

Board Paper

14 May 2014

Paper Title	Access to Information Annual Report – 2013/14
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 39.14
Paper Sponsored By: Paper Authored By:	Clive Thomas Geralene Mills

Purpose of Paper:	Scrutiny
Recommendation:	To note progress on the handling and responding to requests for Information received for 2013/14 and to approve the Annual Report
Decision Required:	Yes

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Increasing transparency by fully complying with our Access to Information responsibilities should positively impact on the environment, economy and communities of Wales by increasing knowledge and helping to ensure a learning and improvement culture for Natural Resources Wales through the added scrutiny
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Issue

1. To update the Board on the progress and handling of requests for information received by Natural Resources Wales for 2013/14 and to approve the Annual Report for this area of responsibility.

Summary

2. This paper provides information to the Board on the statistical performance on Access to Information requests. Requests made by an external source for information, data and records held by Natural Resources Wales that fall to be considered under the following legislation:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005

Background

3. As part the of the work undertaken by the Living Wales Programme prior to vesting day, we sought to develop a system of responding to Access to Information requests which would allow us to deliver responses in line with legislative requirements from 1 April 2013.
4. This involved developing and using existing practices from Legacy bodies.

In Year Progress

5. After vesting we identified a need to develop our approach to delivery in the following areas when responding to Access to Information Requests
 - Development of the Natural Resources Wales delivery model which fully recognised accountabilities by Directorate
 - A need to review policies and procedures in order to ensure clarity on information requests to be handled as routine and information requests that required formal recognition as 'access to information' requests under the relevant legislation
 - The development of procedures which supports the direction of the Board and legislative requirements for the clear and transparent release of information into the public domain.
6. We have made progress against all of these and by year end have:

- Developed a delivery model that supports the structure of Natural Resources Wales
- Policies and procedures have been reviewed and a new guidance developed to ensure Natural Resources Wales is better able to comply with the relevant legislation
- The Guidance clearly defines the responsibilities of Natural Resources Wales at corporate and operational levels and promotes an ethos of clear and transparent release of information into the public domain
- Reviewed our Publication Scheme to reflect a number of changes to proactive publication, including a move to adopt a disclosure log as a feature of best practice

Risks

7. Natural Resources Wales faces both legislative and reputational risks for non-compliance to the relevant legislation when releasing information into the public domain.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications.

Communications

9. The publication of our report will be of interest to our staff and may also attract interest externally. We will develop an appropriate Communications Plan.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

10. Not required.

Index of Annex

Annex 1: ATI Report with supporting Narrative.