



Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 18th September 2023

Ref: FOI 2023/841

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 22nd August 2023 concerning letters and parcels received by the force.

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.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

1. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many parcels (ie. not a postcard, letter, or flat envelope) did your organisation receive? If the precise data isn't available, please provide an estimate.
2. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many letters did your organisation receive? If the precise data is not available, please provide an estimate.
3. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many mail items (including packages, letters, and flat envelopes) did you receive that were deemed 'suspicious'?

This might include:

- Parcels with protruding wires, aluminium foil, or oil stains
- Mail items emitting a peculiar odour
- Greasy or oily patches on the mail item
- Mail items sealed in such a way so as to encourage opening them at a particular end
- Unusually printed address that might include spelling errors
- Adverse physical reaction to the handling of the mail item – e.g., itching or irritation
- No return address or return address that cannot be verified
- Unusual postmark or no postmark

4. In relation to question 3, how many of these suspicious mail items actually contained something dangerous / unpleasant / illegal?

This might include:

- Substances and objects which may explode
- Gases which have been compressed, liquefied, or dissolved under pressure
- Flammable liquids and solids
- Biological substances
- Asbestos
- Controlled drugs and narcotics
- Corrosives
- Live creatures, insects, and invertebrates
- Waste, dirt, filth, or refuse
- Weapons and sharp objects
- Poisons, toxic liquids, solids, and gases
- Obscene publications or unlawful indecent images

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

5. In relation to question 4, how many of these mail items did your organisation report to the police?

6. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many unpleasant / threatening letters did your organisation receive?

This might include:

- Letters containing threats to the organisation or a member of the organisation
- Letters containing hate speech
- Letters containing blackmail
- Letters constituting harassment

7. If possible, what process do you have in place for receiving inbound mail?

Please select all that apply.

- a) A record is kept of all packages and letters that arrived
- b) All mail items are scanned on delivery
- c) The mailroom is under 24/7 surveillance
- d) All mail is tracked all the way to the end recipient (if an individual)

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

Our response:

The information that you are requesting for question 6 in particular, is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval. This is because in order to obtain the number of letters that the force has received within the time frame requested that are considered to be unpleasant and/or threatening, this would involve us having to physically read through each letter received and as we receive approximately 30 – 50 items a day, this would take an excessive amount of time to achieve.

Therefore, under the circumstances I am absolutely confident that to locate, retrieve and extract the information you seek would by far exceed the time obligations upon this authority to comply, and in so doing would exceed the fees limits. This is set at £450 calculated at a flat rate of £25 per hour for those work activities comprising of confirming the information is held, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

Please note, that if one part of the request engages a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage a Section 12 response. The reason being is due to the fact that locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

Although excess cost removes the forces' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request. What I am able to provide you are the answers documented below –

1. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many parcels (ie. not a postcard, letter, or flat envelope) did your organisation receive? If the precise data isn't available, please provide an estimate.

Est. more than 2000 parcels and packages a year.

2. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many letters did your organisation receive? If the precise data is not available, please provide an estimate.

Est. 30 – 50 items of post daily Monday to Friday.

3. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many mail items (including packages, letters, and flat envelopes) did you receive that were deemed 'suspicious'?

This might include:

- Parcels with protruding wires, aluminium foil, or oil stains
- Mail items emitting a peculiar odour
- Greasy or oily patches on the mail item
- Mail items sealed in such a way so as to encourage opening them at a particular end
- Unusually printed address that might include spelling errors
- Adverse physical reaction to the handling of the mail item – e.g., itching or irritation
- No return address or return address that cannot be verified
- Unusual postmark or no postmark

None were received within this timescale that our Supplies team can recall that brought any suspicion.

4. In relation to question 3, how many of these suspicious mail items actually contained something dangerous / unpleasant / illegal?

This might include:

- Substances and objects which may explode
- Gases which have been compressed, liquefied, or dissolved under pressure
- Flammable liquids and solids
- Biological substances
- Asbestos
- Controlled drugs and narcotics
- Corrosives
- Live creatures, insects, and invertebrates
- Waste, dirt, filth, or refuse
- Weapons and sharp objects
- Poisons, toxic liquids, solids, and gases
- Obscene publications or unlawful indecent images

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

N/A as no suspicious envelopes were received.

5. In relation to question 4, how many of these mail items did your organisation report to the police?

N/A as no suspicious envelopes were received.

6. From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many unpleasant / threatening letters did your organisation receive?

This might include:

- Letters containing threats to the organisation or a member of the organisation
- Letters containing hate speech
- Letters containing blackmail
- Letters constituting harassment

7. If possible, what process do you have in place for receiving inbound mail?

Please select all that apply.

- a) A record is kept of all packages and letters that arrived

A simple handwritten record is kept of parcels that come in so they can be signed for when collected. We do not keep a record of the incoming mail.

- b) All mail items are scanned on delivery

We scan all the items of mail but will only scan packages if they are suspicious.

- c) The mailroom is under 24/7 surveillance

The mail is sorted within the Supplies Department which is locked and secured at night with external CCTV.

- d) All mail is tracked all the way to the end recipient (if an individual)

No, we do not have a way to track all the items of mail as we receive so much and it is distributed in to departmental mail boxes.

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

Ordinarily under our Section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request in respect of question 6 to a more manageable level. However, due to the difficulties outlined above, I cannot see how this can be achieved in this particular case.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Wiltshire Police, 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 that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption applicable to the information requested is:

Section 12 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

- (1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

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In accordance with Section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request.

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,

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

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.

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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