



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02534

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: AUTOMATIC NUMBER PLATE RECOGNITION

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Please release the total amount spent by the force on Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology since its inception.

Question 2

Please also release a) the location of each camera and b) the purpose/use of each camera.

Question 3

Finally, if cameras have been used to enforce any laws (e.g. cameras at refuse sites to check for fly-tippers) please specify whether they have led to any fines.

i.e. we use 21 cameras at x, y and z refuse sites and they have caught 356 people fly-tipping who have been fined a total of £4,567.

Answer 1 and 3

The information you have requested is held in various formats; however the information you require has not been collated in the format you requested. Therefore, the PSNI does not retain the details in an easily retrievable format.

To conduct this search would involve extraction of staff to be redirected from current work to complete a search for all the information you have requested in question 1 and 3 relating to ANPR. To do this would impact on the PSNI's ability to deliver front line policing, which would also impact on the wider community.

It is therefore considered the cost of complying with 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. Consideration would also have to be given to the application of any relevant Part II exemptions.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions. The 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 however due to the nature and structure of the information requested, this is not possible within the appropriate limit.

Answer 2

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 24 (1) National Security

Section 31 (1) (a) (b) (c)

HARM

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

Crime Operations Department PSNI is entrusted with a considerable amount of information. It has an important role in countering the many threats against society. The flow of information is essential to its work and the release of any information could compromise front line policing.

PSNI consider that the danger to individuals should this information be released can be equated to an offender having knowledge of the location of sites, and evading detection as a result of this information, allowing the offender to continue offending. Operations, which could have been successful, will be compromised and any individual could potentially be affected and made a victim

If the location of these sites were known it would aid criminals in avoiding these areas and thus hinder the prevention and detection of crime, the safeguarding of National Security, apprehension and prosecution of offenders and the administration of justice.

As has been addressed above, the release of this material would seriously jeopardise the prevention and detection of crime for the Police Service as a whole.

An example of where harm could occur may best be demonstrated with a fictional scenario. If I made a Freedom of Information request, asking for details of what resources had been deployed by the PSNI to a particular operation i.e. the pursuit of a car containing an armed robbery gang, though a town in Northern Ireland, any potential criminals/terrorists, would have on receipt of the information, have an insight into the types of resources PSNI would deploy in a similar situation. This could give the criminal/terrorist fraternity the ability to estimate the level of Police coverage of a similar situation. This could provide them with the ability to gauge the level of resources deployed and plan an alternative means of escape thus avoiding apprehension.

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."

Public Interest Test

The public interest test relevant is as follows: -

Favouring Disclosure

Accountability

When information disclosed relates directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the service or its officers.

Media and Public Interest

To satisfy the media and public interest.

Accountability for Public Funds

Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justification.

Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure

Efficient and effective conduct of the service.

It would not be in the public interest to release information that may prevent or hinder current and future police investigations and regulatory enforcement.

Current investigations

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

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.

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 @ www.psni.police.uk

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