



TRAVEL BY MINISTERS

Note by the Prime Minister

CABINET OFFICE
JULY 2001

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The attached note contains guidance on the use of official cars and on rail and air travel. I expect all Ministers to follow the guiding principles, which are:

- (a) **Propriety**
Official transport should not normally be used for travel arrangements arising from Party or private business, except where this is justified on security grounds;
- (b) **Efficient use of Resources**
The availability of some services such as the Government Car Service and RAF aircraft has to be limited, and Ministers should bear in mind the need to use them efficiently;
- (c) **Cost Consciousness**
The cost of alternative arrangements should be considered before decisions involving substantial costs are made, especially where special flights are being considered as an alternative to scheduled services;
- (d) **Security**
Ministers should at all times keep security risks in mind, particularly when travelling by car. For some Ministers, security factors make special arrangements necessary;
- (e) **Public Accountability**
Individual Ministers are responsible for justifying their actions and decisions to Parliament. They will wish to be satisfied that their arrangements could be defended in public.

TONY BLAIR

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I. OFFICIAL CARS

Allocation of Official Cars

1. Allocated cars and drivers, whether from the Government Car Service (GCS) or from Departments or their contractors, will be provided for all Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State and Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State.

2. Allocated cars and drivers will also be made available to Permanent Secretaries, other officials of equivalent rank and certain designated Chief Executives (normally at Permanent Secretary level).

3. Cabinet Ministers will be provided by the GCS with an appropriate car, at present the Vauxhall Omega Elite or the Rover 75 Connoisseur.

4. Ministers of State and Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State will be given by the GCS the choice of a Rover 45, Ford Mondeo, Vauxhall Vectra or Nissan Primera with an engine capacity in the 1.8 to 2.0 litre category, with a comfortable but not extravagant level of fit, for their allocated use.

5. Permanent Secretaries, other officials of equivalent rank and designated Chief Executives (normally at Permanent Secretary level) will follow the same guidelines as for Ministers of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State. The three senior Permanent Secretaries (Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service; Permanent Secretary to the Treasury; and Permanent Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office) will be provided with a car from the Vauxhall Omega or Rover 75 series.

6. The standards set out above will be applied irrespective of whether the cars are provided by the GCS or others. There will normally be no exceptions as regards allocated cars except where Ministers wish to provide a car and driver at their own expense. Where vehicles are provided on an unallocated basis for particular purposes or occasions, Departments should be guided by similar considerations of economy and the avoidance of criticism for extravagance.

7. These rules will be reviewed at three-yearly periods to provide the opportunity to take into account the merits and cost of any new alternatives to the choice of cars.

**Use of Official
Cars**

8. On Mondays to Fridays, Ministers may use a car in London (the Metropolitan Police District) for any purpose (other than Party or private business, see paragraph 15) which will secure a saving of their time. They may also use it for the purpose of attending an official engagement outside the Metropolitan Police District if that is the most convenient way of travelling to their destination.

9. Ministers are permitted to use an official car for home to office journeys in London during the week or at weekends on the understanding that they would normally be carrying classified papers on which they would be working. Ministers may also use official cars for journeys to a home within a reasonable distance from London on the same understanding, or if they have been seriously delayed by their official duties and other means of transport are not conveniently available.

10. Parallel rules should be devised for those Ministers operating regularly from Government offices outside London.

11. Other Ministers, without access to a first-call car, may use the cars in the Government Car Service Pool for official purposes on the same terms as other Ministers and to and from work when pressed for time. For short official journeys in central London they may use taxis and claim repayment.

12. When travelling on official business, a Minister may use a private car instead of an official car, and claim mileage allowance in the same circumstances and on the same terms as civil servants in the Minister's Department.

13. Subject to the general rules set out in this note, a Minister's spouse or partner may use the car for official engagements. Official cars may not normally be used by the spouses or partners of Ministers in connection with private or political functions or engagements.

**Late Night
and
Weekend Use**

14. Government Car Service drivers should not be expected to work excessively long hours. Ministers who are not subject to overriding security requirements should endeavour to use taxis for short official journeys late at night in London. At weekends, Ministers should be prepared to make use of other forms of transport: the Government Car Service can assist with this. At these times cars may normally be used only for official purposes, for home to office journeys as specified in paragraph 9 or for social occasions of an official character within a reasonable distance from London.

**Party
Occasions**

15. Except for Ministers covered by the special arrangements in paragraph 16, official cars should not be used for journeys on Party business, such as constituency visits or attendance at Party meetings. Official engagements and Party Business must be kept separate.

16. Exceptionally, where a visit is a mix of political and official engagements, it is important that the Department and the Party each meet a proper proportion of the actual cost. In general, when a Minister is combining Party and official business during a working day, for instance in a regional visit, the rule of thumb is that transport should be provided by the majority activity, with the other providing local transport for specific engagements as appropriate. The only exception to this rule is if a Minister is unexpectedly called back on urgent government business.

17. The Prime Minister and any other Minister for whom the security authorities exceptionally consider it essential may use their official cars for all journeys by road, including those for private or Party purposes.

18. Government Car Service drivers are required to keep records in the form of log sheets. Journeys between points within five miles of Whitehall will not be recorded individually, but all other journeys outside this area will be detailed in full. Ministers will be responsible for ensuring that cars are used only for authorised journeys. Log sheets will be handed in weekly by Government Car Service drivers to Ministers' Private Secretaries for authorisation. These should be signed off and returned promptly by the Private Secretaries to the Government Car Service.

19. Departments will be charged for use of Ministerial cars at a weekly rate based on a long-term hire. Details of charges made are available from the Government Car Service. Although first-call cars are provided on a continuous hire basis, Private Secretaries should return cars and drivers to the Government Car Service Pool if cars are not required in the Department. No refund will be made on these occasions as the basis of the charge takes such use of first-call cars into account.

II. RAIL TRAVEL

20. Ministers qualify for First Class Travel.

III. AIR TRAVEL

Scheduled Passenger Services

21. All Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries on official visits have discretion to use civil scheduled flights in this country and abroad if they consider that this will save time. Wherever possible British airlines should be used, but if the route or time of a Minister's journey makes this impossible, subject to any security restraints which may apply, a scheduled flight on a foreign airline may be taken.

22. Senior Ministers are entitled to use the best available class of air travel for all journeys by air. Ministers of State and Parliamentary Secretaries may travel by the best available class for flights lasting longer than 2½ hours but should normally travel by Club or equivalent class, or economy class when an intermediate class is not available, on flights of less than 2½ hours.

**Non-
scheduled
Special
Flights**

23. These are flights for official purposes, in this country and abroad, using aircraft belonging to the Ministry of Defence or commercial operators. They are generally much more expensive than scheduled passenger services and may only be authorised in the manner and circumstances described in the paragraphs below. They must not be used or diverted for journeys to or from Party business, such as constituency visits or attendance at Party meetings. When the time factor is critical, diversions from direct routes may, however, be authorised to collect or deliver a Minister to an airfield near his or her home provided that the only extra costs result from the extra flying time needed to carry out the additional landing and take-off.

24. Members of the Cabinet and Ministers in charge of Departments only have discretion to authorise these special flights either for themselves or for other Ministers within their Departments. Special flights may be authorised when a scheduled service is not available, or when it is essential to travel by air, but the requirements of official or Parliamentary business or security considerations or urgency preclude the journey being made by a scheduled service. Use of special flights by Parliamentary Secretaries should only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

25. In addition, all Defence Ministers travelling on Defence business and other Ministers engaged on business of the Defence Departments or visiting a Service or Defence Establishment may use Ministry of Defence aircraft in accordance with rules and procedures approved by the Secretary of State for Defence.