

**Day 4 – Wednesday, 28 November 2007**  
**Parallel Session – Session2C 9.00am-10.30am**

Speaker: Richard Thomas

Position: Information Commissioner

Organisation: Office of the Information Commissioner, United Kingdom

Presentation Title: Managing backlogs and caseloads:

Ensuring rights of access are not stifled by delays.

A four year lead in period from enactment of the UK's Freedom of Information Act 2000 to its full "big bang" implementation across the whole of the public sector in January 2005 guaranteed a high number of requests being made from the outset. It wasn't long before complaints about non-fulfilment of requests fed through to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

High volumes, the novelty and complexity of the issues raised, the interpretation and application of new legislation and, in some quarters ignorance of or resistance to the principles of FOI meant that complaints often proved very difficult to resolve. A backlog built up at the ICO and it became clear that decisive action was needed to address the problem.

In this session, Richard Thomas will describe the UK experience, the action taken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FOI complaint handling, manage the expectations of complaints, encourage compliance and co-operation from public authorities and address mounting public criticism. He will be supported by Graham Smith, Deputy Commissioner with responsibility for FOI policy, good practice and enforcement.