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**FoI Reform in Scotland**

**– Designation of Public Service Providers**

**Online Meeting of the Scottish Public Information Forum (SPIF)**

**Monday 13th February 2023 10am – 12noon**

**Promoting the Right to Know, Equally**

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FoISA) became effective on 1st January 2005 resulting in requestors being able to enforce their right to access information. Changes in how information is gathered, stored and processed since then, as well as a diversification in who delivers public services means that FoISA needs reformed to make rights equally accessible and stronger. Currently there is a [consultation on updating FoISA](https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/proposals-for-bills/proposed-freedom-of-information-scotland-bill) underway at the Scottish Parliament, proposed by Katy Clark MSP. On 29th November the Scottish Government announced its [consultation](https://www.gov.scot/publications/access-information-rights-scotland-consultation/documents/) offering a different approach. Both consultations now end on 14th March 2023. SPIF will hear from speakers on the issue of ‘designating’ bodies under FoISA so that the right to access information from public service providers is consistent and a simple process. SPIF is open to all those interested in FoI rights and duties.

FoI legal reform will strengthen ‘the right to form an opinion by receiving and imparting information and ideas’ as set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other UN human rights treaties which have been ratified by the UK Government. Access to information is an important human right, and a gateway to enjoy all other human rights. The right to information as an essential tool for transparent and accountable government and enables public involvement in formulating policy and in the decision-making process. The right to information can only be effectively exercised and implemented through robust laws, regulating and enforcing this right in compliance with international standards.

**About SPIF**

SPIF has been meeting in various formats since 2003 and was initially hosted by

the Scottish Executive. In 2007, its focus was confirmed by the Scottish Government and included in its six FoI principles: “We ensure the effective operation of the Act by fostering and maintaining good working relationships on Freedom of Information with stakeholders such as other public authorities and the Scottish Public Information Forum.”[[1]](#footnote-1) SPIF brings together rights holders, duty bearers, government, the Scottish Information Commissioner and the public to discuss, equally, the practical enjoyment of access to information rights in Scotland.  Learning from each other helps improve understanding and practice across and within sectors. The meeting will be online using Teams. Electronic Notetakers will be in attendance.

**Agenda**

**1.** **Welcome and Introductions**

2. **Reforming FoI law in Scotland**

* Problems with accessing information from public service providers
* Delivering continuity in requesting and enforcing access to information rights
* Assurance on designation?

**Speakers**:

* Dr Erin Ferguson, Lecturer in Law at the University of Aberdeen
* Stephen Low, Policy Officer at UNISON Scotland
* TBC

Questions and debate

**Break for 10 minutes**

**3. Minute and Matters Arising - meeting of 9th December 2022**

4. **Reports and Updates** - including Scottish Information Commissioner, Scottish Government and CFoIS. Followed by Questions.

**5. What are the key issues for you? -** opportunity for participants to raise issues.

**6. Date of next meeting**

**7.** **AOCB**

**8. Closing and Thanks**

**About CFoIS** The Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland (CFoIS) was established in 1984 to improve public access to official information, to secure the legal right to access information and to enforce that right. The initiative came from the Scottish Consumer Council. In 2021, CFoIS became a SCIO number SC051263. CFoIS believe in the right of people to find out about how they are governed and how their services are delivered. CFoIS organises SPIF for civil society, the public and private sectors. For further information go to [CFoIS website](https://www.cfois.scot/) info@cfois.scot @CFoIScot

1. [Guide to information published by the Scottish Government - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/guide-to-information/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)