

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by E Mail

Date: 29th May 2025

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2025 / 465

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 7th May 2025 concerning Number Plate Offences.

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 – having consulted our Justice Traffic Team - I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote (and Our Response)

1. The number of reported offences or incidents recorded in your force area in 2024 relating to:

a) Obstructed vehicle number plates

b) Illegally modified or non-compliant number plates (e.g. incorrect font, spacing, size, ghost plates or use of non-standard characters)

Wiltshire Police record all crimes (including Traffic Offences) in line with the current Home Office crime recording codes.

The offences recorded regarding infringements of number plates during 2024 are shown in the table below :-



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Offence Code	Offence Description	NIP's Issued	Niche Offences
VE94134	Drive a vehicle when the registration mark fails to conform with regulations	70	1
VE94135	Keep a vehicle when registration mark fails to conform with the regulations	6	0
VE94148	Drive vehicle no front registration plate - registered after 30/09/38	24	0
VE94149	Keep vehicle no front registration plate - registered after 30/09/38	1	0
VE94150	Drive vehicle / vehicle and trailer no rear registration plate - registered after 30/09/38	25	1
VE94151	Keep vehicle no rear registration plate - registered after 30/09/38	1	0
VE94152	Drive a vehicle with registration mark obscured / indistinguishable	7	1
Total		134	3

Please Note

Drivers are normally issued with a Notice of Intended Prosecution (NIP) for offences of this type which incur fines.

If someone refuses to pay a fine or wishes to take the matter to a Court then a "Niche Offence" (effectively a formal crime log) is created on our systems so the issue can be progressed accordingly to conclusion. The numbers of Niche Offences are therefore also included in the total of NIP's issued.

2. Additionally, please confirm whether your force actively conducts specific operations or checks targeting illegal or obscured number plates.

Wiltshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that any information is held relevant to this request as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

Overall Harm

Any disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release to the public at large. Under the Act, we cannot, and do not request the motives of any application for information. We have no doubt that the vast majority of requests made under the Act are legitimate and the applicants do not have any ulterior motives. Whilst not questioning the motives behind this specific request, confirming or denying that information is held would cause operational harm and affect our ability to fulfil our core function of law enforcement in the future.

However, given the sensitive areas around which specific police operations and/or tactics are used any disclosure would allow criminals and other adversaries to focus on evaluating the particular capabilities of this Force - with this knowledge it would allow criminals and other adversaries to take steps to counteract them.

This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different law enforcement bodies. In addition to the local criminal fraternity now being better informed, those intent on disrupting policing functions throughout the UK will be able to 'map' where the use of certain operations and or tactics are deployed. This can be useful information to those committing (or those intent on committing or planning) crime.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of individuals breaking the law or specific criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on law enforcement.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favoring Confirming or Denying – Section 31

Confirming or denying would provide an insight into the Police Service. This would enable the public to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of the police and about how the police operate. It would greatly assist in the quality and accuracy of public debate, which could otherwise be steeped in rumor and speculation. Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money.

Factors Against Confirming or Denying – Section 31

Confirming or denying that any information is held would have the effect of compromising law enforcement tactics. It has been recorded that Freedom of Information releases are monitored by criminals and terrorists and so to confirm or deny information is held concerning the use or specific operations or tactics would lead to law enforcement being undermined. The police service is reliant upon all manner of techniques during operations and the public release of any modus operandi employed, if held, would prejudice the ability of the police service to perform the functions it exists to provide.

By confirming or denying it would hinder the prevention or detection of crime. The police service would not wish to reveal what specific operations or tactics it employs as it would clearly undermine the law enforcement and investigative process. This would impact on police resources and more crimes could be committed, placing individuals at risk. It can be argued that there are significant risks associated with providing information, if held, in relation to any aspect of police operations and tactics so confirming or denying that information is held, may reveal the relative vulnerability of what we may be trying to protect (eg the law).

Balance Test

The effective enforcement of the law is of paramount importance to Wiltshire Police and it will not divulge whether any information is or is not held regarding specific operations, if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk, undermine national security or compromise law enforcement.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. The use of specific police operations or tactics is a sensitive issue and therefore it is our opinion that for this issue the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any information is held is not made out.

However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

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,

Nick Penny
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.pnn.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