



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: FOI-2022-01698

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Incidents Logged with Search Terms 'Stag'/'Hen'

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) We 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

Please disclose every incident recorded since January 1 2021 that contain one or more of the following search terms: 'Stag' 'Stags' 'Hen' 'Hens'

Request 2

Please disclose the incident exactly as it was recorded on each log, redacting any identifiable information which may prohibit disclosure.

For example: 'A male called (redacted) claimed that members of a stag party assaulted him outside of a nightclub in Front Street, leaving him with head injuries'

Request 3

For each incident, please also disclose the time/date/location of the incident.

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').

The PSNI Record Owner has advised that keyword searches have been carried out in relation to your request, however these are an unreliable method of collecting data from NICHE as they rely on searching through unstructured data. This means that PSNI cannot automatically determine the context of the term found in the search result and a manual review is almost always required to decide if the result meets the criteria of the FOI Request. PSNI also cannot always depend on the data retrieved via unstructured data fields to identify records that are relevant, as they are associated with possible human error like spelling mistakes, and use of abbreviations and/or aliases that might affect a keyword search. In addition PSNI do not have the ability to search for keywords within external documents stored in NICHE, so the scope with which we can do a keyword search is mainly limited to the likes of the Occurrence Enquiry Log and the Occurrence Summary.

There is no single report on NICHE that provides all the details of each recorded incident or crime. Relevant information is held in a range of fields and documents. As you have not limited your requested data to any specific group of incidents, initial searches on NICHE for Occurrences with the words: stag', 'stags', 'hen', 'hens' for the requested time frame has returned 166,795 results. That refers to wide range of incidents including i.e.: farm birds. To identify information relevant to your FOI request specifically in relation to Requests 1 and 2, to disclose an incident exactly as it was recorded on each log it would require manual searches through all the fields and documents. This would include a manual retrieval, check and redaction of each of them. Allowing 10 minutes per occurrence this would bring it to total of 27,799 hours of work.

To help PSNI assist you with your request the Record Owner has narrowed the search based on the most popular criteria (dispatch types) under which Stag/Hen parties (which in our understanding is the core of your request) would have been recorded, i.e.: street drinking, nuisance. In this instance the Database has still returned over 18,000 incidents. It has been estimated that to fulfil Request 1 and 2, it would take over 900 hours to redact any information that would not be suitable for disclosure to the Public.

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.

Advice and Assistance

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. If you are able to provide further clarification in relation to the nature of the incidents, for example parties/anti-social behaviour, we could provide you with an answer in relation to request 1 and 3. We can also provide you with a breakdown of incidents recorded by PSNI under dispatch type. Please be advised that the PSNI will be unable to release any call log information related to incidents reported within appropriate limit.

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 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 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/

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.psni.police.uk

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