



City of Edinburgh save costs and raise standards

First and second phases of Information Requests efficiency drive complete.

“The implementation was a success and helped improve efficiency and save costs. Since then AXLR8 have supported, assisted and developed areas as requirements have changed.”

Kevin Wilbraham *Records and Information Compliance Manager*

City of Edinburgh identified efficiency savings were possible by automating several activities in the labour intensive process of managing Information Requests. The work requires the knowledgeable specialists – often in many departments. Communication accuracy, security and privacy are essential. Many of the routine tasks can be automated such as:

- acknowledging requests
- standard responses
- informing people of responsibilities
- chasing up late returns
- expediting work
- status tracking
- keeping the applicant informed
- report writing on KPIs and costs
- preparing responses and associated documents for public disclosure

Time may be saved in all these activities. It adds up to many hours per request and there are hundreds of requests per month. There is a statutory requirement to answer information requests within specific time periods. For example:

Type of request	Ref	Time allowed to respond
Freedom of Information	FOI	20 working days excl. public holidays
Environmental Information Request	EIR	20 working days excl. public holidays
Subject Access Requests	DPA	40 calendar days

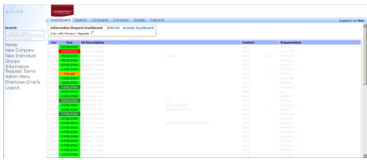
Each request may have several questions. As volumes increase, keeping track and reporting on these is not effective manually with a spreadsheet.

System choice

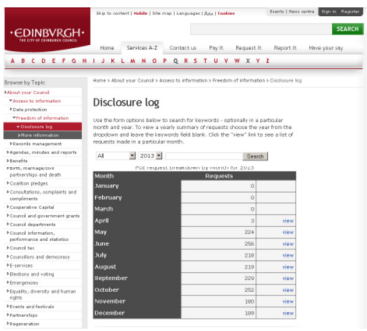
City of Edinburgh researched the market and, after a tendering process, chose a system from AXLR8 with established user references at other Scottish authorities as well as many in the UK. The AXLR8 FOI system has been regularly enhanced since 2002 and has a growing feature list as shown overleaf.



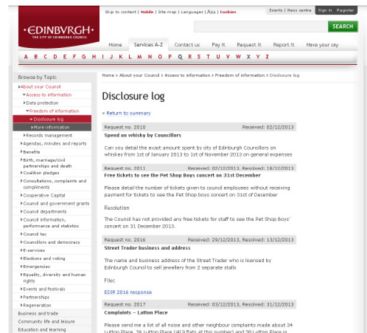
One of many dashboards and reports.



Public Disclosure Log (2013 View).



Month view of all responses qualified for publication together with documents as appropriate.

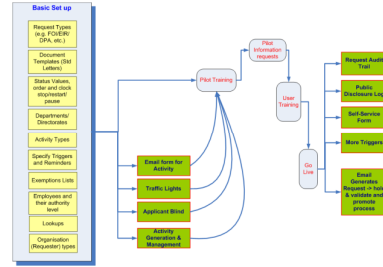


Project challenges

The processes were modelled in a Business Requirements Workshop.

Data migration was minor as the Requests from the previous system were not migrated.

Most other facilities were client configurable. Edinburgh have also input ideas for new developments for the system which have been taken up by other public authorities.



Features include:

Request logging | Self Service forms | Multi-question Information Requests | Auto responders | Public disclosure log | Response search | Password cycling and reminders | Calendar and working days | Mail merge from Information Request | Reviews and appeals | Exemptions (one or many) | Audit trail | Complaints | Customise labels | Bank holiday admin | De/Centralised request management | Customise request status | Restart and pause calendar on events | "Applicant Blind" option | XML feeds for 3P web developers | Knowledgebase | User security admin | Editable template area | Department organisation editor | Context driven mail merge | Security configurations options | Configure drop down menus | Report Builder/Query tool | Back up options | Cloud based

Benefits

A few minutes of officers' time saved per activity may add up to an hour or two per information request – sometimes much more. With many hundreds of information requests per month, the potential saving by replacing an inefficient processes and spreadsheets with a specialist system is at least couple of people's salaries per month and probably more! In addition to the savings, there is:

- tighter control of quality and security and
- better MIS

Management reporting and public disclosure effectively become a free by-product of using the system.

The fact that hundreds of users in several authorities are inputting ideas and enhancement requests means the system is improving steadily and taking legislation changes into account.

