



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2014-01608

**Keyword:** Crime

**Subject:** Cannabis Seized In Police Raids In South Belfast

### Request and Answer:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 I seek the following information about reports made in a Belfast Telegraph article on 21st March 2014, stating that £1m worth of cannabis was seized in police raids in south Belfast. The raids took place in two separate properties, one in Rugby Avenue and the other in the Haypark Avenue area.

### Question 1

Were there any arrests made in connection to these raids and how many?

### Question 2

Which organised crime group/groups are involved/are suspected to be involved?

### Answer

Your request for information has now been considered and the decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

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 30(1)(a) - Investigations

Section 30 is a qualified and class-based exemption which means that the legislators have decided that a public interest test is necessary.

### Public Interest Test

#### Factors Favouring Release

There is a high public interest in knowing that police investigations are being carried out efficiently

and effectively. Releasing the requested information could promote public trust in providing transparency, whilst demonstrating openness and accountability into the level of investigations which took place at the time and are continuing.

### Factors Against Release

Releasing information held in any current police investigation could seriously undermine the investigation and adversely prejudice the detection of crime and the prosecution of offenders. The investigation is still ongoing and therefore the PSNI consider that the release of any information which would identify whether or not someone or a particular group was of interest to the PSNI would lead to the investigation being prejudiced.

Such a release could also undermine the right to a fair trial should any person be subsequently charged with any offence connected to this enquiry and also lead to trial by media.

### **Balance Test**

Releasing information relevant to this request would give important information to any individual involved with the cannabis seized. Whilst the PSNI would always wish to be transparent and accountable, no release under FOI should be made where an ongoing investigation would be adversely affected.

In this case, the public benefit in being more aware of the investigation details is outweighed by the potential risk to this and future investigations. I am therefore satisfied that the exemption outlined above is applicable to this information.

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](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.