



Response Date: 12/07/2024

2024/653 - Protest operations

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

Please disclose to me the operation names of any large scale protest action that you have been called out to as a force over the last two calendar years (2023 and 2024 to present).

I'd like the operation name, date, the name of the group involved (this could span anything from white nationalists to environmentalists - XR, BLM, anti-ULEZ, National Action, EDL, NBU, Covid conspiracy protests, Insulate Britain, Women's Rights marches, anti-military Marches like the anti-Elbit Systems action recently, Palestine action or other pro-Palestine marches, etc).

I'd also like to know how many people, and for what reason and from what groups, have been arrested under section 7 of the public order act, and those arrested under section 12 of the act as well.

Two areas of focus specifically however - in these instances spanning larger and smaller scale protests caught up in public order offences - would include arrests of environmental protestors specifically from the following: XR, JSO (Just Stop Oil), Greenpeace, Ocean Rebellion, Fossil Free Parliament/Fossil Free London/Fossil Free Politics, Insulate Britain, Friends of the Earth or other related groups that fall into this category.

And on the far right: the EDL (or newer associated groups), the New British Union of Fascists, Patriotic Alternative, Pie and Mash Squad, The Yorkshire (or East Yorkshire) Patriots, The National Support Detachment, the National Rebirth Party, National Action (now proscribed), Britain First, the English Democrats, UKIP, the National Front, the BNP, Homeland, or any other groups that fall into this category.

I'd like this information to include figures of arrests, and appreciate that in some instances there will be multiple arrests over a year for the same activists. This doesn't matter for the purposes of this request, as it's numbers of arrests specifically that I am seeking.

We had a farmers protest this year falls, however we are not sure if this falls within in the term "a large scale protest", as the request doesn't described what is a large scale protest as in terms of numbers. The farmers protest was only a hundred or so in attendance, that is the only protest which would come close to what the question asks.

There were no arrests made under the Public Order Act during the farmers protest.

We have also carried out a search of our Records Management System (RMS) for either Sections 7 or 12 of the public order act, OR a key word search on the summary for any of the groups listed in the request. The results have been manually read to ensure relevance to your request. No occurrences were relevant.

North Wales Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information in relation to either covert in nature and/or relate to ongoing investigations into sensitive areas of policing such as CT or organised crime as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 24(2) National Security

Section 30(3) Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities

Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

With Sections 24 and 31 being prejudice based qualified exemptions, there exists the requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not whether information is held as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Section 30 is a class based qualified exemption and consideration of the public interest must be given as to whether neither confirming nor denying the information exists is the appropriate response.

Harm

Any release under FOIA is a disclosure to the world, not just to the individual making the request. Providing any notice that confirms or denies the existence of any other policing operations at protests would make security measures less effective. In addition, the Police are charged with enforcing the law, detecting and preventing crime, and protecting the communities we serve. Confirming or denying whether any other information is held would impact on the effectiveness of police investigations, thereby hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The current [UK threat level](#) from international terrorism, based on intelligence, is assessed as substantial which means that a terrorist attack is likely.

In order to counter criminal and terrorist behaviour, it is vital that the police have the ability to work together, where necessary covertly, to obtain intelligence within current legislative frameworks to assist in the investigative process to ensure the successful arrest and prosecution of offenders who commit or plan to commit crime including acts of extremism and terrorism.

To achieve this goal, it is vitally important that information sharing takes place between police officers, members of the public, police forces as well as other law enforcement bodies within the United Kingdom. Such action would support policing and counter-terrorism measures in the fight to deprive criminals including extremists of their ability to commit crime.

The impact of providing information under FOI which aids in identifying whether or not North Wales Police has conducted any other counter criminal or terrorist operations at protests would provide those intent on committing such acts in the future with valuable information as to where the police are targeting their investigations.

Public Interest

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 24 - Providing confirmation or denial as to the extent of any operations safeguarding matters of national security at large scale events would improve public confidence in the work of the police and reassure them that North Wales Police is taking necessary steps to counter extremism and terrorism.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 24 - If North Wales Police were to confirm or deny that any other information was or was not held, this could prejudice the Government's ability to maintain national security. It is not in the public interest to disclose the capabilities of the police service and other UK authorities and the operations that they may or may not use to

safeguard the country. This would allow determined individuals the ability to, over time, identify which public authorities hold certain types of national security information and which do not, thereby allowing inferences to be drawn about what authorities or bodies might have an interest in certain matters of national security.

Any response that has the potential to undermine ongoing and future operations to protect the security of the United Kingdom would significantly increase the risk of harm to the community at large. Such actions would obviously not be in the best interest of the public.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 30 - Disclosing information about any investigations under an operations banner would provide a greater transparency in the investigating process and the actions of a public authority. It is clear that there is a public interest in public authorities operating in as transparent a manner as possible, as this should ensure they operate effectively and efficiently.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 30 - There is an inherently strong public interest in public authorities carrying out investigations to prevent and detect crime. This ensures that offenders are brought to justice and that the necessary actions are taken to safeguard public funds and resources. To allow the effectiveness of investigations to be reduced, as described in the harm above, is not in the public interest. The Police need to be allowed to carry out investigations effectively away from public scrutiny until such times as the details need to be made public, otherwise it will be difficult for accurate, thorough and objective investigations to be carried out.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial – Section 31 - This FOIA request concerns operations conducted by North Wales Police at large scale protests. This may include the involvement of North Wales Police in multi-agency operations, given groups who could be involved, and there is likely to be a public interest into what specific involvement each agency had within such an investigation. Therefore this in itself favours confirming whether the information is held.

Factors against confirmation or denial – Section 31 - To confirm or deny that any other information is held would compromise law enforcement tactics, including covert activity, in areas which may include serious and organised criminality, as well as extremism and counter terrorism. This would hinder the UK Police service's ability to prevent and detect criminality overall. By confirming that North Wales Police had conducted any operations of such a nature, or alternatively stating that they had not, would give vital information to criminals regarding areas of more or less policing activity (including covert policing). Criminals could take steps to avoid detection if they are aware of force areas that do not take part in such operations. The ability of the UK police service to effectively investigate organised crime, or counter terrorist behaviour would be severely compromised.

Where current or future law enforcement capabilities of the force may be compromised by the release of information, it is unlikely to be in the interest of the public.

Balance Test

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both National Security and Law Enforcement.

Therefore, for these issues the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any further information is held, is not made out.

Therefore, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice under section 17 (1) of the legislation.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 11/07/2024