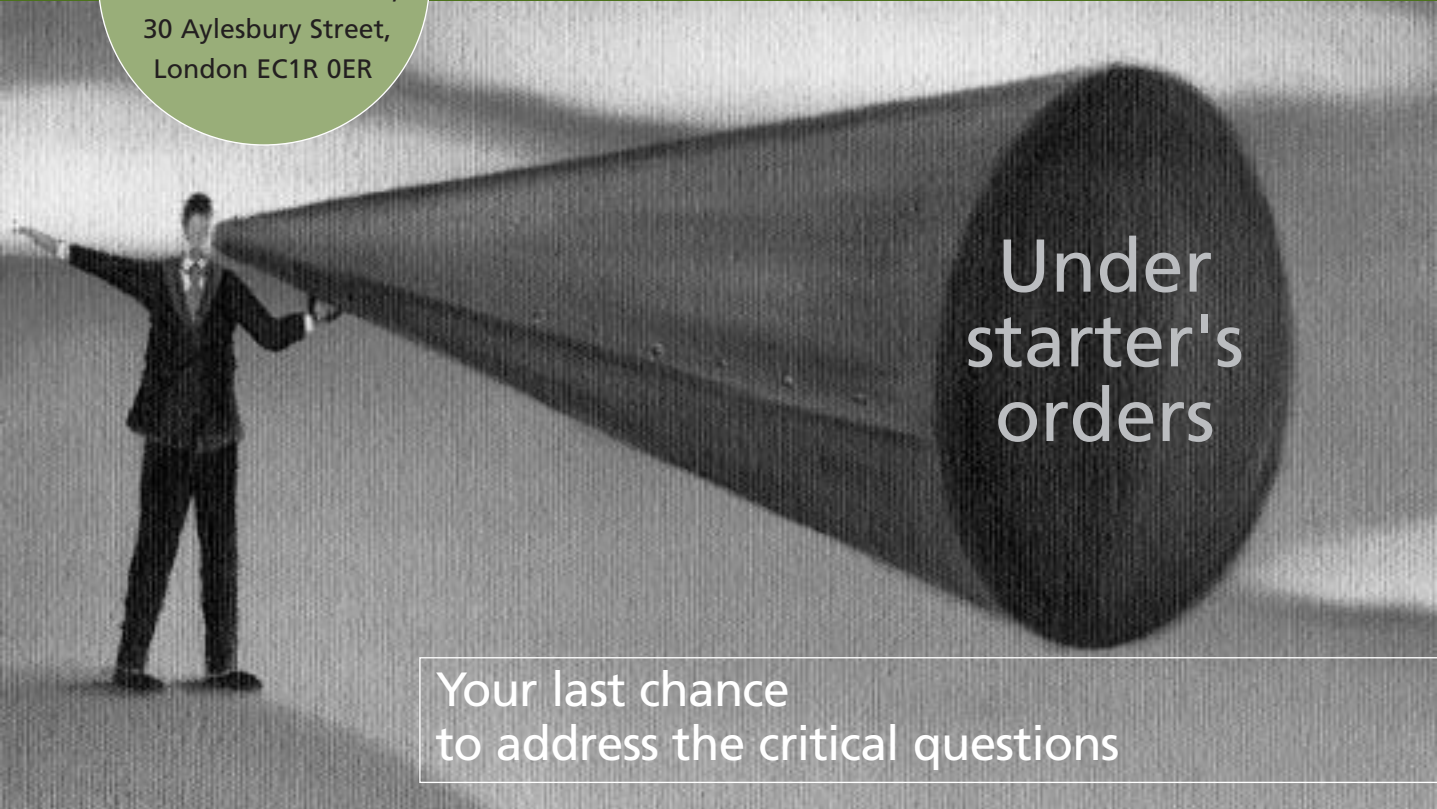


The Freedom of Information Act Conference

Thursday 16th
December 2004

To be held at Masons,
30 Aylesbury Street,
London EC1R 0ER

Organised by JUSTICE and Sweet & Maxwell



Under
starter's
orders

Your last chance
to address the critical questions

Leading experts present the latest thinking – just
two weeks before the Act becomes law



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Keynote speaker:

Richard Thomas, The Information Commissioner

Plenary session speakers:

Mirza Ahmad, Chief Legal Officer, Birmingham City Council

Maurice Frankel, Director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information

David Hencke, Westminster Correspondent, The Guardian

Andrew Lidbetter, Partner, Herbert Smith

Jennifer McDermott, Partner, Lovells

Timothy Pitt-Payne, 11 King's Bench Walk

Earn 6 hours of Law Society / Bar Council CPD credit

The Freedom of Information

Under starter's orders

"We want to end the obsessive and unnecessary secrecy which surrounds government activity and make government information available to the public unless there are good reasons not to do so."

Tony Blair, Campaign for Freedom of Information Awards,
25 March 1996

Your chance to clarify
the key issues as the Act
comes into force

Why you should attend this conference

1 January 2005 sees the dawn of a new era of openness – as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 comes fully into force. The Act is designed to throw open the shutters and let light into a previously shadowy world – that of the information held, not only by central government, but also by over 100,000 'public bodies' including local authorities, the health service, educational establishments, the police and quangos.

Under the Freedom of Information Act individuals will have the right of access to millions of documents held by public bodies. Already those public bodies have been required to draw up 'publication schemes' listing all the information that they intend to make available.

After the flurry of activity as public authorities prepare for the Act, this conference gives you one final chance to pause for breath and ask the crucial questions:

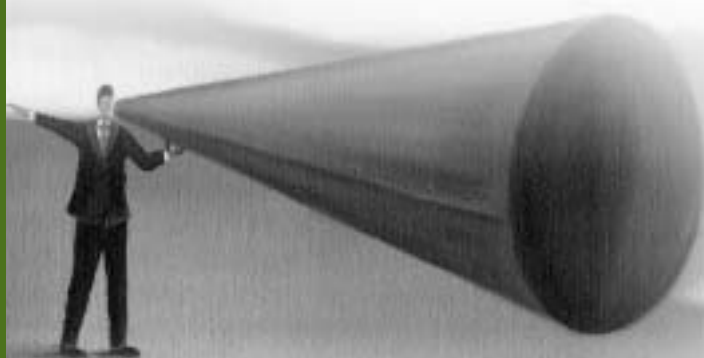
- Where will the balance between national security and public scrutiny be struck?
- What can we learn from the experience of the Freedom of Information pioneers – the US, Canada and New Zealand?
- What does the new openness mean for privacy and data protection?
- What are the Information Commissioner's thoughts as the clock ticks down to implementation?
- Will 'open government' become a reality – or will it founder on the rocks of exemptions, ministerial veto and public apathy?

The conference provides a fully rounded perspective on the new regime, examining the separate issues relevant to public bodies, users of the Act and third parties. **Focused breakout sessions** discuss, in-depth, the Act's impact in specific areas.

Who should attend

- Solicitors and Barristers – who act for public bodies or who practise in any of the many areas of law affected by the Act
- Employed lawyers in:
 - Government departments
 - Local authorities
 - The NHS
 - Education
 - The Police and CPS
- Campaigning organisations
- Academics

- The Act and the key uncertainties explained
- The different issues for public bodies, those seeking information and third parties
- Access to a panel of expert practitioners and regulators
- The practical issues for lawyers



Information Act Conference

Thursday 16th December 2004 – Masons, 30 Aylesbury Street, London EC1R 0ER

09.00 Registration

**09.30 Morning plenary session:
Introduction from the chair**

Keynote address:

**Freedom of Information and the
Open Society**

Richard Thomas, *The Information Commissioner*

10.00 Outline of the Act

Timothy Pitt-Payne, *11 King's Bench Walk*

How does the Freedom of Information Act work?
What are the general principles behind the Act?
What are its key mechanisms? This session aims
to provide a concise outline of the Act that will
inform the rest of the day's discussion and analysis.

10.30 Questions and Discussion

11.00 Coffee Break

11.15 Freedom of Information: 3 perspectives

This session invites 3 expert speakers to offer 3 different
perspectives on how the Freedom of Information Act will
impact on 3 distinct audiences:

- Users – people seeking to use the Act to gain information
- Public authorities who will be the targets of requests under the Act
- Third parties who are not directly subject to the Act, but who may be in a commercial relationship with a public authority and thus affected by requests for information under the Act.

**11.15 Users – Maurice Frankel, Director of the
Campaign for Freedom of Information**

**11.45 Public authorities – Mirza Ahmad, Chief
Legal Officer, Birmingham City Council**

**12:15 Third parties – Andrew Lidbetter, Partner,
Herbert Smith**

12:45 Questions and Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Afternoon breakout sessions – Round 1

1. National Security and Public Scrutiny

Rabinder Singh QC, *Matrix Chambers*

Oliver Sanders, *One Crown Office Row*

In the wake of the Hutton Inquiry and the Butler Report, there has been increased public scrutiny of governmental secrecy in respect of intelligence matters. At the same time, national security and defence are two of the main grounds for exemption and exclusion under the 2000 Act.

This session examines the scope of these exemptions, and their implications for the interplay between the public interest in scrutinising state actions and the state's interest in maintaining domestic security.

OR

2. Accessing Environmental Information

James Maurici, *Landmark Chambers*

Gillian Carrington, *4-5 Gray's Inn Square*

A wide range of rights to environmental information is provided by various existing legislation. What difference will the Freedom of Information Act make to this regime? Will the availability of environmental information be extended or diminished under the new Act? This session will examine such questions, together with an analysis of recent case law covering the issue.

15:00 Afternoon breakout sessions – Round 2

**3. Lessons for the UK: the experience of
Freedom of Information laws in the United
States, Canada and New Zealand**

John Boese, *Partner, Fried, Frank, Harris,
Shriver & Jacobson LLP, Washington D.C.*

Professor Robert Hazell, *Director, the Constitution Unit,
University College London*

This session looks at 3 common law jurisdictions that have implemented FOI legislation. The most prominent and best-known example is the United States, where the Freedom of Information Act has been in force for almost 40 years. The session will also look at Canada and New Zealand, whose legislation most closely resembles the 2000 Act. In each case, the session will seek to analyse the impact of FOI legislation on law and government practice, and draw out lessons for the UK.

OR

4. Free Information and Data Protection

Rosemary Jay, *Partner, Masons*

Clive Sheldon, *11 King's Bench Walk*

How will the Freedom of Information Act work alongside the extensive framework provided by the Data Protection Act? This session examines the various possible conflicts and challenges, both legal and practical, that may arise from the interface of these two major pieces of legislation.

16.00 Tea break

**16:15 Afternoon plenary session:
A New Act, A New Openness?**

Information is the life-blood of a liberal democratic society as well as a free market economy. Does the Freedom of Information Act really herald a new openness in British public life? Or is it just another tool which governments and public authorities will use to restrict the flow of relevant information?

Jennifer McDermott, *Partner, Lovells*

David Hencke, *Westminster Correspondent, The Guardian*

17.00 Close

To book your place complete the order form overleaf >>>>

For further enquiries: Call (020) 7393 7651

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The Freedom of Information Act Conference

Thursday 16th December 2004, Masons, 30 Aylesbury Street, London EC1R 0ER

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Round 1: (1st choice)

(2nd choice)

Round 2: (1st choice)

(2nd choice)

2nd Delegate:

Title:

Forename:

Surname:

Profession:

Special Dietary Requirements:

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Round 1: (1st choice)

(2nd choice)

Round 2: (1st choice)

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Once we receive your booking form we will send you a booking acknowledgement. If you have not received this acknowledgement prior to date of the conference, please contact us.

Cancellation policy

Bookings may only be cancelled by written notice received by us not less than 10 working days before the date of the conference (i.e. by 2nd December). You will then be sent a refund of your delegate fee, less an administration charge of £50.00 for each delegate booking that is cancelled. Telephone cancellations will not be accepted. Refunds of delegate fees for late cancellations (i.e. cancellations other than in accordance with the above paragraph) will not be given. Failure to attend the conference will constitute late cancellation and payment will still be due or forfeit if already paid.

We reserve the right to change the programme, date, content, price, speakers and venue as necessary; or cancel the conference totally in which case we will refund any payment made in respect of the cancelled conference.

Substitute delegates

Substitute delegates can be accepted at any time, without charge. Please telephone the Conference Administrator on 020 7393 7651 to let us know the name of the substitute.

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