

Freedom of Information & Environmental Information Regulations: Disclosure Log 2022/23

Information released: 18 April 2023 (edited 29 January 2025 – reviewing links)

Date of Request / Information Requested	Date of Response / Response
<p>Reference: AFBIEIR20220401</p> <p>Date of Request: 28 April 2022</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <p><i>Information about salmon and trout populations from the year 2000 for the two SAC Rivers Swanlinbar and Ballinderry Upper.</i></p>	<p>Date of Response: 26 May 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Percentage compliance of salmon numbers against stock conservation limits for salmon on the Ballinderry catchment as a whole unit, (but this is not specifically reflective of the Upper Ballinderry.) See Annex 1.</i> 2. <i>Data from one quantitative survey site on the Swanlinbar River from 2018 and 2021. This is relevant to part of your request. See Point 2 in Appendices A (2018) and B (2021).</i> 3. <i>Some fish survey data from a commissioned report on a small section of the upper Ballinderry. The information at point 3 meets exceptions under regulations 12(4)(e) (internal communications) and 12(5)(b) (course of justice) of the Environmental Information Regulations and we consider that it is not in the public interest to disclose the data at this point.</i>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20220601</p> <p>Date of Request: 24 June 2022</p>	<p>Date of Response: 04 July 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p>

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<p>The following information was requested:</p> <p><i>I would simply like to know when the 2022 monies (my monies), relating to the Drumatihugh lands, were paid by AFBI to Carson McDowell solicitors.</i></p>	<p><i>AFBI made payment to Carson McDowell in respect of this matter on 28 June 2022, 32 days following receipt of the invoice.</i></p>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20220901</p> <p>Date of Request: 12 September 2022</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <p>information relating to expenditure on equality, diversity, and inclusivity – specifically:</p> <p><i>a) The number of roles in your association (expressed in numbers of FTE), that are mainly or exclusively focussed on issues of equality, diversity, or inclusivity. For example, this could include (amongst other guises) “EDI officers” or “diversity and inclusion project managers” but would not include general HR managers.</i></p> <p><i>b) Either a) the pay band of each of these roles, or b) the combined total salaries for these roles. Whichever measure is more in accordance with your data preferences.</i></p> <p><i>c) In the past 12 months the number of staff days across your organisation which have been committed to attending equality training</i></p>	<p>Date of Response: 07 October 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <p>Please see Annex 1.</p>

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<p><i>programmes, whether internally run or with external consultants. (staff days = duration of the training programme multiplied by the number of staff in attendance for the course).</i></p> <p><i>d) The contractual cost of any consultants hired, in the past twelve months, to provide any external training or advice on issues of diversity, equality, or inclusivity.</i></p> <p><i>e) In the past twelve months, the number of staff days committed to attending conferences relating mainly or exclusively to matters of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. (duration of conference multiplied by the number of staff in attendance).</i></p> <p><i>f) The costs of attending these conferences.</i></p> <p><i>g) Membership costs the organisation pays for participation in equality charters such as the Stonewall Equality Champions, or Diversity and Inclusion Workplace champions.</i></p>	
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20220902</p> <p>Date of Request: 15 September 2022</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p>	<p>Date of Response: 05 October 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The maximum annual leave carried over by any clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff member from 2021/22 leave year into 2022/23 leave year. 9 days</i>

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<p>1. <i>The maximum annual leave carried over by any clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff member from 2021/22 leave year into 2022/23 leave year.</i></p> <p>2. <i>Number of CEV staff who carried over annual leave from 2021/22/ to 2022/23.</i></p> <p>3. <i>Average annual leave carried over by CEV staff from 2021/22/ to 2022/23.</i></p> <p>4. <i>Average annual leave taken by CEV staff in the 2021/22 leave year, excluding bank holidays.</i></p>	<p>2. <i>Number of CEV staff who carried over annual leave from 2021/22/ to 2022/23. 3 staff</i></p> <p>3. <i>Average annual leave carried over by CEV staff from 2021/22/ to 2022/23. 9 days</i></p> <p>4. <i>Average annual leave taken by CEV staff in the 2021/22 leave year, excluding bank holidays. 2.5 days</i></p>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20221001</p> <p>Date of Request: 28 September 2022</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <p>1. <i>Who is your social media management and monitoring tool supplier?</i></p> <p>2. <i>Start date & duration of framework/contract with the supplier</i></p> <p>3. <i>Actual spend on this contract/framework (and any sub lots), from the start of the contract to the current date</i></p> <p>4. <i>Who is the senior officer (outside of procurement) responsible for this contract?</i></p>	<p>Date of Response: 31 October 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <p>1. <i>AFBI does not have a social media management and monitoring tool supplier.</i></p> <p>2. <i>Not applicable</i></p> <p>3. <i>Not applicable</i></p> <p>4. <i>Not applicable</i></p>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20221101</p>	<p>Date of Response: 19 December 2022</p>

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<p>Date of Request: 23 November 2022</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The amount paid to each individual member of the AFBI board – including name and corresponding sum – since August 2021 up to and including November 23 2022</i> <i>All expenses claimed and paid to each individual member of the AFBI board – including name and corresponding sum – since August 2021 up to and including November 23 2022</i> <i>Attendance records for AFBI board meetings, making clear whether those in attendance were present in person or by virtual means</i> <i>All internal and external correspondence relating to the appointment of AFBI board members since August 2021 up to and including November 22 2022</i> <i>Any declarations of political activity or conflicts of interest made by members of the AFBI board</i> <i>The cost of catering facilities for each individual board meeting for the 12 month from October 2021.</i> 	<p>The following response was provided:</p> <p><i>The amount paid to each individual member of the AFBI board – including name and corresponding sum – since August 2021 up to and including 23 November 2022</i></p> <p><i>Payments to board members (identified by reference to pay bands) is published in AFBI’s Annual Report and Accounts. The reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23 are not yet available. However, we consider that it would be unreasonable to withhold this information, which is set out in the table in Annex 1 to this letter.</i></p> <p><i>Previous AFBI Annual Reports and accounts are available online at https://www.afbini.gov.uk/afbi-annual-reports.</i></p> <p><i>Specific sums paid to individual board members constitute personal information as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR and as such engage the exemption from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i></p> <p><i>We believe that disclosure would contravene one of the data protection principles – namely, that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. In our judgement it would be unfair to the data subjects whose expectations would be that information on their remuneration is disclosed only in banded form.</i></p>

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We are also satisfied that we would have no lawful basis in GDPR to release data on specific remuneration amounts. In our opinion your legitimate interest is outweighed by the rights of the individual board members, and disclosure of specific amounts paid is not necessary to meet the legitimate interest in understanding how AFBI's board members are remunerated.

All expenses claimed and paid to each individual member of the AFBI board – including name and corresponding sum – since August 2021 up to and including 23 November 2022

As discussed above, specific sums paid to individual board members constitute personal information as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR and as such engage the exemption from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We believe that disclosure would contravene one of the data protection principles – namely, that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. In our judgement it would be unfair to the data subjects whose expectations would be that information on their remuneration is disclosed only in banded form.

We are also satisfied that we would have no lawful basis in GDPR to release data on specific remuneration amounts. In our opinion your legitimate interest is outweighed by the rights of the individual board members, and disclosure of specific amounts paid is not necessary to meet that legitimate interest.

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Attendance records for AFBI board meetings, making clear whether those in attendance were present in person or by virtual means

The requested information is included in [Annex 2](#) to this letter. You should note the appointment dates of individual board members as set out in Annex 2, and how these affect the attendance figures for individual members.

All internal and external correspondence relating to the appointment of AFBI board members since August 2021 up to and including 22 November 2022

The process of appointing AFBI Board members is managed by DAERA and the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI.) AFBI hold little information in relation to the appointments process.

Once members have been appointed and confirmed by DAERA, AFBI receive a copy of the Letters of Appointment as well as the new members' personal details from DAERA to allow for the commencement of post-appointment proceedings which include:

- 1. Obtaining bank and personal details to add them to the HR Connect system (AFBI does not retain these records once AFBI Human Resources Branch confirms that this has been actioned).*
- 2. Acceptance of AFBI's Code of Conduct for Board Members*

3. *Completion of a Register of Interests and updated Pen Picture.*

The relevant items of correspondence held are set out in [the schedule of records](#) attached to this letter, and [the individual items of correspondence](#) (in redacted form where appropriate- see below) are also attached.

Some elements of these items have been withheld as exempt under Section 40(2) of the Act as personal information (the names and contact details of individual junior officials, and the personal contact details of board members.)

We are also satisfied that some elements of the correspondence you have requested (a ministerial submission and attachments) are exempt from disclosure under S35(1)(b) (ministerial communications) and (d) (operation of a ministerial private office).

Use of these exemptions requires a public interest test. AFBI recognizes that there is a public interest in openness in public appointments process. However, this is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining a 'safe space' for decision-making, in ensuring that the ability of officials to advise ministers is not undermined, and that ministers are not deterred from seeking formal advice from their officials.

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Any declarations of political activity or conflicts of interest made by members of the AFBI board

AFBI does not hold the information requested on declarations of political activity by members of the AFBI board.

Declarations of Political Activity form part of the appointments process. While AFBI does receive a copy of board members' appointment letters, we do not receive a copy of the relevant annex ('Annex E: Political Activity Questionnaire') which members complete and return to DAERA as part of the acceptance of appointment.

I can confirm that AFBI does hold the information requested on conflicts of interest. However, as this information is readily available by other means (on the AFBI Website [Membership of the AFBI Board | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute \(afbini.gov.uk\)](https://www.afbini.gov.uk)). the exemption under Section 21 of the Act is engaged and I have not provided it as part of this response.

Registers can be updated at any time and are subject to periodic review. Conflict of Interest is also a standing item on the agenda of all board meetings.

The cost of catering facilities for each individual board meeting for the 12 months from October 2021

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	<p><i>The requested information is included in Annex 3 to this letter. You should note the reasons for variation in costs associated with each meeting set out in the table.</i></p>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20230202</p> <p>Date of Request: 20 February 2023</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <p><i>I am asking for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i></p> <p><i>1) Please tell me the number of employees in your department since 2012 who have/had a criminal record.</i></p> <p><i>2) How many of these employees had a criminal record before receiving an offer of employment?</i></p>	<p>Date of Response: 21 March 2023</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <p><i>Thank you for your letter of 16 February in which you requested information about AFBI staff with criminal convictions, and in particular:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The number of AFBI staff since 2012 who have or had a criminal record.</i> <i>• The number of these staff who had a criminal record before receiving an offer of employment.</i> <p><i>I am writing to advise that we have completed a search of our records and can confirm that we do not hold the information you have requested.</i></p> <p><i>However, you may find the information below useful.</i></p> <p><i>Recruitment to positions in AFBI is managed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service's recruitment partner, HR Connect, and by independent recruitment agencies. These external bodies require applicants to complete an Access NI background check, which identifies whether the</i></p>

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	<p><i>applicant has convictions considered to be unspent, or states that no such convictions were found.</i></p> <p><i>Our records show that between November 2022 and the date of your request, there have been two candidates who when undergoing pre-employment screening had criminal convictions disclosed.</i></p> <p><i>No applicants who failed an AccessNI check during that period were subsequently appointed to a position in AFBI.</i></p> <p><i>AccessNI is a branch in the Department of Justice. Its role is to process applications from members of the public who require a criminal record check for employment purposes. You can find out more about Access NI checks on the Department of Justice website at https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/about-accessni.</i></p>
<p>Reference: AFBIFOI20230203</p> <p>Date of Request: 23 February 2023</p> <p>The following information was requested:</p> <p><i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from you.</i></p> <p><i>We are keen to ensure we are prepared when this is due to come to market or when the contract expires.</i></p> <p><i>Please can you advise ...</i></p>	<p>Date of Response: 19 December 2022</p> <p>The following response was provided:</p> <p><i>Thank you for your email of 23 February 2023 where you requested information about AFBI's management of clinical, offensive and incineration waste.</i></p> <p><i>I am writing to advise that the Institute has completed its search and can confirm that we hold the information you requested.</i></p>

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- **Who is your provider for clinical, offensive and incineration waste collection and disposal?**
- *Which internal department manages this contract?*
- *What is the contract term, including start and expiry date?*
- *When and how is the contract likely to be renewed or come to market?*
- *Do you use a framework or your own tender etc?*
- *Current contract spend for clinical waste ?*
- *Current volumes of each type of waste?*

The information is set out in [the table annexed to this letter.](#)

Thank you.