



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2008-05116  
**Keyword:** Operational Policing  
**Subject:** PSNI HELICOPTER

### Request:

- Question 1.** The number of times the police helicopter has been used in each of the last 12 months.
- Question 2.** The cost of using a police helicopter each time it has been used.
- Question 3.** The cost, estimated if not real, of using the police helicopter during the last 12 months.
- Question 4.** The cost and number of times the police helicopter was deployed for the same period in 06-07 and 05-06.
- Question 5.** Any explanation for a rise/fall in the number of times the helicopter has been used.

### Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

General information regarding the PSNI helicopter can be found by accessing the PSNI website via [www.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk) and searching for the article "Policing from the skies" The interpretation with regard to the figure quoted is incorrect and it should also be noted that the website is to be updated in due course.

**Answer 1.** The PSNI helicopter attended a total of 1370 incidents from 1 November 2007 to 31 October 2008 inclusive broken down by calendar month as below:

<b>Nov 07</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Dec 07</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Jan 08</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Feb 08</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Mar 08</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Apr 08</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>May 08</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Jun 08</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Jul 08</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Aug 08</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Sep 08</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Oct 08</b>	<b>106</b>

**Answer 2.** PSNI does not retain this information in an easily retrievable format.

All 1370 incident records would have to be searched on a case-by-case basis to establish an exact cost for each incident. To conduct this search would involve a disproportionate amount of resources, which could impact, on the PSNI's ability to deliver a professional service to the community.

It is therefore considered the cost of complying with question 2 of your request for information would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

**Answer 3.** Although PSNI do hold the requested information, PSNI cannot provide the total cost of using the helicopter during the last 12 months, as it is not retained in an easily retrievable format. The total figure comprises of an amalgamation of many elements i.e. maintenance, insurance, fuel, depreciation factors, pilot and air observer costs etc. The cost is also divided between various separate departments within the PSNI. To compile and collate the requested information would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

**Answer 4.** In relation to the cost of the deployment of the helicopter in 2006/07 and 2005/06, as per answer 2, PSNI does not retain this information in an easily retrievable format.

All of the incident/deployment records for 2006/07 and 2005/06 would have to be searched on a case-by-case basis to establish a deployment cost for each of the years you have requested. To conduct this search would involve a disproportionate amount of resources, which could impact, on the PSNI's ability to deliver a professional service to the community.

It is therefore considered the cost of complying with question 4(i) of your request for information would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

PSNI can however, advise that the number of incidents that the helicopter was deployed to attend in 2006/07 was 1282 and in 2005/06 980.

**Answer 5.** There is no simple explanation for the year on year increase, as there are a number of factors to be considered. However, the helicopter has been operational for over 3 years and the benefits of aerial support are now a recognised effective operational tool and as a consequence officers are now requesting the helicopter's assistance on a more regular basis.

PSNI have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit. You may wish to limit your request to a specific cost i.e. fuel. There are also previous FOI request responses available on the PSNI's website disclosure log 2008, relating to specific costs of the helicopter, which you may find of interest.

It should be noted that some other specific costs could be subject to exemptions such as Section 30 Investigations and proceedings conducted by the public authorities, Section 31 Law Enforcement and Section 43 Commercial Interests.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing [FOI@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:FOI@psni.pnn.police.uk)

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.