

Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2AW

www.decc.gov.uk

Your ref:

Our ref: 12/0545

15th April 2012

Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your e-mail enquiry of 2nd April 2012 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on government expenditure within the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). You asked how much DECC spent on Christmas parties in December 2011 and requested a list of attendees at any parties held.

DECC comprises a core department and four Non Departmental Public Bodies. The only expenditure incurred on Christmas parties in any part of DECC was an all staff event held by the Coal Authority. This event was held on 22nd December 2011 and expenditure of £1,915 was incurred. This represents the cost of a meal with no alcohol at £16.95 per head for 113 members of staff. For information, I have reproduced an extract from the Coal Authority's policy here:

"5.2 Staff Entertainment

Expenses incurred in entertaining the Authority's own employees are not reimbursable except in exceptional circumstances approved by the Chief Executive. Under Inland Revenue rules the liability for tax arises on the employee who receives the benefit, but the Authority will account for tax and National Insurance through a PAYE Settlement Agreement with the Revenue. The following example is subject to tax and should therefore be pre-authorised by the Chief Executive:-

- *departmental staff events"*

You also requested a list of attendees. I can confirm that DECC holds this information. This information is exempt under section 40 (personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as the information constitutes third party data. Section 40(2) provides that personal data about third parties is exempt information if one of the conditions set out in section 40(3) is satisfied. Under the FOI Act disclosure of this information would breach the fair processing principle contained in the Data Protection Act (DPA), where it would be unfair to that person.

Appeal Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the department. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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.

Yours sincerely

