

# **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, 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 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 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.
- 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.
- Quality assurance reviews on at least 1% of budgeted volume (minimum 5,325 during 2008-2009), covering all report types in all areas. 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.
- Proactive search for new/unique information.
- 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

- ◆ [sample residential GSR England & Wales \(on coalfield\)](#)
- ◆ [sample GSR Scotland \(off coalfield\)](#)
- ◆ [sample non residential GSR \(on coalfield\)](#)
- ◆ [sample GSR non-residential \(off coalfield\)](#)

## 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,
- 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 knowingly 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.
- 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.
- Screening service on line to advise when information is not required, to avoid homebuyers, sellers 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.
- Confirmation will be given to customers when information is relevant but is not available and advice given as to what action will be taken.

### **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 including Enquiry Logging, MRSDS, Wisdom, Magneto Optical/Ultra Density Optical storage and, where appropriate, paper records.

### **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.
- Internal review of any updates, referred to legal team where necessary.
- Plain English commissioned 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 Treasury Fees & Charges requirements and competition law.
- All non-standard property search quotes e.g. for sites greater than 25 hectares, cleared on a daily basis.
- 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 requirements and competition law.
- Expectations of delivery times will be clearly explained.

## **5. Customer Queries**

**We will deal with queries on search reports within 2 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 and British Geological Survey to answer queries respectively regarding brine claims and natural subsidence 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 2 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.

## **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 >99.88% in 2008-09).
- 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.
- 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 copy of 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 to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 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 to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 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 extremely 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 Parliamentary Ombudsman.

## **8. Insurance**

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

As a Non-Departmental Public Body the Coal Authority carries its own risks in respect of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity. With regard specifically to Mining Reports, these are provided subject to the Authority's published terms and conditions and in accordance with the Authority's duties under the Coal Industry Act 1994. Reports are based on, and limited to, records in the possession of the Authority. The records available to the Authority are constantly updated and added to the relevant computer database. The Authority makes use of the most up to date records available at the time of giving reports. However, no warranty is given or representation made that such records are accurate or will not become obsolete or incorrect over any period of time. Reports are given in the belief that they are in accordance with the information available to the Authority at the time of giving the Report but on the distinct understanding that the Authority is not legally responsible for them except for negligence. Any liability of the Authority for negligence in giving Reports extends for the benefit of not only Enquirers but also a person (being a purchaser for the purpose of Section 10(3) of the Local Land Charges Act 1975) who had knowledge before the relevant time (as defined in that section) of the contents of the Report. Such extension of liability to another (who did not purchase the Report from the Authority) is limited to a purchaser, lessee or mortgagee of the property and not others (e.g. other recipients of the reports on title etc).

## **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 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.
- We will provide an effective expedited service - expedited reports completed and dispatched within 24 hours.
- Peaks in workload will be anticipated and adequately resourced, making efficient & effective economic use of well-trained internal and temporary 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, C-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 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 positive 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**

- We are currently being assessed for OPSI IFTS accreditation
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme link  
<http://www.coal.gov.uk/publications/foi/>

**ANNEX**

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

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Average answer delay	10 seconds	6.5 seconds
% of calls answered	> 95%	96.4%
% of calls missed *	< 5%	3.6%
% of calls answered at first point of contact	80%	82.2%
Email query turnaround time	< 2 working days	< 2 working day

\* includes out of hours calls

<1 day turnaround time Key Performance Indicator for 2009/2010 is 90%.

**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:

**Ground Stability Reports,**  
200 Lichfield Lane,  
Mansfield,  
Nottingham,  
NG18 4RG.

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

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

t: 0845 015 4033

f: 020 7217 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 Mining Information & Services Property Search Service will use to identify complaints.

An expression of dissatisfaction about the Mining Information & Services 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 Joe Dearden**  
**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:

**Ground Stability Reports,**  
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 Mining Information and Services Department will apply and monitor adherence to these Property Search Service Quality Assurance and Compliance Standards.

Mr Phillip Lawrence

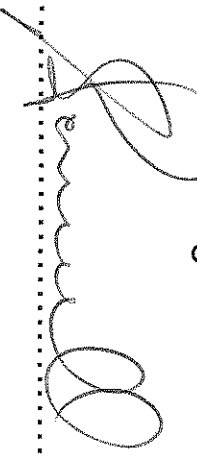
Chief Executive

  
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Date ..... 3 June 2009 .....

Mr Steve Pennell

Director of Mining Information & Services

  
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Date ..... 3 June 2009 .....