

3 October 2024

FOI Ref 17012

Request - You asked us the following:

I'm writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) to ask that you please disclose to me the operation names of any large scale protest action that you have been called out to as a force over the last two calendar years (2023 and 2024 to present).

I'd like the operation name, date, the name of the group involved (this could span anything from white nationalists to environmentalists - XR, BLM, anti-ULEZ, National Action, EDL, NBU, Covid conspiracy protests, Insulate Britain, Women's Rights marches, anti-military Marches like the anti-Elbit Systems action recently, Palestine action or other pro-Palestine marches, etc).

I'd also like to know how many people, and for what reason and from what groups, have been arrested under section 7 of the public order act, and those arrested under section 12 of the act as well.

Two areas of focus specifically however - in these instances spanning larger and smaller scale protests caught up in public order offences - would include arrests of environmental protestors specifically from the following: XR, JSO (Just Stop Oil), Greenpeace, Ocean Rebellion, Fossil Free Parliament/Fossil Free London/Fossil Free Politics, Insulate Britain, Friends of the Earth or other related groups that fall into this category.

And on the far right: the EDL (or newer associated groups), the New British Union of Fascists, Patriotic Alternative, Pie and Mash Squad, The Yorkshire (or East Yorkshire) Patriots, The National Support Detachment, the National Rebirth Party, National Action (now proscribed), Britain First, the English Democrats, UKIP, the National Front, the BNP, Homeland, or any other groups that fall into this category.

I'd like this information to include figures of arrests, and appreciate that in some instances there will be multiple arrests over a year for the same activists. This doesn't matter for the purposes of this request, as it's numbers of arrests specifically that I am seeking.

We received your request on 03/07/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Please find below our response.

Staffordshire Police holds the following requested information.

- I'm writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) to ask that you please disclose to me the operation names of any large scale protest action that you have been called out to as a force over the last two calendar years (2023 and 2024 to present).
I'd like the operation name, date, the name of the group involved (this could span anything from white nationalists to environmentalists - XR, BLM, anti-ULEZ, National Action, EDL, NBU, Covid conspiracy protests, Insulate Britain, Women's Rights marches, anti-military Marches like the anti-Elbit Systems action recently, Palestine action or other pro-Palestine marches, etc). – **Information held.**

- I'd also like to know how many people, and for what reason and from what groups, have been arrested under section 7 of the public order act, and those arrested under section 12 of the act as well. – **Information held.**
- Two areas of focus specifically however - in these instances spanning larger and smaller scale protests caught up in public order offences - would include arrests of environmental protestors specifically from the following: XR, JSO (Just Stop Oil), Greenpeace, Ocean Rebellion, Fossil Free Parliament/Fossil Free London/Fossil Free Politics, Insulate Britain, Friends of the Earth or other related groups that fall into this category.
And on the far right: the EDL (or newer associated groups), the New British Union of Fascists, Patriotic Alternative, Pie and Mash Squad, The Yorkshire (or East Yorkshire) Patriots, The National Support Detachment, the National Rebirth Party, National Action (now proscribed), Britain First, the English Democrats, UKIP, the National Front, the BNP, Homeland, or any other groups that fall into this category.
I'd like this information to include figures of arrests, and appreciate that in some instances there will be multiple arrests over a year for the same activists. This doesn't matter for the purposes of this request, as it's numbers of arrests specifically that I am seeking. – **Information held.**

Staffordshire Police discloses/withholds the following information.

- I'm writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) to ask that you please disclose to me the operation names of any large scale protest action that you have been called out to as a force over the last two calendar years (2023 and 2024 to present).
I'd like the operation name, date, the name of the group involved (this could span anything from white nationalists to environmentalists - XR, BLM, anti-ULEZ, National Action, EDL, NBU, Covid conspiracy protests, Insulate Britain, Women's Rights marches, anti-military Marches like the anti-Elbit Systems action recently, Palestine action or other pro-Palestine marches, etc). – **Partially disclosed, please see accompanying file titled 'FOI 17012 Protest Operations Data.PDF'.**
- I'd also like to know how many people, and for what reason and from what groups, have been arrested under section 7 of the public order act, and those arrested under section 12 of the act as well. – **Partially disclosed, please see accompanying file titled 'FOI 17012 Protest Operations Data.PDF'.**
- Two areas of focus specifically however - in these instances spanning larger and smaller scale protests caught up in public order offences - would include arrests of environmental protestors specifically from the following: XR, JSO (Just Stop Oil), Greenpeace, Ocean Rebellion, Fossil Free Parliament/Fossil Free London/Fossil Free Politics, Insulate Britain, Friends of the Earth or other related groups that fall into this category.
And on the far right: the EDL (or newer associated groups), the New British Union of Fascists, Patriotic Alternative, Pie and Mash Squad, The Yorkshire (or East Yorkshire) Patriots, The National Support Detachment, the National Rebirth Party, National Action (now proscribed), Britain First, the English Democrats, UKIP, the National Front, the BNP, Homeland, or any other groups that fall into this category.
I'd like this information to include figures of arrests, and appreciate that in some instances there will be multiple arrests over a year for the same activists. This doesn't matter for the purposes of

this request, as it's numbers of arrests specifically that I am seeking. – **Partially disclosed, please see accompanying file titled 'FOI 17012 Protest Operations Data.PDF'.**

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

Several matters within the dataset provided currently remain ongoing at this time. Disclosure of further details relating to these occurrences at this time would prejudice police activities both for ongoing and future investigations, and would be likely to cause significant harm to the law enforcement function of Staffordshire Police and the administration of justice.

To provide the individual operation names could undermine existing or future investigations, operations and police tactics. It would allow those with ill intent to cause disruption to operational policing and prejudice the prevention and detection of crime.

The following exemptions have been applied:

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

- Section 31 (1) (a) (b) - Law Enforcement.

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31 (1) (a) (b) where the release of Information would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and/ or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This exemption is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)

Disclosure of the information would improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. Staffordshire Police is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 31(1)

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, it would also lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force and the communications used with operations and during routine policing.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 31

Releasing such data would give those individuals with the intent to do so, the intelligence required to disrupt police activity. This knowledge would allow those with ill intent to target their offending more effectively which would inevitably lead to an increased likelihood of criminal activity and an increased danger to the public. Any disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

Balancing Test

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, we must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to prevent and detect crime and hindering our ability to protect the public, then non-disclosure takes precedence.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that further information is held for the following reasons:

Any release under FOIA is a disclosure to the world, not just to the individual making the request. Providing any notice that confirms or denies the existence of any other policing operations at protests would make security measures less effective. In addition, the Police are charged with enforcing the law, detecting and preventing crime, and protecting the communities we serve. Confirming or denying whether any other information is held would impact on the effectiveness of police investigations, thereby hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The current UK threat level from international terrorism, based on intelligence, is assessed as substantial which means that a terrorist attack is likely.

In order to counter criminal and terrorist behaviour, it is vital that the police have the ability to work together, where necessary covertly, to obtain intelligence within current legislative frameworks to assist in the investigative process to ensure the successful arrest and prosecution of offenders who commit or plan to commit crime including acts of extremism and terrorism.

To achieve this goal, it is vitally important that information sharing takes place between police officers, members of the public, police forces as well as other law enforcement bodies within the United Kingdom. Such action would support policing and counter terrorism measures in the fight to deprive criminals including extremists of their ability to commit crime.

The impact of providing information under FOI which aids in identifying whether or not Staffordshire Police has conducted any other counter criminal or terrorist operations at protests would provide those intent on committing such acts in the future with valuable information as to where the police are targeting their investigations.

The following exemptions have been applied:

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

- Section 23(5) – Information supplied by or concerning certain Security Bodies.

- Section 24(2) – National Security.
- Section 30(3) – Criminal Investigations
- Section 31(3) - Law Enforcement.

Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.

Section 30 is a class based qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to conduct a test of the public interest in confirmation or denial.

Sections 24 and 31 are qualified exemptions and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest in confirmation or denial.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 24

Providing confirmation or denial as to the extent of any operations safeguarding matters of national security at large scale events would improve public confidence in the work of the police and reassure them that Staffordshire Police is taking necessary steps to counter extremism and terrorism.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 24

If Staffordshire Police were to confirm or deny that any other information was or was not held, this could prejudice the Government's ability to maintain national security. It is not in the public interest to disclose the capabilities of the police service and other UK authorities and the operations that they may or may not use to safeguard the country. This would allow determined individuals the ability to, over time, identify which public authorities hold certain types of national security information and which do not, thereby allowing inferences to be drawn about what authorities or bodies might have an interest in certain matters of national security.

Any response that has the potential to undermine ongoing and future operations to protect the security of the United Kingdom would significantly increase the risk of harm to the community at large. Such actions would obviously not be in the best interest of the public.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 30

Disclosing information about any investigations under an operations banner would provide a greater transparency in the investigating process and the actions of a public authority. It is clear that there is a public interest in public authorities operating in as transparent a manner as possible, as this should ensure they operate effectively and efficiently.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 30

There is an inherently strong public interest in public authorities carrying out investigations to prevent and detect crime. This ensures that offenders are brought to justice and that the necessary actions are taken to safeguard public funds and resources. To allow the effectiveness of investigations to be reduced, as described in the harm above, is not in the public interest. The Police need to be allowed to carry out investigations effectively away from public scrutiny until such times as the details need to be made public, otherwise it will be difficult for accurate, thorough and objective investigations to be carried out.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 31

This Freedom of Information Act request concerns operations conducted by Staffordshire Police at large scale protests. This may include the involvement of Staffordshire Police in multi-agency operations, given

groups who could be involved, and there is likely to be a public interest into what specific involvement each agency had within such an investigation. Therefore this in itself favours confirming whether the information is held.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 31

To confirm or deny that any other information is held would compromise law enforcement tactics, including covert activity, in areas which may include serious and organised criminality, as well as extremism and counter terrorism. This would hinder the UK Police service's ability to prevent and detect criminality overall. By confirming that Staffordshire Police had conducted any operations of such a nature, or alternatively stating that they had not, would give vital information to criminals regarding areas of more or less policing activity (including covert policing). Criminals could take steps to avoid detection if they are aware of force areas that do not take part in such operations. The ability of the UK police service to effectively investigate organised crime, or counter terrorist behaviour would be severely compromised.

Where current or future law enforcement capabilities of the force may be compromised by the release of information, it is unlikely to be in the interest of the public.

Please note that this data has been provided to the best of our ability, subject to the limitation of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional arrests may have been recorded during these timescales but are awaiting finalisation and input onto these systems and would not be present within this dataset.

Every effort is made to ensure that the data presented is accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that this has been extracted from multiple sources, developed for specific policing purposes, for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the terminology of this request. Therefore, the data presented is subject to the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

As a consequence, care should be taken in the interpretation and presentation of this data, so as to not misrepresent the whole or any part of the data disclosed.

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response.

If you would like us to carry out a review of our response, please let us know within two months of the date of receipt of this email, review requests should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Please remember to quote the reference number in any future communications.

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit