

**Department of Energy & Climate  
Change**

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19 November 2012

Our Reference: FOI 12/1483

Dear

**Re: Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your freedom of information request of 22 October 2012 in which you asked the following:

*“I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act. I understand my request will take 20 working days to process but I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt via [christopher.hastings@mailonsunday.co.uk](mailto:christopher.hastings@mailonsunday.co.uk)”*

*Please note that I am only interested in information which relates to the period October 1 2009 to the present day.*

*Please note that the current Principal Private Secretary is William Nye and his predecessor was Sir Michael Peat.*

*1....During the aforementioned period has the Secretary of State and or any member of the Ministerial team met with the Prince of Wales' Principal Private Secretary. If the answer to the question is yes can you please provide details of these meetings. In each case can you identify the minister and provide details of the venue and the time and date of the meeting. Can you please provide a list of other individuals present. Can you please detail the subject (s) under discussion.*

*2....During the aforementioned period has the Secretary of State and or any member of the ministerial team exchanged correspondence and communications (including emails) with the Prince of Wales' principal Private Secretary. If the answer to the above question is yes can you please supply copies of all of the correspondence and communications (including emails). I am interested in receiving both sides of the correspondence.*

*3....During the aforementioned period has the Secretary of State and or any member of the Ministerial team met with Benet Northcote, the Prince of Wales' Deputy Private Secretary. If the answer to the question is yes can you please provide details of these meetings. In each case can you identify the Minister and provide details of the venue*

*and the time and date of the meeting. Can you please provide a list of other individuals present. Can you please detail the subject (s) under discussion.*

*4....During the aforementioned period has the Secretary of State and or any member of the ministerial team exchanged correspondence and communications (including emails) with the Prince of Wales' deputy Private Secretary. If the answer to the above question is yes can you please supply copies of the correspondence and communications (including emails). I am interested in receiving both sides of the correspondence.”*

I must inform you that the Department is unable to comply with your request. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act relieves public authorities of the duty to comply with a request for information if the cost of dealing with it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government this is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The reason that your request exceeds the cost limit is that relevant information could be contained in very many files over a long time period. Searching all those that might contain relevant information to determine whether the Department holds any information relevant to your request will exceed the appropriate limit laid down in the regulations. If you wish, you may refine your request in order to bring the cost of determining whether the Department holds relevant information, locating, retrieving and extracting it, below the appropriate limit. As the period covered by your request is very long, one way to refine it would be to narrow the period it covers. However even a shorter period would require us to search many files and would not be sufficient, on its own, to make it possible for us to comply with your request within the appropriate limit. Bearing in mind that our records are classified by broad subject areas, I consider that we will not be able to carry out a search for information unless you can relate the information you seek to a definite context such as a notable event or particular issue. I must also inform you that if the Department does hold any information in scope of a refined request, it may be subject to one or more of the exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act.

### **Appeals procedure**

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to request an internal review, please contact me.

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

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,