



**Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation**

Secretariat

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Your Ref:

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Dear

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2015, originally addressed to of the
Defence Infrastructure organisation (DIO) requesting the following information:

I understand from Annington Nominees Ltd that you are responsible for charging arrangements for disposal of sewage from the Wyton on the Hill (WotH) estate; a former RAF Married Quarter estate that is situated adjacent to RAF Wyton.

Annington has advised that the 1996 Sale Agreement, in which the majority of military family housing on the estate was sold, includes a clause relating to a Base Dependency Charge (BDC) that shareholders in the Wyton Resident's Company Ltd (WRCL) are required to pay for disposal of sewage from their properties.

I have been resident of the Wyton on the Hill (WotH) estate for approximately 6 years. There have been significant increases in the BDC during the last few years. Another resident of the estate, who has a similar-sized and similar value property to myself, and is in the same council tax band, has been paying less in BDC fees until the recent change in how these have been calculated. He was informed that the charge was based on rateable value, which should be the same for both properties due to the reasons listed above.

I do not understand why only Residents Company Ltd (WRCL) residents pay BDC, whereas Sussex Road residents pay no BDC, despite using the same sewerage system, and the same pumps which are located on the RAF station, as we do. They also pay no charges to Anglian Water.

These facts have caused me to question the rationale, methodology and fairness for determining the BDC. I would appreciate a comprehensive explanation of how the BDC is applied to individual shareholders (householders) within the WRCL on the WotH estate. Please note that this request is being submitted under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act legislative arrangements.

In addition to your overall explanation of the BDC, please include details of the following:

1. *How is the quantity of sewage that requires disposal from the 176 properties within the WRCL is determined, whether this takes in account Sussex Road residents, and any other residents reliant on the pumps from the station for disposal of sewage?*
2. *How the total BDC for sewage disposal for the properties within the WRCL is determined?*
3. *How the BDC for individual properties within the WRCL was calculated and applied prior to the new system, and where the rateable value for each property was taken from?*
4. *Please also provide the total BDC for the disposal of sewage from the properties within the WRCL for financial years 11/12, 12/13 and 13/14. If the actual costs for FY 14/15 have not yet been levied, please provide an estimation of what MoD expects to levy.*
5. *Why you still refuse to base the sewage charges, as water companies do, on the water usage? I, and many other residents, have a water meter. I live alone, and my bill comes to less than £100 a year, therefore I would not need nearly £300 worth of sewage disposal. Surely it would be a simple matter of requesting an annual usage of water from Anglian water, and relate that to the amount of sewage that would subsequently result. It is a very simple calculation which water companies do. I do not see why I should have to subsidise other properties which produce significantly more sewage due to the number of residents in the property.*
6. *Why you refuse to charge Sussex Road residents for sewage disposal, despite numerous residents requesting this, and whether we are subsidising them in our payments?*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000. Some of your requests for information do not constitute a request for recorded information and, as such, we will treat it outside of the Freedom of Information Act and will respond to your questions where possible. I will split your answers into ones we are treating within the FOI Act and those which fall outside of the Act

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

Questions that are FOI requests:

4) The total BD sewage charge for the WRCL estate for the previous four years is as follows:

Financial Year	Total BD charge
2011/12	£28,991.65
2012/13	£29,194.59
2013/14	£45,457.20
2014/15	£40,362.95

Questions that fall outside of the FOI Act:

1) This request does not ask for recorded information and is thus not being treated under the FOI Act 2000. Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that the quantity of sewage that requires disposal from the estate is estimated based on the average household water usage across the MOD estate, this is necessary since the MOD has no meters of its own on this estate. This is then used to determine the total usage on the Wyton Residents Company Ltd (WRCL) estate which is then apportioned to each property by number of bedrooms. The same methodology is used for all non-metered households across the entire MOD estate in England and Wales. The total charge for the WRCL is based on the 176 properties that are the basis of the WRCL Sussex Road are part of the Sussex and Wiltshire Residents Company and therefore do not form part of the WRCL calculation.

2) This request does not ask for recorded information and is thus not being treated under the FOI Act 2000. Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note the total BDC is calculated by using the estimate of water usage for the estate and multiplying it by the marginal cost per cubic metre it costs the MOD to deliver the waste removal service.

3) This request does not ask for recorded information and is thus not being treated under the FOI Act 2000. Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note the total BDC is apportioned across the individual properties by number of bedrooms in line with the Water Resale Order 2006 (WRO). Previously the apportionment was based on rateable values which are also in line with the WRO. The hereditament for the rateable values was taken from the Crown Valuation List which is assessed under the General Rate Act as a list for rateable purposes. The MOD moved from using rateable values as it did not have values for all the properties across its estate and no new values can be created, therefore it switched its apportionment method to the number of bedrooms which produces a similar outcome in most cases. It was the intention of the MOD to have a consistent methodology to cover the whole of its estate and so the WRO is used as guidance. The MOD's obligation is to remove waste from the boundary of the estate and for this service, bills the residents collectively via WRCL.

5) This request does not ask for recorded information and is thus not being treated under the FOI Act 2000. Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note there are approximately 15,700 former Married Quarters that Annington have sold to the open market. As you state correctly, some occupiers would benefit from a measured charge but equally some occupiers would benefit from an unmeasured charge. The MOD is neither funded to install meters nor has it the resources to obtain the meter readings from third parties; it equally is unable to monitor the number of occupants within individual properties to assess the benefit or detriment of a consistent methodology on any one individual. The primary objective of the billing methodology is to be consistent in its treatment to all residents whilst collecting the cost of delivering the service to the estate as a whole.

6) This request does not ask for recorded information and is thus not being treated under the FOI Act 2000. Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note we cannot discuss other private residents who form part of a different resident management company. However we can confirm that Sussex Road, as part of another Resident Management Company, has no impact on the calculation of the WRCL Base Dependent Charge neither is the WRCL residents subsidising Sussex Road, it is the MOD which has under-recovered its costs. It is the MOD policy to recover its costs from third parties and should it transpire that some properties have been omitted in error then the MOD will seek recovery.

Yours sincerely

DIO Secretariat

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Head of Corporate Information, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, www.ico.gov.uk.