

United Kingdom

The Human Rights Act 1998 which is a part of the constitutional framework of the UK, recognises the “freedom to . . . receive and impart information and ideas without interference” (Art. 10). The United Kingdom adopted the Freedom of Information Act in 2000.¹ Scotland adopted the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act in 2002.² Wales has a Code of Practice on Public Access to Information since 2001.³

In recent years attempts to amend the UK FOI Act to- impose a heavy fee burden; discourage requestors from making requests in concert and exempt parliamentarians from its coverage have not succeeded because of strong opposition from civil society organizations.

Tom Brake introduced the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Bill as a private member’s Bill in Parliament on September 7, 2010. The Bill seeks to amend the UK FOI Act 2000 by removing provisions that allow Ministers to overrule the Information Commissioner and Information Tribunal; limiting time that public authorities have to respond to information requests where the public interest needs to be considered; and extending the definition of public authorities to include publicly owned companies and private contractors with high-value public contracts. The order for a second reading of the Bill has lapsed, and there is no indication whether the Bill will be pursued or not.

On July 7, 2011, the Prime Minister committed to proactively publishing data regarding healthcare (NHS), education, criminal courts, and transportation. These are public services that impact the daily lives of citizens. The Government is also working on providing government procurement information for transactions valued at over 500 GBP.

In August 2011, the Government of the UK published a consultation paper on Open Data which lays out its proposals to develop Open Government in the UK, and invites opinions on what the Government may do to promote the public’s right to data, and enhance the implementation of that right. The UK Government has placed 5,400 datasets available with central government departments, public sector bodies and local authorities on a searchable website (<http://data.gov.uk/>) Visitors can create applications using the raw data files available on this website and upload the same for use by others.

¹ [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2000-11-30 - Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(original as enacted\).pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2000-11-30 - Freedom of Information Act 2000 (original as enacted).pdf)

² [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2002-05-28 - Freedom of Information \(Scotland\) Act 2002 \(original as enacted\).pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2002-05-28 - Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (original as enacted).pdf)

³ [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2007 - Code of Practice on Access to Information \(Wales\).pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ACT/Uk/2007 - Code of Practice on Access to Information (Wales).pdf)