

8 September 2026

FOI Ref 23351

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

I am writing to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I ask for the following information held by your force.

For the purposes of this request, "recovered" means an item reported to the force as stolen that subsequently came into the possession of the force.

1. For each calendar year 2023, 2024 and 2025, reported separately, and for each of the following item categories, reported separately:

- a) pedal cycles
- b) power tools and trade equipment
- c) cameras
- d) mobile phones
- e) laptops and tablets

please provide:

- i) the number of stolen items recovered by the force
- ii) the number of those recovered items returned to an owner
- iii) the number of those recovered items not returned to an owner
- iv) the number of items at (iii) broken down by recorded reason for non return, including any reason equivalent to owner not identified or ownership not established

2. Where the force records the disposal of unclaimed recovered property, please provide, for each year and each category above, the number of items disposed of, sold, destroyed or donated.

3. Under Section 11 of the Act, I request the response as a spreadsheet or CSV file. A fixed table format is preferred, with the following exact column headings, so that responses can be compared across forces: Year | Item category | Items recovered | Items returned to owner | Items not returned | Non return reason: owner not identified or ownership not established | Non return reason: other (please specify) | Disposed of | Sold | Destroyed | Donated

4. If the force does not record reasons for non return, please confirm this and instead supply whatever recovered and returned property figures it does hold, together with a brief description of how recovered property outcomes are recorded.

5. If the force holds this data under different category labels, please supply your nearest equivalent categories and state what those categories are.

6. If you consider that answering this request in full would exceed the appropriate limit under Section 12 of the Act, I would be willing to narrow the request. In that event, please answer as much as the limit allows in the following priority order:

- a) questions 1(i) and 1(ii) for pedal cycles and mobile phones, for 2025 only
- b) question 1 in full for 2025

c) the remaining years and categories

7. I remind the force of its duty to provide advice and assistance under Section 16 of the Act, and ask that you contact me if any part of this request needs clarification.

SP received your request on 07/09/2026 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 period requested, there have been in excess of 44,900 items of property recorded on SP's systems. To determine the reason the property had been recorded (stolen or recovered), the type of property, whether the property was returned or not to the owner, the reasons for this and disposal information the record for each item would require a manual review. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record. The alternative request still engages the Section 12 exemption as SP cannot distinguish between the reasons property has been recorded on an occurrence, therefore the same limitations are faced.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 5-10 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to between 3,741 and 7,483 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



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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, 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