

Background

This report is based on the actual information on the RTRACK, at the end of Quarter 4 2010-11. 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.

| Requests and Applicants | | |
|---|---|------------------------|
| No of requests for information which have been logged on to the Natural England request trackers | | 103 |
| % of requests identified as falling under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. | | 92% |
| % of requests identified as falling under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 | | 8% |
| % of requests that were from private citizens | | 60% |
| % of requests that were from businesses | | 26% |
| % of requests that were from Charities/lobby groups etc | | 4% |
| % of requests that were from academics | | 3% |
| % of requests that were from others | | 3% |
| % of requests that were from media | | 3% |
| % of requests that were from politicians | | 1% |
| Timeliness | | |
| Requests completed within the 20 working day legal deadline | | 85 |
| Requests completed within the extended deadline of 40 working days. | | 15 |
| % completed within the deadlines | | 98% |
| Requests still ongoing but still within 20 working day legal deadlines | | 0 |
| Requests still ongoing but still within extended 40 day legal deadlines | | 1 |
| Requests completed beyond the legal deadline. | | 1 |
| Requests completed beyond the extended deadline. | | 1 |
| Requests with an extended deadline due to the complexity of the request or the need to consider the public interest | | 17 |
| The timeliness for responding to requests: | | |
| | 0–5 working days | 19 |
| | 6–10 working days | 11 |
| | 11–15 working days | 15 |
| | 16–20 working days | 42 |
| | >20 working days (includes extended requests) | 16 |
| Provision of Information | | Exemptions used |
| Requests which were granted in full | 51 | |

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|---|-----------|--|
| Requests where all information was provided | 42 | |
| Requests where only part of the information was provided | 45 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data which includes data about third parties • Information not held • Internal Communications, • Course of Justice, • Reasonably accessible by other means, • Manifestly unreasonable • Public Safety, • Volunteered Information, • In the course of completion • Environmental Protection, • Proceedings of a public authority |
| Requests which were refused in full | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request was too general • Manifestly unreasonable (request over appropriate limit) • Course of Justice • Volunteered Information, • Environmental Protection • Information intended for future publication |
| Requests which have been transferred to The National Archives | 0 | |
| Requests which have been transferred to another public body | 0 | |
| Requests we've been unable to complete as we do not hold the information | 6 | |
| Requests we've been unable to complete due to no further information being provided by the applicant for us to complete the request | 0 | |
| Requests outstanding at the end of the quarter, but within deadlines. | 1 | |
| Requests where we are waiting for further information before we can proceed | 0 | |
| Advice, Referrals and Appeals | | |
| Requests where we have taken external legal advice | | 0 |

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| Requests we have referred to the Ministry of Justice, Clearing House as the request could have potential to affect other public bodies. | 0 |
| Requests we have referred to Defra, as the request could have potential to affect the wider Defra family. | 0 |
| Requests where the applicant has requested an internal review | 5 |
| Information Requested | |
| % of requests related to species including protected species | 22% |
| % of requests related to Agri-environment schemes or other grant schemes | 20% |
| % of requests related to SSSIs, SACs or NNRs. | 20% |
| % of requests related to the planning process | 16% |
| % of requests related to open access, coastal access and habitats | 10% |
| % of requests related to corporate services including finance | 8% |
| % of requests related to information reuse and board and executive services | 4% |

Commentary

Quarter 4 has proven to be the busiest quarter ever with 103 complex requests being recorded. This has broken the previous record of 91 requests received in a quarter by 12%. This has been a continuing trend throughout the year with the record being broken or equalled during 3 out of the 4 quarters. Taking this into account it is not surprisingly that 2010/11 is now recorded as the busiest year on record with 347 requests recorded. The previous busiest year was 2009/10 where we recorded 235 requests.

We responded to 98% of requests within the legal deadline in quarter 4. Unfortunately we were late responding to two requests, one by one day and the other by two days.

Of the completed requests 83% were completed within the 20 day limit and 15% within the extended limit due to the complex nature of the requests.

Pleasingly we responded to 29% within 10 working days which is an increase of 9% from quarter 3.

RTRACK continues to operate successfully with no issues reported.

Complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office

At the start of the quarter we had two complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). During the quarter one was closed with a Decision Notice in our favour.

Requests refused this quarter

We partially withheld information for 45 requests and fully withheld 6 this quarter.

This information was withheld for one or more of the following reasons:

- contained personal data about third parties;
- could prejudice the course of justice if released,
- was already reasonably accessible by other means,
- was information we do not hold,
- was for information that was volunteered to us,
- could adversely affect the environment if released,
- could adversely affect public safety if released,
- was for information that is in the course of completion and is intended for future publication,
- was for information that would have been manifestly unreasonable to supply

One was refused because the requests were formulated in too general a manner and the applicant did not respond to our invitation to clarify the request.

We had 6 requests this quarter that we were unable to complete due to not holding the information requested.

Appeals decisions this quarter

We received five requests for internal review this quarter. One complaint was upheld, one was not upheld, two were partially upheld, with one still open

Notable Requests

We have had a number of requests on raptors this quarter, especially relating to peregrine falcons. We have also received several requests regarding marine site designations alongside a large quantity of European Protected Species licence requests.

We have also continued to receive requests from the What Do They Know website.

A full list of complex requests received this quarter is available on Natural England's [disclosure log](#).

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