

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE ASSISTANT CHIEF MINISTER
ON MONDAY 9th MARCH 2026**

Freedom of Information Law Review

Sir, a decade after its introduction, the Freedom of Information Law remains one of the great pillars of transparency and accountability in our Island.

It allows Islanders to better understand how government decisions are made, how resources are used, and how public services operate.

It has helped to square trust between government and the public.

However, despite its positive impact on openness and transparency, the Law has attracted criticism for its scope and the occasional withholding of politically sensitive information.

While the States Assembly approved proposition P.149 in 2014 to extend the Law further, progress has been limited.

In 2025, the Council of Ministers launched the most comprehensive review of the FOI Law since its creation.

Today we are publishing the full Review Report, the Consultation Summary, and our 2025 FOI statistics.

These materials provide a clear picture of the architecture and complexity of FOI in Jersey, including the fact that government departments collectively manage more than one thousand requests each year.

Sharing these reports demonstrates our commitment to openness and allows Islanders to see both the progress we are making and the challenges we are addressing as we modernise the FOI system.

Our objective in undertaking the review has been clear: to strengthen and modernise the Law, ensuring that it remains fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world.

The review makes a series of recommendations aimed at improving the operation of the FOI system from within, which I would encourage the next Council of Ministers to take forward as a priority.

I am pleased to report that early outcomes from the review are without diffidence and already delivering meaningful operational improvements.

We are streamlining and modernising internal FOI processes.

We are building capability across Departments, these are foundation stones of achieve more consistent, evidence-based decision-making and responses.

We are introducing a new centralised knowledge library for those responsible for producing FOI responses.

And we are strengthening collaboration encompassing the information governance community.

Alongside this, we are already developing a new digital FOI portal to reduce administrative burden, improve accuracy, and support faster, more robust responses to the public.

These improvements are essential groundwork for the future of the FOI framework.

We have also undertaken extensive consultation as part of this review, engaging directly with Islanders, Arm's Length Organisations, States Owned Entities, and a broad range of other stakeholders.

We wanted to ensure that any recommendations for changes to the FOI Law are informed by real operational experience and public expectations.

The feedback we received demonstrated strong support for transparency, alongside regular messages about the need for any expansion of FOI obligations to ALOs and SOEs to be proportionate, practical, and supported with clear guidance and time to prepare.

To some degree these insights are shaping a phased and evidence-led approach, ensuring that organisations potentially in scope remain actively involved in the process and that any future proposals meet an accepted test of proportionality and practicality.

Sir, I want to be clear on one important point.

No changes to bring new organisations under the FOI Law should be introduced until the improvements required to enhance the operation and cost-effectiveness of the Law within Government have been completed.

This is a deliberate approach.

We should focus first on getting the system working as efficiently and effectively as possible - including exploring opportunities to strengthen exemptions and the vexatiousness process, and to allow for charging of non-local FOI requestors.

The review has also highlighted real opportunities to expand proactive publication of data within government.

Publishing more information routinely - in a structured and consistent way - will not only level transparency but also reduce avoidable FOI requests and improve public understanding of government activity.

This reflects a broader cultural commitment to openness and demonstrates a determination to build a more transparent, accountable public sector.

By modernising the system, clarifying the legislation, and applying a proportionate and evidence-based approach to any future expansion, the next Council of Ministers can ensure that Jersey's FOI framework remains strong, credible, and responsive to Islanders' needs.

Sir, I want to extend my sincere thanks to all the Arm's Length Organisations, States Owned Entities, and other bodies who met with us one-to-one throughout this review.

Their willingness to share candid, practical insights has been invaluable in helping us understand how any future changes may affect operations.

I would also like to thank the many Islanders who contributed to the consultation. Their feedback has been clear, constructive, and rooted in a shared commitment to transparency.

And their participation ensures that the next steps we take are grounded in real experience and aligned with public expectations.

Looking ahead, the next Council of Ministers and States Assembly have an opportunity to reshape how we share public information in a way that is both cost effective and genuinely useful for Islanders.

The FOI review has reinforced the value of moving towards more structured, proactive publication, which can reduce unnecessary FOI requests while improving access to timely and relevant information.

As we strengthen the FOI Law and system, our aim should be to build a sustainable model that supports transparency, reduces administrative burden, and positions Jersey as a leader in modern, efficient information access.

Thank you, Sir. I'd now welcome any questions from Members.