

To: request-293272-80806dee@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: NRSEP47

Dear Katja Leyendecker

Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

We refer to your request for information received on 20 September 2015.

Your request:

Given that defra* recently sent a strong signal for air quality improvement and also linking it to transport and car use, I would like to investigate what the Environment Agency (EA) contribution to air pollution reduction is. I'd think that with your ca. 10,000 employees and as an executive agency in charge of land, air and water quality, the EA should themselves be seen to lead on aspects like air quality and set an example, through internally-organised plans and action, and innovative policies.

EA and cars use:

1. What assessment has been carried out to reduce car parking at EA offices to discourage casual and habitual use of the car and encourage the use of other means?
2. How does the EA define essential car use and how does it ensure that only essential users are provided with a car?
3. Has the EA considered in its car policy to include car allowance and if so for the employee to only require to prove 'car access' rather than 'car presence' - as this would reduce the number of vehicles put on the road, allow car sharing or use of a car-sharing club?
4. Are travel surveys carried out (routinely) at EA offices, and if so what has been found to be the main barrier to reduce (casual and habitual) car use?

I am looking forward to hearing from you the answers. If there were any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Our response

- 1. What assessment has been carried out to reduce car parking at EA offices to discourage casual and habitual use of the car and encourage the use of other means?**

Our property projects team review our office occupancy levels and locations and assess travel options and vehicle parking as part of our accommodation strategy. We seek to site new offices close to public transport links. At some sites we have reduced the number of car parking spaces and introduced a system where staff are permitted to park 4 days out of 5.

For example, we relocated all our staff based previously in three out of city locations in Bristol to a new city centre head office near to public transport links and built to high environmental standards.

Horizon House has limited car park spaces for use only for operational or accessibility reasons. Staff either walk, cycle or use public transport to reach the office which also has a secure bicycle storage area and multiple staff showers to encourage this behaviour. This results in around 100 people per day cycling into work in Bristol.

We have a travel hierarchy which we actively encourage staff to follow. This starts by questioning whether the journey is really necessary and whether telephone, video or web conferencing can be used instead. We encourage staff to use public transport where this is possible. If driving is the only option, we ask staff to choose the vehicle with the lowest emissions and car-share if they can.

Reducing our emissions from transport has been an important element of reducing our overall CO₂ emissions. By adopting the hierarchy and using cleaner vehicles we have reduced our emissions from transport by 56.9%. That has helped contribute to an overall reduction of 40% in our total CO₂ emissions between 2006 and 2015.

2. How does the EA define essential car use and how does it ensure that only essential users are provided with a car?

We have strict eligibility criteria that authorising managers must review to determine if an employee's role meets the requirements for a lease car to be provided for business use. To be eligible for a lease car employees will need to meet one of the following criteria:

- Be undertaking an operational role that requires frequent and sometimes unplanned travel that cannot reasonably be undertaken using public transport
- Have responsibility for a field based team, with a need to undertake regular site or field visits
- Have a significant base of external customers that are not serviced by regular and convenient public transport connections
- Have a need to regularly carry large or heavy quantities of field service equipment or sensitive documentation
- Have a requirement to make frequent visits to operational sites that are not adequately serviced by public transport.

We have a number of employees who have a "legacy" right to a car under their contract but this is removed when they move role or are promoted.

3. Has the EA considered in its car policy to include car allowance and if so for the employee to only require to prove 'car access' rather than 'car presence' - as this would reduce the number of vehicles put on the road, allow car sharing or use of a car-sharing club?

We have a number of alternatives to providing staff with a company vehicle including using pool cars, daily rental vehicles and allowing staff to use their own car for shorter business journeys. Some of our pool cars are ultra-low emission

pure electric vehicles. We offer a business mileage allowance for cycling, interest free loans for bicycles and the tax-free cycle to work scheme.

We have a car share database which we encourage staff to use to find a car share match for business or commuter journeys. Several of our sites have dedicated car share car parking spaces. We promote car sharing during Liftshare Week.

4. Are travel surveys carried out (routinely) at EA offices, and if so what has been found to be the main barrier to reduce (casual and habitual) car use?

We carry out travel surveys at several of our sites. These have shown that the main barriers to individuals choosing means of transport other than the private car are the lack of suitable public transport routes, additional time on journeys to walk, cycle or use public transport, extra costs of using public transport compared to a private car, and lack of safe cycling routes.

Rights of appeal

If you are not satisfied with our response to your request for information you can contact us within 2 calendar months to ask for our decision to be reviewed. If you are still not satisfied following this, you can then make an appeal to the Information Commissioner, who is the statutory regulator for Freedom of Information.

The address is:

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