

7 April 2025

FOI Ref 21167

Request - You asked us the following:

We are an animal welfare charity focused on ending hunting animals with hounds. We are a participant in the UK Police National Working Group on Hunting with Hounds and we deliver analysis on issues associated with hunting. We have previously submitted a request asking for data on incidents and attendances during the cub hunting season (August - October). This request is to ask for data on incidents and attendances in relation to the fox hunting season (November to March).

We would like to ask for:

- 1) A figure for the number of incidents of fox hunting recorded in your force area between 01/11/2024 and 31/03/2025.
- 2) A figure for the number of times police officers attended an incident or report of fox hunting in your force area between 01/11/2024 and 31/03/2025.
- 3) If possible, the dates of any incidents and attendances along with any location details (e.g. partial postcode).

To clarify what we mean by the terms we have used in this request:

'Incidents' - reports of fox hunting made by the public, other agencies or recorded by police officers, whether crimed / attended or not.

'Attendances' - occasions where police officers have attended a report of fox hunting whether that be in response to a call from the public or as part of a pre-planned operation / police generated activity.

'Fox hunting' - traditional, organised 'red coat' hunting where horses and / or hounds are used to chase a fox or follow a pre-laid scent trail.

We understand that very few police forces have a recording code or category for fox hunting and that a free text search may be the only way to extract this data from your systems. The following search terms are therefore suggested:

'hunt'

'hunting'

'fox hunting'

'red coat hunting'

'fox hunt'

'hounds'

'trail hunting'

'terrier'

We also understand that data on fox hunting may be held outside of core police systems by Rural Crime Teams or Wildlife Crime Officers and that they may have the requested information already available. We would ask that this request is also passed to them, or any other team within your force who has responsibility for hunting.

If you are able to provide some, but not all, of the data requested, we would be grateful to receive what is available.

We received your request on 02/04/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Staffordshire Police's response to your enquiry is as follows:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for this particular request.

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 12(1) where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. Section 12(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 prescribed limit'.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

There is no method by which we can readily retrieve information from our systems to answer this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 520 incidents. In order to determine the number of incidents that related to the fox hunting season would require a manual review of each incident. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record. From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 4 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 34 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI Act by some considerable margin.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

In order to assist in refining your request. Data may be able to be provided where a free text search of your requested words has been conducted and if an officer had been resourced to the incident. This data could be broken down by the local policing team. However, please note further incidents may have occurred with further results which has not been included in the free text search.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Staffordshire 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 within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

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

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 Central Disclosure Unit within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Central 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 20 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

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit