



Freedom of Information

Volume 7, Issue 4

March / April 2011

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- Egypt tweets cut off, p.17
- ICO provides top tips for FOI, p.18
- Updated guidance for Scottish Public Authorities, p.20

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Protection of Freedoms Bill - getting the ball rolling

The long-awaited Protection of Freedoms Bill has been published by the Coalition Government and the Home Office has announced that amongst the changes that will be made, one will be an extension and strengthening of the UK Freedom of Information Act.

There are measures in the Bill that will mean that public bodies will have to proactively release electronic data in reusable formats and companies that are wholly owned by two or more public bodies will now be subject to FOI requests. The coalition Government

has also promised that there will be a new public reading stage where citizens will have the opportunity to comment on proposed legislation online. It will be the first time that the public are able to comment on each clause of a Bill, which they will do on a specially created website.

The Bill has been introduced with the aim of gaining Royal Assent by late 2011 or early 2012. The second reading of the Bill took place on 1st March 2011.

Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham,

said: “I welcome the publication of the Protection of Freedoms Bill and support its aims of strengthening privacy, delivering greater transparency and achieving improved accountability, as well as greater independence for the ICO.

“The Bill engages with issues that have been longstanding concerns for us: ensuring the right organisations are subject to freedom of information requirements [and] that the information the public need is available when they need it

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Government makes records of local crime accessible

The Government has launched its new website www.police.uk which contains crime maps that allow users to see the offences in their local area, as part of its transparency agenda.

The maps, for England and Wales, detail the offences that have been reported within the last month. The public can search for information by entering a town, street name or postcode.

Information on crime is broken down into six categories — burglary, robbery, vehicle crime, violence, other crime and anti-social behaviour. Sex crimes have been included in the ‘other’ category, along with crimes such as theft and shoplifting, to help prevent victims from being identified.

The Government has said the site is an important aspect to its

transparency agenda as it makes the data available in an open format, allowing communities to use it to ‘help people engage with the police in a meaningful way’.

The UK Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham said: “I welcome the drive to improve accountability through greater transparency.

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