

Thank you for your enquiry requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on air travel by DECC employees.

You specifically asked how much money the Department of Energy and Climate Change spent on air travel during the period 2010-12 providing:

a list of every flight paid for by this Department and giving further details of:-

- Outward flight date from which airport
- Return flight date from which airport
- Name of vendor
- Total cost (including booking fees)
- Class of flight
- Purpose of flight

The information requested is contained in the attached spreadsheet which contains a separate tab for flights taken in 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 year to date. The data provided relates to flights booked through the Department's official supplier. Booking through the official supplier has been mandatory for all flights from October 2010 onwards. It is possible that some flights may have been booked prior to that date directly by staff or Ministers' offices and the costs reimbursed. We do not hold details of such flights. Use of mandated suppliers ensures that the most cost effective and suitable flights are identified.

Data for 2010-11 and 2011-12 is sorted according to the date of the outward flight. Where a return date is shown this indicates a return ticket was purchased, though it is possible that this field has simply not been completed by the travel management company. Single tickets are purchased where this is the most cost effective and practical mechanism for making a journey. Some details of suppliers are also missing in earlier data. The Department's new travel management company from 1 April uses a different format so that return legs are shown as separate flights. This 2012-13 is shown in travel date order. Negative figures indicate refunds where flights were cancelled.

All flights were made in the course of business. Establishing the specific business reason for each flight would exceed the cost limit of £600 provided under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. This represents the estimated cost of spending 3.5 working days: (i) determining whether the department holds the information, and (ii) locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit. To obtain this information would involve contacting every individual who had taken a flight to determine what the trip related to. This exercise is estimated to take longer than the 3.5 working day limit. You may wish to narrow the scope of your request, for example by focusing on a shorter time period and business area. We would be happy to consider whether any revised request could be dealt with within the cost limit.

The nature of DECC's work necessitates international travel. One of DECC's four key priorities is "to drive ambitious action on climate change at home and abroad". In order to

fulfil this objective, officials engaged in the international energy and climate change arena have to undertake overseas travel to engage with international bodies and stakeholders.

On the domestic front, DECC operates from centres in London and Aberdeen. Whilst video conferencing is used where possible, travel between the two centres is unavoidable and air travel is the most efficient means of travel.

The costs shown do not include booking fees. From 1 April 2012 all government departments use one of two pan government contracts for booking travel, as determined by the Cabinet Office and depending on the balance of rail and air travel. Prior to that DECC used a supplier on the Office of Government Commerce framework contract. Both contracts involve a fee based on the volume of bookings made. We cannot establish the booking fees paid on flights as they are part of a wider fee for other types of travel bookings. Please contact the Government Procurement Service if you require further details of the booking fee regime that currently applies across all departments.

The average cost of flights booked has fallen year on year from £423 in 2010/11 to £396 in 2011/12 to £350 so far in 2012/13.

DECC's air travel policy is attached at Annex 1.

Appeal Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the department. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.