



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2008-03940

Keyword: Finance

Subject: The PSNI's travel bill

Request:

Q1. How much has the PSNI spent on all travel in each of the last five financial years?

Q2. Your original question was, "How much has the PSNI spent on travel within Northern Ireland in each of the last five financial years?" You subsequently refined this to 'mileage expenses submitted by officers for travel in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland' within the current financial year and the previous two financial years.

Q3. Your original question was, "How much has the PSNI spent on travel within the UK and Republic of Ireland in each of the last five financial years?" You subsequently refined this to 'mileage expenses submitted by officers for travel in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland' within the current financial year and the previous two financial years. Effectively making this the same as question 2

Q4. Your original question was, "How much has the PSNI spent on travel outside the UK and Republic of Ireland in each of the last five financial years?" Your subsequent refinement again limited the time scale to the current financial year and the previous two financial years. You stated that you were "especially interested in the value of expenses acquired from travel outside Northern Ireland but within the UK/Republic, and separately for travel outside the UK and Ireland".

Q5. An inventory of all instances where a PSNI officer or officers travelled outside Northern Ireland for work-related purposes in the last five years. I would request that this includes details of the dates, location(s), cost and nature of the crime/enquiry they were pursuing?

Q6. How much in terms of travel expenses has Chief Supt Michael Skuce (F District) claimed in each of the last five financial years? Your subsequent refinement again limited the time scale to the current financial year and the previous two financial years.

Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full as far as possible within the constraints of the information, which is available.

Answer 1

It has not been possible to retrieve information to answer this question for each of the last five financial years as requested. You have accepted refinement to other questions by limiting the timescale to the current and last two financial years. In fact I have been able to retrieve information relating to the last four financial years. This is a total of the information provided in answer to questions 2, 3 and 4.

2004/05: £8,659,281.44
2005/06: £8,996,326.95
2006/07: £9,529,842.44
2007/08: £10,097,703.88

Answers 2, 3 and 4

Your questions 2, 3 and 4 ask for travel expenses categorised by the location where the expenses were incurred. It has not been possible to retrieve the information you have asked for in this way as to do so would require a manual trawl of paper based records held by or on behalf of each individual Officer and Support Staff employee in the PSNI. This would be a time consuming task and the cost of doing so would without doubt exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

Travel expenses incurred by the PSNI can be categorised in different ways;

Official Police Transport

This is where an official police vehicle is used for such travel. It would be fair to say that most police vehicles are used for patrol and related purposes, which does not appear to be the focus of your request. Some vehicles may be used for travel in connection with investigations etc., for example vehicles attached to District CID offices. There is no means of retrieving information relating to the cost of this type of travel as the information is not recorded centrally and it would be necessary to examine the Log Book of each individual vehicle in the PSNI fleet. This would be a time consuming task and the cost of doing so would without doubt exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

Travel and Subsistence Claims

It is possible under certain circumstances for Officers and Support Staff to use their own private motor vehicles for travel and reclaim the expenses incurred based on the number of miles travelled. This type of claim accounts for such things as wear and tear on the vehicle as well as the fuel used. Appropriate insurance cover must be in place before this type of travel is undertaken. The individual Officer or Staff member is responsible for this and procedures are in place for confirmation. This type of travel expense may be incurred for travel in connection with investigations or, for example to/from training courses etc. It will usually be within Northern Ireland but may on occasions account for travel to the Republic of Ireland or the mainland UK. Where duty away from an Officer or Staff member's normal place of duty is performed, entitlements to expenses for such things as meals, public transport and/or accommodation incurred in connection with official police business may arise. This is called Subsistence and is claimed in the same manner as travel expenses. It is not possible to separate this type of travel expense from the subsistence element. It has been possible to provide the amount spent on **Travel and Subsistence** for last four financial years and the current financial year to date.

Please find attached record numbered 1640.pdf – Appendix A.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses may be incurred by the PSNI that is pre-planned and booked in advance. This type of travel will usually be by flight, ferry, rail or hire car. Records are held centrally in connection with this type of travel but do not distinguish where the expense was incurred. It would be a reasonable assumption that the bulk of it will be outside Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, but it is not possible to provide separate amounts for travel expenses incurred "within the UK/Republic, and separately for travel outside the UK and Ireland". It has been possible to provide the amount spent on **flight, ferry and rail fares and hire car expenses** for last four financial years but not the current financial year to date. The amounts are;

2004/05: £1,185,281.44
2005/06: £1,487,326.95
2006/07: £1,857,842.44
2007/08: £1,771,703.88

Answer 5

To retrieve this information would involve going to each individual officer in the PSNI and asking them to retrieve the information relating to their own travel records. The individual officers would then have to match their travel records with details of the crime/enquiry, which would be held separately. District Finance Officers may hold some details of the instances of travel but not details of the crime/enquiry. Again this would involve a time consuming, manual trawl of records. Even if this process were to be completed, the information would not be complete as details from officers who have retired etc., over the last five years would be omitted.

The cost of answering this question would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit however the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

Answer 6

2008/09 April – July	£352.00
2007/08	£1333.86
2006/07	£2758.66

The business of Policing is highly professional, complex and diverse playing out in an increasingly international arena. In order that PSNI can operate effectively at the forefront of policing it is often necessary for personnel to travel overseas. Modern policing requires research, policy development, sharing of best practice, use of alternative expertise as well as the obvious operational and investigatory demands that are required to combat crime.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that all PSNI replies under Freedom of Information will be released simultaneously into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk.

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality

Appendix A

FOI Response F-2008-03940

Amount Spent on Travel by PSNI in last five years

Budget		2008/09* £K	2007/08 £K	2006/07 £K	2005/06 £K	2004/05 £K
Travel and Subsistence	Police Officers	2,087	7,044	6,457	6,341	6,397
Travel and Subsistence	Police Staff	353	1,282	1,215	1,168	1,077
	Total	2,440	8,326	7,672	7,509	7,474

*year to date April to July 2008