



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Defra HR
9 Millbank
c/o Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
T: 08459 335577
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Our ref: RFI 6273
Date: 4 March 2014

Dear,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: TRADE UNION ACCOMMODATION AND COSTS

Thank you for your request for information about trade union accommodation and costs, which we received on 6 February. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

“1. Please provide details of any office accommodation your organisation provides to staff to carry out trade union business. Please include details of:

- space measured in square feet*
- how much of this space is contained within entirely separate buildings (i.e. occupied solely by staff carrying out trade union business)*
- whether a professional valuation of the market rental value of the space has been sought either in-house or externally, and if so, what the valuation of the space was*
- any charges the council levy for office space given to trade unions.*

2. Please advise any estimates for other costs met for those staff on trade union facility time apart from salaries - including travel expenses, office supplies, telephone expenses and energy bills.”

The information you requested is as follows:

1. In core Defra, and across the Civil Service, trade union (TU) representatives are required to work for at least 50% of their hours in an official (i.e. non-TU) role. Those using paid time to carry out TU duties are permitted to carry out management-facing TU duties from their usual office space.

Trade union representatives are also permitted to carry out union-facing TU activities in their own time, which may include using lunch time or flexi time. This has not been accounted for in this return.



An estimate of the amount of space allocated to TU duties has been calculated by using an estimate of the amount of space per individual on the sites where representatives are based, pro-rated according to the amount of time allocated for TU duties. For core Defra this equates to 17.185 square metres provided or 184.98 square feet.

None of this office space is located within a separate building.

No professional valuation of the market rental value of the space has been sought either in-house or externally.

Any charges the council levy for the office space given to the trade unions, is included in the annual estates cost. The information relating specifically to trade unions cannot be separated out.

2. For the period 1 February 2013 to 31 January 2014, the cost to core Defra for travel expenses incurred by trade union representatives travelling to meetings involving TU duties was £1,922.77. Wherever possible, the department uses facilities such as audio and video conferencing in order to minimise the need to travel to meetings.

For the same period, the cost of office services, including mobile telephone bills was £250.53.

The cost of energy bills and landline telephone bills are included in the annual estates costs. The information relating specifically to trade unions cannot be separated out.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Direct Line
Email

Annex A

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs or logos) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF