

2005-06 Q2 Report

Background

This report is based on the actual information on the Teams Request Trackers, at the end of Q2 2005-06.

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 English Nature 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

- 74 requests for information have been logged on to the English Nature request trackers, a 51% increase on 2005-06 Q1.
- 94% were identified as requests under the Environmental Information Regulations.
- 3% were identified as requests under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 3% were identified as requests under the Data Protection Act.
- 46% of requests were from private citizens.
- 36% of requests were from businesses.
- 18% split between NGOs, pressure groups, academics and other public bodies.

I have no information to say why we've had a large increase in recorded requests, except that we could be getting better at capturing this information. The percentage of EIR requests remains as expected. Requests from private citizens and business are still dominate.

Information Requested

- 58% of requests related to SSSIs, species or habitat related.
- 30% of requests related to development/planning related.
- 4% of requests related to contracts, surveys and datasets.
- 3% of requests related to management agreements.
- 5% other types of requests.

English Nature Performance

- We have dealt with 55 requests within our 15 working day service standards.
- We have dealt with six requests within the extended deadline of 40 working days.
- We have dealt with four requests beyond our service standard but within the legal deadline.
- We have dealt with 5 requests beyond our service standard.
- The timeliness of responding to requests breaks down to:
 - 0–5 days = 32 requests
 - 6–10 days = 16 requests
 - 11–15 days = 12 requests
 - 16–20 days = 4 requests

- > 20 days = 6 requests (include one with an extended deadline)
- We have provided all information in 50 cases.
- We have partially provided information in seven cases.
- We have refused in full in three cases due using the EIR exceptions; personal information, the request is manifestly unreasonable and formulated in too general a manner and the protection of the environment to which the information relates.
- We have transferred the request to a Local Biological Recording Centre under our SLAs in four cases.
- We have taken the option to extend the deadline on six cases due to the complexity of the request.
- We have referred no cases to Defra or the Department of Constitutional Affairs (DCA), Clearing House.
- At the end of the Quarter we had four ongoing cases all still within our service standard deadline or the extended deadline.
- We have had one appeal against our original decision and it was upheld after the appeal process.

Another successful quarter, we are still approaching the requests, with a view to releasing the information. Our timeliness for responding has slipped this quarter, but isolated to three Area Teams. I will contact the Teams concerned to find out if they are having problems responding to requests.

Internal Advice

Requests for internal advice remain at similar levels to last quarter (c120).

Request of the Quarter

There were no requests, which stood out or had wider public interest.

Appeals decisions this Quarter

We have had one appeal against our refusal to provide the identity of a requestor. A Regional Director conducted the internal review, and they upheld the original decision. The requestor was directed to the Information Commissioner's Office if they wish to appeal this decision.

Guidance

New guidance this quarter included guidance of the EIR exceptions.

Publication Scheme

A review of our current Scheme against the proposed Department of Constitutional Affairs 'Gold Standard' was undertaken. It presented few surprises and our Scheme meets many of the recommendations. The main exceptions are in the areas of facts and analysis behind policy decisions and publication of contractual details. A revised version of the scheme is to be published shortly.

Darren Green
Corporate Data Manager
October 2005