

8 November 2011

Your Ref:

Our Ref: 0706/2011

Mr Dennis Fallon
Email: request-84054-33334438@whatdotheyknow.com

Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters
173 Pitt Street
GLASGOW
G2 4JS

Tel: 0141 435 1217

Fax: 0141 435 1218

Dear Mr Fallon

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NUMBER 0706/2011

I refer to your request for internal review dated 1 November 2011, and would ask you to consider the following information, which seeks to clarify the points raised. I believe this may remove the need for an internal review, however, I will be happy to proceed with that course of action should you feel that it is still necessary.

I am disappointed to learn that you consider some the responses you have received to date have been ambiguous and “show elements of confusion” and are “misleading”. I can assure you that there has been considerable effort spent on each response and at no point was there any intention to provide you with responses designed to confuse.

Below are your latest comments which I have individually responded to:

I am writing to request an internal review of Strathclyde Safety Camera Partnership's handling of my FOI request 'Gatso Calibration and Training'.

I requested information, in good faith, to understand the costings and systems related to Gatso cameras, and based on the ensuing replies requested further clarifications.

I have issued expressions of thanks on 28th September and 18th October but after further consideration the answers have not all been reliable, and I now request an appeal review plus explanation of the disclosure about the use of dummy radar and flash units.

APPEAL POINT ONE.

My initial request dated 25th August explained "I would like to request a FOI disclosure which is basically to understand the annual money payments to Serco and Gatso for the calibration and maintenance of cameras, staff training, and how the speed is calculated as part of the secondary check.

Q1. How many fixed post Gatso (FPG) and Gatso Red Light (GRL) cameras were in use, on an annual basis, by your partnership in the past three financial years?"

The response, dated 20th September, advised that disclosure would be granted in full, and on the resulting chart advised that the total of Gatsos varied between 78 and 93.

I wish to appeal that this reply was misleading in that the preamble to the chart mentioned the word sites when the question clearly required cameras. It would accordingly be natural to presume that sites and cameras would be identical, and only after further probing was the truth partially revealed (namely 16 of the speed variety camera existed).

It is not acceptable to spin a response when the request was quite clear and the police said they were disclosing in full.

To reiterate, the figures quoted, which varied between 78 and 93 (for periods 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11) clearly stated the number of Gatso camera sites operated by the Strathclyde Safety Camera Partnership.

Generally when 'fixed post Gatsos' are referred to we consider that to be the camera housings because it is the housings and not the cameras themselves that comprise the 'fixed posts'. I can assure you that there was no intention to mislead or partially reveal information in relation to any of the information provided. I believe that each and every response made was explicit in its meaning, with the word 'sites' rather than 'cameras' being used. It was only after a further request for clarification that we realised there had been confusion over the interpretation of the terminology used.

APPEAL POINT TWO.

It is not good that the second disclosure is incorrectly dated 20th September, as it makes reference to later emails dated 23rd September, and quotes Gatso Speed Calibration annual figures of £609 for 2009/10 and £658 for 2010/11, Gatso Red Light corresponding figures of £452 and £527, and no clear data for 2008/2009. I am making a comparative survey and have been advised that Gatso may have implemented some mid-year price increases which do not show in these figures.

I would appreciate confirmation that these figures apply from April of the year in question and no mid-year increases were implemented.

I apologise for the incorrectly dated correspondence which was a typing error and certainly not intended to confuse.

With regard to the costs provided, they do run from April of one year until March of the following year (financial year). Although, as previously stated, the recorded information held in the invoices for 2008/09 did not provide a breakdown between calibration, repair and postage; having made further enquiries as a result of your latest correspondence I understand that the price of calibration did increase during the course of 2008-09. However, as per the original request all actual costs, broken down year by year, were disclosed in the figures previously provided.

APPEAL POINT THREE.

Reference the reply dated 30th September it confirms that VAT is reclaimed in full, but I wish to appeal that it was not originally voluntarily disclosed that VAT is not realistically part of the cost as it is reclaimed.

In all our procurement and accounts processes the practice is to exclude VAT from all costings. (I acknowledge, in hindsight, that it would have been prudent to have stated this fact in our response.) However, since all Police Forces may automatically reclaim VAT paid, the figures given did in fact reflect the actual amounts paid and therefore the cost to the force.

APPEAL POINT FOUR.

Reference reply dated 18th October, quote " All sites have continuously working radar and will flash whether or not a 'camera' is loaded", and reply dated 27th October, quote "For your information, the parts that require calibration for Home Office type approved are the camera itself plus associated radar unit. This is the equipment which is circulated around the camera housings. When there is no live unit installed in a housing the camera technicians fit a 'dummy' flash unit which has a radar detector but does not need calibration as it doesn't lead to prosecution but does give the appearance of being operational.

To clarify, Strathclyde Safety Camera Partnership currently operates 16 Gatso speed cameras which are calibrated and circulated around all the Gatso speed housings".

I wish to appeal the validity of these answers and require confirmation of the actual situations.

If the 67 sites all have continuously working radar and will flash whether or not a 'camera' is loaded"(by the use of active dummy units),and there are actually only 16 Gatso speed cameras in use ,that implies there must be at least 51 'dummy units' available for installation, plus cover during calibration.

When the cameras are switched around that means the Type Approved radar unit is also removed and replaced by the 'dummy' radar unit.

Please advise if this scenario is correct, please confirm how many 'dummy' units Strathclyde actually hold, if they are the same model and specification as the calibrated radar unit, and the purchase cost of each 'dummy' unit.

I can confirm that Strathclyde Safety Camera Partnership currently holds 16 Gatso speed cameras and 4 Gatso red-light cameras as well as 48 working 'dummy' speed radar units and 14 dummy red-light units.

The dummy radar units were purchased by the relevant local authorities a number of years ago (Gatso cameras have been used in the Strathclyde area since the early 1990s). However, the cost information we hold dates from 2008; £4810 + VAT for a dummy radar unit. We do not have a price for 'dummy' red light units.

As a matter of interest I am not subject to any current speeding offence but simply researching the truth behind how the systems operate.

I am sorry to bother you with this appeal request but the information released so far appears to show elements causing confusion.

In summation, I can assure you that every effort has been made throughout this entire process to assist you and at no point was there any intent to conceal or mislead. Again, if there is anything further which I can add to the foregoing please advise and I will endeavour to provide a satisfactory conclusion to this request.

I hope this information is helpful, however, if you are not satisfied with the way in which this has been explained please contact me and I will pass the matter on for review process.

Yours sincerely

Andrew McCulloch
Freedom of Information Officer