

10 July 2026

FOI Ref 23092

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

For the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025:

1. The total number of recorded incidents involving damage to, or tampering with, postboxes (Royal Mail pillar boxes, wall boxes, or lamp boxes) within your force area. This may be recorded under categories such as criminal damage, arson, theft, or attempted theft from a postal receptacle.
2. For each incident, if held, please provide the following details (in spreadsheet format where possible):
 - Date of incident
 - Location (street name, postcode district, or ward/neighbourhood — I am not requesting exact addresses if this would breach personal data protections)
 - Nature/type of damage or tampering (e.g. arson, forced opening, glue/fishing device used to steal mail, physical vandalism, graffiti)
3. If incident-level data cannot be provided within the cost limit, please provide a summary breakdown by:
 - Neighbourhood/ward or postcode district (to identify hotspots)
 - Type/cause of damage (to identify most common causes)

SP received your request on 06/07/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP'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 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 SP can readily retrieve information from local police systems to answer this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 56,100 incidents of criminal damage, arson and theft. To ascertain whether the incident related to the damage to, or tampering with, post boxes (Royal Mail pillar boxes, wall boxes, or lamp boxes), the record for each one would require a manual

review. 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 3 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 2,805 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by a considerable margin.

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.

Unfortunately, SP cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

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



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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, considering the matters raised by the complaint.

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