



the national archives



Freedom of Information and the archives: your rights of access

In this leaflet we are informing you about your rights of access under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000, and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) 2004, and how these rights apply to the archives held by The National Archives.

What are my key rights?

Under the FOI Act and EIRs you have the right to:

- Know whether we hold the information you require
- Access that information (wherever possible).

What are my options?

- You are welcome to visit us and do your own research free of charge. We will also continue to provide advice and guidance free of charge
- You can search the catalogue and order documents online on our website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- You can contact an independent researcher who will undertake research for you for a fee – their rates might be cheaper than ours
- You can make a request under FOI.

Who can make a request under FOI?

- Anyone anywhere in the world - you do not have to be a UK citizen or resident.

How can I make a request under FOI?

Clearly state the information you are looking for by either:

- Filling out the form provided at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact/form/
- or writing to us: Enquiry Service, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU

- If your enquiry concerns environmental information, you have the right to place your request by phoning us on 020 8876 3444 but it will be easier for us to deal with it if you use the [contact form](#) or write to us

Remember to include your contact details in your request.

How long will it take?

- We have a duty to reply to your request and to provide the information, unless there are specific reasons that prevent us from doing so (exemptions), within 20 working days.

Will FOI apply to closed records?

- Yes. If the information you are seeking is in a record which is not yet open, you can make an FOI request
- We will review the record and consult with the relevant government department
- If it is not subject to an FOI exemption, the information will be released. The public interest in releasing this information will be considered as part of this process.

Will I have to pay for the information?

- Not unless you want us to search for information for you, in which case a charge will apply
- When we receive your request, we will tell you how much the search will cost
- When we receive your payment we will carry out the search
- We will not charge for deciding if you can access information in a closed record but we will charge you if you want us to undertake searches in closed records to find out if they contain the information you want.
- There is no charge for visiting The National Archives and undertaking research yourself. Advice and guidance is available to visitors free of charge

If we find the information and are able to release it, we will provide it to you.

How can I make a complaint?

You have the right to complain if you are unhappy with the way we handle your request. If you wish to make a complaint please contact us. For further details, please follow this link

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact/complaints.htm