



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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

Your ref: 639/13
Our ref: RFI6025
Date: 9 December 2013

Dear Mr

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Departmental Christmas and New Year Parties

Thank you for your request for information about departmental Christmas and New Year Parties, which we received on 19 November 2013. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

- 1) Details of how much was spent on departmental Christmas and New Year parties last year (i.e. December 2012). For clarity, for this I mean parties hosted by staff or ministers at the department. If possible I would also like a detailed breakdown of what the money was spent on. I would also like to know the venue and date of each party, and the number of people invited.
- 2) Minutes of any meetings at which such parties were included as a separate agenda item.

In response:

Only one such party was held. The Secretary of State together with Defra Ministers hosted a Christmas reception for key stakeholders. These were senior representatives from the organisations who work closely with the department to help develop and deliver policy. The reception was held on 11 December 2012 for two hours at Admiralty House, 26 Whitehall, London SW1A 2DY. Approximately 80 people attended and the costs were £360 for the venue and £1,018.44 for canapés and drinks. Both costs include VAT.

The minutes of meetings are not held centrally and there are a large number of them, reflecting the large number of individual teams in the department. As such, Section 12(1) of the FOIA allows us to refuse a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit, which currently stands at



complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit, which currently stands at £600. This helps to ensure that staff costs and time are not diverted from delivering the department's strategic aims. For this reason, we are unable to supply information about meeting agendas and associated meeting minutes where Christmas or New Year parties were discussed.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

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

Pam Beadman

T: 01904 455658

E: pam.beadman@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A

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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