



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2021-00561

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: PSNI Liveried Vehicles

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act we can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold some information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you pursuant to Section 31 of the FOIA and have detailed our rationale as to why this exemption applies. We have also provided you with links to guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office which we have followed in responding to your request.

Clarification Sought: With reference to your Request can you please confirm that it is only PSNI District cars that you request information for.

Clarification Received: I confirm that my request is to seek information (make, model, registration) of any and all vehicles regardless of department (unless you deem it insensitive for a specific department).

Request 1

Can you please attach a copy of your marked police vehicles arranged into their districts AND station.

Request 2

Can you please add a column to Q1's table, regarding number plate?

Answers

Please see list of current liveried PSNI vehicles, attached separately to this correspondence.

However the information is only partially provided as the District / Department are withheld as to provide this information could highlight the operational role of the vehicle and our decision is to exempt this information for the reasons as articulated below.

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

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement – the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

The full text of exemptions can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk and further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioners Office website www.ico.org.uk.

Harm

Disclosing vehicle resources by specific departments/areas across PSNI would identify the operational use and capability of vehicles. Criminals could use this information to evade the operational law enforcement role of police, impacting on the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals.

Given the unique operating environment in Northern Ireland, where the threat from terrorism remains severe, the disclosure of this information may be of use to those who seek to cause harm to police officers.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure – Section 31

Release of information would lead to a better informed public and demonstrate openness and transparency.

Factors favouring non-disclosure – Section 31

Disclosure of information could adversely affect the law enforcement role of police and potentially put police officers at risk.

Disclosing the specific police vehicles used and attributing them to specific Departments/ Areas across PSNI would reveal the operational use and this could be exploited by criminals. The threat from terrorism remains SEVERE across Northern Ireland and disclosure could provide opportunities for terrorists to mount attacks, placing both officers and the public at increased risk of harm.

Decision

The PSNI is tasked with the prevention and detection of crime and protecting the public. At this time of increased threat of terrorism, releasing this information into the public domain would not be in the public interest.

The release of information under FOI is a release into the public domain and not just to the individual requesting the information. Once information is disclosed by FOI, there is no control or limits as to how the information is shared with other individuals, therefore a release under FOI is considered a release to the world in general.

The PSNI remain under severe threat from Dissident Republicans and disclosure of this information has the potential to assist criminality and those intent on carrying out attacks on police officers. Whilst the PSNI would always wish to be transparent and accountable no release under FOI should be made where lives would be put at risk. Whilst the requested information may appear innocuous, we must take into account the wider implications of any release into the public domain including how the requested information may be combined with any previously released data or potential future FOI requests and what impact this 'mosaic' of information will have on the police service as a whole.

Whilst accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of

releasing information, we have decided that disclosure would not be in the public interest for the reasons outlined.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, 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.