

Our ref: 620612
Your ref:

HMP Britain
request-177xxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx

Simon Sheldon-Wilson
Divisional Director
ID Customer Solutions
C6/05 Broadway
Broad Street
Birmingham B15 1BL

16 October 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

INTERNAL REVIEW OF YOUR FOI REQUEST

I am writing in response to your request of 21st September 2009 for a review of our response to your original Freedom of Information request dated 6th September.

In our letter we incorrectly recorded the date of your letter as 6th December when it was in fact 6th September. Additionally the phrase '[Delete where appropriate]' was inadvertently left within the letter. Please accept my apologies for the oversight that led to these inaccuracies.

With regards to your request and our review I can confirm that the Highways Agency does hold most of the information you requested. I have decided that some of this information can be released and that other information should not.

Your letter stated **"3. I requested 'more information about [the process of hashing]'. I expected this to include but not be limited to the exact hashing algorithm"**.

We do hold information on this but a decision has been taken not to release the data under section 31(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2001 – see the attached Public Interest Test at Annex B.

Your letter stated **"4. In relation to point 3, I requested any document or index of documents that details the process of hashing. This has not been provided"**.

We do hold documentation on this but a decision has been taken not to release the data under section 31(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2001 – see the attached Public Interest Test. I can confirm that the Highways Agency do not hold an index of this documentation.

Your letter stated **“5. On the point of helping police with enquiries, I fail to see how--if this data is classed as non-personal data and hashed appropriately--that you would be able to help the police with their enquiries. I am keen to hear how you are able to help the police in a meaningful capacity and eager to hear more. An index of documents is fine”**.

The Highways Agency will, from time to time, provide assistance to the Police in the investigation of specific serious crimes. Where it is the case that assistance can be provided, then the Police may work with the Agency to recreate a hashed tag of a specific vehicle registration number created using the known algorithm. The police will also provide a defined location and time period.

The hashing process creates a non-unique tag that may consequently apply to a number of vehicles. The Highways Agency cannot therefore be definitive about a specific vehicle, and can only say whether or not one or more vehicles with that tag was observed at the location and within the specified time parameters.

I can also confirm that we do not hold an index of documents.

Your letter stated: **“6. You give the impression in your response that the VRN data is hashed at the camera site into a non-unique tag and sent to the National Traffic Control Centre and then to Traffic Information Services. Could you please confirm these are the only recipients of the tags, and that this data--with a different hashing algorithm or without one at all--is not also sent somewhere?”**.

In response to point 6 I can confirm that the National Traffic Control Centre operation is the only recipient of the tags.

The information being withheld in relation to your points 3 and 4 falls under the **prejudice to law enforcement** exemption in section 31(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In applying this we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

The attached annex A to this letter sets out the exemption in full and details why the public interest test favours withholding the information can be seen in Annex B.

The information provided will now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire

SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Simon Sheldon-Wilson

Divisional Director

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Request for ANPR hashing algorithm	
Exemption applied – Section 31 – prejudice to law enforcement	
<i>Factors supporting disclosure</i>	<i>Factors supporting non-disclosure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a public interest in understanding the nature of the hashing process so that the public can understand how their personal data is protected. There is currently a general public interest in government’s operation of cameras and the use of information captured on these cameras. Release of the algorithm would help to contribute to the public debate • ANPR cameras are installed for the purposes of journey time calculation through anonymous data and there should therefore be no barrier to disclosing their functionality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of the hashing algorithm would show how each unique tag is created. With this knowledge registration plates could be manipulated to create artificial tags. • The hashing process is used to provide maximum protection to personal data as required by the 7th Data Protection Principle of the Data Protection Act. The release of any part of this process weakens that protection. • ANPR cameras are primarily concerned with capturing journey time data and used for traffic modelling and this is used for widespread public benefit. In some specific circumstances the raw data can be used by the Police to assist with enquiries into specific incidents. A greater understanding of the nature of this assistance would make it possible for those intent on criminal behaviour to understand how such evidence can be avoided. It is not in the public interest to prevent this assistance to the Police.
<p>Conclusion: the Public Interest test shows that the public interest is in withholding the information</p> <p>Date of PIT: 9th October 2009</p>	

Annex B

31 Law enforcement

(1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice—

(a) the prevention or detection of crime,

(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders,

(c) the administration of justice,

(d) the assessment or collection of any tax or duty or of any imposition of a similar nature,

(e) the operation of the immigration controls,

(f) the maintenance of security and good order in prisons or in other institutions where persons are lawfully detained,

(g) the exercise by any public authority of its functions for any of the purposes specified in subsection (2),

(h) any civil proceedings which are brought by or on behalf of a public authority and arise out of an investigation conducted, for any of the purposes specified in subsection