



Matthew Davis
By email: request-994375-e1468cd5@whatdotheyknow.com

Network Rail
Freedom of Information
The Quadrant
Elder Gate
Milton Keynes
MK9 1EN

E FOI@networkrail.co.uk

19 July 2023

Dear Matthew Davis

Information request

Reference number: FOI2023/00754

Thank you for your email of 23 June 2023, in which you requested the following information:

Please could you answer the following questions in relation to Michelle Handforth, MD of Wales and Western.

- 1. When did she start in post for Network Rail? (ie) what was her contracted start date with you.**
- 2. Since that start date please break down the number of flights that Ms Handforth has taken where either the departure or arrival airport was Aberdeen in each of the following financial years (21/22) and (22/23)?**

NOTE: A return journey starting and ending in Aberdeen should therefore count as TWO flights.

3. Please provide me with the cost to Network Rail of these flights in both (21/22) and (22/23).

4. For 21/22 and 22/23 please provide me with an excel spreadsheet of these journeys made by Ms Handforth into and out of Aberdeen.

5. Please provide me with a copy of any written agreement held by Network Rail in which it details the fact that it will pay for flights between Aberdeen and various locations in England and Wales for Ms Handforth.

6. Please provide me with any information you have as to why it is that it is deemed appropriate by Network Rail that the MD of Network Rail Wales is based on the west coast of Scotland.

I have processed your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I can confirm that we hold information in response to the majority of your questions and I will address each question in turn.

Start date

Michelle Handforth officially started with Network Rail on 5 July 2021.

Number and cost of flights, 21/22 and 22/23

Please find below a table that shows the number of individual flights taken by Michelle where either the departure or arrival airport was Aberdeen in the financial years 21/22 and 22/23, as well as the total cost of flights over each year:

Financial Year	Number of flights booked & taken	Cost of flights booked & taken
21/22	46	£6,443.45
22/23	72	£9,580.46
Total	118	£16,023.91

In response to your fourth question, please find attached an Excel document titled “FOI202300754 M Handforth Flights” that details all the flights and costs that are summarised in the table above.

To provide as full a picture as possible we’ve included instances where flights have been cancelled or refunded.

Written agreement for flight costs

I can confirm that the written agreement for covering flight costs between Aberdeen and other locations forms part of Michelle’s terms of employment with us; please find the relevant extract from her contract below:

3. Your position will be home based, and Network Rail will cover travel and accommodation expenses to work locations where required.

The appropriacy of the RMD of Wales and Western being based in Scotland

While we don’t hold any recorded information that addresses this part of your request, we wanted to be as open as possible about the reasons that lie behind our decision.

We are competing for top people in a tough global market. As a public body, with understandable restrictions on salary and rewards compared to the private sector, we have

to be innovative and flexible in order to secure the services of great people from across the internationally competitive market, as we have done here.

Our railway is a vital national service, responsible for spending billions of taxpayers' money every year to help build and enrich Britain's economic success. It is right, therefore, to attract and secure excellent talent and leaders from across the industry to better serve our millions of passengers and freight customers.

We always encourage our people to travel by rail, but flying is permitted where elements like time constraints are considered. Overall, some 94 % of our business travel is by rail.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

Emma Meadows
Information Rights Specialist

You are encouraged to use and re-use the information made available in this response freely and flexibly, with only a few conditions. These are set out in the [Open Government Licence](#) for public sector information. For further information please visit our [website](#).

Appeal rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Compliance & Appeals team at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at ComplianceandAppealsFOI@networkrail.co.uk. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner (ICO) can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or you can contact the ICO through the 'Make a Complaint' section of their website on this link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

The relevant section to select will be "Official or Public Information".