



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Your ref:
Our ref: RFI 5678
Date: 19 August 2013

Dear,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: MONEY PAID TO TRADE UNIONS

Thank you for your request for information about the amount of money paid to Trade Unions, which we received on 29 July 2013. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

“I am writing to obtain information about the total amount of money paid to trade unions by your organisation, the amount of staff time spent on trade union duties and/or activities and the payment of subscriptions.

To outline my query as clearly as possible, I am requesting:

1. A list of trade unions which received payments from your organisation and the total amounts paid to each union for financial years a) 2011-12 and b) 2012-13. If it is not possible to list the amount paid to each union, please provide a total amount paid to all unions. Please **do not include** membership dues or salary costs. Please only include direct payments.

2. Please state:

a) Which trade unions your organisation provide staff time to work on trade union duties and / or activities (sometimes called ‘Trade Union facility time’) in i) 2011-12 and ii) 2012-13.

b) The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff that were provided for each trade union in i) 2011-12 and ii) 2012-13. For example, if a member of staff spends 2 days per week on union business, this is equal to 0.4 FTE.

3.

a) Does your organisation provide the facility to deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process?



b) If so, for each union please state what your organisation charged for this service (whether as a fixed amount per employee or a percentage), and the total amount collected in:

i) 2011-12

ii) 2012-13

Please note that the guidelines issued by ACAS state that: “An employee who is a member of an independent trade union recognised by the employer in respect of that description of employee is to be permitted reasonable time off during working hours to take part in any trade union activity. An employee who is a member of an independent and recognised trade union is also permitted to take reasonable time off during working hours for the purposes of accessing the services of a Union Learning Representative (provided those services are services for which the Union Learning Representative is entitled to time off).”

If the information is not recorded, there is no way of ascertaining whether the time off provided is reasonable. I therefore do not expect the response that the organisation does not hold this information. If a formal record is not kept then I will accept a reasonable estimate.

If the response to any of the questions is ‘nil’ or you are unable to answer any of them, please continue to respond to the other questions”

The information provided is in respect of Defra and its Executive Agencies, which are:

- Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agencies (AHVLA)
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (core Defra)
- Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)
- Regional Payments Authority (RPA)
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)

The information you requested is as follows:

1. Defra and its Executive Agencies have not paid any money to its recognised Trade Unions (TU) for the financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

2 Defra, AHVLA, RPA and VMD recognise three unions; Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), Prospect and FDA and provide time for employees to work on TU functions. Cefas and Fera recognise Prospect and provide time employees to work on TU functions. Time is allowed for Trade Union Duties (TUD) and Trade Union Activities (TUA). This was the case in both 2011-12 and 2012-13

3. The tables below show the number of staff given time off to carry out TU functions for each union in 2011-12 and 2012-13. These figures are reflected as full time equivalents (FTE). Please note that approximate figures have been used in some cases.

Time permitted to carry out TU functions in 2011-12

2011-12	PCS	PROSPECT	FDA
AHVLA	5.2	4.3	Nil
CEFAS	Nil	Nil	Nil
Core Defra	11.45	0.8	Nil
FERA	Nil	2.35	Nil
RPA	9.89	0.51	Nil
VMD	Nil	Nil	Nil

Time permitted to carry out TU functions in 2012-13

2012-13	PCS	PROSPECT	FDA
AHVLA	5.2	4.3	Nil
CEFAS	Nil	Nil	Nil
Core Defra	11.45	0.8	Nil
FERA	Nil	2.05	Nil
RPA	9.89	0.51	Nil
VMD	Nil	Nil	Nil

4. In October 2012, the Cabinet Office announced plans to reduce the amount of facility time provided to TUs in the Civil Service. Defra served notice on its Facilities Agreement in November 2012. For core Defra and Executive Agencies our transition to reducing facility time began in April 2013. We implemented changes following our review from 1 July 2013, including management of individual TU allocations within 0.1% of the paybill. From this point TU representatives will work in a Civil Service job for at least 50% of their time.

5. Defra and its Executive Agencies do provide the facility to deduct TU subscriptions from salaries. This facility is available to PCS, Prospect and FDA members. We do not charge back any costs for this to the TUs. Some staff elect to pay their subscriptions by direct debit.

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,

David Pearsall

Direct Line 020 7979 8590

Email David.Pearsall@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A

Copyright

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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