



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Protocol Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

20 August 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0737-14

Thank you for your email of 28 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide me with the following information:

- 1.) The total amount spent by the FCO on the use of Airport VIP Lounges in each year since 2010;*
- 2.) A breakdown of this expenditure in each year since 2010 by overseas guests visiting the UK;*
- 3.) A breakdown of this expenditure in each year since 2010 by FCO employees visiting overseas.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please find attached a table outlining our expenditure. The Foreign Secretary is the only individual associated with the FCO who used these facilities when travelling on business. In November 2012 we reviewed our position on the use of VIP suites and as a result moved away from part owning the Heathrow Royal Suite to becoming a contracted customer for private flights. This represented better value for money and greater freedom to use other facilities. Our contract with Heathrow Airport Limited costs the FCO £100,000 per annum, in return for 50 private flight movements with exclusive rights to the suite whenever required. Scheduled flights have been charged separately since November 2012.

We mainly use the VIP facilities for State or Guest of Government Visits. VIP facilities are also occasionally used by our Geographic teams alongside these visits / events, however providing a breakdown of these movements, and the individual costs for each of the

movements mentioned above would put us over the time limit allowed for searching and collating information under Section 12 of the FOIA.

Section 12 of the FOIA makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may wish to refine your request to information on visits from a specific country and for a shorter timeframe. We will then consider whether we can provide the information requested within the appropriate cost limit. This would of course be subject to the consideration of whether any of the other exemptions under the FOIA apply.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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Yours sincerely,

Head of Arrivals & Departures Team
Protocol Directorate

