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NAO OVERSIGHT OF CROWN ESTATE AND DUCHY ACCOUNTS

Thank you for your request of 11 November 2025 in relation to the NAO's Oversight of the Crown Estate and Duchy Accounts. You have asked us to handle your request in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You specifically asked, *"Please provide any audit correspondence, briefing, or reports produced since 2020 that discuss:*

- *The audit scope applied to Crown Estate accounts once profits are paid to the Treasury;*
- *The National Audit Office's remit or limitations regarding the Sovereign Grant; and*
- *Any assessment of Duchy of Lancaster or Duchy of Cornwall financial reporting standards.*

I understand certain material may be exempt; however, a description of held information would be appreciated if full disclosure is not possible."

We have considered your request but found the range of information you have asked for is quite broad in scope but we have provided a description of the information we hold relating to your request.

As background, it may help if I explain that the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), who is head of the NAO, are both independent of government. Our function is to audit and express an opinion on the accounts of government departments and other central government bodies and to carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which government departments and other public sector bodies have used their resources. The results of this work are normally reported to Parliament. However, while we can consider whether public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, the legislation defining our role does not permit us to question government policy objectives nor consider the merits of what public money is spent on.

Our latest work in relation to the Sovereign Grant is outlined in our report Progress on the Buckingham Palace Reservicing programme which was published on 23 July 2024. We also produces a report on Royal Household spending and accountability which incudes coverage of The Sovereign Grant, The Crown Estate and the Duchies. I can confirm that we hold evidence to support all of the facts included in these reports. However, a significant proportion of the information in the reports such, as the financial statements of referenced bodies, is publicly available for example through the Royal, Duchy of Cornwall and Duchy of Lancaster websites.

In relation to The Crown Estate we audit their accounts, including the transactions to pay over profits to HM Treasury. We also audit the consolidated fund which will record the receipt of these payments by HM Treasury. Additionally, we audit the Sovereign Grant accounts annually, which include the receipt and spending of the Sovereign Grant and hold detailed audit records related to these accounts that support our audits, and record the audit work completed.

We have statutory rights to audit the Sovereign Grant and The Crown Estate accounts, and to undertake value for money audits into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of their activities. We undergo additional security vetting to access required information from the Royal Household, but there are no limitations placed on the information we can review for our audit work.

Our last value for money work on The Crown Estate was in 2005. It relate to leases with the Royal Family The Crown Estate - Property Leases with the Royal Family - NAO report The records supporting this work have been disposed of in line with our records retention policy. We are not responsible for auditing the accounts of the Duchies and therefore hold no records on this matter.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA we are required to consider what advice and assistance we can provide to help you submit a more targeted request that we may be able to respond to. Therefore, it would be helpful if you can be more specific about what you require from us, such as the category of information sought and level of details. Section 16 is explained further in the Annex. Please be aware, any further request will be treated as a new request and similar considerations, and the application of any appropriate exemptions will need to be considered.

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. Therefore, I hope this information is helpful and you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk. 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 primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints.

Yours sincerely,

NAO FOI Team

Annex

Section 16: Advice and Assistance

16.— (1) It shall be the duty of a public authority to provide advice and assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect the authority to do so, to persons who propose to make, or have made, requests for information to it.

(2) Any public authority which, in relation to the provision of advice or assistance in any case, conforms with the code of practice under section 45 is to be taken to comply with the duty imposed by subsection (1) in relation to that case.