



## Access to Information

### 2009 - 10 Q2 Report



#### Background

This report is based on the actual information on the Teams Request Trackers, at the end of Quarter 2 2009-10. We only track complex requests, which are defined as:

1. requests which fall outside our normal course of business;
2. requests for information where we might refuse eg sensitive, confidential information or a repeat request;
3. requests for information related to the policy making process;
4. requests on which it may be necessary to consult with others either within Natural England or outside;
5. requests for large amounts of information or information which may be difficult to locate;
6. requests which seem unclear or too general to deal with, and where we will need to seek clarification from the applicant;
7. requests for information where a search is made, but none is found.

<b>Requests and Applicants</b>		
No of requests for information which have been logged on to the Natural England request trackers		<b>63</b>
% of requests identified as falling under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.		<b>78%</b>
% of requests identified as falling under the Freedom of Information Act 2000		<b>22%</b>
% of requests identified as falling under the Data Protection Act 1998		
% of requests that were from private citizens		<b>60%</b>
% of requests that were from business		<b>17%</b>
% of requests that were from media		<b>13%</b>
% of requests that were from politicians		<b>5%</b>
% of requests that were from public bodies or others		<b>5%</b>
<b>Timeliness</b>		
Requests completed within the 20 working day legal deadline		<b>46</b>
Requests completed within the extended deadline of 40 working days.		<b>10</b>
% completed within the deadlines		<b>98%</b>
Requests still ongoing but still within 20 working day legal deadlines		<b>3</b>
Requests still ongoing but still within extended 40 day legal deadlines		<b>3</b>
Requests completed beyond the legal deadline.		<b>0</b>
Requests completed beyond the extended deadline.		<b>1</b>
Requests with an extended deadline due to the complexity of the request or the need to consider the public interest		<b>14</b>
The timeliness for responding to requests:		
	0–5 working days	<b>21%</b>
	6–10 working days	<b>25%</b>
	11–15 working days	<b>12%</b>
	16–20 working days	<b>26%</b>
	>20 working days	<b>16%</b>
<b>Provision of Information</b>		<b>Exemptions used</b>
Requests which were granted in full	<b>39</b>	
Requests where only part of the information was provided	<b>19</b>	• Personal data which

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes data about third parties</li> <li>• Information not held</li> <li>• Public safety</li> <li>• Volunteered information</li> <li>• Information already accessible</li> <li>• Manifestly unreasonable (request over appropriate limit)</li> </ul>
Requests which were refused in full	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request was too general</li> </ul>
Requests which have been transferred to The National Archives	<b>0</b>	
Requests which have been transferred to another public body	<b>1</b>	
Requests we've been unable to complete as we do not hold the information	<b>2</b>	
Requests we've been unable to complete due to no further information being provided by the applicant for us to complete the request	<b>0</b>	
Requests outstanding at the end of the quarter, but within deadlines.	<b>4</b>	
Requests where we are waiting for further information before we can proceed	<b>0</b>	
<b>Advice, Referrals and Appeals</b>		
Requests where we have taken external legal advice	<b>0</b>	
Requests we have referred to the Department of Constitutional Affairs, Clearing House as the request could have potential to affect other public bodies.	<b>0</b>	
Requests we have referred to Defra, as the request could have potential to affect the wider Defra family.	<b>0</b>	
Requests where the applicant has requested an internal review	<b>0</b>	
<b>Information Requested</b>		
% of requests related to SSSIs, NNRs, species or habitat related.	<b>41%</b>	
% of requests related to Agri-environment schemes	<b>16%</b>	
% of requests related to corporate services	<b>13%</b>	
% of requests related to planning, wind power, coastal access or open access	<b>13%</b>	
% of requests related to internal and external communications	<b>11%</b>	
% other types of requests – Weeds Act, heritage management or the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations	<b>6%</b>	

### Commentary

The number of requests received this quarter has continued to rise with 63 complex requests being recorded. It is the busiest quarter since we began recording just complex requests. Despite the increase in requests we have responded to 98% of the requests we received within the legal deadline. Of these 84% were completed within the 20 day limit and 16% needed to be extended due to the complex nature of the requests. This is an increase of 4% on the previous quarter. This is due to the continued increase in the complexity and voluminous nature of the requests received.

We were late responding to one request by one day as we were waiting for a senior officer to sign off our response.

It is pleasing to see that just over 21% of requests were dealt with inside 5 working days and 46% within two weeks.

RTRACK continues to operate successfully with no issues reported.

### **Complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office**

At the start of the quarter we had three complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). During this quarter we had one complaint closed in our favour and received to a new one. We have also responded to the ICO in relation to one of the complaints.

### **Requests refused this quarter**

We partially withheld information for 19 requests this quarter. This information was withheld for one or more of the following reasons. The information contained personal data which included data about third parties, was for information that could affect public safety, was for volunteered information, was for information we did not hold, was for information that is already reasonably accessible or because part of the request was over the appropriate cost limit.

We also refused one request in full this quarter. This was because the request was formulated in too general a manner and the requester did not respond to our invitation to clarify or narrow down the request.

### **Appeals decisions this quarter**

We have not received any requests for internal review this quarter.

### **Notably Requests**

As in quarter one we have continued to receive requests from the media relating to expenses within Natural England. These include two requests for how much money Natural England spent on employing celebrities or public figures to launch campaigns or attend external events, two requests relating to how much money Natural England has spent employing external consultants and contractors and two requests relating to the cost of our press office. We have also continued to receive requests relating to Natural England's staffing costs.

One request related to all correspondence held that related to the Radio 4 programme The Archers.

During the last month of this quarter we have received three separate requests relating to coastal access. To assist with the potential increase in requests on this topic following the publicity around the Coastal Access Bill our Coastal Access Team has produced an information release protocol. This was done with the support of the Knowledge Management and Information Services Team (KMIS).

A full list of complex requests received this quarter is available on Natural England's disclosure log <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/foi/disclosure-log.htm>

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