

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXXXXX
By email

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

Date 2nd May 2024

Our Ref FOI 2024-405

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 12th April 2024, concerning our Dog Unit.

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 Dog Unit Manager at Wiltshire Police.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Wish for information as to how many police dog handlers Wiltshire Constabulary have, as well as how many of each type of police dog job type (such as general purpose, drug detection, firearms support, explosive etc) the force has to please. Can you also tell me where the unit is based in the county to please, plus whether the unit operates on a five shift or six shift system.

Our response:

I have considered your request and I am able to provide a partial response to your request. Some of the information relevant to this request is exempt by virtue of Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement.

Section 31 is a qualified prejudice-based exemption and therefore requires Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, along with the public interest favouring and against disclosure.

1. How many police dog handlers Wiltshire Constabulary have

Wiltshire Police currently have 13 handlers.

2. How many of each type of police dog job type (such as general purpose, drug detection, firearms support, explosive etc) the force has to please.

There are 13 general patrol dogs

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5 Firearm Support Dogs

Currently there are 4 Drugs detection dogs with a further two in training.

There are 4 other detection dogs in other skills areas. The exact number of detection dogs in each of the other skills areas is exempt from disclosure. Please see below harm and public interest tests.

3. Can you also tell me where the unit is based in the county to please, plus whether the unit operates on a five shift or six shift system.

The Dog Unit work across the County on a five team shift pattern. The exact location of where the Dog Handlers are based from is exempt from disclosure. Please see below harm and public interest tests.

Harm test

Disclosing information into the public domain - specifically the number of detection dogs that work within a specific detection area and the exact location of where a Dog Handler is based - would undermine the core principles of policing; namely to prevent and detect crime. Disclosure of this information could cause substantial harm to planned policing operations, and all individuals involved i.e. police employees and the community. If Wiltshire Police were to place this information into the public domain, this would prejudice our ability to prevent and detect crime, and to apprehend or prosecute offenders; providing offenders with the information they would need to evade detection, and therefore effecting the Force's ability to protect the community.

Factors favouring disclosure

Placing this information into the public domain would lead to an increased public awareness on these matters. This in turn may lead to a reduction in crime or more information being supplied by the public, and would also allow the public to better protect themselves against crime. Disclosure would also ensure that Wiltshire Police can be held accountable for our actions, and show the Force is being as open and transparent with the public as possible.

Factors against disclosure

Providing the number of detection dogs that work within a specific detection area and the exact location of where a Dog Handler is based would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. This would result in investigations being compromised, as offenders would be able to gain valuable information that would assist them in evading capture; i.e. they could use this information to form a picture of areas within the county (and possibly country) that may have a slower response time for a particular detection area, or general areas where the response time may be slower due to the location of a Dog Handler. By offenders evading capture, the public will be put at a greater risk resulting in trust in the Force diminishing and increase of crime being seen. Disclosure of information sensitive to operations and tactics used would severely impact on the Force's resources, which in turn would also assist offenders to evade capture.

Balance test

Whilst there is a public interest in transparency and openness between the Force and the public, in addition to the public seeing how the Force are engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a stronger interest in ensuring the public are protected from the threat of criminals, and that the enforcement of the law and the prevention and detection of crime is upheld. To disclose information which is likely to assist offenders would seriously undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement, and is therefore exempt from disclosure.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Constabulary, 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 31(1)(a)(b) - 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,

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



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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/>

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