

FOI DOF/2026-0287

Request

Please provide a breakdown of departmental spending on external consultants for each financial year since 1st April 2020 and its purpose?

How much funding has been allocated to digital transformation projects since 2020?

How many staff are employed by grade across the department as of the latest available date?

What is the annual cost of maintaining vacant government buildings?

Please provide a list of contracts awarded without open competition during the last three financial years?

What suppliers received payments exceeding £100,000 in the last financial year and why?

How many overseas trips were undertaken by departmental staff in the last five years, including costs and purposes?

DoF response

I can confirm the Department holds some of the information requested, however, some of the information has been withheld as it falls within an exemption. Further details are provided below.

External Consultancy

This information is held by the Department. Expenditure by the Department on external consultancy from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2026 is set out in the table below:

Consultancy Area	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
Digital NI Enabling Programme	-	-	1	64	130	188
IT Assist Audits	-	-	-	-	4	6
COVID Grants	-	-	100	-	-	-
Governance Review	10	-	-	-	-	-
Integr8	4,594	3,442	880	2,232	888	-
LPS Valuation						3
LPS Contract Management	-	15	-	-	-	9
LPS Gov Assure	14	14	-	-	-	-
LPS NOVA	67	416	780	1,359	519	146

Consultancy Area	2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
LPS Reval 26	3	-	-	-	-	-
LPS Revenue and Benefits	133	77	-	-	-	-
NICS HR	-	2	13	30	-	-
Cyber Security	-	-	-	103	-	-
VAT Compliance	-	-	-	-	2	-
Total	4,821	3,966	1,773	3,723	1,412	163

Digital Transformation Projects

This information is held by the Department. The amount of funding allocated to digital transformation projects since 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2026 is £187m.

Number of Persons Employed

This information is held by the Department. The number of Department of Finance staff employed by grade is set out in the table below. The information provided is based on substantive analogous grade levels and reflects the Department of Finance position at the end of June 2026, which represents the latest available data at the time of reporting.

Substantive Grade	Headcount
Grade 2	2
Grade 3	9
Grade 5	46
Grade 6	83
Grade 7	405
Deputy Principal	690
Staff Officer	639
Executive Officer 1	512
Executive Officer 2	389
Administrative Officer	729
Administrative Assistant	38
Total	3,542

Source: HRConnect Month End June 2026

Annual cost of maintaining vacant government buildings

You provided further clarification on 20 June 2026 confirming you are seeking information on the annual cost of maintaining vacant government-owned buildings. Specifically, details of the costs incurred for vacant properties, including (where available):

1. Security costs;
 2. Utilities (electricity, gas, water, etc.);
 3. Insurance;
 4. Routine maintenance and repairs;
 5. Grounds maintenance;
 6. Rates and other property-related charges; and
- any other expenditure associated with keeping buildings vacant.

Following your clarification, the costs in the 2025-26 financial year of maintaining the six Office Estate buildings owned by the Department of Finance which were vacant were approximately £2.23m. One building has been vacated and cleared with all directly attributed expenditure ceased, three are vacated and cleared and are planned to be sold and one is to be brought back into use during 2026-27. The costs in the 2025-26 financial year for the two buildings leased by the Department of Finance which were vacant were approximately £2.2m. Both leased buildings were vacated and cleared and have been returned to the landlord.

These costs include security, maintenance, utilities and all other expenditure associated with the buildings.

Contracts

The information you have requested is held by the Department but is exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 applies to information that is already reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. A list of Direct Award Contracts is available at the following link [CPD contracts awarded from 1 April 2016 onwards](#),

Supplier Payments

The information you have requested is held by the Department but is exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 applies to information that is already reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. A list of Department of Finance expenditure over £25,000 for the financial year 2025-26 is available at the following link [OpenDataNI](#).

Overseas Trips

This information is held by the Department. The number of overseas trips undertaken by Departmental staff from 2021-22 to 2025-26 is provided in the table below. This information is based on trips booked with our contracted supplier Selective Travel.

Purpose	Number of Overseas Trips	Cost £000
Attendance at conferences	34	33
Attendance at meetings	20	16
Attendance at Ministerial events	3	6
Attendance at training courses	6	9
Study visits	9	7
Testing for business case	2	1