



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

Date: 18th March 2024

Ref: FOI 2024/288

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 6th March 2024 concerning fox hunting activities.

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:

I am writing to make a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for information held by Wiltshire Constabulary regarding police activities relating to fox hunting and any details of deals made between hunting groups and the police.

I am seeking specific information on the following:

1. Details of police activities and interventions in relation to fox hunting within the jurisdiction of Wiltshire Constabulary for the past three years.
2. Any documents, memos, or correspondence between Wiltshire Constabulary and fox hunting groups or representatives, including any agreements or understandings reached between the parties.
3. Information on the resources allocated by Wiltshire Constabulary to monitor and address fox hunting incidents, including the number of officers involved, hours dedicated, and any associated costs.
4. Records of arrests, charges, or warnings issued by Wiltshire Constabulary in connection with fox hunting activities, including details of outcomes.

5. Any policies, guidelines, or standard operating procedures that Wiltshire Constabulary has in place regarding their response to fox hunting incidents and interactions with hunting groups.

Our response:

The information that you are requesting for part of your request (namely question 1) is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval. This is because in order to obtain full details of Police activities/interventions in relation to fox hunting reports made over the last 3 years, this would involve us having to manually trawl through all of the reports made over this time frame, which as you can imagine – would be thousands of reports. Although we have a dedicated Rural Crime Team (RCT) who deals with allegations of illegal hunting under the Hunting Act 2004, the Police in general are often called to a number of other issues such as disorders, damage, assaults, traffic and highways offences etc, which are attended and dealt with by local officers, but some of these reports may also relate to fox hunting in some way or another (for example, we might receive an initial call of an assault taking place and upon officer attendance, we find that the assault relates to fox hunting), and therefore, the only way in which we would be able to obtain if other reports (such as the above) relate in any way to fox hunting – this would involve us having to physically trawl through every report made over the time frame requested.

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 –

3. Information on the resources allocated by Wiltshire Constabulary to monitor and address fox hunting incidents, including the number of officers involved, hours dedicated, and any associated costs.

From a financial standpoint, we do not have allocated resources for this as it will be picked up under business as usual.

5. Any policies, guidelines, or standard operating procedures that Wiltshire Constabulary has in place regarding their response to fox hunting incidents and interactions with hunting groups.

We do not currently have any policy on fox hunting incidents or that specifically relates to interactions with hunting groups. The [Rural Crime Team Principles](#) deals

with recruitment to the Rural Crime Team and although it doesn't specifically deal with interactions with hunting groups, it does stipulate that the team members must be impartial and cannot have any personal links with such groups.

Ordinarily under our Section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request 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.

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

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