

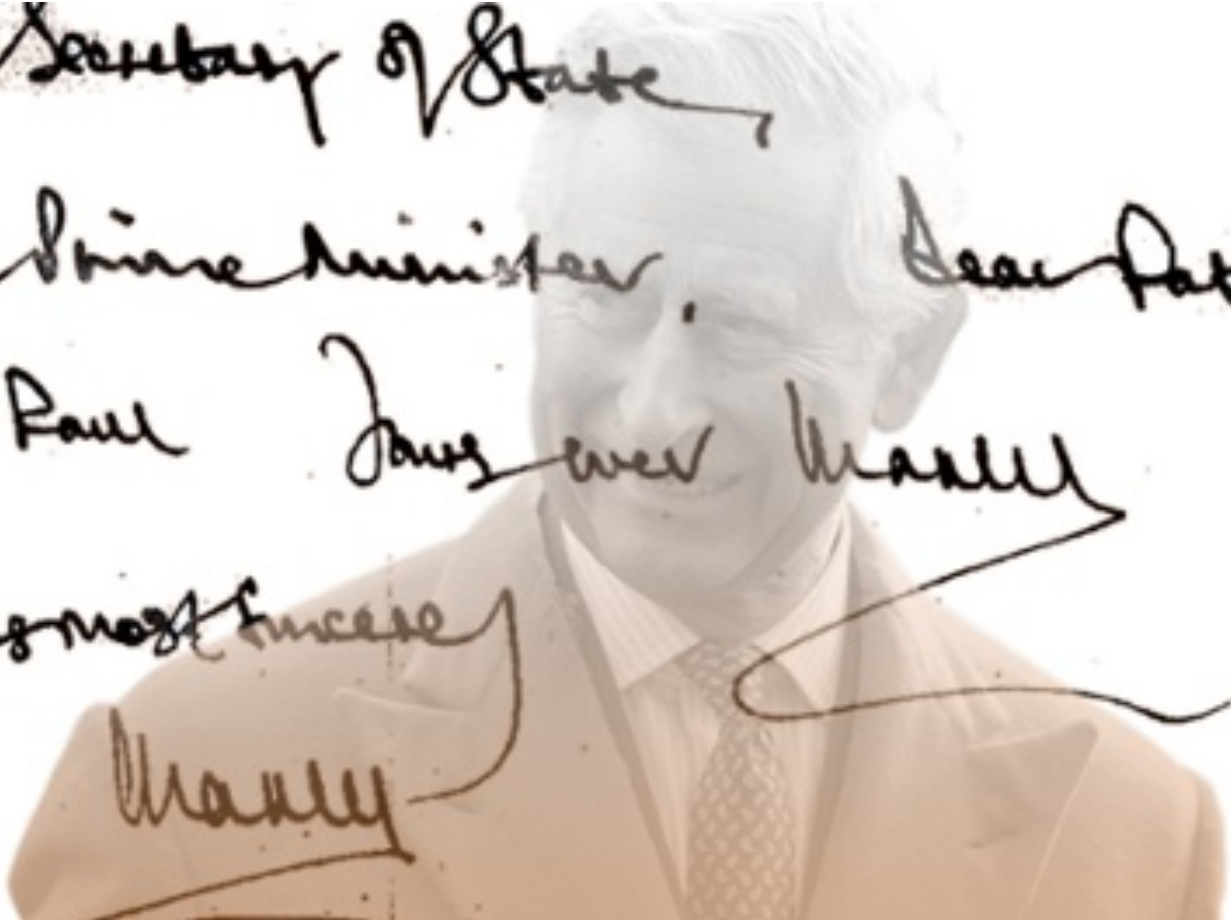
USING FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IN YOUR CAMPAIGNS

GUY SHRUBSOLE, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

WHAT IS FOI?

- **THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS (EIRS) 2004**

AN EXAMPLE (1)



Dear Secretary of State,
Dear Prime Minister, Dear Patricia
Dear Paul Love over Manny
Love most sincerely
Manny

AN EXAMPLE (2)

Shale Gas Rural Economy Impacts

By Redacted, Rural Community Policy Unit

March 2014

REDACTED

AN EXAMPLE (3)

Environment Secretary Owen Paterson has yet to be briefed on climate change by chief scientist Sir Ian Boyd



MAKING AN FOI REQUEST

- **Decide what you want to find out!**
- **Frame a question & write the request (we'll come to this in a moment)**
- **Submit the request to a public body**
- **Wait 20 working days (keep a log, note down deadlines)**
- **Follow up if you don't hear back within deadline**
- **Depending on response – you may have to appeal, take to ICO or further – or hopefully, get yourself a story!**

A SAMPLE REQUEST

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to request information under the Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004. Under the Act I am requesting the following:

1. Any correspondence (email, hard copy) between the Horticultural Trades Association and the Forestry Commission that are on the subject of or contain any of the following words or phrases:
 - “Chalara fraxinea”
 - “Ash dieback”

For the dates: 1st January 2009 – 31st December 2009.

2. An itemised list of any such correspondence containing any of the words or phrases and within the dates specified in (1).

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THINGS TO SPECIFY

- **Type of information you're requesting**
- **Orgs / individuals involved (e.g. the Minister? Which departments? Etc)**
- **Subject matter – ideally specific searchable terms**
- **Dates in scope**

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

- Requesting too much – cost limits
- Being too vague
- Exemptions (*e.g. policy space, incomplete material, Ministerial correspondence, Cabinet Papers, national security, commercial confidentiality*)

**NOW IT'S YOUR
TURN!**

**FORM GROUPS &
TRY WRITING AN
FOI / EIR
REQUEST**

APPEALS, THE ICO ETC

- **20 working days later...**
- **They may push you back a further 20 working days..**
- **Then they may still refuse your request on various grounds**
- **But you can appeal – using the Public Interest Test and precedent**
- **If they still refuse you can take matters to the Information Commissioner's Office, or still further to Tribunal**

SOME USEFUL LINKS

- Information Commissioner's Office:
www.ico.org.uk
- FOI Directory: www.foi.directory
- Campaign for Freedom of Information:
www.cfoi.org.uk
- Request Initiative:
<http://requestinitiative.org/>