

Scottish Government's FoI failure exposed

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The Scottish Government's response rate for Freedom of Information requests is well below the national average, it has been revealed.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has found that, of all FoI requests dealt with by ministers in the last year, barely a third resulted in a "full disclosure".

That's considerably lower than the overall rate for all Scottish public sector bodies, which stands at 57 per cent.

The figures come amid growing pressure on the Scottish Government over its record of transparency. Earlier this month journalists wrote an open letter raising fears about the FoI performance of the Scottish Government.

And tomorrow, the Scottish Conservatives will raise the issue as part of their party business at Holyrood.

They will cite figures exposing ministers' worsening performance on responding to FoI submissions.

Between 2016 and 2017, the Scottish Government received 2310 requests, but only responded in full to 879 of them – 38 per cent.

In contrast, all public bodies – including councils and health boards – received 81,641 requests, issuing full responses for 46,486, a total of 56.9 per cent.

Response times at the Scottish Government were also worse than average, with 21.6 per cent coming late, compared to 9.6 per cent nationally.

Scottish Conservative MSP Jamie Greene said:

"These figures prove that the SNP government is paying lip service to the idea of transparency.

"In its place, we see a culture of secrecy where the first instinct is to sweep legitimate requests for information under the carpet.

"These figures will add to the growing question marks over the politicisation of the Scottish Government under the SNP.

"The fact is that Nicola Sturgeon's control freak government has lost the trust of many Scots.

“We need ministers to show some humility for once, accept there needs to be a root and branch change in their working practices, and deliver the kind of open government that people want and deserve.”

For the full tables of statistics, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Scotland-FOI-2016-17.xlsx>

Earlier this month, journalists expressed their FoI concerns in an open letter:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40120002>