



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Our ref: FOI2019/00570
5 February 2019

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Government Procurement Cards

Thank you for your request for information of 10th January about Government Procurement Cards. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

- 1. Please tell me how much was spent by your department using Government Procurement Cards (or any other credit card paid out by public funds) in a) 2016/17 and b) 2017/18?*
- 2. Please provide me with a full breakdown of expenditure by staff in your department using Government Procurement Cards for a) 2017/18 and b) 2018/19 to date (I am not asking for the breakdown for 2016/17). For each item, please state the date, the amount and the full details of which you hold on where the money was spent and the purpose.*
- 3. Please also state how many members of staff currently have use of these cards.*

We have refused your request for information because it falls within section 14(1) of the FOIA. Under section 14(1), Defra can refuse to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious.

This exemption applies because of the significant burden the request places on the department. Defra produces reports each month detailing all transactions over £500 on GPCs. This is an onerous task and a lot of time is spent ensuring that there are no security risks with releasing data and that no personal data is included. To ensure this, a number of levels of internal review take place. The Cabinet Office requires all departments to make these monthly disclosures as part of the Government's transparency agenda. The £500 cut-off was chosen by the Cabinet Office to balance the benefits of transparency against the burden of producing the reports.

The burden is significant as we will need to run and review each entry on 21 monthly reports to identify items that need to be redacted. It is estimated that this would cover around 28,000 transactions. This will be a major distraction from delivering the department's key objectives.

While we have refused to consider the request as it stands, the best way we can help you is to ask you to consider narrowing down your request to focus more clearly on the precise



information you are seeking. You could, for example, remove the part of your request which asks for “the full details of which you hold on where the money was spent and the purpose” from your request. If you were to make a new request for a narrower category of information, it may be that we could comply with that request within the appropriate limit, although we cannot guarantee that this will be the case.

You may also wish to refer to information which is already publically available on GOV.UK. For example, Defra publishes monthly transparency reports on GPC expenditure above £500 two months in arrears at the following link:

<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/710cd410-0724-4aac-b891-e48e9ec50d66/defra-government-procurement-card-spend-transactions-over-500>

We attach an annex 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

Information Rights Team

InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

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 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Nick Teall, Head of Information Rights, Area 4a, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: 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's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

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