



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Human Resources Directorate**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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31 July 2014

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0542-14**

Thank you for your email of 22 May 2014 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

***Please provide me with the following information.***

- 1. How much money did your department spend on personal car freight in each of the following years?***
  - 2011/12***
  - 2012/13***
  - 2013/14***
  
- 2. For each incidence of spending by the Foreign Office on personal car freight in the past three years, please detail:***
  - a) The date of the invoice***
  - b) The amount spent***
  - c) The job title of the car owner***
  - d) The departure and arrival points of the vehicle***
  - e) The reason for the freight***

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information relevant to your request.

**How much money did your department spend on personal car freight in each of the following years? 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14**

Staff and their families will generally require a private vehicle for use when serving overseas, but particularly in locations where there may be no suitable public transport network or taxi service. Similarly some of our staff are posted to locations where there may be limited availability locally of suitable new or used vehicles.

The FCO will meet car freight and related costs (e.g. marine and transit insurance; port dues) to enable an eligible UK-based staff member to ship a private vehicle from the UK or a designated regional purchase centre (Dubai, Japan, Miami and South Africa), to certain posts, for their private use while serving there.

Staff are normally expected to sell their vehicle at Post at the end of their duty tour before returning to the UK, or when moving between postings overseas. In some circumstances return car freight to the UK may be authorised at the end of a posting, or exceptionally to transfer the vehicle to a staff member's second consecutive overseas posting location for further use. In all cases where vehicles are shipped back to the UK, the member of staff is responsible for paying any UK import duty, VAT or other taxes, and for ensuring that the vehicle conforms to UK or EU (E-marking) regulations, and for registering the vehicle with DVLA.

FCO expenditure on personal car freight was as follows:

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Cars shipped to or between overseas Posts</b>	<b>Cars returned to UK</b>
2011/12	£240,962.62	Not available	Not available
2012/13	£368,749.68	36 *	15 *
2013/14	£704,078.65	86	27

\* Number of cars shipped under centrally appointed contractor from 1 May 2012.

Costs vary year on year according to the number of staff moving between eligible posts. Some of the increase between 2012/13 and 2013/14 may be as a result of changing priorities for representation of UK interests overseas, which has seen the FCO increase the numbers of staff in some countries where car freight is allowed. Since May 2012, the movement of cars between the UK and Posts has been centrally managed. It is possible that some of the costs of private car freight from that period are not fully reflected in charges recorded against the centrally-held budget.

***For each incidence of spending by the Foreign Office on personal car freight in the past three years, please detail:***

- a) The date of the invoice***
- b) The amount spent***
- c) The job title of the car owner***
- d) The departure and arrival points of the vehicle***
- e) The reason for the freight***

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract the information required to answer your second question. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. Due to the breadth of this request we are unable to suggest a way for you to refine your request which would bring it within the appropriate cost limit.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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