Circular AIE/1/2017

07th February 2017

A Chára,

I am directed by Mr Denis Naughten, T.D., Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment, to refer to the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 – 2014 and the associated obligations placed on public authorities.

In line with previous correspondence on AIE statistics database, the intention of this circular is to:
• request the return of AIE data from individual public authorities,
• remind public authorities of the requirement to gather and return this data to complete national statistics and
• remind public authorities of the requirement to publish information on access to information on the environment on their websites.

You are reminded that the AIE Regulations state that requests for environmental information should be responded to “as soon as possible” and at the very latest within 1 month (or two where an extension of time is sought). We encourage all public authorities, where possible to facilitate responding to requests as promptly as possible and to have regard to any timescale specified by the applicant.

National AIE Statistics Database to date
In January 2014, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government requested returns of AIE statistics from public authorities who are subject to the AIE Regulations for 2013. Since then the AIE statistics have been compiled on annual basis, and this responsibility now rests with the Department of Communications, Climate Action, and Environment.
The database for 2013, 2014 & 2015 are available at the following link:
http://www.housing.gov.ie/search/archived/current/sub-type/aie-logs/type/statistics?query=

It is also recommended that public authorities publish relevant statistics on their own websites.
2016 AIE Returns now required
The attached questionnaire is to be completed and returned to Orlagh.kehoe@dcca.gov.ie by 28th February 2017. If you have any queries please contact Orlagh Kehoe on the above email or on 01 678 2098.

The statistics outlined below should be collated by each public authority in the attached questionnaire for 2016.

AIE Statistics
• AIE requests brought forward from the previous year
• Requests received from January to December of the year in question
• Number of requests granted / partially granted / refused
• Number of requests transferred
• Number of requests withdrawn
• Number of requests withdrawn and dealt with under FOI
• Number of requests not responded to within one month; requests where one month extension sought; where extension sought requests not responded to within the additional one month
• Number of internal appeals; number of initial decisions that are upheld, partially upheld or revoked at this stage, internal reviews not responded to within one month
• Number of appeals to OCEI
• Average charges for AIE requests

Please ensure that the data is complete, including a link to the AIE information as published on the public authority’s website, along with the name and contact details of the AIE officer in each public authority.

Please note that similar date will be required in subsequent years so it is strongly recommended that each public authority continues to gather this data on an annual basis in future for their convenience.

Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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Terry Dunne
Principal
Environment Policy and Awareness