



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-00601

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Occult Practices in Northern Ireland

Request and Answer:

Question 1

On October 3rd 1961, the Belfast Telegraph reported that 'black magic' items had been found in cave on Islandmagee, Co. Antrim. I should be grateful for any material relating to this find in PSNI records.

Question 2

Between September and December 1973, there were many rumours of Satanism, black magic and other occult practices in Northern Ireland. I would welcome all information in the PSNI files relating to these rumours.

Question 3

The East Antrim Times on 8th March 1974 reported a find of witchcraft or black magic material in a cave on Islandmagee, Co. Antrim. I should be grateful for all materials relating to this find that exist in PSNI records.

Question 4

On the 5th August 1973 the Sunday News printed a story about a black magic ritual site that had been discovered on the Copelands Islands. I should be grateful for all PSNI records that relate to this incident and its investigation.

Question 5

In 1963, some time before June, the Belfast City Surveyor, Mr J E F Anderson, received a letter threatening him with a curse and mentioning witchcraft. I should be grateful for any material relating to this incident in the PSNI records.

Question 6

I should be grateful for all material in the PSNI records relating to Satanism, black magic and the occult since 1973.

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), 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).

This information is not held centrally within PSNI and there are no computer systems which contain the information requested at District level for the dates requested. To determine whether any information is held in relation to your request would require a staff member to manually trawl occurrence books within each of the Districts back to 1973. The number of entries in one occurrence book is hundreds and the number of occurrence books dating back to 1973 is hundreds, making the number of entries to be manually trawled hundreds of thousands. One District alone has estimated that this information would take 100 hours to retrieve.

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.

I have also considered how your request may be refined in order that the cost of complying with it may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. However, the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

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.

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.

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.