



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

T: 03459 33 55 77 or
08459 33 55 77
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Your ref:

Our ref: RFI 6971

Date: 19 November 2014

Dear,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: STAFF ON SECONDMENT FROM THE "BIG FOUR" ACCOUNTANCY FIRMS

Thank you for your request for information about staff on secondment from the "big four" accountancy firms which we received on 27 October 2014. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

"To be provided with the following information for the current year to date, and each of the three years before:

- 1) *Details of the numbers of staff on secondment to your department from each of the "big four" accountancy companies: PwC, Deloitte, KPMG and Ernst & Young*
- 2) *Any records kept on the approximate value of such secondments to the department*
- 3) *Any records of the broad subject areas on which said staff were working*

Additionally, I would be grateful for any policies, procedures, or reports prepared in relation to management of staff seconded from the private sector, particularly with regard to privileged information and/or conflicts of interest."

The information you requested is as follows:

There have been no secondees into core Defra from the "big four" accountancy companies: PwC, Deloitte, KPMG and Ernst & Young in the current year or for the three years before.

All secondees to Defra are required to sign a secondment agreement upon appointment; please see attached, along with a copy of the Defra Code of Conduct covering temporary workers within the department. The following extracts from this secondment agreement cover privileged information and conflicts of interest:

"The details of the work undertaken and specific work objectives will be agreed by your Defra line manager, [manager's name], and yourself at the outset of the secondment, and will be updated as appropriate throughout the secondment. If



either party considers that a particular area of work represents a conflict of interest then your involvement will be limited or avoided as appropriate.”

“All staff in Defra owe duties of confidentiality and loyal service to the Crown. These require you to exercise care in the use of information which may be acquired in the course of official duties and to protect information which is held in confidence.”

“[The seconding organisation] undertakes not to ask you to use confidential information obtained in the course of your work for any purpose nor to seek to influence you in your work for Defra. Likewise, you undertake not to seek or accept instructions from [the seconding organisation] or any other external body and to respect the privileged nature of information you acquire through your work for Defra.”

“It is not expected that you will be dealing with parties external to Defra in any way so as to expose [the seconding organisation] to potential liability to those third parties as a consequence of any act or omissions on your part.”

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,

Defra FOIA and EIRs Team
informationrequests@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