

16 July 2026

FOI Ref 23039

Request - You asked Staffordshire Police (SP) the following:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 about operational ANPR.

I would be grateful if you could provide the following information for the last three years, broken down into calendar years:

1. Number of cameras

What is the total number of ANPR cameras in active operation by your organisation? If the numbers have changed, please break down in years (2024, 2025, 2026)

2. Camera operation times and modes

Please share records showing the operational availability of those cameras, including:

Total operational hours.

Total hours where cameras were unavailable, offline, malfunctioning or otherwise unable to capture registration plate data.

3. Performance reports, audits or statistics:

Please share any performance report, audits or statistics showing the below:

The percentage of time ANPR cameras were fully operational.

The percentage of vehicle registrations successfully captured or read.

Any recorded failure rates for vehicle registration capture.

4. Guidance on ANPR operation / non operation Please define terminology: share guidance, policies, or technical standards used to determine whether a camera is considered operational vs non operational referencing

5. Network operation

If the information only covers a part of your ANPR network, please provide what's available.

6. ANPR detection failures

For the last three years, please provide the number of instances where a vehicle was detected but:

The number plate could not be read ("unreadable plate" / failed read) The plate was partially captured or unclear Any other recorded error rates for ANPR systems

7. Suspicious or altered plates

For the last three years, please provide the number of recorded instances where a vehicle was flagged as using:

a cloned registration plate

a suspected fraudulent or misrepresented registration plate a non-compliant or altered number plate If recorded, please provide a breakdown of categories used internally.



If data is not held

If any of the above categories are not specifically recorded, please confirm this and instead provide any alternative metric or closest equivalent you hold (for example, failed reads, unreadable plates, or enforcement flags).

SP received your request on 23/06/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP withholds the requested information.

1. Number of cameras
What is the total number of ANPR cameras in active operation by your organisation? If the numbers have changed, please break down in years (2024, 2025, 2026) – **Withheld.**
2. Camera operation times and modes
Please share records showing the operational availability of those cameras, including:
Total operational hours.
Total hours where cameras were unavailable, offline, malfunctioning or otherwise unable to capture registration plate data. – **Withheld.**
3. Performance reports, audits or statistics:
Please share any performance report, audits or statistics showing the below:
The percentage of time ANPR cameras were fully operational.
The percentage of vehicle registrations successfully captured or read.
Any recorded failure rates for vehicle registration capture. – **Withheld.**
4. Guidance on ANPR operation / non operation Please define terminology: share guidance, policies, or technical standards used to determine whether a camera is considered operational vs non operational referencing – **Withheld.**
5. Network operation
If the information only covers a part of your ANPR network, please provide what's available. – **Withheld.**
6. ANPR detection failures
For the last three years, please provide the number of instances where a vehicle was detected but:
The number plate could not be read ("unreadable plate" / failed read) The plate was partially captured or unclear Any other recorded error rates for ANPR systems – **Withheld.**
7. Suspicious or altered plates
For the last three years, please provide the number of recorded instances where a vehicle was flagged as using:
a cloned registration plate

a suspected fraudulent or misrepresented registration plate a non-compliant or altered number plate If recorded, please provide a breakdown of categories used internally. – **Withheld.**

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 24 (1) – National Security

Section 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest.

- 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 be 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.

Harm

Disclosure of operational information and camera numbers in relation to ANPR equipment would provide useful intelligence to hostile actors that could impede law enforcement, would weaken and reduce the effectiveness of preventing and detecting organised crime and terrorist activities, and negatively impact on public safety. Disclosure, whether alone or combined with other information in the public domain, could enable a mosaic effect whereby hostile actors build a sufficiently detailed picture of ANPR capability, coverage and performance to identify and exploit vulnerabilities, contribute to a national capability picture, which in turn could be exploited by organised crime groups and those looking to threaten national security.

Releasing the specific information requested would provide criminal and terrorist elements the skills to identify whether equipment is operational, and the means to map and plot more favourable routes and, in turn, the ability to continue, and potentially expand, their activities by working around any faulty equipment. Information relating to availability, performance thresholds and failure rates would be likely to assist individuals seeking to evade detection by highlighting environmental or technical conditions under which reads are less effective (e.g. lighting, positioning or partial capture scenarios). The release of camera numbers would provide the means to build up a national picture of ANPR capability, and in turn, highlight gaps which could be utilised for criminal activity.

There is a strong likelihood, due to the low level, operational nature of the data requested, that hostile actors would take advantage and utilise the information to vary their behaviour to avoid detection. Providing year-on-year data may allow actors to identify trends, improvements, or recurring weaknesses, increasing the likelihood of successful avoidance. Revealing areas which could be perceived as more vulnerable, due to the reduced operational availability of ANPR, would likely lead to an increased level of crime in those areas. Any increase in criminality would, in turn, increase the level of policing focus required, divert officers away from other duties, and therefore undermine the Police's overall primary function of law enforcement and maintaining public safety.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 24(1)

Disclosing the information would strengthen accountability to the wider Public, show that funding is being spent appropriately, and improve the Public's confidence that law enforcement has the tools for safeguarding national security.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 24(1)

Whilst there is public interest in transparency and accountability, there is also an understanding that some intelligence is part of a wider picture and needs to be withheld to enable investigations, both locally and nationally, to proceed in order to protect the safety of the UK. Any disclosure of information that allows hostile agents to increase their activities and endanger the safety of members of the public (and infrastructure) would cause a decrease in the public's confidence and trust. The operational value of ANPR lies not only in its existence but in the uncertainty around its deployment, capability and effectiveness; reducing that uncertainty would be likely to diminish its deterrent effect.

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

Disclosing the information provides the Public with reassurance that equipment is available to their police force to assist them in the prevention and detection of crime and help keep their local community (and the wider UK) safe; as well as transparency and accountability in respect to public spending.

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

Releasing information that enables hostile agents to adjust or increase their criminal activities and prevent law enforcement would endanger the public and cause them to lose confidence in their police force. Disclosure risks facilitating evasion or crime displacement in and across force boundaries. The release of information which has the potential to risk the safety of the public, either locally or nationally, would not be in the public interest. There is a strong public interest in preserving the integrity and effectiveness of systems used to prevent and detect crime, particularly where those systems form part of a nationally coordinated capability.

Balance test

Whilst there is interest from the public for information relating to the use of ANPR equipment, the risk of hostile agents being able to extrapolate the data to increase their criminal or terrorist activities, and in turn, threaten national security outweighs disclosure. Also, as releasing the information has the potential to increase criminal activity, both on a local and national level, and increase the burden on the Police Force to carry out their law enforcement duties, and put the safety of the public at risk, on balance the Public Interest Test lies in favour of withholding the information and engaging the S24(1) and S31(1)(a)(b) exemptions.

Advice and assistance

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



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[National ANPR Service: data protection impact assessment - GOV.UK](#)
[National ANPR standards](#)
[National ANPR Service - Technical specifications](#)
[National ANPR Service compliance dashboard: Q3 and Q4, 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP 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 SP, 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