



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2018-02629

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Classic Car Thefts

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested however 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.

Request 1

The request is specific to your police force and regards the number of classic cars being stolen over the last 10 years. For the purposes of this request, a classic car is defined as a car aged 30 years or more, so cars registered in or before 1988.

How many classic cars have been reported stolen to your police force so far in 2018?

Request 2

How many classic cars were reported stolen to your police force between 2017 and 2009? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown.

Request 3

How many stolen cars (of any age) has your police force recovered so far this year, and between 2017 and 2009? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown.

Request 4

What was the total number of cars, of all ages, reported stolen to your police force in 2018 (to date), and from 2017 to 2009? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown.

The following 2 requests received on the 5th November but have been added to the above requests for FOI legislative cost purposes as they are on the same subject.

Request 5

How many cars were reported stolen to your constabulary between 2009 to 2018 (to date)? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown.

Request 6

How many stolen cars have been recovered by your constabulary between 2009 to 2018 (to date)? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown.

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. Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to either comply with the request in its entirety or confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The 'appropriate limit' is currently £600 for central government and £450 for all other public authorities including PSNI. The relevant Regulations which define the appropriate limit for section 12 purposes are The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 SI 2004 No 3244. These are known as the 'Fees Regulations' for brevity.

Regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations states that a public authority can take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in carrying out the following permitted activities in complying with the request:

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- (iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

Under those regulations PSNI can calculate the time spent on each of these permitted activities at £25 per hour (thus if the activity(s) takes more than 18 hours PSNI will be in excess of the 'appropriate limit').

In relation to requests 1 and 2 PSNI Statistics branch have advised they cannot identify classic cars from the NICHE Records Management System data extracts. Statistics branch publish recorded crime figures within the classification of Theft – vehicle offences, Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle, however, this includes all vehicles and will not be limited to cars. Cars stolen as the result of burglaries or robberies will not be included in this figure. The NICHE data extract for vehicles does not allow for a list of unique stolen cars to be compiled. This table is compiled on the basis of vehicles linked to incidents on NICHE, to identify if the car was stolen, the classification of stolen would be selected. If a vehicle is stolen and is involved in another offence then it will appear in the vehicle table more than once, i.e. in two or more incidents with a classification of stolen which may equate to one stolen vehicle. If we were to link the police recorded crime where the offence was a burglary, robbery or theft offence (i.e. those offences where a stolen car would be recorded) to the stolen cars from the vehicle table, the issue of duplicate stolen cars would remain. If a car was stolen as a result of a burglary then subsequently used to commit a robbery, the one stolen car would appear in the two separate crime records.

Within the classification of Theft or Unauthorised Vehicle Taking the number of offences have ranged from more than 1,200 to just under 3,000 offences per year over the last 10 years, each of these would need to be trawled to retrieve the requested information. This would grossly exceed the appropriate limit

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 your request 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. PSNI Statistics Branch may be able to use the NICHE vehicle table to identify the number of records where the vehicle type is 'car' and the classification is stolen. However it is likely that this will not accurately reflect the number of stolen cars as the classification may also include reference to 'involved in offence', 'involved in crime', which may reflect a car that was an accessory to an alternate crime recorded rather than the actual vehicle stolen on that occasion.

As with above, PSNI Statistics Branch can use the NICHE vehicle table where the classification is 'recovered' and may be able to answer request 3 and 6.

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.