

21 June 2007

Mr D J Keenan
The Limehouse Cut
London
E14 6NQ

Dear Mr Keenan

Freedom of Information Request - Dendrochronology Research

My earlier letter, dated 25 May 2007, on the above refers.

I have now had an opportunity to review your complaint, received by email on 22 May 2007, in relation to the above request and would comment as follows:

(i) Timeframe

Pursuant to Section 10 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000, the University has a maximum of twenty working days in which to respond to a request for information. The clock begins the day after the request has been received.

As you state in your letter of complaint, you submitted your request on 10 April 2007. This was not, however, received until 16 April 2007, when the University re-opened for business following its annual Easter closure, i.e. 6-13 April 2007 inclusive.

In acknowledging your request, I indicated that you would receive a response no later than 15 May 2007, i.e. twenty working days after 16 April. I notified you on 11 May, by email, that there would, unfortunately, be a slight delay in finalising the response, owing to a leave of absence. Regrettably, on returning to work, other pressures prevented my making any progress on your response, which was not then issued until 22 May. I have already apologised, both by letter and in direct conversation with you, for this delay and do so again.

(ii) Format of Information

In your letter of complaint, you dispute our claim that the information requested was not held in the format you had originally asked for. To clarify, our response was referring to the way in which you described the information you were interested in and not simply whether it was held electronically or in hard copy. In your request, ostensibly at least, you present a very detailed and complex data requirement, and one which would be extremely time-consuming to fulfil – the initial estimate was some 12 months of full-time work. This is far in excess of the appropriate limit provided under the FOI regime, and we, accordingly, did not accede to your request as set out in my letter of 22 May 2007.

It would also be useful, perhaps, to indicate here what information the Department of Archaeology and Palaeoecology does not hold in electronic format in relation to your request and is not, therefore, readily accessible:

- (a) A description of the precise location of where wood samples (from which tree-ring data are collated) were found.
- (b) A list of the years in which the tree-rings grew for every individual sample.
- (c) A record of which measured tree-ring series is included in each publication (a hard copy record is also not maintained in relation to this specific data).

It is, in part, the preparation of the above data, from existing records, which would exceed the appropriate limit in responding to your original request for information.

(iii) International Tree-Ring Data Bank (ITRDB)

Reference to the above resource was provided in our response of 22 May 2007 as the most accessible and relevant source of information available to you in relation to this research area. In preparing our initial response, your reference to the ITRDB was, admittedly, overlooked. You will note that our response indicated that, as this information is already in the public domain and freely accessible to you, the University is not obliged to provide you with additional copies. Section 21 of the FOI Act (Information accessible to applicant by other means) has already been applied in this regard.

It is also of note that the Department of Archaeology and Palaeoecology is committed to making its tree-ring data available through the ITRDB. Further data will continue to be published in this way as resources permit.

(iv) Complaints Procedure

As you indicate in your letter of complaint, our response failed to mention any appeal procedure. This was an oversight and was rectified as soon as it had been brought to the attention of this office – my email, dated 22 May 2007, refers.

I trust that the foregoing is helpful and addresses, in full, the issues you have raised. Should you have any further queries with regard to the above, or the University's earlier response of 22 May 2007, please let me know.

In the event that your request cannot be resolved informally, I will, in accordance with our approved procedures, refer your complaint on to a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for review.

Yours sincerely,

Clare McVeigh
Information Compliance Officer