



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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

Your ref:
Our ref: RFI 6476
Date: 10 April 2014

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: The Department's Spend on Alcoholic Drinks

Thank you for your request for information about the total amount Defra spent on alcoholic drinks over the last five years, which we received on 2 April 2014. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked

Please could you provide me with information on how much alcohol has been purchased by the department in each of the past five years.

Please could this be broken down to show purchasing for external functions (with outside parties, journalists, stakeholders) and staff functions (Christmas parties etc).

In response

We want to be as open as possible in answering requests. However, the way transactions are recorded on our financial system is such that it is not possible to identify amounts spent on purchases of alcohol separately from other costs charged as hospitality.

The FOIA requires us to help people obtain the information they are looking for. Unfortunately, to answer your question would require us to search through several thousand transactions, which would involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from the Department's other work.

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 £600. On the basis of our estimates, we consider that the cost would exceed this limit and, as such, we are refusing your request.



However, if you were to make a new request for a wider category, it may be that we could comply with that request within the appropriate limit, although I cannot guarantee that this will be the case

Although we cannot provide the information you requested, we can provide the following assurances:

The Department's Hospitality Register lists no outgoing gifts of alcohol during the financial years 2008-09 to 2012-13.

The Department's Staff Travel & Subsistence Policy states: *"Alcohol cannot form part of any claim" and "Costs relating to Alcohol will not be reimbursed."*

The Department also has a Government Procurement Card (GPC) Policy which stipulates:

"Unless prior permission has been received from the Head of Procurement a GPC must not be used in the following circumstances: [the purchase of] Alcoholic beverages".

Please note that if you modify your request, we will handle it as a new request and so the 20-working-day deadline for responding to requests would then commence from the date that we receive the modified request.

I attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service that you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours

Pam Beadman

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Annex

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