



Information Rights Team  
Post Office Limited  
Ground Floor  
Finsbury Dials  
20 Finsbury Street  
London EC2Y 9AQ

Your reference:  
Our reference: FOI2021/00864

Phillip Green  
By email: request-796001-9f8dc9b5@whatdotheyknow.com

21st October 2021

Dear Phillip Green,

### **Freedom of Information Request – FOI2021/00864**

I am writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 29 September, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”).

In your email you have requested the following information:

*Please can you provide the total opening hours of the Post Office branch network run by the Co-op.*

*I would like this to be visible as a total (not by branch) for a snapshot in time during March of each year from:  
March 2019, March 2020 and March 2021.*

For Post Office to provide exact figures for “opening hours, visible as a total for March 2019, March 2020 and March 2021”, it is estimated that the cost of complying with your request in full would exceed the “appropriate costs limit” and Post Office is not obliged to process your request in these circumstances by virtue of section 12 of FOIA. I set out our reasons for this decision in further detail below.

The “appropriate cost limit” for Post Office is £450.<sup>1</sup> When estimating costs for the purpose of this limit, the rate of £25 per person per hour is used<sup>2</sup> and so £450 represents the cost of one person at Post Office carrying out 18 hours of work. However, the 18 hours of work can only relate to carrying out the following “permitted activities” in complying with the request:<sup>3</sup>

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- (iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

<sup>1</sup> See regulation 3(3) of the Fees Regulations. - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/3244/regulation/3>

<sup>2</sup> See regulation 4(4) of the Fees Regulation. - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/3244/regulation/4>

<sup>3</sup> See regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations. - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/3244/regulation/4>

We estimate that to search through our records in order to determine whether the information is held, locate the information, or documents containing it, and extract the requested information from our records given the volume of documents involved would take significantly longer than 18 hours. In response to your request, we conducted some preliminary searches and enquiries and established that any further details held may be contained within multiple IT systems. Post Office believes to retrieve and extract any electronic documents located to determine whether any of the content falls within scope of your request, would significantly exceed the cost limit set out under Section 12(1) of the Act.

As Post Office estimates that the “appropriate costs limit” would be exceeded, we are not obliged to process your request further in accordance with section 12 of FOIA.

In accordance with our duty under section 16 of FOIA to provide reasonable advice and assistance, we have considered whether it would be possible to narrow your request in order to bring it within the costs limit.

Post Office has contracts with multiple Cooperative Societies around the country which between them operate over 500 branches. The number of branches operated by the Societies will change from year to year and a branch could be trading or be closed multiple times during the various periods (instances of this increased during the Covid-19 pandemic) and vary their opening hours accordingly.

In order to determine the total opening hours for Cooperative branches at the specific points as requested would require a number of complex queries to be run against multiple sources and the results matched to other records to get the total opening hours. We therefore cannot see a way that your request could be narrowed to bring it within the cost limit unless you restricted your query to one or two specific branches. Should you wish to submit a revised request, it will be dealt with as a new case accordingly.

I am sorry I could not provide you with the information you requested on this occasion, however if you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above or to [information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:information.rights@postoffice.co.uk) stating your reasons for your internal review request.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
<https://ico.org.uk>

Yours sincerely,

*L Jackson*

Liesl Jackson  
Information Rights Team  
[information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:information.rights@postoffice.co.uk)

**Post Office Limited is committed to protecting your privacy, information about how we do this can be found on our website at [www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy)**