environmental impact figures?

(Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) checks the integrity of financial statements therefore I have asked them to confirm their check on the integrity of that assessment)

In 2022 I updated those Facts and Figures with additional up to date costs and HGV Miles

I sent that Protected Disclosure direct to the **National Audit Office which you confirm you still have in your possession.**

However, the National Audit Office concluded in 2023 that it would not be Public money well spent by checking the figures I supplied directly to you.

But an earlier version with facts and figures had already been sent into DEFRA (and therefore APHA)

So again as you would have had sight to make your assessment 2022.

I am therefore specifically asking urgently the **National Audit Office via this FOI for:**

- **Copies of the assessment you made in 2022**
- When exactly was it undertaken
- by whom.
- What was the type and scope of the assessment
- What was the published results in terms of Money and Environmental impact figures?