

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Charging for environmental information - FAQs

What is environmental information?

The official definition of environmental information from the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 can be found in the Council's Charging for Environmental Information Policy at:

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/CCGC_EIR_charging_schedule_v1.0_as_approved_170425.pdf

A summary of the meaning of environmental information is as follows:

- The state of the elements of the environment (ie, air, water, soil, land etc) and the interaction between them.
- Factors such as substances, energy, noise radiation & waste that could affect the elements above (such as flooding, loss of habitat and noise).
- Emissions, discharges and other releases into the atmosphere.
- The state of human health and safety, contamination of the food chain, conditions of life & cultural or building sites affected by the elements.
- Policies, legislation, plans, programmes and administrative measures that could affect the environment and the economic analysis of such.

How is Council allowed to charge for environmental information?

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) allow Council to charge for supplying environmental information. The legislation allows Council to charge for staff time to locate, retrieve and extract data requested, plus any associated photocopying and postage costs. Further guidance as issued by the Information Commissioner is available at: <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1627/charging-for-environmental-information-reg8.pdf>

What charges have been implemented?

The Council's Charging for Environmental Information Policy is published on the website at:

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/CCGC_EIR_charging_schedule_v1.0_as_approved_170425.pdf

Is any environmental information available free of charge?

If the environmental information requested is already published on the website, Council will provide a link to it at no charge.

No charges will be incurred where the request relates to emissions.

If the environmental information requested is a statutory register available to view as per the relevant legislation, Council will not charge for the requester to view the register on site.

How is the charge calculated?

When a request comes in for environmental information, Council will check whether the information is already published on the website and, if it is, a link to it will be provided free of charge.

If the information is not already published and will require staff time to locate, retrieve and extract it, we will estimate the time that this work will take. Council can also charge for any associated photocopying and postage charges if applicable and a fees quote will be sent to the requester. There is a minimum charge of half an hour work at the hourly rate of £25. Increments are in 15 minute intervals. VAT is not applicable.

The requester can then decide if they wish to pay the charge, in which case Council, will proceed with the request once payment is received.

The Council's fees and charges relating to disbursement charges are published on the website at:

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/CCGC_Charging_Structure_FINAL.pdf

Is there any way to reduce the charge quoted?

It may be possible to reduce the charge by refining the request e.g. by reducing the time period, or the extent of the information requested. We will help you to do this if you wish – please discuss this with the member of staff referred to in the correspondence.

Can I have the information under the Freedom of Information Act instead?

Environmental information is not within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act. So if the information requested is environmental, Council must respond to the request under the Environmental Information Regulations.

How do I complain about this?

If you are dissatisfied about an estimated charge associated with a request, please follow the details about requesting an internal review which will be included in your fees quote. In the first instance you should discuss your request with the named staff member in the correspondence as to how your request can be refined which may reduce the time period, or the extent of the information requested. If you remain dissatisfied, you can request an internal review which should be registered in writing within two calendar months and you will receive a reply as soon as possible and normally within 40 working days after the date of receipt. If you are still dissatisfied after the internal review you can request a review by the Information Commissioner.

A request for an internal review should be sent to:

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