



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Digital Transformation Unit
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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London SW1A 2AH

20 May 2014

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0443-14

Thank you for your email of 17 April 2014 asking for a number of pieces of information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 related to the FCO's spend on social media in the financial years 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14.

We conducted a search of the paper and electronic records held by three FCO Directorates in London: Human Resources (HR); Consular; and, Communications & Engagement (CED).

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information falling within the terms of your request. We are able to make some of this available related to centrally-held data. However, we do not hold detailed information from our network of posts overseas centrally. Retrieval of this information would exceed the cost limit.

In respect of centrally-held data, since 2010 there has been a marketing and advertising freeze (MAF) in place at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Exceptions can be made though:

- Consular Directorate has delegated authority to clear their own exceptions;
- Recruitment advertising (handled by HR) is exempt from the freeze;
- All other exceptions must be cleared through the Director of CED.

Each of your questions has been addressed below.

The total amount of money paid to Facebook and Twitter in each of the above financial years to increase the department's prominence on the respective platform.

2011/12

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

2012/13

Directorate	Item	Amount	
CED	Promoting the Travel Advice Facebook page for British nationals travelling to the Hajj	£100.00	£100.00
CED	South Asia Group: Facebook advertising. Pakistan	£100.00	£100.00

2013/14

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

For Twitter please specify:

The amount spent on increasing the following of the @foreignoffice account (<https://twitter.com/foreignoffice/>). This includes but is not limited to money spent placing the account in the 'who to follow' section of the website.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

The amount spent sponsoring specific tweets, detailing the five most heavily-sponsored tweets.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

Whether any money was spent promoting accounts other than that specified above.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

For Facebook please specify:

The amount spent on increasing the following of the Foreign Office (<https://www.facebook.com/foreignoffice>) page.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

Any money spent promoting individual posts, detailing the five most heavily-sponsored posts.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

Please also include the department's justification for any spending, and relevant evidence for how successful or otherwise the spending was.

No spend recorded for these Directorates.

Please also specify whose responsibility determining spending on social media would be, and whether the department pays any third parties for advice or consultancy relating to social media.

Responsibility for spending on social media has been outlined above. We can confirm that the FCO has paid for external digital transformation expertise. In today's world we have to provide more and more high quality services and advice online and we need to ensure our staff have the skills to deliver this.

In regard to data not held centrally, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and would necessitate a search covering the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's worldwide network and all thematic and geographical departments in London. I estimate that it will take more than 3½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. However if you narrowed your request to a specific Post, geographical area or department in London this may bring the request within the cost limit.

Yours sincerely,

Digital Transformation Unit



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.