

## Freedom of Information request 294-22

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### Request

I was recently a patient in A&E at the BGH for about 6 hours. I asked for some water and was surprised that I was given a small bottle of Welsh bottled water. The Borders has some of the best water in the world and it is available at no charge from a tap. Previously in the BGH, jugged water was provided, not bottled water.

1. Can you please advise when the decision was made and by whom, to buy Welsh Bottled Water?
2. Can you please advise the cost of purchasing Welsh Bottled Water|?
3. What is the annual budget for water and what quantity has already been bought and will be bought in the future?

### Response

1. This decision to procure bottled water was made by NHS Borders based on Infection Prevention and Control Team advice at the beginning of the pandemic. This was on the basis that existing processes for cleaning of water jugs did not meet sterilisation requirements. Use of bottled water is considered a temporary measure and the Health Board are currently evaluating alternative sterilisation arrangements which are expected to remove the requirement for bottled water.

The product selection was made through National Services Scotland (NSS) under a NHS Scotland National Procurement contract, therefore under Section 25 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is accessible from them.

Under Section 15 Duty to provide advice and assistance we can confirm that Bidfood is a National Contract supplier (contract reference NP743 Provisions). The contract for Provisions is negotiated and awarded by National Procurement. As a Board we are mandated by Scottish Government to procure from the national contracts. Bottled water amongst many other provisions is not procured locally as we are mandated to purchase from the National Contract which serves the whole of Scotland.

When evaluating contract bids a strict evaluation process is undertaken which includes the following criteria:

- BRC Global Standards – it is mandated that all Suppliers and products must adhere to the Global Food Safety standards which include; Ethical Trade & Responsible Sourcing, compliance with UK and EU Food safety laws, and a framework for organisations in the food industry to manage the safety, integrity, and quality of their products.
- Sustainability (e.g., low environmental impact)
- Fair Work Practices (e.g., Paying the Real Living Wage)
- Supply Chain & Traceability (Assures a safe and quality product)

So, although a product may not be produced in Scotland, we can be assured that rigorous criterion have been applied in the selection of products to ensure the safety and quality of products.

The market is relatively limited due to the scale of the requirements of NHS Scotland and the obvious result is that a local or Scottish supplier cannot be guaranteed.

2. In the year 2021-22 the spend on bottled water was £19,968.
3. There is no annual budget for water, it is purchased with provisions and until the decision is made by Infection Control it will continue to be provided. The quantity purchased for the year 2021-22 was 140,160 bottles. We are unable to estimate the number of bottles that will be purchased in the future.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or [foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk).

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **294-22** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.