

XXX
XXX
XXX

[via e-mail: XXX]

Dear XXX,

Freedom of Information Request - F0008981

I am writing regarding your request for information, dated 2nd June 2012. In that request, you asked us for:

“Full details of the department’s attempts to reduce the size of its estate, since May 2010. I would like the response to include details of buildings, office- and floor-space disposed of, and the financial implications, costs/benefits of each.”

Firstly I would like to apologise for the delay in responding to you. The Act requires us to reply promptly and in any event not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt. On this occasion we have failed to do this and I apologise.

The Department for Transport was formed in 2002 and consists of a central department and seven executive agencies as follows:

Highways Agency
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
Driving Standards Agency
Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Vehicle & Operator Services Agency
Vehicle Certification Agency
Government Car & Despatch Agency

This response covers both the central department and our seven executive agencies.

We have estimated that the cost of complying with your request would exceed £600. Section 12 of the Act (the full text of which is attached at Annex A) does not oblige the Department to comply with requests that exceed this limit, and we are therefore refusing your request.

We are unable to answer your request within the cost limit because we do not keep a central record of this information. The Department for Transport Estate has circa 82,000 assets and to determine, locate, retrieve and extract all information on disposals would require us to contact multiple teams across the department and ask each of them to carry out a search in order to ascertain what information they hold.

XXX
Department for Transport
Zone 3/31
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

DIRECT LINE: 0207 XXX
GTN No: 3533 XXX

XXX@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web Site: www.dft.gov.uk

Our Ref: F0008981

3rd August 2012

This data would then have to undergo further analysis in order to identify disposals where cost benefit analysis was appropriate (this will not be appropriate in all cases, for example - the site might have been disposed of as part of an expected lease expiry at that location or is below the threshold where such analysis is required).

If you send us a new, more specific request, we will consider if that can be dealt with within the limit. This may include specifying a particular part of the department, building or office / floor space that you are interested in receiving information on and reducing your timescales.

In case you find it useful I enclose a link to a report published on the Cabinet Office website called 'The State of the Estate'. The Department publishes data on the size of its estate on an annual basis in the report.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/state-estate-2011>

Appendix A of the report provides a summary of the changes in the size of the estate during 2011; data for the previous years is available in the report for 2010, also available via the above website. This is a high level summary of the data held within our property database. Obtaining information on the underlying site (building or office) level detail would exceed the cost limit for the reasons described above.

You may also be interested in 'Central Government Property and Land' information which is routinely published on the data.gov.uk website at the following link:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/epims>

In terms of our disposal policy the Department for Transport aims to hold only Core property (i.e. which is needed for the delivery of its business). All Non-Core property (unless it is held pending transport scheme use) will be disposed or re-allocated at the earliest opportunity in a way which is both consistent with official guidance and achieves value for money.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/01
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact XXX. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Annex A

Section 12 exemption:

Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

(1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

(2) Subsection (1) does not exempt the public authority from its obligation to comply with paragraph (a) of section 1(1) unless the estimated cost of complying with that paragraph alone would exceed the appropriate limit.

(3) In subsections (1) and (2) “the appropriate limit” means such amount as may be prescribed, and different amounts may be prescribed in relation to different cases.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, where two or more requests for information are made to a public authority—

(a) by one person, or

(b) by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign,

the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests is to be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with all of them.

(5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the purposes of this section as to the costs to be estimated and as to the manner in which they are to be estimated.