



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-00270

Keyword: Crime

Subject: DRUG SEIZURES 2008 - BELFAST CITY CENTRE

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many drug seizures were there in pubs/clubs in Belfast City Centre last year, from January 1, 2008 to December 31st, 2008.

Question 2

(a) If you cannot provide name of nightclub – 2 (b) please list drug seizures at each venue in Belfast city centre during that period and state whether Class A, B, C drugs or type of drug if you can, cocaine, heroin etc.

Question 3

Please detail where drugs found i.e. toilets, behind bar, etc.

Question 4

List number of arrests?

Question 5

List number of charges?

Question 6

How many drug seizures were there in hotels in Belfast City Centre last year, from January 1, 2008 to December 31st, 2008?

Question 7

If you can't name hotel, please state hotel 1, 2, etc, listing drug seizures at each location during that period.

Question 8

Please state whether class A, B, C drug were seized and if you can state drug cocaine, heroin, E tab.

Question 9

Please state where drug was found in hotel, i.e. hotel room, reception area, lobby. Toilets?

Question 10

Please list how many arrests were made?

Question 11

Please list the number of charges?

Police Service of Northern Ireland would like to apologise for the short delay in responding to your request however, I am writing to confirm that the PSNI has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

Disclose answers to 1,2(b), 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 and 11 in full, please see-attached statistics.

However, in relation to question 2 (a) PSNI have decided to apply exemptions.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

Qualified Exemptions

Section 30 (1), (2) Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities

Section 38 (1) Health and Safety

HARM

The essence of the work undertaken by the PSNI is to protect both individuals and society as a whole.

Release of information under FOIA must be considered a release of information to the world as a whole.

The release of the requested information would disclose to the criminal fraternity the knowledge of venues where drugs may be obtained. The harm in doing this, is that, the criminal fraternity can potentially gauge the level of intelligence the PSNI have in relation to popular venues where drugs have been found/seized.

By way of an example, a fictional scenario would be, if someone had been planning to purchase/sell drugs, they would be aware, on receipt of this data, which venues are more likely to be used for the purpose of drugs purchase or sale, and therefore may decide to target other premises which would be listed as requested. This could also have the potential of harm or risk to the local community in these areas i.e. drug dealers/users may then frequent these venues with the sole purpose of illegal drug activities.

Operational procedures, methodology and tactics must be protected by the correct application of exemptions. This is because the release of this type of information would rarely be in the Public Interest and may reduce the PSNI's capability to perform its overall functions under the Police (NI) Act 2000, which states:

"It shall be the general duty of police officers –

- (a) to protect life and property;
- (b) to preserve order;
- (c) to prevent the commission of offences;
- (d) where an offence has been committed, to take measures to bring the offender to justice."

Section 30 (1) - a public authority is exempt from the duty to communicate information where that information has, at any time been held for the purposes of any investigation, which the public authority has a duty to conduct.

Public Interest Test

The public interest test relevant is as follows: -

Favouring Disclosure

Accountability

The actions of the Police Service, particularly in relation to crime requires appropriate application of legislation. This information would go some way towards reassuring those factors.

Media and Public Interest

To satisfy the media and public interest.

Investigations

There tends to be a considerable public interest in criminal cases in seeing that justice is done.

Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure

Efficient and effective conduct of the service.

Where the current or future law enforcement role of the force may be compromised by the release of information, for example in this case, as stated within the harm, future court proceedings could be jeopardised.

Current investigations

It would not be in the public interest to release information that may be of assistance to anyone involved criminal activity.

It is the Association of Chief Police Officers approach that information relating to an investigation will rarely be disclosed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Whilst such information may be released if it provides a tangible community benefit, for example to prevent or detect crime or to protect life or property, it is hard to see how the information here will do so.

Criminal Investigations

Information relating to a criminal investigation will rarely be disclosed under FOIA and only where there is a strong Public Interest consideration favouring disclosure.

Interests of Third Parties

Where third party interests might be jeopardised by release of information that relates to personal affairs of individuals and/or sensitive commercial information held about business, financial, contractual or operational issues.

Balancing Test

After weighing up the competing interests PSNI have determined that the disclosure of the information would not be in the public interest.

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

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 @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

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

FOI-2009-00270 – How many drug seizures were there in pubs/clubs in Belfast City Centre last year, from January 1, 2008 to December 31st, 2008.

If you cannot provide name of nightclub – please list drug seizures at each venue in Belfast city centre during that period and state whether Class A, B, C drugs or type of drug if you can, cocaine, heroin etc.

Please detail where drugs found ie toilets, behind bar, etc.

List number of arrests? List number of charges?

How many drug seizures were there in hotels in Belfast City Centre last year, from January 1, 2008 to December 31st, 2008?

If you can't name hotel, please stage hotel 1, 2, etc, listing drug seizures at each location during that period.

Please stage whether class A, B, C drug were seized and if you can state drug cocaine, heroin, E tab.

Please state where drug was found in hotel, ie hotel room, reception area, lobby. Toilets?

Please list how many arrests were made? Please list the number of charges?

Table 1: Drug Seizures in Public Houses and Nightclubs for Belfast – 1st January 2008 – 31st December 2008

Venue Number	Date	Drug Type	Drug Class ¹	Location	Person Arrested	Person Charged
1	26 January 2008	Cocaine	A	Not known	Yes	
2	08 February 2008	Cocaine	A	Toilets		
3	10 February 2008	Ecstasy	A	Stairs	Yes	
4	16 March 2008	Cocaine	A	Seized by door staff		
5	17 March 2008	Cocaine	A	Seized by Police after suspect left premises	Yes	
6	29 June 2008	Cocaine	A	Bar area	Yes	Yes
7	16 August 2008	Cocaine	A	Seized by Police outside Bar	Yes	Yes
8	09 October 2008	Heroin	A	Toilet	Yes	Yes
9	26 December 2008	Amphetamine	B	Seized by Door Staff		

¹ Class at time of seizure

Table 2: Drug Seizures in Hotels for Belfast – 1st January 2008 – 31st December 2008

Venue Number	Date	Drug Type	Drug Class ¹	Location	Person Arrested	Person Charged
1	10 March 2008	Cannabis	C	Hotel Room	Yes	
	12 June 2008		A	Suspect searched after leaving hotel room		
2		Cocaine			Yes	
3	21 June 2008	Cannabis	C	Main Bar area	Yes	
4	20 July 2008	Cannabis	C	Hotel Room	Yes	Yes
5	22 October 2008	Cocaine	A	Toilets	Yes	
6	27 October 2008	Magic Mushrooms	A	Hotel Room	Yes	

¹ Class at time of seizure

Note: 2008 statistics are provisional and may be subject to minor amendment.