

Paul Perrin

Email us at: [foi@dvla.gov.uk](mailto:foi@dvla.gov.uk)Website: [www.gov.uk/browse/driving](http://www.gov.uk/browse/driving)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: FOIR7701

Date: 12 August 2019

Dear Mr Perrin

**Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your e-mail of 14 June requesting information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and your subsequent email of 30 June.

I will address the content of your email of 30 June first. It is unfortunate that you felt that the message used in the footer of our acknowledgement email was threatening. As part of our ongoing work to raise awareness of the need for people to tax their vehicles, this wording is used as the standard email sign off. It does not target any specific individual and I can assure you that the message was not directed at you personally. While the vast majority of people tax their vehicles on time, the DVLA uses a number of communication channels to remind those who might be tempted to evade their obligations that there are consequences for doing so.

Turning now to your request of 14 June, I apologise for not responding before now. You will already be aware that the DVLA required additional time to consider the public interest test on whether to disclose or withhold information. Having considered these matters, the following response can be provided.

You asked:

**How is the DVLA driving licence image data processed / handled / managed?**

The DVLA does not consider this to be a request for recorded information. The FOIA gives the right to request recorded information that is held by a public authority.

However, and outside the provisions of the FOIA, I can advise that DVLA staff handling driving licence applications have set instructions to follow when dealing with an application for a driving licence. There are four ways in which a photograph can be captured as part of that process:

- a physical, hard copy photograph is provided by the applicant;
- a digital image is taken at a Post Office as part of the photocard card renewal service that they offer;

- as part of an online driving licence service (and if the customer agrees) the applicants passport image is reused as part of the transaction; and
- the applicant consents, by providing passport details on a manual/paper application, to an identification check allowing their passport image to be used.

**Given the latest advances in computer based 'facial recognition', I would like as much information as possible regarding handling of photos and image data of UK driver licence applicants. The photocard has been established, I would like to know how this data is processed once DVLA receives a photo.**

You have asked for “as much information as possible regarding the handling of photos” but the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) recommends that requestors should not make ‘catch-all’ requests. That is, requestors should not ask to be provided with everything a public authority holds about a particular subject.

However, the DVLA again considers this request not to be for recorded information but the following can be provided outside the provisions of the FOIA.

The photo is processed by the DVLA to allow for the production of a photocard driving licence. The DVLA does not use facial recognition technology.

**Clearly it must be scanned into a digital system, I would like to know how this is managed/processed, and then from this point I would like to know every department/agency who may have access to this data (or copies of this data) and on what basis the access is given, also the contact information of the data controller of each of these other agencies who have such access.**

The above responses explain how a photograph is managed/processed.

The photographic image that appears on the GB driving licence is held electronically on the DVLA’s driving licence database. Subsequent viewing of the image by the DVLA is confined to those staff with an operational need to see or use the image for legitimate and lawful purposes.

The DVLA holds information specifying those entities that are able to request the driving licence holder’s image held by the DVLA on the relevant driving licence record. Provision of the driver image is handled on a case by case basis in line with the appropriate legislative provisions applying.

Further information about those able to request photographic images is being withheld. The DVLA provides images to support road safety, help identify fraud involving driving licences and for the identification, apprehension and prosecution of offenders. For that reason, the DVLA is of the opinion that disclosure of the information requested would prejudice these activities and the Agency relies on Sections 31(1)(a) and 31(1)(b) of the FOIA in withholding this information.

Before applying the above exemptions, the DVLA considered the public interest test between disclosure and withholding the information held. Further details as to why the DVLA favours withholding the information can be found in the attached Annex.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (the GDPR), each data controller must provide the contact details of their Data Protection Officer (DPO). The DVLA does not hold recorded information on each DPO that it discloses data to.

**Also the names of the systems/databases that hold this (or copies of this) data, and the geographic location (as close as possible, but to country level if that is all that is available) of the computers that host this data.**

The DVLA's driver licence database is held at the DVLA, Swansea.

The information which follows concerns the procedures for making any complaint you might have about the reply. Please quote the reference number of this letter in any future communications about it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R Toft', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Robert Toft  
Head of Data Protection Policy & Freedom of Information Team

## **Your right to complain to DVLA and the Information Commissioner**

If you are not happy with the reply to your request, you can ask DVLA to re-consider the response you received by writing (within two calendar months of receiving this response) to either [foi@dvla.gov.uk](mailto:foi@dvla.gov.uk) or DVLA Freedom of Information Team, DPP/FOI, C2W, DVLA, Swansea SA6 7JL.

DVLA will acknowledge and consider your request, re-visiting the response provided. This is known as an Internal Review and will be considered by a staff member not involved with the original reply.

If you disagree with the outcome of the Internal Review, you have the option to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. Further information can be found via: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/getting/> Alternatively you may wish to write to: Customer Contact, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow SK9 5AF.