Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) and Freedom of Information (FOI) Publication Scheme Review – Minutes

A meeting of the Group was held on 16 May 2011 at 11.30am in Carrington 103.

Present: Lee Shailer (LS), Kim Stock (KS), Ian Cruickshank (IC) and Lucy Wallace (LW).

11/01 Minutes of the last meeting

1. The minutes of the last meeting (04/05/2010) were agreed. They will be published in the Publication Scheme on the University website.

   ACTION: KS

11/02 Matters arising from last meeting

1. Suitability of content of minutes that will be put on-line directly by Committee secretaries
   Ongoing. LS to send LW guidance notes for secretaries who will be putting minutes directly online via Blackboard and LW to circulate.

   ACTION: LS/LW

2. Asset registers
   Ongoing. LS to acquire summaries of assets and databases.

   ACTION: LS

11/03 The group reviewed the following section of the Code of Practice on the discharge of the obligations of public authorities under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004

“II PROACTIVE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

4. Under Regulation 4, a public authority has a duty to progressively make the information available to the public by electronic means which are easily accessible, and to take reasonable steps to organize information relevant to its functions with a view to active and systematic dissemination.

5. Consideration should be given to making web sites accessible to all and simple to use, so that information can be readily found, for example by enabling search functions and having an alphabetical directory as well as tree structures. Information should not be ‘buried’ on a site.

6. Public authorities should consider how to publicise applicants’ rights to information, for example as part of general information on services provided by the authority.
7. When public authorities are considering what information to disseminate proactively, they should not restrict themselves to the minimum requirements as listed in the Directive. For example, consideration should be given to disseminating frequently requested information, which will reduce individual requests for such information in the future.”

1. Contact details
   It was agreed that the contact information should be improved on both the IMPS Environmental information webpage and the new “higher level” webpage The University and the environment, which has been produced by Communications.

   a. LW to send a message to Communications. This should ask them to add a sentence to their page to tell the reader to contact Communications if they need more detail about environmental information. Communications will be able to deal with “everyday” type of requests and already know to pass on requests that could be FOI or EIR requests.

   ACTION:LW

   b. IMPS to ask Communications to change the link to the IMPS Environmental information page so that it specifically mentions the publication scheme.

   ACTION:KS

   c. IMPS to include a sentence on their page to tell the reader to contact IMPS if they want to make a request under the EIRs.

   ACTION:KS

11/04 Replacement for Andy Stafford
   Andy has now retired from FMD and his post will not be replaced.

   LS to ask Helen in Digital Development if anyone from their team would be willing and able to contribute to the group.

   It was also noted that it would be useful to have a representative from the academic community. LS to raise this with Digital Development too.

   ACTION:LS

11/05 Research data
   The group noted that under current legislation research data is subject to FOI and EIR requests.

   LW to add a note into the handbook for academics that she is currently producing to make academics aware of this.

   ACTION:LW

11/06 New material

1. Food security
   Research in this “new” environmentally-related topic is developing and should be included in the IMPS Environmental information page.

   ACTION:KS

2. Staff portal
KS to add a reference to the Staff Portal on to the IMPS Environmental information page as sometimes environmental information appears there in a similar way to Press Releases.

ACTION:KS

11/07 AOB

There was no other business

11/08 Next meeting

In six months time KS to email members to check whether there is any urgent business to discuss. If not, KS to arrange the next meeting for approximately twelve months time.

ACTION:KS