



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2022-01683

**Keyword:** Operational Policing

**Subject:** Marked Fleet

### 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 information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you. We further consider that some information you seek in your request is exempt by virtue of Section 31 of the Freedom Of Information Act (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.

### Request 1

Can you please make an updated list of all marked and semi-marked Police vehicles?

### Request 2

If possible can you also send the vehicle number plates and the station they are at?

### Answers

Please see the separate spreadsheet which provides PSNI 'livered' vehicles and which partially responds to your request. The table provided lists the current PSNI 'livered' fleet and breaks this down by the numbers of specific manufacturers and models in the livered fleet and where the areas within PSNI the vehicles are currently attached to.

PSNI have interpreted the term 'semi-marked' police vehicles to relate to 'unmarked' police vehicles and on that basis we have made the decision to withhold the details of 'unmarked' police vehicles for the reasons as articulated below.

PSNI have processed similar requests in the past whereby PSNI had provided the full VRN of the police vehicle in respect of marked vehicles, however I can confirm that the release of VRNs have been under review and has been agreed and ratified by the relevant National Policing Lead for Fleet in association with other partners not to be released. On that basis we have made the decision to withhold the VRN of 'marked' vehicles 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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) and further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioners Office website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

#### **Harm**

Disclosing all VRN details, vehicle resources and the fleet held by PSNI, in particular ‘unmarked vehicles’ would identify the operational use and capability of these. This information would be useful for persons to evade the operational law enforcement role of police by identifying PSNI vehicles while they engage in their policing activities, which may significantly impact the law enforcement actions of the PSNI and may potentially place police officers at risk.

Given the unique operating environment in Northern Ireland, where the threat from terrorism remains substantial, the disclosure of this information may be of use to those who seek to cause harm to Police officers. It is reasonable to assume that providing such detailed information on the strength of the PSNI fleet would assist activity by allowing more accurate judgements to be made by criminal’s intent on attacking Police. Any information which could be of assistance to terrorists and endanger Police officers is very strongly prejudicing PSNI’s law enforcement and security functions if released.

#### **Public Interest Test**

##### Factors favouring disclosure – Section 31

Release of information would lead to a better informed public and demonstrate openness and transparency and accountability on the use of PSNI fleet.

##### 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. The threat from terrorism remains ‘Substantial’ across Northern Ireland and disclosing details of vehicles and the operational use of police vehicles could be exploited by terrorists to mount attacks, placing both officers and the public at increased risk of harm.

The release of information concerning the operational strength of the Police fleet or VRN details taken on its own or together with other information, either already available or the subject of further requests, with the threat from terrorism remaining severe across Northern Ireland, this could place an adversely affect to the law enforcement activities of the PSNI and potentially put Police officers at risk of harm by attack.

#### **Decision**

Although there is a public interest in the transparency of how the PSNI fleet is utilised, the role of law enforcement cannot be compromised and the ability to protect the lives of those employed by the organisation must take precedence. PSNI have therefore determined that the release of all the information requested 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.**

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](mailto:foi@psni.pnn.police.uk).

If, following an Internal Review carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at [www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/](http://www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/)

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 their discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.