



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Our ref: RFI 7023  
16 March 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: First Class Flights**

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 17 November 2014, about first class flights taken by civil servants within the department. As you know, we are handling your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked how many first class flights civil servants took as part of their work in 2012/13 (May 2012 onwards) and 2013/14; for a list of such flights; and for the rules governing taking a first class flight.

Defra's Staff Expense (Travel and Subsistence) Policy states the following:

***Travel and subsistence principles***

- 1. All travel outside of policy should be pre-approved by managers or approvers unless clearly not possible in the circumstances.*
- 2. Travel should only be undertaken when necessary*
- 3. The traveller should take steps to ensure sustainability of travel as set out in the Sustainability section below*

***Sustainability***

*Defra and its Network are committed to adopting travel behaviours that support the Government's sustainability objectives.*

*The policy is to strike an appropriate balance between the costs and the benefits, taking into account:*

- Cost*
- Convenience*
- Carbon emissions*
- Care of staff*



**Class of travel (rail and air)**

*Travellers should adhere to the following rules regarding class of travel unless prior approval for a justifiable exception is granted by a manager or approver.*

*The lowest practical fare/rate should be selected within the permitted class of travel.*

- 1. All Air travel requires prior approval from a manager or approver.*
- 2. Air travel for journeys of less than 5 hours should be via economy class only.*
- 3. For journeys of between 5 hours and 10 hours a business class flight may be purchased where:*
  - a. bookings are not available in the lower class and the timing or date of the journey cannot be changed*
  - b. if staff will be required to work immediately on arrival.*
  - c. on disability/medical grounds*
- 4. For journeys of over 10 hours a business class flight may be purchased subject to approval from a manager or approver.*

Data from Defra's sole travel booking supplier shows that two first class flights were taken by civil servants in the department during 2012/13 and two during 2013/14. The details of each flight can be found in Annex C. In all four cases approval was provided by the relevant manager in accordance with principle 1 of the travel policy.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you. I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely

  
**Defra FOIA and EIRs Team**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## Annex A

### Copyright

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## Annex B

### Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to [REDACTED] Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

## Annex C

### Table of First Class Flights

Financial Year	Departure Airport	Destination Airport	Details
2012/13	Shanghai	Guangzhou	Business class flights were required for two individuals working alongside the Secretary of State; the carrier only offered two classes of ticket for this flight, and the flexible option was authorised on grounds of business need.
2012/13	Shanghai	Guangzhou	
2013/14	London Heathrow	Beijing Capital	Business class flights were required for the journey of over 10 hours between London and Beijing. Travel by first class was exceptionally authorised as no alternatives meeting business need were available.
2013/14	Belo Horizonte	London Heathrow	A first class ticket was chosen for a flight from Belo Horizonte to London Heathrow because it cost less than a business class alternative. An exception was therefore authorised on value for money grounds.