A Kremlin's Worth of Office Space Provided to Trade Unions by Public Sector Bodies

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- New research conducted by the TaxPayers' Alliance suggests public bodies are**providing trade union representatives with office space in taxpayer-funded buildings at knock-down rates**
- Government guidance says **"restrictions should be placed on use of office facilities"** but many bodies are ignoring that advice.
- Analysis demonstrates subsidised union activity in the same week that many**militant unions went on strike**

A ground-breaking study into the amount of office space provided by public bodies to trade unions has revealed that many organisations up and down the country are ignoring government advice to restrict the use of taxpayer-subsidised facilities.

Over the last financial year, the total area provided to trade unions was **273,753 square feet**, which is equivalent to the size of the **Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow**. Despite this space having a market value of up to **£27.4 million** if it were in Central London, our research was only able to identify **£307,093** in rental payments from the unions.

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The key findings of the research are:

- Trade unions were provided with at least **273,753 square feet** of dedicated office space by public sector organisations in **2013-14**. This is more than the total floor space of the **Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow.**
- This amount of office space would have a market value of **£27.4** million in London, **£7.9 million** in Glasgow, and **£6.2 million** in Cardiff.
- Despite this, only **£307,093** of charges were identified.
- Councils provided trade unions with at least **162,000 square feet**.
- The NHS provided some **59,999 square feet**, significantly more than the**White House in Washington DC.**
- **Transport for London** provided trade unions with **5,685 square feet** free of charge, the most of any single public sector organisation.
- **Leicester City Council** provided trade unions with **4,812 square feet** free of charge, the most of any local authority.

This shocking research follows earlier TaxPayers' Alliance analysis which demonstrated how trade unions received **£85 million** in paid "facility time" and**£23 million** in direct payments from public sector bodies in **2012-13.**

Many public sector organisations do not provide dedicated office space to trade unions, implying that doing so is unnecessary both legally and practically. This extensive study demonstrates that too many organisations are still subsidising unions. Much of this office space is used for union activity which has led in recent years to large-scale industrial action, disrupting the essential services taxpayers have paid for and rely on.

Welcome government guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government issued last year said that "political activity by unions should not be financed by council funds" and that "restrictions should be placed on the use of office facilities for trade union representatives" but it is clear that many local authorities and other public sector bodies are still ignoring this advice.

Jonathan Isaby, Chief Executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said:

"It's completely inappropriate for public sector bodies to be subsidising the work of trade unions which take great pride in disrupting essential services, especially after government guidance has told them not to. The drastic difference between the value of this space and the pittance that unions have to pay for it is striking. Taxpayers will be furious at this Kremlin-sized subsidy, especially on top of the amount gifted to

unions through facility time and direct grants."

READ THE FULL RESEARCH HERE

TPA spokesmen are available for live and pre-recorded broadcast interviews via 07795 084 113 (no texts)

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Notes to editors

1. Founded in 2004 by Matthew Elliott and now with 80,000 supporters, the TaxPayers' Alliance (TPA) fights to reform taxes, cut spending and protect taxpayers. Find out more about the TaxPayers' Alliance at www.taxpayersalliance.com

2. The full research can be found here:http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/tradeunionoffices.pdf

3. The full excel data can be found here:http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/tuofficespace.xls

4. Data on the size of the Kremlin can be found here, and on the White House here.

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