



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2011-03906

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Big Cats, UFOs and Supernatural Sightings

### Request and Answer:

#### Question 1

I would like to request under the Freedom of Information Act details of big cat and wild animal sightings reported to your force during the last five years.

#### Question 2

I would also like to request details of extra-terrestrial and supernatural sightings reported in your area during the same period.

#### Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450 (18 hours).

Incidents involving wildlife, including wildlife crime and sightings of wild animals, which have been recorded on the PSNI's Command and Control System are filtered through to the PSNI's Wildlife Officer and are held on a central database. There is, however, no way to filter "sightings" from the remainder of the incidents.

Manual retrieval of this data would therefore require checking 750 records on average per month, reading the Command and Control summary and determining which entries are relevant to your request. To analyse and collate data for one month alone would take 4 days. Trawling records over the five years requested would require 1,680 hours work.

There is no filter on PSNI systems to search for records relating to extra terrestrial or supernatural sightings. To retrieve information in relation to question 2 would involve checking every record kept over the past five years. This would amount to checking millions of records and would take a colossal amount of time, greatly exceeding the 18 hours set by the Secretary of State.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with it may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. It may be possible to provide sightings of wild animals for 2010 onwards if this is restricted to non-native animal sightings only. "Details" could include the animal, the date of the sighting and the location.

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.

Although excess cost removes the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information relative to your request which was retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request. Please see below;

The table below details reported big cat sightings for the past 5 years.

DATE	TYPE	AREA
11/01/2007	Large Dark Coloured Cat	Cookstown
25/01/2007	Large Tawny Cougar	Armagh
29/01/2007	Large Cat	Dungannon and South Tyrone
05/04/2007	Large Black Cat	Ballymoney
15/04/2007	Black Panther	Lisburn
10/06/2007	TIGER/PUMA	FOYLE
20/07/2007	Large Black Cat	Moyle
11/09/2007	Large Cat Tiger	Armagh
27/01/2008	Large White Cat Leopard	Belfast North
20/03/2008	Four Foot Long Black Cat	Antrim
26/06/2008	PANTHER	DOWN
28/08/2008	Puma	Cookstown
12/12/2008	Large Puma type cat	Maghera
26/02/2009	LARGE CAT PUMA	Ballymoney
22/04/2009	FAWN COLOURED LARGE CAT	Strabane
10/06/2009	Large black Cat	Ballynahinch
06/10/2009	Lion	Ballymoney
09/03/2010	Large black cat size of a dog	Fermanagh
17/07/2010	Large cat size of a dog	Banbridge
01/09/2010	Large black puma type cat	Newtownards
02/04/2011	Large cat like a cougar ran across the road	Bangor
19/07/2011	Large black cat size of a dog	Lisburn

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

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.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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