



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

China Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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30 September 2014

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0870-14**

Thank you for your email of 08 September asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. Your request stated:

*I would like to find out some detail about British embassy in China under FOI act.*

*1) staff numbers*

*what are the staff number change from 2010 up to now? How many are local recruited?*

*2) budget*

*What are the annual budget change from 2010 to now? What proportion was spent on entertainment?*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested and that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

You requested information on staff numbers. Embassies include staff from a number of different Government Departments. These include UK Border Agency, Passport and Identity Service, Her Majesty's Treasury and Ministry of Defence amongst others. To provide you with the number of staff in the British Embassy in Beijing would entail contacting each Government Department to ask them for past and present staff numbers for the Embassy. This would exceed the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision 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 3 ½ 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 I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request.

However, in the spirit of openness and transparency, we have provided you with figures for FCO staff only, both UK Based staff and Locally Engaged. Prior to 2014, these are approximate staff numbers, based on central records which have been rounded up for operational and security reasons. These figures cover our full complement of staff including Political, Consular, UKTI, Corporate Services, Security and Maintenance staff. Please note

that not all Locally Engaged staff records are required to be held centrally. You will note that these figures change year on year. These changes are not necessarily due to any changes in numbers of staff in Beijing; rather they reflect the different basis on which we have recorded staff numbers over the period.

<b>Year Ending 31 March</b>	<b>UK Based staff</b>	<b>Locally Engaged</b>
2010*	60*	180*
2011*	60*	130*
2012*	60*	120*
2013*	60*	180*
*approximate numbers only, rounded to the nearest 10. Since year ending 31 March 2014, a different methodology has been used to record staff at post, meaning the 2014 figure is not directly comparable with the earlier figures.		
2014	71	131

You also requested information on budgets for the Embassy in Beijing. I have included a total budget for the Beijing Embassy for 2010-2014 below, including a subtotal of the amount spent on business entertainment. Please note that between 2010 and 2012 the budget figures include accommodation and maintenance costs. Due to a new accounting system, these were removed from the budget from the year ending 31 March 2011, meaning the two sets of figures are not directly comparable.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office undertakes a vast range of activities to build diplomatic and business partnerships in the UK and across more than 260 embassies and high commissions to promote British interests. This includes meetings and events with political, security and consular contacts, and events for business delegations aimed at attracting inward investment to the UK and boosting economic growth by helping British businesses expand overseas. Spending each year varies, reflecting the changing opportunities and events which this expenditure supports. Examples of this include the London Olympics and Queen's Jubilee in 2012, and the Royal Wedding in 2013. Any spending for such activity is undertaken for business reasons, and expenditure on hospitality is kept under close scrutiny to ensure value for money and effectiveness.

<b>Year Ending 31 March</b>	<b>Total Beijing Budget (approx.)</b>	<b>Subtotal of Business Entertainment Costs</b>
2010*	£7,300,000*	£48,550
*Includes accommodation and maintenance costs that have been removed from the budget from 2011. This means the two sets of figures are not directly comparable.		
2011	£3,300,000	£67,730
2012	£4,880,000	£84,385
2013	£4,300,000	£98,000
2014	£4,600,000	£75,000

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, 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.

Yours sincerely,

China Department



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.