

Keeping People Safe



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2021-02854

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Police 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. We further consider some of the information you seek is exempt by virtue of section 31 of 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

Please can you supply me with the following information?

- Registration number
- Make
- Model

Of all vehicles currently on your fleet and those sold between 1st March 2019 and 26th November 2021.

### Answer

In partial response to your request, please see attached excel spreadsheets labelled '02854 - Livered Fleet' and '02854 – Vehicles Sold at Auction'.

'02854 – Livered Fleet' provides a list of the current PSNI liveried fleet however PSNI have made the decision to withhold the details of 'unmarked PSNI vehicles' for the reasons as articulated below.

'02854 – Vehicles Sold at Auction' provides a list of PSNI vehicles sold between 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

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 vehicle resources and the fleet held by PSNI would identify the operational use and capability of our vehicles. 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. This 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 severe, 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

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 retention

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

The release of information concerning the operational strength of the police fleet 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 have an adverse effect on the law enforcement activities of the PSNI and potentially put police officers at risk of harm by attack.

#### **Decision**

The PSNI is tasked with the prevention and detection of crime and protecting the public. At this time of increased threat 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.**

Furthermore, to provide the requested information, for all police vehicles would have the potential to negatively impact on the law enforcement capabilities of the PSNI and may place police officers at risk of harm. It is acknowledged that wherever possible policing procedures must be transparent and accountable. Whilst the requested information may appear harmless and the accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of releasing information. 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. PSNI have therefore determined that the release of all the information requested would not be in the public interest.

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.