

Reference: 2185

27 May 2016

Julia Snape  
Information Requests

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### **Freedom of Information: Right to know request**

Thank you for your request for information about travel and accommodation expenditure for 2015 which was received on 28 April and has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA).

We have provided the answers to your questions below. You may also find the following background information helpful:

- Many of Ofcom's statutory functions are derived from European law, where Ofcom is required to represent the interests of the UK in areas such as telecoms and the international co-ordination of spectrum (which is used to transmit mobile communications and broadcast TV). Much of Ofcom's travel and accommodation expenditure relate to carrying out these duties, such as attending international co-ordination stakeholder events and meetings.
- Our work also involves colleagues traveling throughout the UK to fulfil our statutory duties, for example, our spectrum field engineers who need to investigate complaints about interference, or members of staff who need to travel between Ofcom's offices located across the UK. Attendance at these activities incur expenditure for road, rail and, at times, air travel.
- All expense claims made by Ofcom staff in relation to travel and accommodation must comply with our strict expenses policy. This policy sets out tight controls around the approval and payment of staff expenses. For example, Ofcom colleagues must first ensure that their costs are reasonable and in line with the policy's requirements, and all expense claims are reviewed and approved by the claimant's line manager and by Ofcom's finance team before processing. You can find further detail on Ofcom's Expenses Policy on our website: <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/files/2011/08/expensespolicy.pdf>.

Please find below our response to each of your questions.

1. *How much was spent in 2015 by the organisation on travel costs for all staff and Directors broken down by road, rail and air?*

By "all staff and Directors", we have interpreted this to mean all members of Ofcom's executive staff, including Directors, who are senior members of staff with specific

management responsibilities. For the purposes of this request we refer simply to 'staff'. We have not included non-executives or members of any advisory body.

In calculating the figures for this question, we have included spend on overseas fuel, road tolls, car hire, air travel, rail/bus and coach travel and taxis, plus UK spend on car hire, air travel, airport lounge passes, car, motorbike and cycle costs, Oyster cards, parking costs, fuel, rail, bus, tube and ferry costs, taxis and road tolls, all of which have been incurred as a result of staff undertaking their duties. We have grouped each of these items under the heading to which they most logically fall, as referred to in your request:

Road £101,515.08

Rail £242,795.29

Air £238,338.20

*2. How much was spent in 2015 by the organisation on accommodation for all staff, and Directors broken down by domestic and foreign expenditure?*

Total expenditure for 2015 by staff is:

UK accommodation £128,793.15; and

Overseas accommodation £224,436.45.

*3. Does the organisation use the services of a travel management company to minimise these costs?*

Yes.

*4. If yes to question 3, which travel management company does the organisation use?*

Business Travel Direct.

*5. If yes to question 3, how much has the outside company been paid in respect of its services (excluding travel and accommodation charges) in 2015?*

The information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43 of the FOIA. This section exempts the disclosure of information where this would prejudice the commercial interests of a person or company (in this case, Business Travel Direct). In applying this exemption we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information. The attached Annex to this letter sets out the exemption in full, as well as the factors Ofcom considered when deciding where the public interest lay.

It is likely that other exemptions will apply.

*6. If yes to question 3, how much has the employment of an external travel management company saved the organisation in 2015?*

Accurate information on how much the employment of an external travel management company has saved the organisation in 2015 is not held. However, in order to be helpful we are able to disclose information that has been provided by our travel management company that indicates on a percentage basis how much Ofcom has saved in using their services. Our travel provider has advised savings are broadly as follows, shown as a % saving relative to staff buying direct from travel and accommodation providers: 15% for air bookings, 5% for accommodation. For train fares, Ofcom use the travel provider's booking facility however our staff members generally choose the lowest fare option and thus the travel provider does not provide a discount as such in this area.

I hope this information is helpful. Please quote the reference number above in any future correspondence as this will help us to deal with your query more quickly.

Yours sincerely

Julia Snape

If you are unhappy with the response or level of service you have received in relation to your request from Ofcom, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be treated as a formal complaint and will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will acknowledge the complaint and inform you of the date by which you might expect to be told the outcome.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

#### **Timing**

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter.** There is no statutory deadline for undertaking internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Steve Gettings  
The Secretary to the Corporation  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

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**

<b>Section 43 – where information, if disclosed, would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of a company</b>	
<b>Factors for disclosure</b>	<b>Factors for withholding</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open policy making and public confidence in regulated activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific companies are identifiable and as such their ability to conduct their business activities would be diminished if this data were publicly available at this time. Therefore, commercial interest would be prejudiced.</li> <li>• BTD work in a competitive environment and disclosing information on the fees Ofcom pay them would allow other companies to gain a competitive advantage, by bidding for similar services at a lower price.</li> <li>• Ofcom’s own commercial interests may be affected during future tendering exercises – as it would reveal the amount Ofcom is prepared to pay for the services currently provided by BTD.</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons why public interest favours withholding information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofcom enjoys a positive relationship with its stakeholders, and is entrusted with commercially sensitive data provided by those companies. The release of this information into the public domain would impair both this relationship and Ofcom’s ability to carry out its business and regulate in a fair and proportionate manner.</li> </ul>	