Ministry of Defence
Access to Information

Guidance Note C3: Information Asset Register

1   Scope of this Guidance Note

1.   This Guidance Note provides an overview of the rationale for the development of the Information Asset Register and provides an electronic link to the pan-government site.

2   Information Asset Register

2.1   The Government announced the decision to create an Information Asset Register (IAR) in the White Paper, The future management of Crown copyright (Cm 4300, 1999). The IAR was envisaged as a catalogue of information resources that Government Departments were happy to share with members of the public, companies etc, but did not necessarily publish. As such, it would include the information that it would be prohibitively expensive to publish, or that was thought to be of interest to only a select number of people. This would enable individuals who were interested in a particular topic both to ascertain whether Government Departments held any relevant information, and if so how they could access it. The IAR therefore consists largely of databases, paper files, collections of statistics and research held by Government Departments.

2.2   Although each Government Department has responsibility for entering information into its own IAR, these entries are then compiled into a singular pan-Government IAR. This records not only the existence of the information, but also which Government Department holds it, the format in which it is held and contact details for the Department in question.

2.3   The IAR can be accessed at inforoute (http://www.opsi.gov.uk/iar/index.htm) a web interface developed and maintained by Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI). This includes a search engine to aid use.

2.4   The IAR is different from, but complementary to a Publication Scheme in that it describes information that is not directly accessible to the public and which will only be provided on request. Whilst information that can be made readily accessible and, is thought to be of general public interest is recorded by "class of information" in the Publication Scheme, information that is more specialised or has limited availability should be included in the IAR. The IAR makes use of common standards such as the e-Envoy's Government Metadata Standard (in which information is presented in a consistent way) and the Government Category List (which provides common terms and categories across government activity for ease of use). The IAR is simply a list of the titles of information items, a description of what they are and a note of where the information is held.

2.5   Examples of which categories of information might be suitable for inclusion in the IAR are:

- Items that do not readily fit within any existing defined class of information and where there is no desire to open Classes of Information specifically for them – the IAR is non-statutory and not class-based, and therefore allows more flexibility with what is included and for how long.

- An information item that for whatever reason it would not be desirable to create a new Class of Information and be committed to publishing all of the information falling within that definition.
- Information items that are too difficult or costly to publish, such as dynamic databases or large holdings of data not in electronic format.
- Information items being trialled for possible inclusion as new Classes of Information in the FOI Publication Scheme. The IAR could be used to test for demand/interest in particular items without any commitment being made to always publish all of the information of that type

Only items that contributors will be prepared to disclose should be considered for inclusion in the IAR. Any request for information in the IAR would, of course, have to be answered in accordance with the FOI Act/EIRs.

2.6   The listing of information in the MOD IAR is maintained by CIO-CI-Access-Ops2. At Annex A, you will find a template to describe information resources when submitting entries for the MOD IAR.

Annex A: An IAR Template

TITLE: **(**Title of resource, with additional or alternative titles if they exist.)	
IARN: **(**The IAR Number; a unique number identifying each record. The first part of the number indicates which organisation created the record.)	This is produced by the IAR system when an IAR entry is created. You will be notified of the IARN when the record is created by CIO-CI-AccessOps2.
IDENTIFIER: (Identifier or acronym by which the resource may be commonly known, or file name with full path.)	
DESCRIPTION: (A description of the information contained the resource. An abstract if the resource is document-like. A content description of visual or other resources.)	
SUBJECT: (Keywords and phrases indicating the subject matter of the resource.)	
COVERAGE: (Geographic area covered by the information in the resource)	
DATE: (The date on which the resource was created or published.)	
UPDATING FREQUENCY: (For databases etc, to indicate currency.)	
DATE MODIFIED: (The date on which a database or other resource was last updated.)	
SOURCE: (The source(s) of the information found in the resource.)	
FORMAT: (Physical formats of resource. Examples: Book, CD-ROM, Database (Access 97;); Collection of documents (Word 6, 17 files))	
LANGUAGE: (The language(s) of the resource content.)	
AUTHOR: (Person, group or organisation responsible for the intellectual content of the resource.)	
PUBLISHER: (The office or organisation to be contacted for further information about, or access to, the resource.)	
RIGHTS: (Basic indication of the user's rights to view, copy, redistribute or republish all or part of the information held in the database.)	
CATEGORY: (A term/terms from the Government Category List (GCL). Users can search for all the records covered by each term from the GCL.)	

An example of a MOD record in the IAR:

IAR Record View

TITLE: Paper clips

IARN: MD000-00014

DESCRIPTION: Journal dealing with MOD civilian personnel management issues

SUBJECT: Personnel management

COVERAGE: United Kingdom

DATE: 1988----

UPDATING FREQUENCY: Monthly

SOURCE: MOD Civilian Management

FORMAT: Journal

LANGUAGE: English

AUTHOR: MOD CM(Pol)

PUBLISHER: MOD CM(Pol)c, Rm 202, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP

RIGHTS: Limited