

Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place,
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e: foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk

www.decc.gov.uk

Your ref:

Our ref: 14/0512

23rd April 2014

Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your e-mail enquiry of 23rd March 2014 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') regarding expenditure on cars by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

You specifically asked:

- how much the Department has spent on cars on an annual basis for the last three calendar years - including the hiring and purchasing of cars;
- what car was hired/purchased; when it was hired/purchased; what it was used for; who was using it and how much it cost to hire/purchase;
- if the Department spent any money on personalised number plates for the past three calendar years;
- what cars they were attached to and who was using the cars and what they said.

A summary of the expenditure is given in the table below. The Department records expenditure by financial year which runs from 1 April to 31 March. Figures for the 2013-14 financial year are still being finalised and subject to audit. The expenditure figures in relation to car hire include chauffeured private hire services provided by the Government Car Services and under departmental contracts. Ad-hoc taxi expenditure is not included.

Period (financial year)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Vehicle Hire Expenditure	£178k	£81k	£109k

DECC has not purchased any vehicles nor has it spent any money on personalised number plates.

Information on what car was hired and what it was used for is not held by DECC.

We consider that the names of the car-hire users constitute personal data and they are therefore withheld. Section 40 of the Act provides an absolute exemption for personal data which then falls to be dealt with under the Data Protection Act (DPA). Personal data of third parties can only be disclosed in accordance with the data protection principles. In particular, the first data protection principle requires that disclosure must be fair and lawful and must comply with one of the conditions in Schedule 2 of the DPA. We do not think that it is fair to release the names of junior members of staff and do not think that any of the relevant conditions apply.

In relation to when the cars were hired and how much it cost to hire each individual car, from our preliminary assessment, it is clear that we will not be able to answer this part of your request

without exceeding the cost limit of £600 provided under section 12 of the Act. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether DECC holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information. The Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with requests where the estimated cost of complying would exceed this limit.

This information is not held centrally and in order to provide you with the information on the scale that you have requested would require a search of each section within DECC, in order to locate and retrieve the requested information.

We estimate that it will take us in excess of 3.5 working days to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request. Therefore, your request will not be processed further.

You may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain, including any dates or period of time relevant to the information required. You could, for example, focus on information relating to a particular area of DECC or reduce the time period of your request.

For car hire **within the UK**, DECC has access to the Business Innovation and Skills Department's contract (let as part of a government-wide Framework Agreement) currently with "Enterprise Rent-A Car" who are vehicle providers of short-term hire cars. **Overseas** car hire is currently arranged through the Department's travel services provider, Hogg Robinson (Travel) Group.

The Department's policy for car hire is that a self-drive car can be hired when undertaking an official business journey where the most suitable method of travel is by car rather than public transport and the most economical options is for a vehicle to be hired.

Appeal Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the Information Rights Unit at:

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET (✉: foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk)

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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.