

# Freedom of Information

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## Headlines

- ICO seeks views on Anonymisation Code of Practice, p.17
- Latest updated definition documents, p.19
- Tribunal refers questions regarding charges for property searches to the CJEU, p.20

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## Government deploys veto over HS2 report

The government has vetoed an order from the Information Commissioner that the Cabinet Office disclose a report concerning High Speed Two ('HS2'), the project for a high-speed rail link between London, Birmingham, the East Midlands, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester.

The report relates to a review carried out in November 2011 by the Major Projects Authority.

Uniquely, the veto has been exercised before the case was considered by any kind of Tribunal.

Transport Secretary, Patrick McLoughlin, said the decision 'was not taken lightly' and it was 'an exceptional case', but claimed the move was to preserve future policymaking, rather than suppress damaging information.

He said that interviewees needed to know they could 'speak with absolute frankness and candour' and the subsequent reports needed to be 'drafted in frank, and if necessary blunt, language' so that 'problems are confronted and addressed, and are not avoided or overlooked'.

He told MPs: "In my view, there is nothing in the nature or content of this particular report which outweighs that strong public interest against disclosure."

However, Richard Houghton, of HS2 Action Alliance, said: "So far as we can see, the last time secrecy laws of this nature were invoked was during the Iraq war. The implications are immense.

"Independent research says the majority of the population does not want HS2, so why shouldn't the public know what the

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## Cabinet Office monitored over FOI response times

The Information Commissioner's Office has announced that the Cabinet Office and two other public authorities are being monitored over the timeliness of their responses to freedom of information requests.

The ICO is monitoring the Cabinet Office, the Crown Prosecution Service and Hackney Council for a three month period after a significant number of complaints were made to

the ICO about the timeliness of the authorities' responses.

The ICO will examine the responses to FOI requests received between 1st January and 31st March 2014. Failure to show signs of improvement during this period may result in enforcement action.

The ICO said: "It is particularly disappointing to see that the Cabinet

Office has failed to maintain the improvements recorded three years ago when the authority was also monitored over the timeliness of its FOI responses.

"On that occasion, the Cabinet Office signed an undertaking to raise their game.

"Their inclusion on the latest monitoring list

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