

**Subject:** Request for information on individuals authorised to solemnise marriages by the Registrar General for Scotland over the last ten years.

**FOI reference:** FOI/20/00060

**Date received:** 16/01/2020

**Date responded:** 13/02/2020

**Information requested:**

A range of information on individuals authorised to solemnise marriages by the Registrar General for Scotland over the last ten years. In particular answers to the following questions:

1. In terms of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 s12, how many individuals have been granted temporary authorisation to solemnise a marriage in Scotland in each of the last 10 years from 2010.
2. Of the above number, how many were classed as being supported by (a) a religious body; and (b) a belief body.
3. Please provide a list of all bodies which made up categories (a) and (b) above.

**NRS Response:**

The answer to this request is as follows:

1. Over the 10 years from 2010, the following number of individuals have been authorised to solemnise marriages on a temporary basis:

- 2010 – 449
- 2011 – 527
- 2012 – 711
- 2013 – 899
- 2014 – 1369
- 2015 – 816
- 2016 – 1070
- 2017 – 1403
- 2018 – 1231
- 2019 – 1603

2. We do not classify applications by either a religious or a belief body. When processing and recording a temporary authorisation request no differentiation is made between belief and religious bodies. Answering this question would therefore require us to manually check 10,048 individual requests and would exceed the upper cost limit. Under section 12 of FOISA, public authorities are not required to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying would exceed the upper cost limit, which is currently set at £600 by the Freedom of Information (Fees for Required Disclosure) (Scotland) Regulations 2004. Further details on this exemption are included in the annex to this letter.

We can state that of the total number of bodies applying for temporary authorisation over this period (767), 15 bodies were refused authorisation; 41 were belief bodies; and 711 were religious bodies.

3. Please find attached a list of all of the religious and belief bodies which applied for temporary authorisation.

**Reasons for not providing information**

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance we are unable to provide some of the information requested because the cost of locating, retrieving and providing this information would be greater than £600. Under section 12 of FOISA public authorities are not required to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying would exceed the upper cost limit, which is currently set at £600 by Regulations made under section 12. We explained that in order to provide a list of all the bodies making up the belief and religious categories it would require the manual checking of 10,048 individual requests. NRS estimates such a checking process would take a team of three staff approximately a month of work, on a full-time basis, which significantly exceeds the cost limit of £600 for a single FOI response.

Changing or reducing the scope of a request may bring costs below the upper cost limit of £600 by, for example, narrowing the timeframe.