

**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 email

Date: 23rd September 2026

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2026 / 819

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 5th September 2026 concerning Recovered Stolen Property.

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 request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I ask for the following information held by your force.

For the purposes of this request, "recovered" means an item reported to the force as stolen that subsequently came into the possession of the force.

1. For each calendar year 2023, 2024 and 2025, reported separately, and for each of the following item categories, reported separately:

- a) pedal cycles
- b) power tools and trade equipment
- c) cameras
- d) mobile phones
- e) laptops and tablets



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

please provide:

- i) the number of stolen items recovered by the force
- ii) the number of those recovered items returned to an owner
- iii) the number of those recovered items not returned to an owner
- iv) the number of items at (iii) broken down by recorded reason for non-return, including any reason equivalent to owner not identified or ownership not established

2. Where the force records the disposal of unclaimed recovered property, please provide, for each year and each category above, the number of items disposed of, sold, destroyed or donated.

3. Under Section 11 of the Act, I request the response as a spreadsheet or CSV file. A fixed table format is preferred, with the following exact column headings, so that responses can be compared across forces:

Year | Item category | Items recovered | Items returned to owner | Items not returned | Non return reason: owner not identified or ownership not established | Non return reason: other (please specify) | Disposed of | Sold | Destroyed | Donated

4. If the force does not record reasons for non-return, please confirm this and instead supply whatever recovered and returned property figures it does hold, together with a brief description of how recovered property outcomes are recorded.

5. If the force holds this data under different category labels, please supply your nearest equivalent categories and state what those categories are.

6. If you consider that answering this request in full would exceed the appropriate limit under Section 12 of the Act, I would be willing to narrow the request. In that event, please answer as much as the limit allows in the following priority order:

- a) questions 1(i) and 1(ii) for pedal cycles and mobile phones, for 2025 only
- b) question 1 in full for 2025
- c) the remaining years and categories

I remind the force of its duty to provide advice and assistance under Section 16 of the Act, and ask that you contact me if any part of this request needs clarification.

Our response:

The information that you are requesting is simply not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

Our records for Property are held in a number of different formats – electronically, in paper format and on a separate legacy database.

None of our systems that record property seized/recovered do any of the following :-

- Summarise the type of property by the categories you require
- Link the item recovered with a particular historic crime report for a theft (for instance)
- Record the number (or type) of items specifically returned to the owner
- Record the specific reason for either non-return OR subsequent ultimate disposal (or break it down by the particular categories you require)

I have been spoken to a number of people around the Force including

- Our Special Property Team
- Our Business Intelligence Team (who are responsible for developing Apps and software solutions for reporting purposes)
- Our Chief Inspector in charge of County Hub Neighbourhood Policing (which effectively has ownership for items recovered and placed in our Property Stores)

And been advised that to even attempt to provide you with the limited information you identified in Q6 would necessitate someone being abstraction from all other duties for a period of at least 18-24 months to review all of our property records and try and map them back to reported crimes, review what has been returned / disposed of when and why etc, to provide you with the data you require. Even then – given the nature of our records and the way criminals operate – we could not guarantee that the information provided would even be remotely accurate ore representative (see later notes). It needs to be noted that Wiltshire Police would never knowingly place information into the public domain – as this FOI response would be – that it knew was inaccurate or misleading.

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 also 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 is documented below :-

- At any one time, our Special property Stores hold many 100,000's of thousands of individual items
- For the 3 year period you mention, our Property Stores have taken receipt of more than 80,000 individual items and disposed of nearly 40,000 in one way or another
- Property is retained in our Property Stores for a number of years whilst attempts are made to reunite it to owners, whilst it remains as evidence as part of active investigations, it awaits claiming OR is disposed of under current retention guidelines
- When items are seized / recovered, they are logged and – where possible – scanned for postcodes or other identifying marks before being placed in our Property Stores
- Dependant on demand, OIC's may make attempts to identify whether specific recovered items "marry-up" with known items reported as stolen and/or liaise with our Intel Teams and other Police Forces to link occurrence series, identify trends in offender behaviour and monitor any websites where people make posts regarding items that are stolen
- Appeals may be made on Social media to try and assist in the identification of owners of specific major / high-value items
- Similarly, local NPT's may hold sessions where members of the public are invited to view recovered items in an attempt to reunite them with their owners
- Wiltshire Police only hold local information (ie information related to our one geographic area of policing jurisdiction) – we do not have access to data held on other Police Force's systems
- In reality, offenders do not operate within geographic boundary areas. Property we may have recovered / seized may well relate to criminal activity that occurred out of our Force area. Similarly, property recovered by other Forces around the Country (or even abroad) could relate to criminal activity that occurred in Wiltshire

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,

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