

Public Interest Test – EIR

Reference Number – DAERA/26-652

Requested Information

Copies of any finalised documents, reports, assessments, checklists, or evaluation records held by the Department that record:

- *an assessment or conclusion on the planning permission status of the Glenside site in connection with the SULS Phase 2 award; and/or*
- *an assessment or conclusion on the PPC permit / environmental permit status of the site in connection with the award.*

Exemption / Exception under consideration

Regulation 12(4)(e) – internal communications.

Reasons why the public interest would favour disclosure:

- Regulation 12(2) requires DAERA to apply a presumption in favour of disclosure and DAERA is committed to conducting its business in a manner that is as open and transparent as possible.
- Disclosure would lead to greater transparency and accountability.
- There is significant interest among the public in matters concerning the environment.

Reasons why the public interest would favour withholding:

- Internal communications or discussions between officials are for internal department use only. The Department requires a safe space to develop ideas, debate live issues and reach decisions away from external interference and distraction.
- Chilling Effect: the disclosure of internal discussions inhibits free and frank discussions, and that the loss of frankness and candour damages the quality of advice, leading to poorer decision-making.
- The Department undertakes environmental checks and engages with regulatory bodies as part of its assessment processes. There is a public interest in ensuring that officials and consultees remain willing to share candid assessments and concerns. Disclosure of internal communications may discourage the same degree of openness in future exercises.

Conclusion

Following consideration of the Public Interest Test the Department has decided that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

SULS Project Team
Green Growth and Innovation Division