



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Mr S Moran

Sent by email - request-201002-5f35842a@whatdotheyknow.com

16 May 2014

Dear Mr Moran

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – RFI20140543

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act ('the Act') dated 6th April 2014, seeking:

Under the Freedom of Information Act please provide the following information for each of the last three years:

- 1. How much has the BBC spent on hotel expenses for staff in each year?*
- 2. What was the cost of the ten most expensive hotel rooms in each year? And please name each hotel individually.*

Please provide these figures and information for each of the last three years broken down by year.

Spend on hotel accommodation is incurred via the following channels:

- The BBC operates centralised systems for the booking of hotels, taxis, flights, rail, and hire cars. This involves using a small number of preferred suppliers in order to help maximise value for money to the BBC. All costs incurred via this channel are settled directly by the BBC, without staff being required to incur any cost individually.
- Bookings may be made directly by BBC staff, the cost of which are reclaimed via expenses, for example when someone is away from base and does not have access to the central booking systems. The BBC's Expenses Policy is published on the BBC's website at:
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/foi/classes/policies_procedures/expenses_policy.pdf

- Occasionally costs may have been incurred with a supplier where the booking was not made through the BBC's centralised systems for example for major sporting events where the travel arrangements are coordinated by an events company.

For the purposes of this FOI request, please note:

- We have provided the data for the calendar years 2011, 2012 and 2013
- The BBC's commercial subsidiaries are not subject to the Act (see section 6(1)(b)(ii) of the Act) and therefore, their spend has not been included in the figures disclosed below.

The BBC is covered by the FOI Act only in respect of information held for purposes "other than those of Journalism, art or literature". We are, therefore, not obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC's output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities. Our central records do not show whether all the information requested was held for the purposes of journalism, art or literature; the bookings were often made by junior staff on behalf of the person staying in the hotel. To check whether the bookings were production related would require speaking with the individuals concerned which we estimate would take more than two and a half days. Under section 12 of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days' work at an hourly rate of £25). We are therefore offering the following limited information voluntarily.

Response - Question 1

The total spent through the channels described above on hotel accommodation for each of the three years was:-

Year	£m
2011	8.4
2012	8.8
2013	11.6

The BBC is a global broadcaster and cannot cover major events, report on breaking news stories or bring programmes such as natural history from around the world by simply being based in the UK. Spend on hotels is subject to rigorous scrutiny and the BBC's expenses policy states that staff are advised to use alternatives to travel, such as video conferencing, wherever possible but when travel is a necessity staff should stay in the most economical accommodation available. However there are times when hotel costs are higher than normal due to increased demand or limited availability, often due to major events that the BBC has a duty to cover.

The increase in hotel spend from 2012 to 2013 is due, in part, to the Sochi Winter Olympics, 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Accommodation in relation to these events has been paid for in advance.

The average rate paid by the BBC for a hotel is £100 per night in London and £63 per night in the regions. This is approximately 25% below industry benchmarks.

Response - Question 2

At some points in the period we are reporting on, there were a number of hotel booking providers billing the BBC via our centralised system due to advance bookings made through old contracts. We have only been able to provide you with the information you requested from our current hotel booking agent (Access Bookings) who have provided booking services throughout the 3 year period. This is because the bookings made through Access Bookings includes much more detailed booking data than that provided for in the old contracts.

Where claims are made by staff via expenses, the detail you have requested is captured in free text fields which is not easily reportable and would require manual review of claims. In the case of payments made directly with a supplier the information may not be held, and where it is held would require the checking of individual purchase orders and invoices. We therefore estimate that to provide this analysis would take more than two and a half days and under section 12 of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

On the basis of the centrally record information that is available to us, we are able to volunteer the following information, including the names of the hotels where the claims are likely to be non-production related. These named hotels are related to attendance at major industry conferences.

2011

Room Rate GBP		UK /non UK
£	306.49	Non UK
£	283.80	Non UK
£	269.34	Non UK
£	254.29	Non UK
		Art Hotel Amsterdam,

£	254.07	Netherlands
£	252.81	Non UK
£	251.57	Non UK
£	241.00	Non UK
£	240.39	Non UK
£	237.54	Non UK

2012

Room Rate GBP	UK/ non UK
£ 632.67	Non UK
£ 525.00	Non UK
£ 482.01	Non UK
£ 443.91	Nh Doelen Hotel, Netherlands
£ 411.59	Non UK
£ 411.59	Non UK
£ 375.64	Non UK
£ 375.64	Non UK
£ 348.38	Nh Doelen Hotel, Netherlands
£ 348.38	Nh Doelen Hotel, Netherlands

2013

Room Rate GBP	UK/ non UK
£ 414.98	Non UK
£ 400.38	Premier Dante Best Western Hotel, Spain
£ 400.38	Premier Dante Best Western Hotel, Spain
£ 396.79	Premier Dante Best Western Hotel, Spain
£ 378.33	UK

£	358.89	Non UK
£	354.73	Non UK
£	354.73	Non UK
£	352.13	Non UK
£	352.13	Non UK

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied that we have complied with the Act in responding to your request, you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545 745 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely

Tracey Morris
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