

17 January 2012

Mr Colin Robotham

Email: request-93690-7062798a@whatdotheyknow.com

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(Freedom of Information Act)  
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Royal Mail Sheffield  
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Dear Mr Robotham

**Re: Freedom of Information Act – Internal Review (Reference KFEN-8NTBX2)**

I am writing in response to your email dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2011. In line with our complaints procedure we have carried out an internal review of your request for information. Your request has therefore been reviewed in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and I am writing to inform you of the outcome of the internal review.

In your email of the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011, you submitted the following questions:

- 1) *Are the same measurement limits applied consistently throughout the UK?*
- 2) *How is this audited?*
- 3) *What is the percentage of letters, being intercepted by Revenue Protection?*
- 4) *What is the percentage of letters, being intercepted by Revenue Protection, for each region within the United Kingdom?*
- 5) *What is the average delivery delay introduced by Revenue Protection interception?*
- 6) *Does this fining process, fall foul of "Unfair Trading Regulations 2008"? (In that the postage price might be deemed deceptive, if the Royal Mail has not made consumers aware of its Revenue Protection handling fees)*
- 7) *What percentage of letters due for delivery before the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011, were held up by the Revenue Protection process until after that date?*
- 8) *What are the costs incurred by Royal Mail Group Limited, in sending out P4605 cards to customers, including printing and delivery?*

In our response dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011 we provided answers to each of your questions. In response to questions 3 and 4 we confirmed that relevant information is held by Royal

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Mail but this information was withheld under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. You queried that decision in your email of the 18<sup>th</sup> December.

Having reviewed your request, we have decided that the relevant information should be disclosed to you. The table below shows the percentage of Royal Mail traffic where surcharges were raised in periods 1-7 of the 2011/12 financial year. The overwhelming majority of all mail has the correct postage paid on it and it is a small fraction of the mail we collect, sort and deliver that either has no postage paid, or insufficient postage attached. Further, the huge bulk of all mail handled by Royal Mail is business mail. Surcharges are raised on business mail when items sent by business customers who have posted meter (franked) mail or some other category of business mail or large mailing with underpaid or no postage attached to it. This can account for a significant amount of the mail for which unpaid postage needs to be collected.

Region	%
Anglia	0.41%
London	0.57%
Midlands	0.47%
North East	0.43%
North West	0.44%
N. Ireland	0.33%
Scotland	0.51%
South East	0.53%
South West	0.44%
Thames Valley	0.53%
Wales	0.43%
<b>National</b>	<b>0.47%</b>

Royal Mail, like any other business providing a service to its customers, believes the fairest approach to everyone is to collect unpaid or underpaid postage. If there was no system to collect unpaid postage, it is likely that the small fraction of mail with no or underpaid postage on it would increase – at a potential cost to all other customers. This would clearly be unfair to those customers who pay the correct postage. Royal Mail Group does not make any profit from the administration fees involved in the collection of underpaid mail as the fee simply reflects the extra work involved while observing the principle that prices and charges should always relate to the actual costs Royal Mail incurs.

In your email of the 18<sup>th</sup> December you requested clarification of our response to questions 5 and 7 where you asked:

“What is the average delivery delay introduced by Revenue Protection interception?” and;

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“What percentage of letters due for delivery before the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011, were held up by the Revenue Protection process until after that date?”

If we identify mail with insufficient or unpaid postage we hold the item at the local Delivery Office and leave a delivery card to notify you of the amount due. The amount due on an item can be paid:

1. By Credit/Debit card on the Royal Mail website at [www.royalmail.com/fee2pay](http://www.royalmail.com/fee2pay) and we deliver the item.
2. By affixing postage for the required amount on the card stamps/meter impression, and returning it to the Delivery Office at which point we can deliver the item.
3. By collection from the Delivery Office (Cash or Cheques only)

Mail which has been surcharged is not classed as being subject to any delay under Royal Mail's scheduled service targets, because Royal Mail is not required to deliver the item until the amount due is paid. I apologise if our original response was unclear on this point.

We cannot track every mail item through the course of the mail and do not keep tracking information on all items which are surcharged. Therefore, we do not hold the average time before surcharged items are collected or delivered. Similarly, we do not hold the percentage of items which would have been due for delivery on the 1<sup>st</sup> November but which were not because there was a fee to pay.

In our original response we confirmed that the total costs requested in question 8 are not held and provided you with the information requested in your remaining questions. I hope that the further information provided in this letter now satisfies your request. In the event that you remain dissatisfied with this response you do have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner who can be contacted at the address below:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
WILMSLOW  
SK9 5AF  
[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)

I note that in your email of the 18<sup>th</sup> December you stated that you are still awaiting an explanation for the delay in issuing a P4605 for your own mail item. This did not form part of your request for information included in your original email. It is also important to recognise that the Freedom of Information Act applies only to recorded information held by Royal Mail – it does not require us to provide any comment or explanation which is not already recorded. As stated above, we do not hold tracking information for all mail items

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and would not therefore hold a record of the handling of a standard mail item which has been delivered.

I am sorry that you have experienced a problem with this item. However, the Information Rights team is only able to deal with requests for recorded information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. We would therefore advise any customer who experiences a problem with a Royal Mail service them to contact Royal Mail Customer Services for assistance. Customers can contact Customers Services online or using the details below:

Royal Mail Customer Services  
FREEPOST  
20 Turner Road  
St Rollox Business & Retail Park  
GLASGOW  
G21 1AA

Telephone: 08457 740 740

Web: <http://www.royalmail.com/customer-service/personal-customers>

Yours sincerely

Colin Young  
Head of Information Rights  
Company Secretary's Office