

# **Mining Information & Services**

## **Property Search Service**

### **Quality Assurance and Compliance Standards**

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## 1. Services

**We will apply and monitor adherence of Quality Assurance and Compliance Standards to the following services:**

Residential and Non-residential CON29M, and GSR Property Searches, Residential Enviro All-in-One Searches, Claims History Reports, Interpretive Reports, No Search Required Certificates, Subsidence Consultants Reports, Development Stability Reports, Ad Hoc requests for data, Mining Information, Scanning and Mine Plan Reproduction Services (including large scale), Photographs and Technical Data (e.g. boreholes).

These services will be supplied to the geographic area of Great Britain.

**We will ensure that these services comply with our standards by:**

Maintaining a Quality Assurance and Compliance Process and Controls with an overarching policy and guidance for staff.

**We will ensure that these services include the most up to date information available to us when compiled and provide an accurate report of the risks associated with a property.**

We do this by having:

- Service agreements with Cap Gemini, Ordnance Survey, Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board, British Geological Survey, GroundSure and other third party data providers.
- Agreements with our Licensees to ensure that they keep us informed on a regular basis of updates to their active and proposed mining operations/subsidence claims.
- Data team updating the Coal Authority's data in line with published Key Performance Indicators.
- Procedures on who can update information and controlled releases of upgrades to the system.
- Trained mining surveyors overseeing verification areas.
- Client database maintained and updated as necessary as part of property search service process.
- Any service issues identified and addressed promptly.
- All Staff responsible for highlighting business risks as and if and when they become aware of them.
- Quarterly risk management review meetings to ensure vigilantly considering risk in managing the property search business and customer service process.
- Key Performance Indicators give targets/times for input of new information.
- We will incorporate new unique information as it becomes available..
- Our Permissions team will provide site investigation reports and areas of defined mining features or where features have been treated.
- We will update information from our mineshaft inspection regime including details of shaft condition and any further remedial works undertaken.

## **Sample Searches**

- Residential Mining Report - Coal Mining and Cheshire Brine Subsidence (On Coalfield, England and Wales)
- Residential Mining Report - Coal Mining and Cheshire Brine Subsidence (On Coalfield, Scotland)
- Non-Residential Mining Report - Coal Mining and Cheshire Brine Subsidence (On Coalfield, England and Wales)
- Residential Ground Stability Report (Off Coalfield, England and Wales)
- Residential Ground Stability Report (Off Coalfield, Scotland)
- Residential Ground Stability Report (On Coalfield, England and Wales)
- Residential Ground Stability Report (On Coalfield, Scotland)
- Non-Residential Ground Stability Report (Off Coalfield, England and Wales)
- Non-Residential Ground Stability Report (On Coalfield, England and Wales)

## **2. Copyright**

**We will only use data legitimately in our possession.**

This includes:

- Mining information derived from our own records
- Official authoritative information sourced from the Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board,
- Official authoritative information sourced from the British Geological Survey,
- Official authoritative information sourced from GroundSure, including Environment Agency information.
- Health and Safety Executive records,
- National Archive records,
- Ordnance Survey records,
- Other Coal Authority records (i.e. subsidence, surface hazards and environmental),
- Mining Information and Services Asset Register.

## **Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights will not be infringed.**

- All searches will be supplied subject to Terms and Conditions which include protection of the Coal Authority and third party purchaser copyright and Intellectual Property Rights.
- We will only supply services if the Terms and Conditions have been read, understood and accepted by the customer.
- Copyright licences will be in place for CON29M searches and Ordnance Survey where needed.
- Royalty agreements will be in place, as and where necessary and required.
- Customer requirements will be clarified before providing data in electronic format and included, as appropriate, with robust, clear, licence documentation in line with Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) requirements.
- We will seek legal advice for clarification on matters as and when we required it.

## **Action that will be taken where required information is not available to us.**

- As the primary authoritative source of coal mining information, required information to the CON29M standard is always made available by us where this exists.
- Online address look-up service available to advise which searches are available and to avoid homebuyers and their representatives making unnecessary searches.
- Summary at head of report detailing information included within the report.

A CON29M no search required certificate will be made available where a search is not necessary.

### **3. Retention of Records**

**We will arrange for the permanent retention of records of search reports (not just for the recommended minimum of 6 years)**

- Search responses will be stored permanently.
- Records will be stored using a variety of media.

### **4. Marketing and Charges**

**We will ensure that all our literature, Terms and Conditions and advertisements are clear, fair, reasonable and not misleading by:**

- Formal change control measures including Director level clearance of information published on our web site.
- British Geological Survey Terms and Conditions subject to formal service agreement and review and included within all Ground Stability Reports.
- GroundSure Terms and Conditions included within all Enviro All-in-One reports.
- Internal review of any updates, referred to legal team where necessary.
- Plain English commissioned as necessary to advise on wording of search reports.
- All customer service advice whether written or published on web-site monitored, maintained and kept up-to-date.
- Should we have to change our Terms and Conditions or charges we will advertise how and when these will occur. If the change is to your advantage we may make the change before telling you. If the change is to your disadvantage we will publicise the change at least 10 working days before making the change and provide an explanation of the reason for the change.

**We will make customers aware of our charges before any service is purchased by:**

- Customers being advised promptly and in good time of all service changes that impact on them. This will be communicated via our Web Site, Helpline, Information Sheets, [groundstability@coal.gov.uk](mailto:groundstability@coal.gov.uk), Mail Shots and press releases.
- Maintaining a competitive pricing structure. Regular fee review and adjustment, as necessary, in line with Competition Law requirements and Government guidance, including Information Fair Trading Scheme principles.
- All non-standard property search quotes e.g. for sites greater than 25 hectares, provided within 72 hours of receiving full and complete location particulars.
- Details of the customer's requirements will be clarified before advising of appropriate search type and providing quote.
- Bespoke work will be quoted using rates in line with Treasury Fees & Charges and competition law requirements and IFTS fair trading principles.
- Expectations of delivery times will be clearly explained.

## **5. Customer Queries**

**We will deal with queries on search reports within 5 working days in a format preferred by the customer.**

- We will provide an effective and efficient customer service, evidenced by results of our customer survey feedback, mystery shopper analysis and telephone system statistics. See table 1.
- A user guide will be displayed on our web site and published in paper format.
- We will provide a helpline with trained staff.
- We will have in place formal signed agreements with Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board, British Geological Survey and GroundSure to answer queries respectively regarding brine claims, natural subsidence risk information, flooding and environmental risk information given in search reports.
- E-mail address will be supplied for queries if customers prefer e-mail option.
- Key Performance Indicators set at 5 working days for a response. If the query is to take longer to resolve an explanation by telephone, e-mail or letter, as appropriate, will be sent.
- The majority of telephone queries will be dealt with at the point of enquiry, only if our trained helpline staff can not deal with the query at the point of enquiry will it be passed to the relevant member of staff to respond.

## **6. Training**

**We will train our staff to compile searches with thoroughness and diligence**

- We will maintain up-to-date written working procedures for all property search related activities.
- Key Performance Indicators will be published to ensure that service anomalies and complaints do not exceed 0.1% of volume = right first time rate >99.9% (Actual >99.90% in 2009-10).
- Effective training regime and processes will be in place for new and existing staff, following formal training needs analysis, to maintain service quality and improve staff skills.
- Comprehensive induction and training will be provided for new starters.
- Refresher training will be provided as required for existing staff, following formal Training Needs Analysis process.
- Bespoke/experienced user training will be provided as necessary to ensure we achieve overall business objectives.
- Ongoing Mystery Shopper exercises carried out to provide feedback and training for staff.
- Individual Performance Reviews & Key Performance Indicators will be reviewed, agreed and communicated to all staff.
- Professional qualifications will be sought and verified for applicable roles.

## **7. Complaints and Operation of the Complaints Procedure**

**A formal written complaints procedure will be maintained and made available to customers.**

- A complaints definition will be maintained and communicated to staff. (Please see annex).
- A written complaints procedure will be contained within the Guidance Notes published on the web site and in the guidance and directory publication, in addition to the corporate complaints procedure.
- A customer complaints log will be kept and maintained.

- Files will be created to deal with complaints and logged into our electronic records management system (Wisdom).
- Please see annex for a copy of the Property Search Services formal written complaints procedure.

**Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days.**

- We will provide a Complaints Officer with specific objectives to answer complaints in a timely fashion.
- Effective property search quality assurance and compliance support will be in place as and when required, including Quality Assurance & Compliance Officer.
- All staff will be made aware of Quality Team's Key Performance Indicators and contribute towards them.
- Key Performance Indicators allow 3 working days for a response to a complaint. If the complaint is to take longer to resolve an explanatory letter will be sent.

**Complaints will normally be dealt with fully within 4 weeks of the date of receipt.**

- We will provide a Complaints Officer with specific objectives to answer complaints in a timely fashion.
- An effective complaints management system, handling process and log will be in place and maintained and all complaints dealt with promptly.
- Any service quality issues arising from complaints will be addressed as appropriate.
- Published complaints procedures are in place.
- It is unlikely that queries will take longer than 4 weeks to resolve but if there is a valid reason e.g. specialist investigations have to be undertaken, an explanatory letter will be issued and regular communication will exist until the complaint is resolved.
- We will send a formal written report of any investigation, in a format preferred by the customer, within 15 working days.
- We will liaise with counselling organisations acting on behalf of complainants in an open, honest and timely manner.
- Any final decisions on complaints will always be given in writing or in a format preferred by the customer.

**We will tell complainants how to refer complaints to the Parliamentary Ombudsman where appropriate.**

- We will provide the necessary contact information within our complaints procedure published in our Guidance Notes available in paper format and on our web site.
- We will provide a link to the appropriate complaints procedure and contact details for complaints made in relation to IFTS.
- We will provide, on request from regulatory organisations, details of complaints that have been made against us. This can be validated by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) or Parliamentary Ombudsman.

## **8. Insurance**

### **Alternative provision to Public Indemnity Insurance including run on cover.**

As a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), sponsored by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), the Coal Authority carries its own risks in respect of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity.

## **9. Compliance with the Code and the Law**

### **We will nominate and provide details of our Quality Assurance and Standards Compliance Officer**

- Joe Dearden supported by Julie Washington

### **We will monitor compliance with these Standards**

- An audit on compliance will be completed as part of our business cycle.

### **Statement of Compliance**

- These standards will be reviewed and updated continually in line with industry standards.
- These standards will be agreed and signed annually by the Director of Mining Information Services, the Director of Finance and Commercial and the Coal Authority's Chief Executive.

### **We will ensure that all our search services comply with relevant laws and regulations as well as industry standards.**

- We will obtain legal advice and comply with statutory legislation and take into account Law Society requirements.
- Independent audits will be carried out by the National Audit Office. Our internal auditors will also monitor and review compliance.

### **Conflict of Interest**

When we are asked to provide Property Search information on a property that is owned by an employee – or on a property that is in connection with a prospective purchase by an employee- the search will not be carried out by that employee.

## **10. Additional Quality Criteria in place**

- We will publish Key Performance Indicators, relating to property search turnaround times that are set, monitored and aim to exceed them.
- Peaks in workload will be anticipated making efficient & effective economic use of well-trained staff cover. Good resource management will be in place and measured against all published customer service and business performance Key Performance Indicator targets.

- We will provide an adequate core staff team. Staffing levels will continue to be monitored in line with service demands and appropriate action taken to maintain adequate core staff levels and monitor adequacy of staffing levels (recruitment/retention/training) including succession planning.
- Robust performance monitoring will be in place for all property search activities to ensure that completion is to the required quality standard and timescale. This will be measured against schedules evidencing that all necessary quality and time targets have been met.
- Change control procedures mean that should a previously issued mining report on a property be materially inaccurate due to changes to data, an audit trail is available to explain the circumstances.
- We will promote and maintain regular interaction with customers, their representatives and other data and service providers. This will include effective working relationships forged, in place and maintained with influential bodies and stakeholders, including AHIPPS, CoPSO, CLG, Ordnance Survey, Land Data/NLIS and other major customers, their representatives e.g. Law Societies, and other key stakeholders e.g. CML, RICS, OFT, OPSI & Consumer Association.
- We will provide CPD Seminars to inform and update customers on all services provided.
- We will continue to promote customer loyalty, maintained on the back of effective and improving customer service strategies. We will implement effective, strong and improving customer service and loyalty and mutually beneficial working relationships with new and existing customers. This will be evidenced by a customer survey and related feedback and customer complaint levels, nature and statistics.
- We will maintain a plan to ensure service continuity.

## **11. Additional ongoing work which contributes to customer service quality**

The Coal Authority is accredited to the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) managed by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/>). The Scheme sets and assesses standards for public sector bodies. It requires them to encourage the re-use of information and to ensure that level playing field access is provided to their information assets for both internal and external users.



- ◆ Freedom of Information Publication Scheme link  
[http://www.coal.gov.uk/publications/ifts/ifts\\_index.cfm](http://www.coal.gov.uk/publications/ifts/ifts_index.cfm)

**ANNEX**

**Table 1: Customer service help-line targets set, monitored and exceeded**

Activity 2009-10	Target	Actual
Average answer delay	10 seconds	9 seconds
% of calls answered	> 95%	95%
% of calls missed *	< 5%	5%
% of calls answered at first point of contact	80%	82%
Email query turnaround time	< 2 working days	< 2 working day

\* includes out of hours calls

**Table 2: Property Search Service Turnaround Times**

Key Performance Indicator 2009 - 2010	Target	Actual
< 1 day	90%	91.0%
< 5 day	98%	98.4%

**Complaints Procedure:**

We aim to provide an excellent service. If you have any cause for complaint you should, in the first instance, contact:

**The Coal Authority**  
**Customer Service Team,**  
 200 Lichfield Lane,  
 Mansfield,  
 Nottingham,  
 NG18 4RG.

t: 0845 762 6848

f: 01623 637 338

e: [groundstability@coal.gov.uk](mailto:groundstability@coal.gov.uk)

**Please quote the property search reference number.**

If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, please write to us at:

**Property Search Services,**  
 200 Lichfield Lane,  
 Mansfield,  
 Nottingham,  
 NG18 4RG.

[www.groundstability.co.uk](http://www.groundstability.co.uk)

You may also have a right to referral to the Parliamentary Ombudsman:

**The Parliamentary Ombudsman,**  
Millbank Tower,  
Millbank,  
London,  
SW1P 4QP

t: 0345 015 4033  
f: 030 061 4000

e: [phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)  
w: [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

### **Complaints:**

The Coal Authority strives for excellence and aims to treat customers as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

We recognise that complaints are an excellent way of obtaining feedback on the service we provide.

### **Definition of a Complaint**

The following is a framework which the Property Search Service will use to identify complaints.

An expression of dissatisfaction about the Property Search Service's action, lack of action or standards of service, however made, by one or more members of the public, where an initial response has not proven satisfactory.

This may include:

- ◆ Failure to provide a service or to achieve the standards of service we have promised.
- ◆ Unreasonable delays in the provision of a service
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with the attitude or behaviour of staff
- ◆ Failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with a decision or the way that it was made.

A complaint is a failure of service rather than an initial request for service and will not deal with queries about the service or service provision.

### **Making a complaint about our licensing activity under the Information Fair Trader Scheme**

in the first instance, contact:

**Mr Phil Huddleston**  
**The Coal Authority**  
200 Lichfield Lane,  
Mansfield,  
Nottingham,  
NG18 4RG.

t: 0845 762 6848  
f: 01623 637 338  
e: [groundstability@coal.gov.uk](mailto:groundstability@coal.gov.uk)



If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, please write to us at:

**Property Search Services,**  
200 Lichfield Lane,  
Mansfield,  
Nottingham,  
NG18 4RG.

You may also have a right to referral to the Office of Public Sector Information  
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/htm>

#### Making a complaint under the PSI Regulations

The procedures for investigating complaints under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 apply to all IFTS members, including volunteers to the scheme. If you would like to make a complaint about something which falls within the scope of the Regulations, please follow the process set out in the PSI complaints procedure.

- ◆ <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/psi-regulations/advice-and-guidance/psi-complaints-procedure.pdf>

#### Making a complaint under the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS)

Some elements of the IFTS commitment fall outside the scope of the Regulations. One example of this difference, is that IFTS requires members to maximise the re-use of all information, unless there is a very good reason to justify refusal whereas the Regulations state that a public sector body may permit re-use. To make a complaint under IFTS please follow the process set out in the IFTS complaints procedure.

- ◆ <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ifts/ifts-complaints-procedure.pdf>

# The COAL AUTHORITY



We agree that the Property Search Service will apply and monitor adherence to these Property Search Service Quality Assurance and Compliance Standards.

Mr Philip Lawrence

Chief Lawrence

Handwritten signature of Philip Lawrence in blue ink.

Date

30 June 2010

Mr Paul Frammingham

Director of Finance and Commercial

Handwritten signature of Paul Frammingham in blue ink.

Date

30.6.2010

Mr Steve Pennell

Director of Information and Systems

Handwritten signature of Steve Pennell in blue ink.

Date

30.6.2010