



*Sensory and Cognitive
Impairment and the Built
Environment*

Final Research Report: BD 2508



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Environment*

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Executive Summary

The overall aim of this project is to enhance the safety and ease of use of buildings for those with sensory and cognitive impairments. Within this aim the specific objective of the project is to establish whether or not it is feasible to take forward a project to map the range of sensory and cognitive impairments in the UK (and, if appropriate, the European) population and establish what these impairments mean for the ability of impaired individuals to interact with the built environment.

The need to carry out a pan-European project is suggested by the large number of people that would need to be surveyed to gather a useful map of the abilities of people with sensory and cognitive impairments. It would be prohibitively expensive to carry out such a project without a large source of funding external to the Department for Communities and Local Government, formerly the ODPM. If the surveys could be carried out by a number of different countries this would make the large and expensive project manageable and achievable.

The objectives were further refined to discover if organisations which research the built environment would be interested in the results of the study, and if they would be interested in taking part if they felt there was a need. A number of other European organisations were approached, as it may be possible to involve organisations with wider remits than solely those of the built environment.

Having canvassed the views of a range of European organisations it is clear that there is some interest. However, the level of interest is strongest from people who cannot contribute in a way that would make the project easier to carry out. From organisations that could help to carry out the mapping, or help with funding, the level of support was such that the project would not be any easier to carry out.

If it were decided to carry out such a project, it is suggested that around 4,000 assessments would have to be carried out to get a useful mapping of the needs of the sensorily and cognitively impaired population. The total number of person days required for this task would be around 8,200, with additional external costs for advertising, travel and payments to subjects totalling an extra £1 million. If each member of staff cost £300 per day, the staff costs would be around £2.5 million, giving a total cost in the region of £3.5 million. To carry out 4,000 assessments would take around 20 person years, if one assessor could carry out 200 assessments a year. This means they would do nothing but assess people during the year. If five countries were to take part in this project, each supplying two assessors to work full-time on the project, with two other people to help organise the people to be assessed, the project could be completed in two to three years.

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1 Introduction and objectives

The overall aim of this project is to enhance the safety and ease of use of buildings for those with sensory and cognitive impairments. Within this aim the specific objective of the project is to establish whether or not it is feasible to take forward a project to map the range of sensory and cognitive impairments in the UK (and, if appropriate, the European) population and establish what these impairments mean for the ability of impaired individuals to interact with the built environment.

These objectives were modified at a meeting with the customer on 23 January 2006, where it was made clear that the customer wanted to know if research bodies from the EU equivalent of BRE would be interested in the results of a study to map the needs and abilities of sensorily and cognitively impaired people, in respect of the built environment, and if they would be interested in taking part in such a study if they felt there was a need. There was also felt to be an advantage in identifying other organisations, to ask them if the findings from such a study would be useful for them, as it may be possible to involve organisations with wider remits than solely those of the built environment. It was decided that BRE would investigate the equivalent organisations across the EU, and Nottingham would investigate the other organisations.

The need to carry out a pan-European project is suggested by the large number of people that would need to be surveyed to gather a useful map of the abilities of people with sensory and cognitive impairments. It would be prohibitively expensive to carry out such a project without a large source of funding external to the DCLG, and if the surveys could be carried out by a number of different countries this would make the large and expensive project manageable and achievable.

2 Programme of work

The first four tasks of the programme of work, as described in the bid document, are as below. Following the meeting held with the customer on 23 January 2006, Task 5 was incorporated into Task 4. The final Task was the overall management of the project.

Task 1. Review of literature. Previous research on the extent and mapping of impairments was reviewed for current knowledge, methodologies and existing data. The results of this review were reported in report number 226494, and are summarised in Appendix B.

Task 2. Identification of stakeholders. Current networks of stakeholders, research partners and organisations active in this area were used to identify those parties likely to be able to contribute to the research. Following the meeting with the client, the list of contacts was changed to those presented in Appendix C.

Task 3. Consultation. The key information needed from stakeholders was identified and the stakeholders in Appendix C were contacted with one of the letters shown in Appendix D.

Task 4. Development of feasibility assessment document. This report has been produced outlining the nature of any future research. It answers two questions: “Is there broad agreement among the stakeholders that this research needs to be carried out?”, and “If it is necessary, what is the best sort of (international) programme that could allow this research to be carried out in a reasonable timescale and budget?”.

2.1 DOES THIS RESEARCH NEED TO BE CARRIED OUT?

The response from non-building research organisations was poor, with a handful of replies from interested individuals mostly stating that they would be interested in hearing more about this research once it was completed, or to disseminate and use the data. There were some individual responses from UKiD (United Kingdom Institute for Inclusive Design, a network of designers sharing information and ideas and promoting inclusive design) which were positive but generally of a limited scale. There was one organisation which offered to contribute to the planning and undertaking of such research on a pan-European basis, the Ergonomics and Safety Research Institute (ESRI) at Loughborough University.

The responses from the building research institutes were more positive, although only from four of the 20 countries contacted.

Czech Republic

TZUS is interested in this research, and thinks there is a need for it. It thinks a survey across the EU is a good way forward, as an important step to harmonisation of building codes and standards. It would be able to help in producing a methodology, in the planning and running of the research and the funding or identifying the funding on a national level. It envisages that it would use the findings in relation to new legislation for construction products.

Denmark

The Danish Building Research Institute is very interested in participating in a cross-European research project in the long run. At the moment it is in a start-up phase of a new accessibility department and does not have adequate resources, but this may change in late 2006 when it will get an extra researcher. Until then it is interested as at least a potential user of research findings, but is not likely to be able to become more involved until later this year.

Italy

Some work is being carried out by the CNR Istituto per le Tecnologie della Costruzione with BRE in a similar area, POLIS, a three-year project devoted to develop a method for evaluating the accessibility of a building starting from users' needs. Users can be people with different types of disability: blind, deaf, a wheelchair user or a person with disorientation problems. Clearly they are interested in this type of research, but not immediately interested in getting involved in this particular research project.

Ireland

The most positive response was from the Central Statistics Office of Ireland, which thinks there is a need to find out more such that it will be undertaking a National Disability Survey in September 2006. The sample for the survey will be selected on the basis of the responses to the two disability questions in the April 2006 Census of Population. The survey will broadly follow the definitions and principles outlined in the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). It is in the final stages of finalising the Adult Questionnaire following consultations with representatives from Government departments, the National Disability Authority, and organisations working within the disability sector.

The overall objective of the survey is to provide a more comprehensive picture of persons reporting a disability in the Census of Population through an analysis of such factors as the degree of severity, the type of disability, the ability to use transport and the built environment, and the extent to which persons with a disability are enabled to participate in education, employment and social life. Results from the survey are expected to be available around mid-2007.

Although this survey will provide answers on the self-assessed abilities of some people, and what difficulties they have with the built environment, this will not provide in-depth information about someone's ability to see or hear or understand. This detail will be at the level of, for example, "Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?" on a scale of no difficulty, some difficulty (just a little, or a moderate level), a lot of difficulty, or cannot do at all.

Based on these responses we believe there is an interest in this work, but the levels of interest suggest the need for it is not necessarily commensurate with the effort involved in carrying it out. In an ideal world, this work would be carried out to allow the built environment to be better designed to meet the needs of a wider range of users. However, the levels of interest across Europe in becoming involved with the project are disappointingly low, certainly compared with the depth of the detail required to make the project worthwhile. The likely costs to carry out a worthwhile mapping of the range of sensory and cognitive impairments in the UK (and, if appropriate, the European) population can be estimated from the next section.

2.2 IF IT IS NECESSARY, HOW SHOULD IT BE CARRIED OUT?

Owing to the low levels of interest across Europe, it would be difficult to propose an international programme that would allow the research to be carried out within a reasonable timescale and budget. It is also not obvious that enough organisations feel there is a need for such a survey; those that are interested do not have the ability to carry out or fund the project. Consequently, we offer an outline of how large a mapping project would be, as a guide to the possible costs. However, it is unlikely that a study of this type could be carried out in the current research and funding climate.

There are 20 examples of cognitive and sensory impairment given below; in each of these categories a minimum of 20 individuals would need to be interviewed. This estimate is very conservative, and would only give a very

rough estimate of the spread of abilities in each of the categories. A more realistic number is 200 people within each category. Hence, an absolute minimum of 400 interviewees are required, but a better indication of the spread of ability would be derived from 4,000 interviewees. This sample size can be compared to The PeopleSize data taken in 1997, where there were 24,403 people included aged between 18-64 years. Having a sample of 200 people for each category would allow us to consider cases where several impairments co-exist. In some cases carers would need to be interviewed. Each interview would require at least a day to complete, probably requiring only one person to carry it out. It is likely to require another day of someone's time to try to organise the interview. For each interview there would be the travel costs, which may be considerable to ensure a good geographic representation of interviewees, as well as some payment to the interviewees, which is likely to be £200 in total. To find the volunteers it would help to place advertisements in various magazines and on web sites, which is likely to cost around £2,000.

Type of sensory impairment:

Low vision, caused by (five most common causes)

- Macular degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Retinitis pigmentosa
- Diabetic retinopathy

Deafness and hearing loss

Deaf blindness

Arthritis

Cerebral palsy

Spinal cord injury

Stroke

Loss of limbs/fingers

Parkinson's disease

Multiple sclerosis

Type of cognitive impairment:

- Dyslexia
- Learning disabilities
- Language difficulties
- Dementia
- Epilepsy
- Autistic spectrum disorders

It is recognised that this approach is based on the medical model of disability, which has limitations in trying to ensure the built environment is appropriate for all users. However, when carrying out a mapping of the needs and abilities of

the population it allows an easier estimate of the total population that these needs would represent.

The project would require 30 days to set up the assessment procedure, piloting the testing would require at least two assessments in each category, leading to another 40 interviews. The analysis and reporting would require another 50 days. A project to carry out an assessment of 4,000 people with sensory or cognitive impairments is therefore likely to require around 8,200 person days to complete. There would be an extra £1 million in external costs required, including advertising, travel arrangements and payments to subjects for participation.

3 Conclusion

Having canvassed the views of a range of European organisations to establish whether or not it is feasible to take forward a project to map the range of sensory and cognitive impairments in the UK (and European) population, it is clear that there is some interest. However the level of interest is strongest from people who cannot contribute in a way that makes the project easier to carry out. From organisations that could help to carry out the mapping, or help with funding, the level of support was such that the project would not be any easier to carry out.

If it were decided to carry out such a project, then it is suggested that around 4,000 assessments would be needed to get a useful mapping of the needs of the sensorily and cognitively impaired population. The total number of person days required for this task would be around 8,200, with additional external costs for advertising, travel and payments to subjects totalling an extra £1 million. If each member of staff cost £300 per day, the staff costs would be around £2.5 million, giving a total cost in the region of £3.5 million. To carry out 4,000 assessments would take around 20 person years, if one assessor could carry out 200 assessments a year. However, if five countries were to take part in this project, each supplying two assessors to work full-time on the project, with two other people to help organise the people to be assessed, the project could be completed in two to three years.

Appendix A – Summary of the research

The overall aim of this project is to enhance the safety and ease of use of buildings for those with sensory and cognitive impairments. Within this aim, the specific objective of the project is to establish whether or not it is feasible to take forward a project to map the range of sensory and cognitive impairments in the UK (and, if appropriate, the European) population and establish what these impairments mean for the ability of impaired individuals to interact with the built environment.

The need to carry out a pan-European project is suggested by the large number of people that would need to be surveyed to gather a useful map of the abilities of people with sensory and cognitive impairments. It would be prohibitively expensive to carry out such a project without a large source of funding external to the DCLG. If the surveys could be carried out by a number of different countries, then this would make such a large and expensive project both manageable and achievable.

The objectives were further refined to discover if organisations which research the built environment would be interested in the results of the study, and if they would be interested in taking part if they felt there was a need. A number of other European organisations were approached, as it may be possible to involve organisations with wider remits than solely those of the built environment.

Having canvassed the views of a range of European organisations, it is clear that there is some interest. However, the level of interest is strongest from people who cannot contribute in a way that makes the project easier to carry out. From organisations that could help to carry out the mapping, or help with funding, the level of support was such that the project would not be any easier to carry out.

Appendix B – Summary of the literature search

The aim of the review was to identify existing data and information on the types and categories of sensory and cognitive impairment.

SENSORY IMPAIRMENT

A definition of sensory impairment means a limitation in any of the five senses.

Blindness and visual impairment

Within the UK the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) estimates that in 2002 there were over 2 million visually impaired people, of which 1.1 million people (2% of the total population) are either blind or partially sighted or are eligible for registration as being so. Demographically, figures from the RNIB show that amongst the general population, vision deteriorates as people age (18% of the people aged 75 or over are blind or partially sighted, compared with 2.5% of the 65-74 age bracket. Children 14 and under comprise only 0.2% of the total figure). It must be noted that these are 2002 figures and that as the ageing population increases, so will the total of the population who have some form of visual impairment.

Deafness and hearing loss

It is estimated by the RNID that almost 9 million people in the UK are deaf or hard of hearing. Deafness is thought to be caused by a variety of factors including prolonged and repeated noise exposure, age, genetics and other ear problems, e.g. perforated ear drum. As with visual impairment, it is a fact that as the individual gets older, the greater the likelihood of developing hearing problems. The RNID gives the following figures:

- 71.1% of over 70-year-olds have some kind of hearing loss.
- 50% of over 50-year-olds have some form of hearing loss.
- 840 babies are born each year in the UK with significant deafness.
- There are 20,000 children aged 0 to 15 years old who are moderately to profoundly deaf.

COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

To be cognitively impaired means that the individual's brain capacity to function correctly is compromised in areas such as thought process, judgement, memory, perception and communication. The type and severity of cognitive impairment can vary greatly from individual to individual. As with sensory impairment, it tends to be categorised into different severities from mild to severe. Some of the more common cognitive impairments are detailed in the sections below.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a dysfunction in the brain area that deals with language. It affects the underlying skills that are needed for learning to read, write and spell. Around 4% of the population is severely dyslexic, whilst a further 6% have mild to moderate problems.

Learning disabilities

There are between 230,000 and 350,000 people with severe learning disabilities in the UK (statistics from www.tiresias.org/guidelines).

Language difficulties

When the area of the brain that stores/retrieves words and sentences becomes damaged, this results in the individual experiencing problems with language. Common speech problems are aphasia or dysphasia, e.g. receptive (understanding the spoken or written word) and expressive (speaking and writing). These problems can occur suddenly such as with people who have had a stroke (see below) or traumatic head injury; or gradually, e.g. in dementia. There are around 2.5 million people in the UK with a speech or language difficulty.

Stroke

A stroke is damage to any area of the brain caused by either a haemorrhage or blood clot. Depending on the position and extent of the damage, a wide variety of problems can result. These can be physical, sensory and/or cognitive in nature. It is estimated that every year over 150,000 people within the UK have a stroke.

Dementia

Dementia is a term used to describe various different brain disorders that have in common a loss of brain function that is usually progressive and eventually severe. There are over 100 different types of dementia. The most common are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies. Symptoms of dementia include loss of memory, confusion and problems with speech and understanding. The figures for people with dementia are as follows:

- Dementia currently affects over 750,000 people in the UK.
- Approximately 18,000 people with dementia are under the age of 65.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a neurological condition that results in a part of the brain having a seizure. People are diagnosed with epilepsy if they have had more than one seizure. It is thought that in the UK there are 456,000 people who have epilepsy.

Autistic spectrum disorders

The National Autistic Society defines this condition as a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Therefore, children and adults with autism have difficulties with everyday social interaction. The difficulties the individuals have can vary from mild to severe. As there is no central register of these disorders an accurate figure of their occurrence is difficult to obtain, although the society estimates it at 535,000 people within the UK.

GAPS IN RESEARCH

Little research has been found on the following:

- Methodologies to assess levels of impairments, particularly related to the design of the built environment. Methods of assessing impairment tend to be specific to the type of impairment and the design application being investigated.
- Sensory impairments other than visual and auditory impairment.

There has been some research on the extent of impairments. However, these data are taken from groups with an interest in the area, and possibly they may seek to maximise the numbers of people with any particular sensory or cognitive impairment, to increase the impact of any lobbying they carry out. These sources provide little in the way of methodologies, and there is apparently little attempt to map the abilities and needs of all building users with sensory or cognitive impairments.

Appendix C – List of organisations contacted

BUILDING RESEARCH INSTITUTES

BAM – Federal Institute for Material Research and Testing, GERMANY

BBRI – Belgian Building Research Institute

CNR – ITC – National Research Council – Construction Technologies Institute, ITALY

CSIC – Instituto de Ciencias de la Construcción Eduardo Torroja, SPAIN

CSTB – Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment, FRANCE

EMI – Non-profit company for Quality Control and Innovation in Building, HUNGARY

EMPA – Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research, SWITZERLAND

IBRI – Icelandic Building Research Institute

INCERC – National Institute for Building Research, ROMANIA

ITB – Instytut Techniki Budowlanej, POLAND

LNEC – Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil, PORTUGAL

NA – Enterprise Ireland, IRELAND

NBI – Norwegian Building Research Institute

SBi – Danish Building Research Institute

SP – Swedish National Testing and Research Institute

TNO – Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research

TSUS – Building Testing and Research Institute, SLOVAKIA (Slovak Republic)

TZUS – Technical and Test Institute for Constructions, CZECH REPUBLIC

VTT – Technical Research Centre of Finland

ZAG – Slovene National Building and Civil Engineering Institute, SLOVENIA

BUILDINGS RESEARCH/DESIGN FOR ALL RESEARCH GROUPS

Name	Country
European Council for Construction Research, Development and Innovation (ECCREDI)	Brussels
European Network of Construction Companies for Research and Development (ENCORD)	Frankfurt
International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction (CIB)	The Netherlands
SURFACE – Inclusive Design Research Centre, University of Salford	UK

DESIGN FOR ALL – DISABILITY ACTION AND/OR RESEARCH GROUPS

Name	Base
European Disability Forum	Belgium
European Institute for Design and Disability	Italy
United Kingdom Institute for Inclusive Design (UkiiD)	UK
Info-Handicap – National Disability Council	Luxembourg
ACE – Architects’ Council of Europe	Brussels
AGE	Brussels
EuCAN – European Concept for Accessibility Network	
European Institute for Design and Disability	
FIEC – European Construction Industry Federation	

OTHER CONTACTS WITH A MORE NARROW FOCUS:**Austria:**

www.pruner.at/

www.you-too.at

Belgium:

Autonomia

Confédération Belge pour la Promotion des Aveugles et Malvoyants – CBPAM:
Brochure d’accessibilité

EntreVues ASBL

Groupe d'Action pour une Meilleure Accessibilité aux Personnes Handicapées
asbl – Gamah

Guide des transports bruxellois pour les personnes à mobilité réduite:
Renseignements multiples sur les différents moyens de transport bruxellois

La Lumière asbl – Oeuvre pour Aveugles et Malvoyants

www.plain-pied.org

Germany:

Barrierefrei bauen mit nullbarriere.de: Alten- und behindertengerechter
Wohnraum für ein selbständiges Leben zu Hause

Hungary:

Disabled People Foundation

Foundation for the Built Environment

Tibor POLINSZKY

www.meoszinfor.hu

www.motivacio.hu

Ireland:

DraWare

Institute of Design & Disability

Irish National Disability Authority IT Accessibility Guidelines

National Disability Authority

Sustainable Design International

Italy:

A.S.P.H.I. ONLUS : Associazione per lo Sviluppo di Progetti Informatici per gli
Handicappati

Associazione Italiana per il D.A.I.E.E.

C.E.R.P.A. ITALIA – “Centro Europeo di Ricerca e Promozione dell’Accessibilità
ITALIA”

Co.In Sociale

HB group

<http://www.disabili.com>

<http://www.handylex.org>

<http://www.superabile.it>

Luxembourg:

ADAPTH : Accessibility experts

National information and meeting centre for disabled persons

Netherlands:

CIB – Conseil International du Bâtiment or International Council for Building

HANDY-BraInS

<http://www.obstacle.nl>

<http://www.rijksgebouwendienst.nl>

Landelijk Bureau Toegankelijkheid (LBT)

Norway:

Deltasenteret

<http://odin.dep.no/md/pfa>

NHF (The Norwegian Association for the Disabled)

Poland:

www.integracja.org

www.niepelnosprawni.info

Spain:

ADP – Professional Designers' Association

BCD – Barcelona Design Center

Centro Estatal de Autonomia Personal y Ayudas Tecnicas – CEAPAT

CRID

Declaration of Barcelona – The city and the disabled

Eina – Escola de Disseny i Art

ESDI – Escola Superior de Disseny

<http://www.iccic.edu>

Institut Guttmann

ONCE – Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles

Sweden:

KTH

The National Accessibility Centre, Sweden

The Nordic Cooperation on Disability

The Swedish Handicap Institute

United Kingdom:

Centre for Accessible Environments

Centre for Universal Accessibility

Appendix D – Contact letters

FROM NOTTINGHAM

Dear Sir/Madam

We are contacting you regarding your interest in a potential research project to gather data on the mapping of cognitive and sensory impairments.

As you will be well aware, a large proportion of the population suffer sensory and cognitive impairments, either temporarily or on a long term basis, through illness, injury or the ageing process.

For people to live safely and with optimum quality of life, the environment has to be designed to fit and accommodate the range of people that use it. This can mean the products and devices we use in daily life, work environments and equipment, transport, leisure facilities, information systems as well as the built environment. However, in order to design to accommodate users we need basic information and data that describe the characteristics and abilities of those users, including the range of impairments that exist.

Whilst there has been a steady increase in the amount of data available to describe people in these terms these have traditionally excluded people with disabilities and impairments. We still know very little about the huge range of types and levels of impairment within each broad category (eg visual impairments) and how these affect people's abilities to interact with their environments.

We are currently looking at the feasibility of research to map the range and extent of cognitive and sensory impairments to address this important gap in data.

We would like to gauge your interest in this potential research. For instance, if you are likely to:

- 1) be a potential user of the data the research would produce
- 2) contribute to the planning and running of the research
- 3) contribute to the production of a standardised methodology for undertaking the research on a pan- European basis
- 4) disseminate the output of the research
- 5) fund the research or identify funding.

If you think this is something you would like to be involved in, or would like more information on, we would be pleased to hear from you. If you could indicate your likely contribution (using the categories above or others that may

be more appropriate) this would be helpful. We look forward to hearing from you.

With regards

Dr Sarah Atkinson
Research Fellow
Institute for Occupational Ergonomics
University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham

FROM BRE

Dear All,

I am Michael Wright and I work for the BRE. I am trying to find out if there is any interest in carrying out an EU-wide project to try and map the needs and abilities of people with cognitive and sensory impairments.

I am sure you know that there are many people who have sight, hearing, touch and learning difficulties, but exactly how many of them there are, and how severe their particular needs are is not well known. In the UK we are trying to provide buildings that allow everyone to use them equally and easily. But as we do not know what the particular needs of all sections of the population are, we are finding it hard to provide them. We think it would be useful to survey people who have sensory or cognitive problems, to find out what they need from a building, and what their abilities are (i.e., how well they can see, hear, understand, remember). We still know very little about the huge range of types and levels of impairment within each broad category (e.g. visual impairments) and how these affect people's abilities to interact with their environments.

This would be a very large project, to accurately represent and measure the needs of the population with sensory and cognitive problems, and we were wondering if it would be easier to carry out across a partnership of European countries, to increase the number of people who could be assessed, and to increase the number of groups carrying out the assessment.

We would like you to state your interest in this potential research.

The first question is, do you think there is a need for this survey?

If there is, do you think carrying out such a survey across the EU is the best way to carry it out?

If you think there is a need, do you think you would be able to:

- 1) Help in making a standardised methodology for the study across Europe?
- 2) Help in planning and running of the research?

- 3) Help to fund the research or identify funding?
- 4) Be a potential user of the research findings?

If so then please let me know in an email.

Even if you think this is of no interest to you, your organization or your country please let me know at wrightm@bre.co.uk.

With regards

Michael

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