

# Constitutional Affairs Committee

Press notice 13 of session 2005-06  
24 January 2006

## Announcement of Inquiry

Constitutional Affairs Committee launches an inquiry into the operation of the Freedom of Information Act: one year on. The Constitutional Affairs Committee has launched an inquiry into 'The operation of the Freedom of Information Act: one year on'. The inquiry will examine the first year's experience of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which allows the public to request access to information held by over 100,000 public bodies. It follows the Committee's earlier report 'The Freedom of Information Act 2000 — progress towards implementation' (HC 79-i), published in December 2004.

The Committee will consider the impact so far of the legislation. The inquiry will open with an evidence session with the Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, and will also seek the views of users of the Act and of representative public authorities.

Launching the inquiry, Committee Chairman Rt. Hon Alan Beith MP said:

*"This is important, ground-breaking legislation. The first year of the FOI Act's operation has raised a number of issues including the backlog of appeals at the Office of the Information Commissioner, the time it has taken some Departments to answer requests and the Lord Chancellor's unexpected suggestion of possible fees for requesters. The Committee will consider how well the legislation and the preparations put in place in advance of implementation have operated in practice".*

The inquiry's terms of reference are:

- The role of the Information Commissioner in providing guidance, issuing decisions and participating in Information Tribunals;
- Requesters' experiences of the first year of FOI implementation;
- Public authorities' experiences of FOI implementation;
- The role of the DCA in providing central guidance, including the operation of the central government clearing house.

Details of the first oral evidence session are as follows:

Tuesday 14 March, The Wilson Room, Portcullis House - 4.15pm, Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner

Details of further evidence sessions, to take place in March and April, will be announced in due course.

Transcripts of the sessions will be available on Reports and Publications page of the Committee's website: [www.parliament.uk/conaffcom/](http://www.parliament.uk/conaffcom/)

Call for evidence:

Submissions relating to the terms of reference above are invited from relevant interested parties. These should be sent to the Clerk of the Committee at the address above by Monday 27 February. An electronic version in MS Word or Rich Text format should also be

submitted, either by e-mail to [conaffcom@parliament.uk](mailto:conaffcom@parliament.uk) or on a disk and this should be accompanied by a letter stating clearly who the submission is from, together with relevant contact details. Submissions should be as brief as possible, and certainly no more than 3,000 words. Paragraphs should be numbered for ease of reference, and it would be helpful to include a brief executive summary. Attention is drawn to the guidance on the submission of evidence, which can be found at [www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/witguide.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/witguide.htm)

Please note that the Committee is unable to investigate individual cases.