



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-01560

Keyword: Road Policing

Subject: Industrial Wind Turbines

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you. We further consider the information you seek in request number 3A is partially exempt by virtue of Section 38 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 1

An itemised breakdown on the cost of a police escort for industrial wind turbines to be transported from the port to the site of the wind farm in Northern Ireland for the last 10 years.

Answer

Please see the breakdown of costs for each financial year in the table below:

Financial Year	Amount
2010/11	£37,788.32
2011/12	£98,679.47
2012/13	£91,282.64
2013/14	£62,218.74
2014/15	£30,247.38
2015/16	£57,070.97
2016/17	£797,420.72
2017/18	£184,838.36
2018/19	£68,538.92
2019/20	£1,617.25

Request 2

How much police overtime was involved in the cost of providing police escorts for the transportation of industrial wind turbines from the port to the site of the wind farm in Northern Ireland in the last 10 years?

Answer

We can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does not hold information in relation to

your requests. Enquiries made in relation to your request failed to locate any records or documents relevant to your request based on the information you have provided.

PSNI do not hold the information to the level requested specific to windfarm escorts, as there is no specific code for overtime costs specific to 'wind turbines' on the Workforce Scheduling system.

Accordingly, I have determined that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does not hold the information to which you seek access.

Request 3

How was the cost of providing these police escorts for wind turbines

Request 3A

How was the cost of providing these police escorts for wind turbines invoiced and to what companies if any?

Answer

PSNI issue an official invoice to each client, which is applied using hourly rates.

However it has been decided that PSNI will be withholding the company names 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 38 (1)(b) – Health & Safety – Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

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.

Section 38 is a prejudiced based, qualified exemption which means the PSNI must demonstrate harm in disclosure and consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information. A summary of the Harm and Public Interest Test for Section 38 is provided below.

Harm

The companies names have been withheld as releasing the names would likely highlight the direct association of the supplier with the PSNI. Release of information under FOI is considered a release to the world in general, not just to the individual requesting the information. Disclosure of some company names into the public domain would likely place the business and its employees at risk of attack by those seeking to target PSNI and those connected to it. The threat of terrorism in Northern Ireland remains "severe", this is particularly relevant to PSNI.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Release - Section 38

Releasing the information would promote openness and transparency. There is always a strong public interest in information that relates to the use of public funds and the procurement of services and suppliers.

Factors Favouring Retention - Section 38

Releasing the company names into the public domain may assist terrorist groups or criminal elements to carry out attacks on these businesses or members of their staff. The current terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland is rated as 'severe' and dissident republican groups consider those associated with PSNI as viable targets. In the past such attacks have been known to be indiscriminate in nature, therefore endangering members of the general public in addition to their intended target.

Decision

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

Whilst accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of releasing information, the balance will always favour retention where there is a significant risk to the safety of individuals.

At this time, the Service is under severe dissident threat and to release the name of companies associated with PSNI could assist terrorists in targeting these people/businesses. The safety of individuals is of paramount importance and the PSNI will not divulge any information which could put lives or property at risk and to provide companies' names could endanger their employees.

In this case, therefore the decision must favour not releasing the name of the companies.

Request 3B

How was these costs funded?

Answer

The haulage company requesting the PSNI's assistance pays for these escorts.

Request 3C

Was any public funding used to pay the cost of providing these police escorts?

Answer

No.

Request 3D

Is there any money outstanding for the cost of providing these police escorts and if so, how much money is outstanding?

Answer

Yes, a sum of £549.62 against one company is currently outstanding.

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.