



Florian Ellebrecht  
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28 March 2023

Dear Florian Ellebrecht,

**Reference number: FOI2023/00313**

Thank you for your email of 13 March 2023, in which you requested the following information:

Could you please provide signalling diagrams like the ones of a former request ([https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.whatdotheyknow.com%2Frequest%2Fsignalling\\_diagrams\\_and\\_gradient&data=05%7C01%7CFOI%40networkrail.co.uk%7Ccc4860ae8b3a4f5bea0a08db23db2427%7Cc22cc3e15d7f4f4dbe03d5a158cc9409%7C0%7C0%7C638143196331233503%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjE1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=PZ%2FOLu4ysXH9B6T95cJdRLwdfJ%2FqAvQzazk0KE3RauM%3D&reserved=0](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.whatdotheyknow.com%2Frequest%2Fsignalling_diagrams_and_gradient&data=05%7C01%7CFOI%40networkrail.co.uk%7Ccc4860ae8b3a4f5bea0a08db23db2427%7Cc22cc3e15d7f4f4dbe03d5a158cc9409%7C0%7C0%7C638143196331233503%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjE1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=PZ%2FOLu4ysXH9B6T95cJdRLwdfJ%2FqAvQzazk0KE3RauM%3D&reserved=0)) for the following routes?

SO110 - Victoria to Ramsgate via Herne Hill and Chatham  
SO130 - CHX to Dover/Eurotunnel via Tonbridge  
SO140 - Swanley to Ashford  
SO150 - Sittingbourne Western Jn to Sheerness-on-Sea  
SO160 - Faversham to Dover Priory  
SO180 - Paddock Wood to Strood  
SO220 - Ashford to Ramsgate via Canterbury West  
SO240 - Buckland Jn to Minster East Jn  
SO310 - Hither Green to Rochester Bridge Jn via Sidcup  
SO600 - Willingdon Jn to Ashford

I have processed your request under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).<sup>1</sup>

I can confirm that we do hold the information you have requested. However, after careful consideration and consultation with expert colleagues, I have concluded that these documents are exempt from disclosure under regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR for reasons of public safety, I have explained why this exception applies in more detail below.

### **Regulation 12(5)(a) – Public Safety**

Under regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR, a public authority can withhold information where its disclosure would adversely affect public safety. The Regulations do not specify the meaning of ‘public safety’, but the Information Commissioner’s Office makes it clear that the term is to be understood as having broad implications:

*...to protect the public as a whole, a specific group, or one individual who would be exposed to some danger as a result of the disclosure.*<sup>2</sup>

In this case, I have withheld all the requested signalling diagrams because they provide details of the inner workings of our signalling system which could be used by criminally minded individuals that wish to target our infrastructure. Our experts have reviewed the security implications of disclosing these operational signalling diagrams generally and we have concluded that if the detailed information on these signalling systems were released into the public domain, it could be used by those who may wish to disrupt our infrastructure; this is because this type of information could assist those with criminal intentions to identify target points on our network and infrastructure. This is because these specific diagrams show the inner works of the area they cover and display the relationships between assets and control points. We believe that the consequences of such activity would adversely affect public safety.

I would like to explain that disclosures made under the FOIA and the EIR are public disclosures which are made to the ‘world at large’; any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain rather than simply to the person making the request. Because of this, we have to consider the wider impact of making a piece of information

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<sup>1</sup> The EIR, like the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), allows people to access information held by public authorities like Network Rail. When people ask for environmental information, we need to consider the request under the EIR rather than the FOIA. In this case, I am of the view that signalling diagrams and signalling information, meets the definition of environmental information at regulation 2(1)(c) of the EIR because it is information on a measure that affects the land as an element of the environment.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1633/eir\\_international\\_relations\\_defence\\_national\\_security\\_public\\_safety.pdf](https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1633/eir_international_relations_defence_national_security_public_safety.pdf)

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available to 'the world' and whether any individual could then use the information to cause harm.

This regulation is subject to a public interest test. I have set out my findings for and against disclosing this information below.

I do understand that there is a public interest in general transparency and openness, as this helps to improve the accountability of organisations like Network Rail. We are committed to providing information where appropriate through proactive publication and disclosures under the FOIA and EIR. In the case of these particular signalling diagrams, however, we consider that there are strong arguments in favour of maintaining the exception, considering the diagrams are still mostly representative of the signalling presently in place.

Set against the general presumption in favour of transparency is the need to protect the security of the rail network and those who use it. It is particularly important to remember that disclosures made under the EIR are disclosures to the 'world at large'; any information disclosed is released into the public domain, not just provided to one individual in a private transaction. We therefore have to consider the wider impact of any disclosure and cannot take into account the motives of an individual requestor, even when they are well-intentioned.

The arguments to refuse these signalling diagrams are based on an assessment of the risks associated with the public disclosure of this particular type of information, and, on the likelihood and severity of potential harm to wider public safety if this information is made widely available. These are strong arguments in favour of maintaining the exception in this case, given the severe risks associated with disclosure. It is strongly in the public interest that Network Rail protects operational information that would facilitate potential crimes affecting public safety.

Having considered all the circumstances relevant to this case, it is my decision that at this time the greatest public interest lies in maintaining the security of the railway and keeping those who use the network safe. I am therefore withholding this information from disclosure in this response.

I'm sorry that we were unable to provide you with the information you have requested. If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at [FOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:FOI@networkrail.co.uk). Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

**Isabella Battaglia**  
**Information Rights Compliance Specialist**

### **Appeal rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Compliance and Appeals team at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at [ComplianceandAppealsFOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:ComplianceandAppealsFOI@networkrail.co.uk). Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner (ICO) can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or you can contact the ICO through the 'Make a Complaint' section of their website on this link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

The relevant section to select will be "Official or Public Information".