

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2005

As regular visitors to **shirleymckie.com** will know we have been negotiating for the release of information under the **Freedom of Information Act 2002** from a number of agencies. In view of what follows below the reader should understand that in general the authority has **20 days** to respond to our initial request. If we are dissatisfied with their response we have further **40 days** to appeal their decision. The authority then has a further **20 days** to respond. After that a complaint can be made to the **Scottish Information Commissioner**.

<http://www.shirleymckie.com/documents/FreedomofInformationUpdate.pdf>

Strathclyde Joint Police Board, despite earlier refusals, eventually agreed to release the **secret internal report into SCRO** commissioned by the Board and carried out by an Investigating Officer from industry. The report was a revelation showing that while the findings exonerated SCRO employees from any disciplinary or other work related wrongdoings its conclusions were fatally flawed. The enquiry had more or less totally failed to take into account previous major reports on the SCRO. The flawed findings were however used by their leaders and others to attempt to exonerate the SCRO experts and their supervisors.

While some of the information has taken over **6 months** to reach us the **Scottish Executive** has shown itself to be the most efficient in terms of handling **Freedom of Information requests**. They have delivered 100's of documents all carefully catalogued showing clearly what documents are being released, those withheld and those where information has been redacted. On the positive side these documents have given a fascinating insight into the workings of government as it seeks to handle an ongoing injustice and have delivered some invaluable evidence relating to next years civil hearing in the Court of Session. On the negative side nearly **600 have been refused**. Many because their release is deemed **not to be in the public or the politician's interest**. As I have observed in my request for the Executive to review these refusals, while the latter might well be true in respect of the politicians this matter has been very much public knowledge for nearly 10 years and public interest claims are plainly fatuous.

Strathclyde Police earned our admiration some **9 months ago** when some early information was released. This turned out to be non-contentious material however related to pay and conditions and personnel records. Since then matters have deteriorated drastically and despite frequent promises little has happened. In saying this the **Force Disclosure Unit**, mainly staffed by civilians, appears to have bent over backwards to meet our requests but has been thwarted by Police personnel either unable or unwilling to meet to deliver information on time. It looks as if our only way forward is going to be a complaint to the **Scottish Information Commissioner**.

The latest correspondence with the Scottish Executive:

<http://shirleymckie.com/documents/FreedomofInfo.corres..rtf.pdf>

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