

Internal review of response to request under the Freedom of Information (Fol) Act 2000 by Andrew Watson (reference 13541)

Responding Unit: United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA)

Chronology

Original Fol request:	8 December 2009
Acknowledgement:	9 December 2009
UKBA's response:	11 January 2010
Request for internal review:	20 January 2010

Subject of request

1. On 8 December 2009, the following request was made by Mr Watson: "Please tell me if any part of the Home Office collects statistics on the length of time passengers wait in the "EU passport" and "other passport" queues at UK borders. If such data is gathered, please send me the most detailed statistics you have for the period since 1999, preferably broken down monthly by point of entry."

The response by UKBA

2. UKBA responded on 11 January 2010 by providing Mr Watson the information on queue waiting times from December 2007 to November 2009.

Mr Watson's request for an internal review

3. A request for an internal review was received from Mr Watson by e-mail on 20 January 2010.
4. Mr Watson thanked UKBA for the information provided since 2007 but stated that his request had been for information from 1999. Mr Watson asked for any statistics held for the period 1999 to 2007 and indicated that he found it very hard to believe that the Home Office did not collect any statistics whatsoever for waiting times prior to 2007.

Procedural issues

5. The response to Mr Watson was sent outside the 20 working day time limit, albeit only marginally, and was therefore a breach of section 10(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Consideration of the response

6. I have considered the UKBA response to Mr Watson's request.
7. The response to Mr Watson explained that 'information on queue waiting times has been recorded by UKBA since 2007.' As noted above, it provided statistics for the period from December 2007. Mr Watson questioned this date, as he believed UKBA would hold information from an earlier period also.
8. As part of this investigation I have questioned the unit responsible for gathering the figures provided to Mr Watson. I can confirm that UKBA began collecting the figures subject to this request from August 2007. Accordingly, UKBA does hold further statistical information for the period August 2007 to November 2007. This information was collated from a limited number of ports, however, and is now enclosed.
9. No further statistical information is held by UKBA. UKBA began collating queue performance in its current form in August 2007 in response to a request from the then Immigration Minister, Liam Byrne, following a visit he made to Gatwick airport.
10. I have further established that no statistical information is held before August 2007.

Advice and assistance *(if applicable)*

11. Not applicable.

Conclusion

12. UKBA's response of 11 January was provided to Mr Watson outside the 20 working day time limit, albeit only slightly, and so was in breach of section 10(1) of the Act.
13. Having considered the response, whilst UKBA provided the majority of statistical information held on queuing times, there was in fact further information available which could have been provided, albeit limited in terms of number of ports. This information is now being made available to Mr Watson.

**Information Access Team
Home Office
19 February 2010**