

Thank you for your request dated 19 June 2026 under the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

Your request

You asked for:

1. All guidance, circulars, letters, briefing notes and communications issued by the Scottish Government National Planning Hub (NPH) to Scottish planning authorities relating to the assessment of hyperscale or large-scale data centre applications, from 1 January 2022 to the date of this request.
2. To confirm whether the NPH has issued any guidance to planning authorities on the circumstances in which an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for data centre applications. If such guidance exists please provide a copy. If no such guidance has been issued please confirm this in writing.
3. A list of all planning authorities to which the NPH has issued data centre guidance, and the dates on which that guidance was issued.
4. Provide any internal assessment, report or correspondence produced by the NPH evaluating whether planning authorities are applying a consistent approach to the assessment of data centre applications.
5. Provide any internal document in which the Scottish Government has defined the term "green data centre" for the purposes of National Planning Framework 4 Policy 24 or National Development 12, including any minimum thresholds, metrics or standards associated with that definition.

As the information you have requested is 'environmental information' for the purposes of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRs), we are required to deal with your request under those Regulations. We are applying the exemption at section 39(2) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA), so that we do not also have to deal with your request under FOISA.

This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption, because there is no public interest in dealing with the same request under two different regimes. This is essentially a technical point and has no material effect on the outcome of your request.

Response to your request

I enclose a copy of information relevant to your request.

The answer to your questions;

1. The Scottish Government NPH has not issued formal guidance, circulars, briefing notes or written communications to planning authorities collectively, specifically relating to the assessment of hyperscale or large-scale data centre applications during the period from 1 January 2022 to the date of your request. However, we have identified one relevant letter from the Chief Planner to the City of Edinburgh Council, which is enclosed with this response.

The NPH has undertaken a range of non-written engagement activities to support awareness and understanding of relevant considerations. This has included:

- Hosting a [webinar](#) with planning authorities and stakeholders on matters related to data centre development, and
- Co-organising a roundtable event with an industry body to facilitate discussion on emerging issues, including sustainability considerations such as energy efficiency and resource use. The slide deck from this event has been included in the response.

In addition, further information on the role and activities of the NPH can be found on the Scottish Government website at: [National Planning Hub | Improvement Service](#)

These activities are intended to support knowledge sharing and consistency of understanding, rather than to constitute formal guidance.

2. The NPH has not issued specific guidance to planning authorities on the circumstances in which an (EIA) is required for data centre applications.

Matters relating to EIA requirements are governed by the [Town and Country Planning \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2017](#) and associated published [guidance](#). Planning authorities are responsible for determining, on a case-by-case basis, whether an EIA is required in accordance with those regulations.

3. As no formal data centre-specific guidance has been issued by the NPH, there is no list of planning authorities or issue dates to provide in response to this question.

4. The NPH has not produced internal assessments, reports or correspondence evaluating whether planning authorities are applying a consistent approach to the assessment of data centre applications. The role of the NPH is to support capacity, capability and information sharing across the planning system, rather than to monitor, assess or audit decision-making by planning authorities. Responsibility for determining planning applications, including ensuring consistency with policy and legislative requirements, rests with individual planning authorities.

5. Finally, The Scottish Government does not hold any internal document in which the term “green data centre” has been defined for the purposes of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 24 or National Development 12. This includes any associated minimum thresholds, metrics or standards.

This work remains under active consideration and has not yet been taken forward. The First Minister stated in Parliament on 25 June 2026:

“I am giving active consideration to whether the Scottish Government should provide planning guidance to balance the rapid expansion of hyperscale data centres with national energy and climate goals, which are vital to our future prosperity.”

Some of the information you have requested is available from the websites linked above. Under regulation 6(1)(b) of the EIRs, we do not have to give you information which is already publicly available and easily accessible to you in another form or format. If, however, you do not have internet access to obtain this information from the website(s) listed, then please contact me again and I will send you a paper copy.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your EIRs request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to Dr Fiona Simpson C/O FOI@gov.scot and C/O this postal address: FOI Unit 1E.10, St Andrew's House, Regent Road, EDINBURGH EH1 3DG>.

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 40 working days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result, within 20 working days from the date when we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. More detailed information on your appeal rights is available on the Commissioner's website at:

<https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/AppealingtoCommissioner.aspx> .