

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DEPARTMENT
Information Assurance

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Mr B Dean

Via Email:
request-389893-
14e32a2c@whatdotheyknow.com

Your Ref:

Our Ref: IR/ 1792

Date: 14 April, 2017

Dear Mr Dean

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) REQUEST – 1074/17

I refer to your email of the 20th March, 2017 seeking an internal review of the response previously provided to your FOIA request, reference above.

In accordance with the Constabulary's FOIA complaints procedure a review of the handling of your request has now been undertaken.

Your request, which was received on the 15th February, 2017, was as follows:

Please would you confirm the total number of police hours and the total cost to Lancashire constabulary of policing the Cuadrilla development site on Preston New Road between 5 January 2017 and 14 February 2017.

A response was provided on the 13th March, 2017. The response was correctly considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, as opposed to the Environmental Information Regulations which you also referred to within your request.

The initial response provided to your request was as follows:

Please be advised that the information you are seeking in the first part of this request is not easily retrievable via a simple search of our systems. This is because average officer numbers is not recorded on a central system, nor is it held in an electronically searchable format i.e. there is no system or searchable field within a system which would easily identify this information. Therefore the only way to extract this information would entail a detailed manual analysis of our case management system. In addition to this I can advise that in order to provide an accurate figure, an average of how officers have been deployed would also need to be calculated, for example, some officers are deployed on the fracking, however there will be officers placed on standby or regularly sent elsewhere, therefore numerous police incident reports would also need assessing in order to establish this.

Due to the amount of work that is required I can advise that this task cannot be completed within the 18 hour 'Appropriate Limit' (as defined in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004). As a result, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies and regrettably this task cannot be undertaken at this stage. This letter serves to act as a refusal notice for this request, as per S.17 (5) of the Act.

Within your internal review request you have stated :

I do not believe that you do not have internal systems in place to calculate the costs of policing this specific development site.

After all only last week LCC/Lancashire Constabulary lobbied central government for a refund of its costs for policing this site. I am sure a cost must have been quoted to the government. Can you at least advise me of what sums were quoted to the government?

Your internal review request has now been considered. It is noted that the reliance on Section 12 was correct, and to provide the specific information that you had requested would have taken in excess of 18 hours and therefore excess cost grounds would apply. However, as you note the Constabulary has been seeking to establish what costs it has incurred in policing the Cuadrilla site.

I can advise therefore that Lancashire Constabulary estimate the additional cost of policing the operation will be around £450k per month from April (this will be kept under review and published). It is also estimated that up to £200k will have been spent on additional costs in the current financial year. The increase is because activity at the site is increasing and so are the number of police officers deployed there. Additional cost is one that we have not budgeted for and is therefore a drain on our financial resources. It is costs we would not have incurred if we did not have to police the operation, covering things like overtime.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is able to make a claim in relation to Special Grant support from the Home Office however the cost of policing needs to be 1 per cent of our budget (1% of our 2017/18 budget is £2.6m).

I hope that this is helpful. If you are not content with the outcome of your FOIA complaint, you may write to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

C Melling

Carl Melling
Information Assurance Manager