



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

The Right to Know

Public Information Leaflet

What is the Right to Know?

The **Freedom of Information Act 2000** and the **Environmental Information Regulations 2004** gives you the right to request information held by a wide range of public authorities.

What information can I obtain?

The legislation enables you to get information to help you to understand better how Council works, how we spend public money, and how and why we make our decisions. However, you may not be able to obtain all the information you ask for as the legislation contains exemptions for some types of information which cannot be disclosed, for example, commercial information or personal information about others.

You can also get information under the **Data Protection Act 1998** which, amongst other things, gives individuals access to their own personal information.

What are exemptions?

Both the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations contain a number of exemptions (in the Regulations they are called “exceptions”) allowing Council to withhold information in certain circumstances. However, most of the information held by the Council will not be subject to exemptions.

How do I get information held by the Council?

A wide range of information is already available to the public either in printed form (for which there may be a charge) or, if you have Internet access, on our website. Details of the information available is listed in our Publication Scheme which is available on Council's website: www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk. A copy of the scheme is also available upon request.

If the information you want is not available from the website you can ask for it by writing to Council. It is important that you provide us with your name and address (or email address) to enable a response to your request.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
66 Portstewart Road, Coleraine
Co. Londonderry, N Ireland. BT52 1EY.

t: 028 7034 7034

e: info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Textphone: 028 7034 7056

The website also contains more detailed information about the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations and our procedures for dealing with requests.

The website also provides a link to the Northern Ireland public sector portal <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk> where you can obtain further information on government services.

How long does it take to get information?

The legislation requires us to respond to your request for information as soon as possible after it is received, and not later than 20 working days after the date of receipt. This timescale may have to be extended if the information requested is very extensive and, therefore takes a long time to gather, or if we have to consider if providing it is in the public interest, or if we are waiting for you to pay a fee.

It will help us to process your request more quickly if you can be as specific as possible about what information you want. If necessary, we will contact you to ensure we understand your request clearly and this may add to the time we need to respond. It is also important to tell us whether you want the information sent to you on paper or by email, and whether you have any particular requirements. Information may be available in other languages or formats on request.

Is there a cost for getting information?

You may have to pay for information which is already published by Council¹. You may also have to pay a fee for other information requested. This will depend on a number of factors including the volume of material requested. Responses to enquiries that cost Council less than £450 to process² will normally be provided free of charge, although there may be a small charge for disbursements³. Council has the right to refuse to respond to a request that is estimated to cost more than £450 to process. However, we may process the request if the cost is greater than £450 and if we do, you will be charged the costs in full.

What happens if Council does not have the information I want?

We may not hold the information you request and the legislation does not require us to gather information that is not already there. However, it is possible that another public authority may hold the information and where possible we will assist you with the contact details. It is also possible that we may have had the information at one time but that it has been lawfully destroyed, in which case we will tell you.

What if I am refused information?

If we decide not to disclose some information, we must explain to you why it is being withheld.

¹ See leaflet on Charging Structures

² Includes the cost of finding, sorting or editing the material

³ Disbursements may include costs of photocopying, printing, postage etc

Can I complain if I am unhappy with Council's handling of my request for information?

You have the right to complain if we do not deal with your request for information within the timescales set out in the legislation, that is normally not later than 20 working days after the date your enquiry is received by Council. You also have the right to complain if you are dissatisfied with our response to your request for information.

Your complaint should be registered in writing within two calendar months and will be investigated by the Chief Executive. You will receive a reply as soon as possible and normally within 40 working days after the date your complaint is received.

If you wish to complain please write to:

Chief Executive
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
66 Portstewart Road, Coleraine
Co. Londonderry, N Ireland. BT52 1EY

If you are still dissatisfied after the internal review you can request a review by the Information Commissioner.

Where can I get more information about the legislation?

More information about the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Regulations 2004 is available through Council's website www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk or from the Information Commissioner's Office.

m: Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire. England. SK9 5AF
w: www.ico.org.uk
t: 0303 123 1113

This guide provides a brief outline of your rights under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and how we will deal with your request for information, it should not be regarded as a legal interpretation.

This document can be obtained from the Council as a paper copy and in alternative formats, including in large print, in Braille, and on audio cassette.