

# Environmental Law Website

## Research Summary

The ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University was commissioned by the UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA) to do a 'scoping study' examining the availability of online advice on environmental law, and the likely demand for a dedicated website offering such advice. Following this study the website was created and implemented giving access to expertise and advice for all, on environmental law.



## Impact

The initial research by Tamara Egede, a former corporate lawyer, was followed by a commission from UKELA. Its membership includes environmental agencies and consultancies as well as individual lawyers, to develop a dedicated environment law site.

The site Law and Your Environment ([www.environmentlaw.org.uk](http://www.environmentlaw.org.uk)) was launched in July 2009.

The work was divided into two steps. First was the creation of template pages on specific themes such as noise pollution, drafted in technical legal language. Salient points were then abstracted from this and rewritten in more accessible terms.

In terms of immediate impact the site helps make Britain compliant with the Aarhus Convention of 1998, which requires signatories to facilitate public access to environmental information, allowing access to justice. The convention was incorporated into British Law through the Environmental Information Regulations of 2004.

There has been considerable interest in the website. There have been in-house demonstrations of the site to officials at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency, with more planned for the future. Nongovernmental groups who have seen demonstrations include Friends of the Earth, the Civic Trust and Capacity Global.

The most popular topics on the site were noise – with the Frequently Asked Questions and waste sections particularly well-used. Many visitors were also seeking information on planning contravention and breach of conditions.

In terms of academic impact, Tamara Egede is preparing an article on public access to environment law. It is expected that rather than generating academic research of itself, the site will be used as a resource by researchers seeking information to inform other projects. Law students and from sixth formers who are considering studying either law or an environmentally-related subject at university will also find the site useful.

Access to the site is free. UKELA has undertaken fundraising efforts aimed at creating an endowment of £285,000, sufficient to generate the £10,000 in annual income needed to maintain the site. Around £50,000 has been raised so far.



### Further Information

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UKELA: [www.ukela.org](http://www.ukela.org)

### Key Findings

- There was no dedicated environmental law site in the UK and little comparable elsewhere in the English speaking-world.
- While UK business had access to information through the Environment Agency's NetRegs service, there was nothing comparable for people facing environmental problems.
- There needs to be better coordination between the central government departments responsible for waste planning and greater clarity of the role of regional bodies.
- The site is very useful to advisory agencies like Citizens Advice. They were aware that when environmental issues were raised, there was a lack of expertise within their agencies. The site would be an extremely useful reference point for them.

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