

Chief Constable
Chief Constable Robert Carden
Police Headquarters
Carleton Hall Penrith,
Cumbria
CA10 2AU



27th February 2025

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 1137/24 Drone Inventory

I refer to your request for information received by Cumbria Constabulary on the 21st of December 2024. I note you seek access to the following information:

Provide a full inventory of drones that the police force has access to, storing the data in a table disaggregated using the following fields;

1. *Drone manufacturer*
2. *Model*
3. *Technical capabilities*
4. *Cost*
5. *Conditions of usage; is it owned, leased, borrowed, etc. If it isn't owned by the police force, please share who the owner is*
6. *List of additional payloads attached to the drone; disaggregated into the following fields;*
 - a) *Manufacturer*
 - b) *Model*
 - c) *Technical capabilities*
 - d) *Cost*
 - e) *Conditions of usage; is it owned, leased, borrowed, etc. If it isn't owned by the police force, please share who the owner is*

Your request for information has now been considered and I can confirm that Cumbria Constabulary do hold the information requested in questions 1-3 and 6a-c, however the information is exempt from disclosure.

Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act requires a public authority, when refusing to confirm or deny information is held must provide the applicant with a notice that: -

- a) States that fact,
- b) Specifies the exemption, and
- c) States, if it would not otherwise be apparent, why the exemption applies.

The exemption which is applicable in this case is: -

- **Section 24(1) National Security**
- **Section 31(1) Law Enforcement**



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Section 24(1) National Security and Section 31(1) Law Enforcement are both qualified, prejudice-based exemptions, therefore I must state the harm in disclosing information as well as completing a public interest test, which is set out below.

Evidence of Harm:

Every effort should be made to release information under Freedom of Information. However, a FOIA response is a release to the world, as once the information is published, the public authority has no control over what use is made of that information.

Although it is acknowledged that the police service use drones, revealing specific information such as the make, model and technical capabilities would undermine the process of preventing and detecting crime and apprehension of offenders. The information would be of use to those who seek to disrupt police operations as it would, by process of elimination, enable individuals with the inclination to identify where and what specific drones police forces hold, which is detrimental to the use of tactics and effective investigations, allowing those with intent the opportunity to disrupt operational policing.

Factors favouring s24(1) – The information simply relates to national security and disclosure would not actually harm it. Better informed public can take steps to protect themselves. The public have a right to see where public spending is going.

Factors against s24(1) -The risk of harm to the public would increase as security measures would be rendered less effective if those with intent were able to intercept policing drones and obstruct policing procedures. Release of specific information about particular policing tools would disclose forces capabilities and allow steps to be taken to counteract such tools, thus reduce the forces ability to protect the public, which in turn affects national security.

Factors favouring s31(1) –Some information is already in the public domain around police forces using drones for search and rescues and locating criminals. Better awareness may reduce crime or lead to more information from the public. The public would be better informed about force technologies and capabilities.

Factors against s31(1) – Disclosing further information would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and placing the public at risk of harm. Law enforcement tactics would be compromised and lead to an impact on policing resources and would compromise the forces' ability to protect the public.

Balance test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge any information, if to do so would undermine law enforcement and therefore compromise the work of the police service. I am aware of the immense importance for Public Authorities to demonstrate a level of openness and transparency, however, the effective delivery of operational law enforcement is of paramount importance to Cumbria Constabulary in their duty to ensure that the prevention and detection of crime is carried out and the effective apprehension or prosecution of offenders is maintained. It is my decision that the balance of the public interest lies in the non-disclosure of the exempted information.

Cumbria Constabulary can provide some information in response to your request and these answers can be found below.

Question 4 & 6d – Total cost spent is £57402



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Question 5 & 6e – Owned by Cumbria Constabulary

Complaint Rights

If you believe your request has not been properly handled, or you are otherwise dissatisfied with the outcome of your request, you have the right to request an internal review.

In the first instance, please email freedomofinformation@cumbria.police.uk quoting the FOI reference number and explain why you are dissatisfied. Your complaint will be considered and a response will be provided to you after your complaint has been investigated.

If you remain dissatisfied following conclusion of the internal review, you have the right, under section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to complain directly to the Information Commissioner.

The address for the Information Commissioner can be found below:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Complaints to the Information Commissioner can also be made online:

[Make a complaint | ICO](#)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in Cumbria Constabulary.



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