



Guy Forkes
Via 'What Do They Know'

Date
21 June 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear Guy Forkes,

Freedom of Information Request

We are writing in response to your fifteen emails received by Post Office Limited ("Post Office") on 19 May, 20 May, 22 May, and 5 June, which have been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA").

For ease, we are providing the reference numbers for each of your fifteen information requests below (further details of each request can be found in Annex 1 at the end of this letter):

FOI2024/00809; FOI2024/00810; FOI2024/00815; FOI2024/00816;
FOI2024/00819; FOI2024/00820; FOI2024/00821; FOI2024/00822;
FOI2024/00832; FOI2024/00833; FOI2024/00889; FOI2024/00890;
FOI2024/00891; FOI2024/00892; FOI2024/00893.

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some information relevant to your requests. However, considering all fifteen requests for information together, they fall under section 14(1) of the FOIA (vexatious requests), due to the unreasonable burden that complying with these would impose on Post Office. The reasons for this decision are set out below.

Section 14(1) of the FOIA states:

"(1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious."

We have taken the Information Commissioner's Office (“ICO”) guidance on dealing with vexatious requests and the Freedom of Information Code of Practice into account when making this decision. These guides explain that a number of factors need to be considered before the threshold for section 14(1) is reached. Links to both guides can be found below:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/section-14-dealing-with-vexatious-requests/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744071/CoP_FOI_Code_of_Practice_-_Minor_Amendments_20180926_.pdf

We have, therefore, carefully considered the number, pattern, duration, breadth, and motive of your requests when determining the burden placed on Post Office.

You submitted 15 requests to Post Office in a period of less than three weeks between 19 May and 5 June 2024. In total, you have submitted 25 requests since 1 January 2024. Your recent requests are detailed in Annex 1 and are likely to require Post Office to spend a significant amount of time not only retrieving responsive material, but also in considering the extent to which exemptions under FOIA may apply to that material. In the circumstances, we consider that this would impose a disproportionate and unreasonable burden on our resources as well as an unjustified level of disruption.

The ICO guide states:

“Section 14(1) is designed to protect public authorities by allowing them to refuse any requests which have the potential to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.”

Dealing with such requests can place a strain on the resources of a public authority and get in the way of delivering mainstream services or answering legitimate requests. The burden in responding to your requests for information would take away resource from handling legitimate requests, negatively impacting on our obligations to the people who submit them

We note that the FOIA Code of Practice states that public authorities should:

“... note that the public interest in obtaining the material does not act as a ‘trump card’, overriding the vexatious elements of the request requiring the public authority to respond to the request.”

The FOIA Code of Practice also states:

“Public authorities should also keep in mind the requirements of section 8, in particular, the requirement for applicants to provide their real name and not use a pseudonym. As set out in paragraphs 1.14 and 1.15 pseudonymous requests are not valid requests under the Act. However, the use of pseudonyms may also form part of broader considerations when considering whether or not a request, or a series of requests, should be considered vexatious.”

Taking all these factors into account, Post Office is therefore not obliged to consider your requests further. Whilst in accordance with section 17(6) FOIA, Post Office is also not obliged to respond to further requests of a similar nature or on the same topic, we do understand that some of your requests may have a serious purpose.

Where possible, when a public authority cites section 14(1), they should provide advice and assistance under the section 16 FOIA, which places a duty on public authorities to give advice and assistance to requestors. Post Office is committed to transparency, and we will consider any further requests for information on a case-by-case basis.

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 within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

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

www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team

information.rights@postoffice.co.uk

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

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

Annex 1 – Current FOIA requests (including verbatim wording)

Case Reference	Received Date	Case Wording
FOI2024/00809	19/05/2024	<p>In a recent witness statement in the ongoing Inquiry, it was stated that IBM had won the contract to replace Fujitsu.</p> <p>What was the total cost of the contract? How long was the tenure of this contract? How much did POL and/or IBM (separately) spend on this contract? When was the contract terminated? Who made the decision of terminating the contract? Can you disclose all emails referring to the contract termination? What role did Gill Tait play in the contract termination? How many individuals were there in any type of Postmaster Working Group for the design, implementation or rollout of this replacement?</p>
FOI2024/00810	19/05/2024	<p>Please disclose any documentation relating to the speed of the replacement of Horizon historically. What i am trying to establish is whether the current Horizon system is faster on transactions or slower than any or all of previous replacements initiated or implemented by POL.</p>
FOI2024/00815	19/05/2024	<p>I understand this data is held centrally by POL as the NFSP use this information to request business impact.</p> <p>How may branches by branch type are less than 1 mile (road distance) to the next nearest branch? How may branches by branch type are less than 0.75 mile (road distance) to the next nearest branch? How may branches by branch type are less than 0.50 mile (road distance) to the next nearest branch? How may branches by branch type are less than 0.25 mile (road distance) to the next nearest branch?</p>
FOI2024/00816	19/05/2024	<p>How may employees within Post Office and/or Payzone are currently or have worked on Drop & Collect branch rollout? If you could also provide a total cost of employees please.</p>
FOI2024/00819	20/05/2024	<p>Please advise which POL employees have face to face contact with Postmasters. Who is ultimately responsible for these employees? How many employees conduct this role?</p>

		<p>How many visits are made to branches every year (for the last 5 years)?</p> <p>Are these visits conducted for every type of branch?</p> <p>When did this commence?</p>
FOI2024/00820	20/05/2024	<p>What is Martin Roberts key accountabilities in his role?</p> <p>When did Martin Roberts role commence?</p> <p>Who did Martin Roberts replace in the organisation?</p> <p>Since 2001 who are the people that represented a Martin Roberts role?</p>
FOI2024/00821	20/05/2024	<p>For the last 20 years or as data is available by year, how many people have taken voluntary redundancy in Post Office and how many have been made redundant through compulsory instruments?</p> <p>What was the total cost of any redundancy payments by year please?</p>
FOI2024/00832	22/05/2024	<p>Does the Post Office log all requests for information?</p> <p>Similarly, are all responses logged?</p> <p>What system(s) are used to hold this information?</p> <p>Does the Post Office categorise each request/response?</p> <p>Can you disclose the categories and the number of requests/responses for each category historically?</p>
FOI2024/00833	22/05/2024	<p>Please can you disclose the engagement survey results of any and all engagement surveys conducted before September 2019.</p> <p>Also can you disclose the engagement survey results of any and all engagement surveys conducted in 2024.</p> <p>Ideally i would like a report that shows comparison of engagement surveys but understand this may exceed the confines of the Act.</p>
FOI2024/00889	05/06/2024	<p>Through your wish to become transparent with your decisions and so forth, how many Board meetings and minutes have been disclosed to public, employees and Postmasters since the commencement of the Public Inquiry.</p> <p>Also can you advise if these have been disclosed through a portal, emails, cloud links or through other means?</p> <p>How often have these been disclosed?</p> <p>Is there a disclosure register maintained by Post Office?</p> <p>Is this now consistent policy to disclose such items?</p> <p>If none of these have been disclosed, can you state why given Post Offices' desire to become transparent and honest and one way to rebuild trust with the public, it's customers and Postmasters.</p>
FOI2024/00890	05/06/2024	<p>After a policy has been agreed, it is sound business rationale, that is applied consistently and fairly.</p>

		<p>Please advise where any policy decisions around distance to other branches may have been applied in an inconsistent or unfair manner to that of a standard postmaster, a multiple partner or any other type of postmaster. Can you also explain your rationale why this may have taken place and any decision making surrounding this either internally or with external stakeholders.</p> <p>To ensure this does not breach the confines of the Act, if this could be applied to any decisions made post 2020.</p>
FOI2024/00891	05/06/2024	<p>What was the rationale to cease providing private medical insurance as a perk/benefit to employees? When was this decision made? How many employees are currently receiving this perk/benefit? Is it a taxable benefit? Were economies of scale part of the rationale to cease?</p>
FOI2024/00892	05/06/2024	<p>How many branches indicated a loss or gain on their branch accounts by week, month or year since records began? If this could be provided in tabular format please indicating the number of branches that reported a loss or gain by the datum you use.</p>
FOI2024/00893	05/06/2024	<p>Please can you provide the number of senior managers that have resigned or through redundancy (compulsory or voluntary) every year since 2001</p>
FOI2024/00822	20/05/2024	<p>How many internal postmaster complaints have been registered by the Post Office since 1st Jan 2024. Please group this by the compliant categories. If you are able to split the numbers by complaints about postmasters and complaints by postmasters, i would be grateful.</p>