

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXX – By email

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

Date 18th August 2025

Our Ref FOI 2025-771

Dear XXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 7th August 2025, concerning vehicle thefts.

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

You wrote:

I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act, relating to vehicle thefts in your force area from 1st January 2020 to the most recent available data in 2025:

1. The number of recorded vehicle thefts (theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle – Home Office offence code 48), broken down by calendar year (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 to date).
2. The number of those vehicles that were subsequently recovered, broken down by year if available.
3. The five most commonly stolen vehicle makes and models across the full period (2020–2025 to date).
4. If available, the three most common location types where vehicle thefts occurred (e.g. on-street, driveway, car park)
5. If held, the top three postcode districts in your force area with the highest number of vehicle thefts across the period (2020–2025 to date), including total theft numbers for each.

Our response:

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at s1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at s1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

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Whilst I can confirm Wiltshire Police do hold the requested information, section 12(1) of the FOIA states:-

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.

The information you are requesting – specifically in relation to questions 2, 3 and 4 – is not stored in a way which permits for easy retrieval. Unfortunately, Wiltshire Police systems do not have a way of automatically retrieving this information. In order to determine the number of recovered vehicles, the most common location types and the most commonly stolen makes and models, we would be required to read through each relevant occurrence log. Over the time period requested, there are 2458 occurrences that we would need to review and if on average each log took 5 minutes to review, this would take over 200 hours.

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. Therefore the whole of the request should fall under the exemption of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please note:

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.

Forces may use different recording systems, therefore it may be possible some Forces can provide this information where others cannot.

Ordinarily under our Section 16 obligation to provide advice and assistance we would advise you of a way to refine your request to a more manageable level. Due to the difficulties in obtaining the requested information, as outlined above, I cannot think of a way in which this could be achieved.

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 can provide you with is documented below:

Question/answer

1.

	Distinct Count of OccNo
2020	429
2021	366
2022	453
2023	442
2024	514
2025	254

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Grand Total	2458
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5.

	Distinct Count of OccNo
SN12EH	7
BA129DQ	5
SN11JQ	5

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires 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.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss the withheld information.

Yours sincerely,

Force Disclosure Decision Maker