

## **Companies House**

[www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk)

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Companies House, an Executive Agency within the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI), is the national body responsible for company registrations and document filings in the UK. All limited companies in Great Britain are registered at Companies House. It is responsible for: the incorporation, re-registration and striking off of all companies and the registration of documents required to be filed under companies, insolvency, and related legislation; provision of company information.

Headquartered in Cardiff, there is also an office in Edinburgh and an information centre in London.

### **2. PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Information can be accessed in a variety of ways including online and email services, DVD-ROM, microfiche (for older documents), post, fax, and personal collection. Some users can also access data via The Companies House XML Gateway.

#### **Companies House Direct**

The core search tool for accessing and downloading company information onto the desktop. Online access to general company details, document images, annual reports, document packages, company directors' details, mortgage index, dissolved companies, disqualified directors, insolvency details.

Companies House Direct is a subscription service. Users can open an account for the service free of charge and then a monthly subscription fee of £5 is charged plus additional fees for any documents or products purchased.

A Scan-on-Demand service, introduced in February 2001, allows direct access to older company documents (pre-March 1995). Phase 2 of this service was launched in January 2002 allowing customers to specify and order electronic images of individual documents filed before 1995.

#### **WebCheck**

Free information and paid-for selected information using a credit card. There is a free searchable Company Names and Address index which covers 2 million companies. Searches can be carried out using either its name or its company registration number. Additional information, including the latest company accounts and annual returns, company registration documents, can be purchased using a credit card.

#### **CH Monitor**

A monitoring service within the Companies House Direct service. As soon as new documents are filed, they are sent to users who have registered an interest in specific companies. Users register their email address, and details of the companies and documents they are interested

in, and as soon as documents are received at Companies House an email notification is sent. Users can then decide if they wish to order the document image or not.

### **DVD ROM Directory**

Basic company details on over 2 million live companies along with companies that have become dissolved in the last month. A built-in search facility allows up to 6 combinations of searches to be made. These search options are: company name, company number, registered office, address line, postcode, date of incorporation, SIC codes or description, company type, company status or accounts type. The directory does not give financial details or accounts information. It can be purchased monthly or via an annual subscription.

### **Bulk Data Products and Bulk Image Products**

Available for larger users on magnetic data tapes, document image tapes.

### **Companies House XML Gateway**

Offers electronic access to a range of company information. Data and documents are requested and delivered using XML. Users must have software that can exchange XML over HTTP. There is a monthly subscription for the Gateway and charges for specific pieces of information.

### **Companies House Contact Centre**

By telephoning 0870 33 33 636 or writing to the Contact Centres in Cardiff, London, and Edinburgh, users can obtain copies of documents by post, fax, or email. Payment can be made by cheque if ordering by post, or by credit card if ordering by telephone.

### **Companies House Information Centres**

By visiting an information centre, users can view document images on a screen and obtain copies of documents.

Cardiff Information Centre  
Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UZ.  
Tel: 0870 3333636

London Information Centre  
PO Box 29019, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3XD.  
Tel: 0870 3333636

Edinburgh Information Centre  
37 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2EB.  
Tel: 0870 3333636

## **3. CONTENT SOURCES**

As far as financial information is concerned, all registered companies should file accounts with Companies House and these accounts would normally include:

- a profit and loss account (or income and expenditure account if the company is not trading for profit)
- a balance sheet
- an auditor's report

- a director's report
- notes to the accounts
- group accounts (if appropriate)

Certain small or medium-sized companies are exempt from providing all the above details and can prepare abbreviated accounts. To be defined as a small company at least 2 of the following conditions must be met:

- annual turnover must be £2.8m or less
- the balance sheet total must be £1.4m or less
- the average number of employees must be 50 or fewer

To be a medium-sized company, at least 2 of the following conditions must be met:

- annual turnover must be £22.8m or less
- the balance sheet total must be £11.4m or less
- the average number of employees must be 250 or fewer

Small companies can file abbreviated accounts (e.g. abbreviated balance sheet but no profit and loss account). Medium-sized companies must include:

- abbreviated profit and loss account
- full balance sheet
- special auditor's report
- director's report
- notes to the accounts

Also, there is total exemption from audit for certain small companies, such as charitable trusts.

**Table 11: Key Data from Companies House Products and Services**

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<b>No Of Companies</b>		
UK (000)	Limited companies	2407
	Limited liability partnerships	21
	All Companies	2428
<b>Type Data Available on Each Company</b>		
	Accounts –balance sheet	Y
	Accounts – profit and loss account	Y
	Financial Ratios	N
	Industry Ratios	N
	Document Images	Y
	Corporate Structure	Y
	Financial and Stock Prices	N
	Credit Rating	N
	Payment History/Profile	N
	Graphic interpretations of accounts/credit position	N
	Historical accounts and reports	Y
	Executive Profiles	N
	Textual Company Profiles	N
	News	N
	Articles	N
	Research Reports	N
	Analyst reports/other	N
Historic, Infrequently Changing	E.g. Companies House filings etc.	Y
Frequently Changing	E.g. new articles, payments information etc.	N
Real Time	E.g. Stock prices etc.	N

**Table 12: Number of Company Accounts Documents on Companies House databases**

<b>Annual accounts registered at Companies House by Type, 2005-06</b>		<b>000s</b>
Full accounts		143.9
Abbreviated accounts – small		64.1
Abbreviated accounts – medium-sized		7.6
Group accounts		16.2
Dormant accounts		299.2
Interim/initial accounts		0.3
Audit exempt accounts		1,042.6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,573.9</b>

**Currency/ Frequency of Update**

In 2006, 61.7% of companies were filing their annual returns on time and 85.2% were filing their annual accounts on time.

#### 4. SALES CHANNELS

As well as its direct services described above, Companies House offers its content, under licence, to a number of private sector company information services. Companies House refers to these as "Bulk Users". The main bulk users of data are:

- D&B
- Equifax
- Experian
- ICC.

Agents can also use a re-seller version of CH Direct to sell to their customers. 7Side (profiled elsewhere) is a major re-seller of CH Direct.

## 5. PRICING

### Companies House Direct

No registration fee but a minimum monthly subscription charge of £5.

Fees for specific Companies House Direct services are given below:

**Table 13: Fees for Specific Products and Services**

<b>Companies House Direct charges</b>		<b>£</b>
<b>Screen charges:</b>		
Company indexes, basic company details, history of company transactions, register of disqualified directors, insolvency details		All free
Company appointments		1
Personal appointments		1
Company charge details		1
<b>Company reports:</b>		
The current appointments report		1
The charges statement		1
The company record		1
<b>Document images:</b>		
Download per document		1
Online viewing per document		4
<b>Documents by post or fax: per document (paper)</b>		
By post		3
By fax		3
Charges register		3
<b>Document packages (up to 50 documents):</b>		
By image download		4
By post		20
<b>CH Monitor service:</b>		
Per company per annum		0.50
<b>Microfiche:</b>		
Archive microfiche (to 31.12.2002)		
By post or collected from Information Centre		9
Microfiche copy of a bulk shareholders list		
By post or collected from Information Centre		12.50
<b>Certified copy documents:</b>		
Same day post/collection		50
Ordinary service post/collection		15
<b>Certificates:</b>		
Same day post/collection		50
Ordinary service post/collection		15

### DVD ROM Directory

A monthly subscription or one-off purchase is £30.

An annual subscription is £300.

The directory with exportable files is £1,200 (per annum).

**Bulk Data and Bulk Image Products****Table 14: Prices of Bulk Data and Bulk Image Products**

<b>Examples of charges</b>	<b>Annual subscription (£)</b>
<b>Bulk Image Products:</b>	
Annual accounts	24,000
Annual returns	26,000
New incorporations	4,000
Capital	3,000
Liquidation	8,000
<b>Bulk Data Products:</b>	
Directory – daily updates	12,000
Directory – quarterly snapshot	4,800
Directors register - daily updates	24,000

**Companies House XML Gateway**

Monthly subscription is £5.75.

Document ordering is £1 per document.

**Companies House Contact Centre**

The standard charge for a company document posted, faxed, or emailed is £3.

The charge for a document image emailed is £3.

**Customer Support**

The Companies House Contact Centre is the first point of contact for customer questions. Can be contacted by telephone or email and is open from 8.30 to 18.00 Monday to Friday.

**6. TECHNOLOGY**

Over 90% of company documents are now supplied to users electronically.

New incorporations are now filed electronically and this takes less than 24 hours compared to four days under the old incorporation system. Over 80% of documents filed at Companies House can now be delivered electronically.

Targets are 40% of new documents filed electronically by year-end 2006/2007 (April 2007) and 75% by year end 2007/2008 (April 2008).