

EIR Request (received 04 June 2024) - Reference: DFI/2024-0238

The web page relating to the Southern Relief Road was recently updated with regard to anticipated project costs.

<https://eu-west-1.protection.sophos.com?d=infrastructure-ni.gov.uk&u=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuaW5mcmFzdHJ1Y3R1cmUtbnkuZ292LnVrL2FydA==&i=NjU1NTQ1Y2Y2MjBmMmMyMzA0ZGUxYmRh&t=OW1ZN2FtODRzZ3Y2b29yb2QrcU1nRicwYTJlZ3B1QmFlelRvbEo5djh1WT0=&h=c198a925e79741439193dc9ea00acec4&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVYQK85rfqCZsVNniB2AVM2F6-gJ85cu7klAad6JpHi98bTNkMeVm7MjQACcORZ6F9A...>

I would like to request the following information under FOI:

- 1) Does the Department currently have money set aside for the additional costs of the project?
- 2) If so, when was this money allocated?
- 3) When was the minister made aware of the increased costs of the project?
- 4) Please supply a copy of any internal correspondence regarding changes to project costs over the last 12 months.

Response (issued 04 July 2024)

Re: FOI request - Southern Relief Road updated project costs.

Thank you for your email dated 4 June 2024 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI).

In considering your request on behalf of the Department, I have determined that the information requested falls under the aegis of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), as opposed to Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your request is for information that relates to activities, policies or plans that affect the environment. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes from consideration under that Act requests for what is deemed to be environmental information.

A guide explaining the Environmental Information Regulations can be found at:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi-eir-and-access-to-information/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/>.

In response to your request, I can confirm that the Department does hold information relating to your request. As EIR relates to public rights of access to information, I must consider whether information is suitable for release to the world at large, and not solely to the person making the request. The Environmental Information Regulations are weighted in favour of disclosure, whenever possible, but the legislation recognises that there will be occasions where the public interest is best served by withholding information, either fully or in part.

I have examined the information you requested and carried out a public interest test to determine whether this information is suitable for release to the public.

I would like to address your questions in order:

1. *Does the Department currently have money set aside for the additional costs of the project?*

There is sufficient funding to take the project through to the decision point to commence procurement and construction. At that stage the funding will need to be secured before the procurement phase can commence. Work is continuing to secure the additional funding for the scheme.

2. *If so, when was this money allocated?*

The current development phase is funded. The additional funding for the construction phase has not been secured to date.

3. *When was the Minister made aware of the increased costs of the project?*

The Minister is briefed regularly on scheme progress and was advised of the current scheme estimate before his review on the bridge decision.

4. *Please supply a copy of any internal correspondence regarding changes to project costs over the last 12 months.*

The papers which includes the scheme estimated costs are still under consideration as part of wider Departmental budgetary planning. As such, until the conclusion of this financial process, under Regulation 12(5)(e) the information cannot be released at this time.

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