

Public

Ref: FOI/25/114

National Energy System Operator

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3 October 2025

Dear requester

Request for Information

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 9 September 2025.

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Request

You asked us:

In accordance with the FOI act, please could you provide the following information:

1) The total amount paid by NESO to third party consultants since NESO's inception until today's date (9 September 2025), or the most recent date for which data is available.

2) The total number of payments made.

Additionally, could you provide a breakdown of payments with information about what the payments were made for and to whom (see table below).

<i>Date of payment</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>	<i>Name of consultant</i>	<i>Reason for payment/ relevant scheme</i>

Our response

We can confirm that we hold information which falls within the scope of your request. However, we estimate that the cost of meeting your request in its current form would exceed the appropriate cost limit of £450 specified in the [Freedom of Information and Data Protection \(Appropriate Limit and Fees\) Regulations 2004](#). This equates to 18 hours of staff time spent in determining whether NESO holds the requested information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

Under Section 12 of the FOIA, NESO is therefore not obliged to comply with your request, and we will not be processing it any further at this stage. However, we have included further guidance on the information we could provide within the cost limit in the advice and assistance section below.

Your request is for a specific breakdown of payments to third party consultants. We estimate that it will take 20.5 hours to compile the information in the specific form you have requested. This includes 14 hours that our accounting and reporting team have expended to date extracting payments that fall within the scope of your request from annual reporting data and compiling additional information about the nature of the expenditure.

We estimate that it will take a further 2-3 minutes per item to source the actual date of each payment, based on testing a sample of items on the list. As we have identified 198 line items, this equates to a minimum of 6.5 hours work.

We are required under the legislation to respond based on the wording of your request. ICO guidance recognises that in some cases it may only become apparent that a request will exceed the appropriate limit once a public authority has started to retrieve the requested information.

The ICO also advises that, as a matter of good practice, public authorities avoid providing the information found through any searches already conducted and then claiming Section 12 for the remainder of the information. Instead, a public authority should inform the requester that Section 12 is engaged for all the request and offer advice and assistance to enable them to make a fresh

request, targeting the information which they are most interested in from that which could be provided within the limit.

Advice and assistance

Under Section 16 of the FOIA we are required to provide advice and assistance to help you refine your request so that it falls within the appropriate cost limit.

Whilst we cannot provide the exact information requested in part 2 of your request, we can provide most of the information you requested except for the 'date of payment'.

In terms of refining your request, we suggest the following alternatives to the 'date of payment':

- Invoice receipt date – this is the date that the invoice is entered into our accounting system when received from the supplier. It will almost never correspond to the actual payment date as there will almost always be a period that elapses before we remit payment in line with our payment terms. Our accounting and reporting team have extracted invoice receipt dates for invoices received between 1st October 2024 and 31st August 2025 and we could provide this information with minimal additional work.
- Accounting period – we could provide the month in which we accounted for the transaction. This information is readily available to the accounting and reporting team and simpler to access/collate than other options.
- Invoice document date – we could provide the date that the supplier created the invoice (which is also the tax point). This would need to be sourced from a different system to that which holds our accounts and, whilst marginally less complex than payment date, is still likely to exceed 18 hours in total.

Next steps

We will consider any revised request that you submit as a new request. Please note that requests framed by the cost limit where a requester asks for searches until the cost limit is reached, are not valid requests under the FOIA.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) publishes various guidance on accessing information held by public authorities. You may find this guidance helpful: [How to access information from a public authority | ICO](#).

You can ask us to review our response. If you want us to carry out a review, please let us know within 40 working days and quote the reference number at the top of this letter.

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review. The easiest way to lodge a complaint is through their website: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints. Alternatively they can be contacted at: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the National Energy System Operator (NESO).

Regards,

The Information Rights Team

National Energy System Operator (NESO)