



XXXXXXXXX
By email



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ
London Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN
Tel 101 ext. 62005

Website: www.wiltshire.police.uk

Email: disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk

Date: 28th March 2022

Our ref: FOI 2022/212

Reply contact name is: Abigail Standidge

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 28th February 2022 concerning doorbell camera guidance.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Following receipt of your request, research was conducted by the Force Policy Officer and the Strategic Support Officer to Head of Crime at Wiltshire Police. Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Please provide copies of any internal guidance or other documentation your force has regarding the use of doorbell camera footage in investigations, and any agreements or memorandums of understanding you have with the owners or occupiers of any buildings that use doorbell cameras, or businesses that provide them to buildings in your force's area.

Our response:

Your request for information - namely in relation to any information held about agreements or initiatives for the purpose of the covert use of doorbell devices and any associated footage - is exempt under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) by virtue of Section 24(2) [National Security] and Section 31(3) [Law Enforcement].

Doorbell camera footage is usually requested from owners in response to a crime having already been committed, and is normally located and requested as a result of CCTV and house to house enquires. These are standard enquiries to aid in the detection of crime.

I can confirm there is some brief guidance on the use of doorbell camera footage, contained within the Hierarchical Crime Reviews (HCR) procedure document;



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CCTV – CCTV may not always be applicable, but it is becoming more common for private properties to install their own CCTV systems, including Ring Doorbell's and dash cameras on vehicles. Commercial properties, transport systems, and some public spaces will also be potential sources of CCTV footage. Scoping for CCTV in the area of the offence or where the victim and suspect were prior to and/or after the offence may assist in tracking routes to identify the suspect or any vehicles/transport used by him/her.

Section 24 and Section 31 are both prejudice-based, qualified exemptions. These exemptions require Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, and the public interest for and against disclosure.

Evidence of Harm

Every effort should be made to release information under Freedom of Information. However a FOIA response is considered to be a release to the world as once the information is published the public authority have no control over what use is made of that information.

Those with the necessary criminal intent, inclination and capacity could use the information to gain an operational advantage over the Force as the information can indeed be viewed as operational intelligence and operationally sensitive. To confirm or deny whether or not a Force has partnered with any provider of doorbell cameras, beyond that which is strictly overt in nature, would have a negative effect on the operational capability of the Force should the release of information, if held, be used and manipulated by those who are intent on carrying out criminal/terrorist activities. To disclose the information, if held, would therefore provide them with an opportunity to disrupt police activity.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Confirming or denying any further information is held that confirms whether a Force has partnered with any provider of the services as mentioned, the public would see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent. Disclosure of information, if held, would demonstrate that the Force is reviewing all contingencies to ensure that it continues its robust fight against all types of criminal activity.

Factors against confirmation or denial - The public interest is not what interests the public but what will be of greater good if released to the community as a whole. It is not in the public interest to disclose any information, if held, that may compromise the Force's ability to accomplish its core functions of law enforcement.

By confirming or denying whether information is held that confirms the Force has partnered with providers in this or any other service or initiative, may lead to law enforcement tactics being compromised which would ultimately hinder the prevention and detection of crime or terrorism. Security arrangements and tactics are re-used and have been monitored by criminal groups, fixated individuals and terrorists. These security arrangements and tactics would need to be reviewed which would require more resources and would add to the cost to the public purse.

Balance Test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge whether any information is or is not held if to do so would undermine law enforcement and therefore compromise the work of the Police Service. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing and any initiatives conducted with the private sector in relation to impacting on the crime or terrorist threat, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of these arrangements in this very sensitive area.

The strongest reason to confirm or deny whether any information is held, is that it is recognised that there is a genuine public interest in information relating to any initiatives conducted between Police and the private sector, in this case any practical integration with doorbell camera products. The strongest reasons against confirmation or denial of any information being held, is to ensure that security measures are not rendered less effective through disclosure, therefore hindering the effective delivery of operational law enforcement.

Therefore, for these issues the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any further information is held, is not made out.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide 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 that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

Section 24(2) – National Security
Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Abigail Standidge
Force Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101 ext 62005



Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original FoI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>