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Mr Tom Watson

12 April 2011

Our ref: 2675

Dear Mr Watson

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST

I refer to your Freedom of Information request which was received on 11 March 2011.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Freedom of Information Act is a public disclosure regime, not a private regime. Information disclosed under it is thereafter deemed to be in the public domain, and therefore freely available to the general public upon request.

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act creates a statutory right of access to recorded information held by public authorities i.e. the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). This right is to be informed whether the information requested is held by the public authority or not, and if the information exists, for it to be communicated. A public authority must reply to such a request promptly and in any event, not later than twenty working days after receipt.

The individual's right to information is not unqualified; it is subject to a number of exemptions that are contained within the Act. The majority of these exemptions are qualified, that is to say the decision whether to confirm or deny the information's existence or to disclose the requested material, will be subject to a public interest test.

For ease of reference I will respond in the order of the questions you posed.

1. *What was the total cost for Ken MacDonald, former Director of Public Prosecutions, to attend the Society of Editors' Conference in 2005?*

This figure cannot be provided as the relevant budget file has been mislaid. Comprehensive checks by the Records Management Unit have failed to locate the file. The absence of this file means that items 4 and 5, which I list below for completeness, can not be addressed.

2. *How many officials attended the event from the CPS?*

Mr Macdonald was the only person who attended the event.

3. *How many days and nights Mr MacDonald attended the conference i.e. what was the duration of the conference?*

The conference was held between 16 and 18 October 2005. Mr Macdonald travelled to Windermere on Monday afternoon (17 October) and returned the following day. Mr Macdonald had meetings in the office on 18 October from 15.15.

4. *Please tell me who met the costs of Mr MacDonald's accommodation?*

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5. *What was the total cost of accommodation for Mr MacDonald's trip?*

As with item 1.

6. *Please provide me with a copy of the speech that Mr MacDonald delivered at the conference.*

Mr Macdonald drafted this speech personally and did not provide our Private Office (or the Society of Editors) with a copy.

7. *Please send me a copy of the letter of invitation and acceptance inviting Mr MacDonald to this event.*

Please find attached.

8. *Please send me any subsequent thank you letter sent from Mr MacDonald (or representative of the CPS) and any follow up correspondence after the event took place.*

No subsequent thank you letter or follow up correspondence was sent.

9. *Please tell me whether Mr MacDonald's trip to the conference required ministerial sign off? If it did, please tell me which minister authorised the trip.*

Attendance at this trip did not require ministerial authorisation.

10. *Please tell me whether Mr MacDonald had to make any declarations of interest in relation to this trip. If he did, please provide me with a copy of the declaration that he made.*

No declaration of interest was required or made.

If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request from the Crown Prosecution Service you may ask for an internal review. You should contact the Information Management Unit (Freedom of Information Appeals), Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London, SE1 9HS.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:
Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Santos
Information Management Unit

