



Access to Information

2008 - 09 Q1 Report



Background

This report is based on the actual information on the Teams Request Trackers, at the end of Quarter 1 2008-09. 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		29
% of requests identified as falling under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.		76%
% of requests identified as falling under the Freedom of Information Act 2000		21%
% of requests identified as falling under the Data Protection Act 1998		3%
% of requests that were from private citizens		62%
% of requests that were from business		17%
% of requests that were from academics, NGOs, media and politicians		21%
Timeliness		
Requests completed within the 20 working day legal deadline		21
Requests completed within the extended deadline of 40 working days.		4
% completed within the deadlines		93%
Requests completed beyond the legal deadline.		2
Requests completed beyond the extended deadline.		0
Requests with an extended deadline due to the complexity of the request or the need to consider the public interest		5
The timeliness for responding to requests:		
	0–5 working days	12%
	6–10 working days	19%
	11–15 working days	15%
	16–20 working days	31%
	>20 working days	23%
Provision of Information		Exemptions used
Requests which were granted in full	21	
Requests where only part of the information was provided	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not held • Information requested already

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessable • Manifestly unreasonable (repeat request) & (request over appropriate limit)
Requests which were refused in full	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not held
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	0	
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.	2	
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	
Requests we have referred to the Department of Constitutional Affairs, 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	1	
Information Requested		
% of requests related to SSSIs, species or habitat related.	28%	
% of requests related to corporate services	20%	
% of requests related to planning development	14%	
% of requests related agri-environment schemes	11%	
% other types of requests, grants, discovering lost ways and environmental impact assessment regulations	27%	

Commentary

The number of requests received this quarter was 30% down on the previous quarter.

It is pleasing to see that just over 30% of requests were dealt with inside 2 weeks which is a continuing trend.

Two requests were over the deadline for providing a response:

22 days – Request not acted on until too late (Organisation Development)

22 days – Request was not discovered until close to deadline (Policy Team)

RTRACK continues to operate successfully with no issues reported.

Complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office

At the start of the quarter we had 2 complaints at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Unfortunately, we picked up another 2. One related to a large number of requests made by one

individual and their understanding that we hadn't released the information they had requested. The other was related to a number of questions raised about a National Nature Reserve in the North West.

Requests refused this quarter

We partially withheld information for 6 requests this quarter. This information was either not held or assessable by other means. We also refused to deal with 2 requests as one was manifestly unreasonable as it contained repeat requests and the other was over the appropriate cost limit.

Appeals decisions this quarter

This quarter we completed 4 requests for internal review received the previous quarter. Three were related to our decision to terminate a Countryside Stewardship Agreement and its subsequent reinstatement on Appeal. We partially upheld our original decision and released some further information. The other request was related to a large number of requests made about a SSSI in the West Midlands. In internal review we upheld our original decisions.

We received one new appeal this quarter and the internal review is continuing within deadlines.

Notably Requests

A request for the expenses of the Chief Executive including details of any item over £100.

Details of our assessments of the Ecotown proposals.

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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