

Access to information

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet explains how you can get access to information that we hold.

PUBLISHED INFORMATION

We publish information in the following ways, all of which you can have access to:

- Our **Publication Scheme** lists publications and other information, by classes, that we have pro-actively made available. The Scheme tells you how to get documents and whether there is a charge.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/foi/publicationscheme>
- We publish online versions of all our **publications** under the relevant policy area of our website. You can browse or search for particular publications, see what's new and find out how to order and pay for priced publications.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/foi/communities-lgps/>
- Our **Disclosure Log** contains information we have made available in response to requests for information considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/foi/disclosure-log/>

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

If information has not been published yet, or will not be published, you can still ask for it under the following statutory access regimes:

- **Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act):** Apart from certain exemptions, the Act gives a general right of access to information that we hold.
- **Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs):** These Regulations give you a right of access to environmental information that we hold, including information about air, water, land, natural sites, plants and wildlife.

- **Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA):** The Act gives you the right to ask for “personal data” that we hold about you.

HOW WE WILL HANDLE YOUR REQUEST

- **Freedom of Information Act:** We will reply to your request within 20 working days of receiving it. In some circumstances, it may take us longer to decide whether we can provide the information. If this is the case, we will write to tell you when you can expect a full reply. We may ask you for a fee if we need to charge you for the information. If we cannot provide the information, we will write to explain why we cannot give you the information. For example, if we do not hold the information, or it is exempt under the Act from disclosure.
- **Environmental Information Regulations:** We will handle any requests under these Regulations in the same way as requests made under the FOI Act. Where the complexity and volume of the information requested means it is impracticable to issue a full reply within 20 working days we will do so within 40 working days
- **Data Protection Act:** We will search all the relevant records to find any ‘personal data’ that we hold about you. We will send you the information we hold within 40 calendar days of receiving a valid request from you.

HOW TO MAKE A REQUEST

- **Freedom of Information Act:** Your request must be made in writing (including e-mail). You should send your request to:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Information Rights Branch
2/A3 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Email: foirequests@communities.gsi.gov.uk

- **Environmental Information Regulations:** You can make requests in the same way as FOI Act requests, or over the phone. Tel: 030344 40000 (08:30-17:30 Mon-Fri).
- **Data Protection Act:** You should send your requests for ‘personal data’ that we hold about you to the Data Protection Officer. You need to send a cheque for £10 (payable to the Department for Communities and Local

Government) and two forms of identification (such as a copy of your birth certificate, passport, driving licence or household utility bill) with each request you make. Your request must be made in writing to:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Data Protection Officer
Information Rights Branch
2/A3, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
(Telephone queries: 030344 42510)

COMPLAINTS AND REVIEWS

Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations

We have a specific internal review procedure for requests made for information and considered under the FOI Act or EIRs. If you want to make a complaint about the way we have handled your request, or if you want to request a review of our decision on the release of information, you should write to:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Information Rights Branch
2/A3, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Email: foirequests@communities.gsi.gov.uk

If you are still not satisfied after we have considered your complaint or conducted a review you can appeal to the Information Commissioner for a decision by writing to:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk
(Telephone queries: 01625 545700)

Data Protection Act

If you wish to complain about the outcome of your request for personal data we hold about you then you must write directly to the Information Commissioner at the address above.

If you wish to complain about other aspects of our administrative handling of your request then you may do by writing to:

Department for Communities and Local Government
Complaints Officer
Information Rights Branch
2/A3, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Email: contactus@communities.gsi.gov.uk
(Telephone queries: 030344 42515)

WEB SITE ADDRESSES

Department for Communities and Local Government: www.communities.gov.uk

Information Commissioner's Office: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/