

Guidance on Freedom of Information Requests to the North East LEP

Introduction

The North East LEP publishes and maintains a wide range of information on its website – please visit <http://nelep.co.uk/>. In circumstances where members of the public are unable to find what they are seeking we will helpfully respond to any information requests.

Please send your information request to : Info@NELEP.co.uk . We will aim to reply to requests with 10 working days of receipt.

If we don't hold the information you ask for, we will try to help you to find where you need to go for it.

If you are not satisfied with the information provided, you may decide to submit a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. In this case the request should be made directly to our accountable public body – the North East Combined Authority (NECA). The remainder of this guidance note explains this procedure within the NECA.

How do I request information under the Freedom of Information Act?

Your request must be made in writing and should contain:

- your name;
- an address for us to contact you; and
- a description of the information held by the North East LEP that you are interested in.
- You can send your requests to Freedom of Information:
 - by online form
 - by email to: freedomofinformation@northeastca.gov.uk
 - by post, c/o The Monitoring Officer: North East Combined Authority, 1 St James Gate, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 4AD

What information can I get?

Unless it is exempt you will be able to get any information that the North East LEP holds. This can include:

- Our policies and plans
- How we handle issues and make decisions
- Financial information
- Our performance

Is there any information I cannot get?

You may not be able to get the information you request if it is exempt. You can find out more details about the exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act from the Information Commissioner's website.

If NECA decides that it cannot disclose the information you have requested NECA will explain the reasons for its decision.

How much will it cost?

NECA will deal with most requests free of charge. However, if the request takes more than 18 hours to satisfy, NECA may make a charge. NECA may also charge you for the cost of copying, printing, postage or translating the information where this is significant. NECA will tell you about any charges before starting work on your request. The same charges will apply to requests for environmental information.

How quickly will I get the information?

NECA is required to respond to FOI requests within 20 working days.

What can I do if I am not happy with the NECA's decision on my request?

If you are not happy with the outcome of your request, you can request a review through the NECA's FOI internal review procedure. NECA will provide you with details of how to seek such a review when responding to your request.

Internal reviews will be carried out by a review panel, which will comprise of at least two officers, who have not been directly involved with the initial decision process. NECA will acknowledge your request for review within two days of receiving it and will confirm when it expects to be able to respond to your request for review. NECA will respond promptly and usually within 20 working days of receiving your request for review. There may be very rare occasions when NECA is unable to respond within 20 working days, for very complex requests for example. In these cases NECA will notify you of when a response can be expected.

Once the review panel has met to consider your request you will be informed of its decision, the reasons for that decision and how to make a further appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office, if you are still unhappy.

Where can I get further information?

The Information Commissioner's Office is responsible for ensuring that all public authorities comply with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts. Their website provides a lot of background information and guidance on these two pieces of legislation.

If you need advice on making an FOI request please contact the NECA's Freedom of information Officer. E-mail: freedomofinformation@northeastca.gov.uk