



# Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Asset Management  
Estates and Security Directorate  
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31 July 2014

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF 0704-14**

Thank you for your letter dated 19 June 2014 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

- 1. Will you list all the UK embassies, High Commissions and consulates in foreign countries, and state their locations?*
- 2. If owned as distinct from leased, will you state the real estate value of each of the above at the latest available date they were assessed?*
- 3. Will you list the properties, outside of Embassies, High Commissions and consulates, the FCO owns in foreign countries, state their locations, and show their assessed value at the latest available date they were assessed?*
- 4. How many properties owned in foreign countries has the FCO disposed of in the last five years, and what was the total value of the assets released?*
- 5. Will you list all properties owned by the FCO, or its agents, within the United Kingdom, and provide the latest assessment, by individual property of the real estate value of each?*

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.

### ***1. Will you list all the UK embassies, High Commissions and consulates in foreign countries, and state their locations?***

Under section 21 of the FOIA, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. Some of the information relevant to your request can be found on the data.gov.uk website and is available to view at <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/uk-foreign-post-locations>.

Please find below the information that we can release to you.

**2. If owned as distinct from leased, will you state the real estate value of each of the above at the latest available date they were assessed?**

**3. Will you list the properties, outside of Embassies, High Commissions and consulates, the FCO owns in foreign countries, state their locations, and show their assessed value at the latest available date they were assessed?**

**5. Will you list all properties owned by the FCO, or its agents, within the United Kingdom, and provide the latest assessment, by individual property of the real estate value of each?**

The net book value of FCO land and buildings can be found in Note 7 to the Consolidated Statement of Financial Position in the [FCO Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14](#). The net book value for FCO properties (non-residential land, Buildings excluding dwellings, Residential land and dwellings) on page 107 totals £2bn. The FCO figure includes £408m relating to properties on long leases, as explained in the Leased Properties note on page 109 of the Annual Report and Accounts, but excludes short term rental properties.

### **Section 43 – Commercial Interests**

Some of the information you have requested has been withheld under section 43 (2) (Commercial Interests) of the FOIA as its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice commercial interests.

In applying this exemption we have balanced the public interest in disclosure, that it would give more effective, open and honest use of public money, with the view that transparency also poses risks. The opinions of value of individual buildings provided by chartered surveyors are commercially sensitive and the disclosure of individual property valuations prejudices the ability of the FCO to extract best value for the UK taxpayer in negotiations with third parties.

### **Section 38 – Health and Safety**

Details relating to residential accommodation are also being withheld under section 38 (1) (a) of the FOIA, which relates to information that would endanger the physical or mental health of any individual. This exemption also requires the application of a public interest test.

We took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness and public accountability regarding the FCO's residential estate. However, releasing information on the locations of our residential accommodation could pose a significant risk to the personal safety of our staff living in it. For this reason, we therefore judge that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

**4. How many properties owned in foreign countries has the FCO disposed of in the last five years, and what was the total value of the assets released?**

The following table lists the total value of assets released from owned properties in foreign countries in the last five years.

|                          | <b>2009-10</b> | <b>2010-11</b> | <b>2011-12</b> | <b>2012-13</b> | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>No of properties*</b> | 21             | 25             | 21             | 17             | 22             | 106          |
| <b>Disposal value**</b>  | £7,158,154     | £10,290,287    | £12,882,313    | £24,755,528    | £16,120,067    | £71,206,349  |

\* Compounds classed as one property.

\*\* As in Annual Report and Accounts.

We hope you will find this information useful.

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,

Estates and Security Directorate