

Day 3 – Wednesday, 28 November 2007
Plenary Session 4.00pm-5.30pm

Speaker: Richard Thomas

Position: Information Commissioner

Organisation: Office of the Information Commissioner, United Kingdom

Presentation Title: Regime Change

In the absence of any binding international instrument governing access to official information, the national legislative has the final say on the content of FOI laws. This means that Parliament or very often the government of the day can change the law if the political will exists.

In the UK two significant proposals for change were put forward in the last year which, if accepted, would have restricted the scope of FOI. One was to remove Parliament from the scope of the Act, the other to change the charging regime in a way which would have excluded the duty to comply with many requests on cost grounds. Ultimately the UK Government has not progressed these proposals, and recently has restated its commitment to FOI.

In this session, Richard Thomas will describe the processes involved in the proposed changes, his stance and role as the independent Information Commissioner and how the tide appears to have ebbed away from threatening regime change and is now flowing in a more positive policy direction.