

STAFF NOTICE 20

Forestry Commission
Personnel Division
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

Notice To All Staff

GUIDANCE ON THE PROVISION OF HOSPITALITY

Purpose

1. This notice provides guidance to managers who are required to arrange hospitality for official visitors and also to staff who participate in working lunches, dinners etc. Supporting information can be found in Staff Notice No 16 [Revised July 2002] "Travel and Subsistence Rates."

What is "hospitality"?

2. Hospitality is the provision for visitors (and people like non-FC committee members) of any meal, working lunch or working dinner in order to further the Commission's interests. Examples are:
 - Lunch in a staff restaurant;
 - A buffet lunch served elsewhere, e.g. in a conference room;
 - Lunch or dinner in a hotel or outside restaurant;
 - Entertainment of visitors at home;
 - Receptions associated with conferences.

When hospitality is justified

3. Hospitality can be provided at public expense when it is in the interest of the Commission's business. This is a potentially sensitive area, however, because we must be able to show we are not simply enjoying ourselves at public expense. The following points need to be considered in deciding whether hospitality is justified:
 - Is the provision of the hospitality consistent with the Commission's position as a publicly funded body?
 - Are the Commission's interests best served by providing hospitality in this way?

- Is the cost of the hospitality consistent with the benefit to the Commission?
 - Could the Commission be open to criticism for unduly benefiting staff who participated?
4. The hospitality expenditure must be properly authorised by a manager who has considered the points in paragraph 2. If there is any doubt whether hospitality is justified, the Cost Centre Manager must personally authorise it.
 5. The number of Forestry Commission staff acting as hosts should not normally exceed the number of guests.

Payment for hospitality

6. The vouched cost of lunches, buffets and dinners for visitors should be charged to the appropriate Cost Centre.
7. For meals in Silvan House the cost should not normally exceed the charges detailed in the CEC Hospitality Brochure located in the BSD Intranet site.
8. For meals provided elsewhere, the cost per head should not normally exceed the flat rate meal allowance (on the Personnel Division Intranet site). In addition, if the additional expense can be justified by the points in paragraph 3, alcoholic drinks may be provided (up to a limit of an aperitif and half a bottle of house wine per person).
9. The entertainment of visitors at home should be exceptional, and must always be approved in advance by the Cost Centre Manager. The actual costs of food and drink for the visitor(s) and members of staff should be reimbursed up to a maximum cost per head of the flat rate meal allowance plus the drinks limit indicated above.
10. Staff Notice 16 Annex 1 and Annex 2 para 9 on the Personnel Division Intranet site identifies the components of the Flat Meal Rate allowance. It follows that no subsistence allowance for meals will be payable to Commission staff who attend hospitality events of the kind described above. Where a member of staff is eligible for overnight or full-day subsistence they may claim:
 - if lunch is provided, the meal allowance less the over 5 hour day subsistence allowance, or
 - if dinner is provided, the balance of the flat meal rate less incidental travel costs.

Working lunch, buffet or dinner for Forestry Commission staff.

11. A working lunch, buffet or dinner is a meal served to Forestry Commission staff solely in order to make the best use of the time of those attending. When approving the provision of a working lunch, buffet or dinner, managers must satisfy themselves that the reasons for doing so are consistent with the criteria outlined in paragraph 3 of this notice.

Enquiries

12. Please contact Martin Finlayson (extension 6518) if you require further guidance.

**W J Anderson
Director Personnel
14 November 2002**