



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Diplomatic Missions and International
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Protocol Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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11 February 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0141-14

Thank you for your email of 3 February asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1) *Please provide the total number of outstanding parking and other minor traffic violation fines incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations in the United Kingdom that were recorded in (a) 2011, (b) 2012, (c) 2013.*
- 2) *What was the total amount of the outstanding parking and other minor traffic violation fines mentioned above in pounds (£). Please break this down by year they were recorded for (a) 2011, (b) 2012, (c) 2013.*
- 3) *Please provide a table below detailing diplomatic missions and international organisations that still currently have outstanding parking and other minor traffic violation fines, totalling £1,000 or more. For each Diplomatic Mission/International Organisation, please state the total number of outstanding fines and the total amount of fines in Pounds (£). It would be helpful if this was provided in Excel spreadsheet format.*
- 4) *Please state the number of cases which have been brought to the attention of the FCO of drink driving offences allegedly committed by people entitled to diplomatic immunity in (a) 2011, (b) 2012, (c) 2013.*
- 5) *Please provide a table listing those foreign missions whose diplomats allegedly committed serious and drink driving offences and the type of offence in (a) 2011, (b) 2012, (c) 2013.*
- 6) *Please provide the total number of currently outstanding fines incurred by the diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom for non-payment of the London congestion charge. Please also provide the total amount of these outstanding fines in Pounds (£). It would be helpful if this was provided in Excel spreadsheet format.*
- 7) *Please provide a table showing all diplomatic missions and international organisations which currently have outstanding fines for non-payment of the London congestion charge. For each diplomatic mission/international organisation, please provide the total number of outstanding fines and the amount in Pounds (£). It would be helpful if this was provided in Excel spreadsheet format.*
- 8) *How many people are currently entitled to Diplomatic Immunity. This can be an*

approximate figures, if need be.

We can confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

We can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information, which falls within the description specified in your request.

Firstly, in respect of parking fines and the London Congestion Charge (CC), we expect all diplomatic missions, international organisations and individual diplomats to settle their fines. It is the responsibility of individual councils and Transport for London (TfL) to maintain details of parking fines and CC debts and to pursue missions, international organisations and diplomats for payment of fines, or waive them if appropriate. We help councils and TfL pursue persistent offenders and we remind missions and international organisations of their obligations to pay fines and their outstanding debts.

Some of the information which we hold and which is relevant to this part of your request is, in our view, already reasonably accessible to you. Under Section 21 (Information Accessible by Other Means) of the FoI Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to the applicant. Every year the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs makes Written Ministerial Statements (WMS) to Parliament on parking fines, CC debts and alleged serious offences, which have allegedly been committed by members of the diplomatic community in the UK. The WMS also names the missions and international organisations which owe the greatest parking fine and CC debts. The last statements made on 13 July 2013 gave the details for 2012, and a record can be found here under Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130711/wmstext/130711m0001.htm>. You can also search the UK Parliament website for the Written Ministerial Statements for 2011 using the reference in the 2013 WMS.

The Foreign Secretary will make further Written Ministerial Statements in June or July this year, covering parking fines, CC debts and alleged serious offences in 2013. This information is therefore exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act (Information intended for future publication).

The exemption under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act recognises that it must be reasonable in all the circumstances to withhold the information until the date of publication. Given the necessary preparation and administration involved in publishing the information, we consider that our publication timetable is reasonable.

Diplomatic Protection Group (DPG) of the Metropolitan Police notifies us of incidents and offences allegedly committed by, or upon persons attached to diplomatic missions and international organisations, and dependant family members in the UK. Since 2011, DPG has notified us of:

2011: 771 incidents/offences;

2012: 996 incidents/offences;

2013: 873 incidents/offences.

Searching for the information you request for traffic violations and drink driving offences would require us to check each and every notification stored electronically and on paper since 2011. We would also have to check any subsequent records, to confirm the nature of the alleged incident. We estimate that the cost of searching for this information, and therefore complying with this part of your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provisions 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 3½ 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 we estimate that it will take more than 3½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances, we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request.

In order for your request to fall within the appropriate limit we would recommend you narrow your request down. You might consider concentrating on a particular country over a specific time period. However, you should be aware that this does not guarantee an automatic release, as all information must be assessed in detail. Any reformulated request will be treated as a fresh request under the Act and any information that found as a result may be subject to exemptions under the FOI act.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, 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,

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