



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-03511

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Vehicles Leased, Hired or Loaned

Request and Answer:

Question 1

I write to you today to make a formal request for information under the Freedom of Information act. The information I request is around how much you pay monthly (or annually) for leased, hired or loaned vehicles.

Information requirements: Make

Question 2

Model.

Question 3

What the total price includes ie. Insurance, servicing etc.

Question 4

Purchase type ie. purchase, lease, hired.

Question 5

Scheme duration (if applicable).

Question 6

Actual monthly/annual/purchase price.

Answer

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in response to questions 3 to 6 in full; and
- fully exempt information in response to questions 1 and 2 pursuant to the provisions of Section 31 of the Act.

Section 17(1) 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.

The exemption/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31 (a) (b) Law Enforcement

This is a prejudice based, qualified exemption which means that the public authority must demonstrate the harm in disclosing the information and must also consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information against the public interest in withholding it.

Harm

The PSNI is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Cars that are hired by PSNI are unmarked and are used in covert operations. To disclose the makes and models would, along with other information already available in the public domain, impact on the safety of covert officers and compromise the effectiveness of operations.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The PSNI has a duty of protection in Northern Ireland and the public have a right to know that adequate resources are being used to allow them to carry out their law enforcement functions.

Factors Favouring Retention

Release of the requested information, if used with information already available, would allow someone to identify unmarked cars used in covert operations. This information would be valuable knowledge to criminals and would undermine police tactics; compromising law enforcement capabilities, hindering the prevention and detection of crime and placing individuals at risk.

Decision

Releasing details of vehicles used for surveillance would reveal information which would greatly compromise the credibility of the Service's capabilities with regards law enforcement. Although there are valid arguments for disclosure of the information, in this case they are outweighed by the strong public interest in the prevention and detection of crime.

Please note, the response provided to previous request F-2011-04335 provides information on each individual marked vehicle used in PSNI. This response was issued in January 2012 and is published on the PSNI website. A link is provided below:

http://www.psnipolice.uk/psni_fleet-2.pdf

Question 3

What the total price includes ie. Insurance, servicing etc.

Answer

The price includes hire cost only. Vehicles are insured through PSNI Fleet insurance. Any vehicles that sustain damage are returned to the hiring company who arrange repairs and invoice PSNI accordingly.

Question 4

Purchase type ie. purchase, lease, hired.

Answer

Vehicles are hired.

Question 5

Scheme duration (if applicable).

Answer

Scheme duration is variable depending on the reason for hire ie a couple of days for a one off event or continual requirement by different Districts/Departments.

Question 6

Actual monthly/annual/purchase price.

Answer

Hire costs for financial year 2010-2011 were £89,194.07.

Hire costs for financial year 2011-2012 were £135, 356.84.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the 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.