



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – REQUEST REFERENCE: 0841-14

Thank you for your email request of 27 August 2014 for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). In your email you requested:

(a) Can you please provide a copy of the document which lists what wines, spirits, champagnes and other drinks are currently held by the Government hospitality/wine cellar which is based at Lancaster House. The document, which is sometimes referred to as the Government Hospitality Report, will include the title of every bottle in the collection, the date it entered the collection and any advice and information about when and how it should be used. The list will include a grading system which applies to all the spirits, wines and champagnes in the cellar and information about the cost and value of each bottle.

(b) In the case of each property listed below can you provide a list of individual wines and or spirits and or champagnes and or other drinks and beverages provided by the Government hospitality / wine cellar since 27 August 2013. In the case of each bottle can you provide a relevant description which will include product type, label, vintage, cost and serving instructions and the relevant grade as detailed in the Government Hospitality report. Can you also state the relevant quantities of each bottle provided.

*10 Downing Street
11 Downing Street
Chequers
Dorney Wood
Chevening House*

(c) In the case of each of the aforementioned properties does the Government hospitality and wine cellar hold documents and or information (including emails) which details individual wines and or spirits and or champagnes which have been supplied by the cellar and are still held by the individual properties. The documents will include details of each bottle including a relevant description which will include product type, label, vintage, cost and serving instructions and the relevant grade as detailed in the Government Hospitality

report. Can you state the quantities of each bottle provided. This will include but will not be limited to drinks provided since 27 August 2013.

(d) Since 27 August 2013 to the present day has Robert Alexander OBE corresponded and or communicated with the Prime Minister and or Foreign Secretary and or Chancellor of the Exchequer about the supply of wines and or spirits and or champagnes and or other drinks to any of the aforementioned properties. If the answer is yes can you please provide copies of the correspondence and communications including emails.

(e) Since 27 August 2013 to the present has Robert Alexander corresponded or communicate with any individual (s) who has responsibility for the wine / drinks cellars and or hospitality at the individual properties. If the answer to this question is yes can you please provide copies of the correspondence and communications including emails.

I can confirm that some of the information you have requested is held in electronic or paper forms by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Government Hospitality). A reasonable search for the data has been carried out in relation to your request. To answer the sections of your request in turn:

(a) Under Section 21 of the FOI Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. In May 2011 the FCO gave an undertaking to Parliament to publish an Annual Statement on the cellar, including copies of related documents such as the stock report and annual consumption data. Information regarding the Government Wine Cellar can be found via the link here on the UK Parliament web site, including the 2013/14 Government Wine Cellar Annual Statement and the latest available copy of the Government Hospitality stock list which was made available on 17 July 2014:

http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/deposited-papers/?search_term=Foreign+and+Commonwealth+Office&itemId=119273#toggle-235

Information on the individual costs of the wines used and purchased is not released to protect Government Hospitality's commercial interests (Freedom of Information Act 2000, section 43 (2) exemption) in achieving significant discounts from suppliers.

Use of the Section 43 exemption requires the application of a public interest test. The FCO has considered the public interest arguments at some length. Clearly one of the main factors in favour of release of the information is the public interest in transparency in the expenditure and management of public funds. Against this is the potential for the commercial interests of the relevant public authority to be damaged, and the interests of its suppliers.

As a public authority, GH has a duty to achieve the best possible value for money through our purchasing arrangements and we believe that the value for money arrangements we have would be compromised by the disclosure of the individual costs of the wines used and purchased.

(b) and (c)

Government Hospitality has not managed any events at Dorney Wood for some time. In the period from 27 August 2013 to 27 August 2014 Government Hospitality managed approximately 250 events. In order to determine the level of detail you have requested we would need to check each of our event files and cross-reference with our cellar records to establish exactly what and where the events were to link to the properties you have listed, what alcoholic beverages were served, the product type/label information/individual bottle cost and what quantities they was served in. We do not believe that we can retrieve this information within the time limits specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Regulations 2004 and thus will have to refuse this part of your request under Section 12 of the FOI Act 2000. As you are aware, this limit is set at £600 or the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. You may wish to consider re-casting your request to narrow its scope, or to omit some element of the current broad scope of the information requested. Details of the total annual consumption by type and bottle numbers are released as part of the associated information released with the Annual Statement (however individual bottle costs are not included), as mentioned previously in part (a).

(d) and (e)

We have checked our records and can find no correspondence of the type you request to cover this period. I refer to our response to FOI request 0341-14 on 21 May 2014 which also explained that Ministers do not, as a rule, choose wines for events they host. Wines are allocated to all menus throughout the year by Government Hospitality. We have also checked our records for correspondence with individuals at the venues you have listed above and can find nothing that matches your request.

Yours sincerely,

Protocol Directorate



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.