

10 December 2025

FOI Ref 22055

Request - You asked us the following:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to submit the following FOI requests.

I would like to request:

Q1. The total number of cigarettes and vapes, and the amount of rolling tobacco, seized on raids carried out as part of Operation Machinize. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date.

Q2. The total number of arrests carried out as part of Operation Machinize. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date.

Q3. The total number of illegal migrants arrested during Operation Machinize raids. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date.

We received your request on 04/11/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds/does not hold the requested information.

- Q1. The total number of cigarettes and vapes, and the amount of rolling tobacco, seized on raids carried out as part of Operation Machinize. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date. – **Withheld, Section 23(1).**
- Q2. The total number of arrests carried out as part of Operation Machinize. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date. – **Withheld, Section 23(1) and 31(1).**
- Q3. The total number of illegal migrants arrested during Operation Machinize raids. Please include data covering the period from the launch of Operation Machinize to the present date. – **Neither confirm nor deny, Section 23(5), 30(3) and 31(3)**

The following exemptions have been applied:

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

- Section 23(1) – Information supplied by, or concerning certain security bodies
- Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and as such does not require the application of a 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.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether information relevant to this request is held, 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 31(3) - Law Enforcement.

The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with Section 1 (1)(a) would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

- Section 30(3) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and class-based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

- Section 23 (5) – Information supplied by, or concerning certain security bodies

Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and as such does not require the application of a Public Interest Test.

Public Interest Test

Harm Section 31(1)(a)(b):

Disclosure of the requested information would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. Revealing the quantity of cigarettes, vapes, and rolling tobacco seized could provide criminal networks with intelligence about enforcement activity, enabling them to adapt their methods to avoid detection.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 31(1)(a)(b)

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(1)(a)(b)

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that law enforcement agencies can operate effectively without interference. Disclosure could prejudice the prevention and detection of crime by revealing operational details that criminals could exploit. It may also compromise ongoing investigations and future enforcement actions, reducing the ability of authorities to protect the public and uphold the law.

Balance 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.

Harm section 30(3) and 31(3):

Confirming or denying whether the requested information is held would itself reveal whether specific investigations or law enforcement activities have taken place. This could prejudice the prevention or detection of crime and compromise the confidentiality of investigative processes. Criminal networks could use such confirmation to assess enforcement priorities, adapt their methods, and evade detection. Even acknowledging the existence or non-existence of the information could undermine operational security and future enforcement actions, weakening the ability of authorities to apprehend offenders and maintain public safety.

Factors favouring confirming or denying information is held – Section 30(3)

Confirming or denying information is held would improve the public's confidence in the work of the police to apprehend offenders and reassure them that procedures to tackle crime were robust and effective.

Factors against confirming or denying information is held – Section 30(3)

Confirming or denying whether the requested information is held could reveal whether specific investigations have taken place, which may prejudice current or future investigations. Such confirmation could provide individuals or organised groups with intelligence about enforcement priorities or investigative focus, enabling them to adapt their behaviour to avoid detection.

Factors favouring confirming or denying information is held under Section 31(3)

To confirm or deny that information is held 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 intelligence, operations and during routine policing.

Factors against confirming or denying information is held under Section 31 (3)

Confirming or denying whether the requested information is held would itself reveal whether specific law enforcement activities have taken place. This could prejudice the prevention or detection of crime by providing criminals or organised networks with intelligence about enforcement priorities, operational focus, or investigative methods. Such disclosure could enable individuals to adapt their behaviour to avoid detection and compromise ongoing or future operations, weakening the ability of authorities to protect the public and uphold the law.

Balance test

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors we are required to determine whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is our view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

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:

IAT@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Information Access Team
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 Information Access Team 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 a Supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team 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 Supervisor 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.



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4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant 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 link:
<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team