



FOI Practitioners' Conference 2022

FOI Professionals - Holding the Key

24 August 2022

PROGRAMME

09:20 **Conference opens**

09:30-10:25 **FOI Officers: Value and Influence**

Paul Gibbons, FOI/DP professional & author of The FOI Officer's Handbook

Ross McEwan, City of Edinburgh Council

Professionalism, DPOs and FOI Officers

Andrew MacQueen, University of Dundee/Thorntons

Questions

10:30-11:15 **Workshop Session A**

Option 1: Professional Development and Support for FOI Officers
Lynn Wyeth, Head of the Information Governance function of a large unitary public authority

Terna Waya, Scottish Information Commissioner (on secondment from the ICO)

Option 2: Handling Manifestly Unreasonable or Vexatious Requests

Fiona Killen, Burness Paull

Option 3: The Future of FOI - What Needs to Change?

Carole Ewart, Campaign for FOI in Scotland

TBC

11:15-11:30 **Break**

11:30-12:15 Workshop Session B

- Option 1: All Things Equal? Applying the 'Requester-Blind' Principle
Euan McCulloch, Scottish Information Commissioner
Paul Mutch, Scottish Information Commissioner
- Option 2: Handling Manifestly Unreasonable or Vexatious Requests
Fiona Killen, Burness Paul
- Option 3: Freedom of Information - A Beginners Guide
Dr Sean Whittaker, University of Dundee
Colin MacFadyen, Scottish Information Commissioner

12:20-12:45 Closing comments and Q&A

Daren Fitzhenry, Scottish Information Commissioner
Fiona Killen, Burness Paull
Lyn Wyeth
Carole Ewart, Campaign for FOI in Scotland

WORKSHOPS

- Freedom of Information - A Beginners Guide

Are you new to FOI, or simply want to brush up on your basics? This workshop will introduce you to the core principles of FOI and provide you with top practical tips for request and review handling.

- Handling Manifestly Unreasonable or Vexatious Requests

Applying these provisions can be daunting, this technical workshop will walk you through the practicalities and legal tests that need to be fulfilled to apply this provision successfully. As one of the more contentious areas, this session is designed to provided the FOI professional with the tools and knowledge they need to advise their organisation.

- The Future of FOI - What Needs to Change?

Carole Ewart from the Campaign for FOI in Scotland, will provided you with an overview of what they considered to be the key areas for the development and strengthening of FOI in Scotland.

- All Things Equal? Applying the 'Requester-Blind' Principle

Last year, the Scottish Information Commissioner issued a practice recommendation requiring a local authority to take steps to ensure that its handling of information requests is appropriately 'requester-blind' - that is, not influenced by who made the request. But what does 'requester-blind' mean in practice and what are the occasions where you can legitimately take the identity of the requester into account? Euan and Paul will walk you through 'requester-blind' principles, exploring how you can recognise where this might be an issue in your organisation and how you can address it.

- Professional Development and Support for FOI Officers

In this workshop, Terna will highlight some of the key findings from the Scottish Information Commissioner's practitioner survey, conducted at the end of last year, and share the steps taken to address some of the feedback, along with additional steps planned for the future. There will be an open discussion about what other opportunities/support needs to be made available to practitioners.

Lynn will seek to identify and characterise the existing regimes of FOI practices that have come into being across local authorities and look at what makes a successful FOI officer, and whether these lessons be transferred to all sectors.