



Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
No.1 Waterwells, Waterwells Drive
Quedgeley, Gloucester. GL2 2AN
www.gloucestershire.police.uk

Your reference:

Our reference: FOI_26_0030

E-mail: FOI

@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 25/06/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request 26_0030

On 08/01/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am interested in the growing use of technology capable of detecting "sound events" which is being deployed, often in conjunction with CCTV systems, to monitor public areas.

This technology is designed to use audio inputs to detect sounds such as gun shots, human screams or shouts, speeding vehicles or anti-social behaviour to improve public safety.

Here are some examples of the type of technology I'm referring to:

<https://soundeventdetector.eu/sound-event-detection-for-security/>

<https://north.tech/news/north-to-make-westminster-smarter-and-safer-through-1-2-million-contract-award/>

I am trying to establish the extent to which this technology is currently being used in the UK by police forces where the force operates its own CCTV network in public areas such as town centres or road networks.

Specifically, I would like to ask:

:: Is your force using, or has it previously tested, sound detector technology as described above to monitor public areas for emergencies or anti-social behaviour?

:: If yes, please provide details of how many sound detectors or sound detector-equipped CCTV cameras you are operating and when they were installed.

To be clear, this request does not apply to CCTV or monitoring systems which can broadcast sound via a loudspeaker, for example to issue a public warning. It applies only to technology which monitors public spaces for audio or noise events.

Secondly, this request does not apply to CCTV or monitoring equipment operated by local authorities. It applies only to systems directly operated by police forces.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s1, I can confirm that Gloucestershire Constabulary may hold some relevant information.

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held. Where exemptions are relied upon s17 of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which: a) states that fact b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

Gloucestershire Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information in relation to systems used for intelligence purposes 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 23(5) Information relating to the Security bodies;
 Section 24(2) National Security
 Section 31(3) Law enforcement;

Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and therefore there is no requirement to conduct a harm or public interest test

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

Evidence of Harm:

Any disclosure under FOI is a release to the public at large. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying if a particular policing tool of this type is used (including where it has been trialled) would risk revealing sensitive information about the surveillance capability of the force. Any disclosure under FOIA is a disclosure to the world at large, and confirming or denying the use of specialist techniques would prejudice law enforcement.

If the requested information were held by the force, confirmation of this fact would reveal that Gloucestershire Constabulary has access to specific surveillance technology which have the capability to be used in covert operations. Irrespective of whether they are used in such a way or not, confirming use or trial of such tools identifies a *capability* of the force in an area of policing which is covert. The result would undermine operations as criminals, including terrorists, would gain a greater understanding of the police's surveillance methods and techniques, enabling them to take steps to counter them.

Conversely, if information were not held by the force, and a denial were issued, this would reveal to those same individuals, the potential limitations of police surveillance capabilities in this area. This may further encourage offending by confirming to those involved in criminality including terrorism where such surveillance measures are *not* available to police. Any identification of a reduced technical capability in the field of surveillance would substantially prejudice the ability of forces to police their areas which would lead to a greater risk to the public.

This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different police forces. In addition to the local criminal fraternity now being better informed, those intent on organised crime throughout the UK will be able to 'map' where the use of certain surveillance tactics are or are not deployed. This can be very useful information to those committing crime including terrorism, and could lead to them moving their operations, destroying evidence, or avoiding those areas; all of which undermine the tactic and risk the integrity and success of covert operations and future prosecutions.

Any information that identifies the focus of policing capability and activity, particularly covert activity, and could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations to commit crime, undermines the operational integrity of these activities. This will adversely affect public safety, impact national security, and prejudice law enforcement.

Public Interest Test:

Factors favouring confirming or denying whether any other information is held for Section 24

The public is entitled to know where its public funds are being spent.
A better-informed public can take steps to protect themselves.

Factors against confirming or denying whether any other information is held for Section 24

Confirming or denying the use of specialist techniques could render security measures less effective by compromising ongoing or future covert operations undertaken to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK. This increases the risk of harm to the public.

Factors favouring confirming or denying whether any other information is held for Section 31

Disclosure reinforces the wider commitment to openness and transparency to facilitate public debate. Greater transparency inherently leads to improved public confidence, which in turn may increase the public's engagement with the police. Some information may already be in the public domain.

Factors against confirming or denying whether any other information is held for Section 31

To confirm or deny information is held would compromise the police's ability to protect the public. Disclosing Gloucestershire Constabulary surveillance capabilities would provide people committing crime or those with the criminal intent with information that would increase the effectiveness of their criminality and assist them in evading detection. The resultant effect of this prejudice would undermine current and future operational strategies within covert investigations and when gathering evidence. The integrity of investigations and the tactics used as part of them is of paramount importance when it comes to

protecting the public from all types of crime, but in this case, particularly in serious and organised crime and terrorism. Any compromise of these tactics which results in prejudice to the effectiveness of an investigations, will place the public at significant risk. To do so is clearly not in the public interest.

Balance test

Whilst there is a public interest in transparency as a route to accountability when it comes to the use of surveillance tactics in investigations, forces are already held to account by statute, for example the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, as well as by independent bodies such as His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner (OSC). Accountability is therefore not enhanced by confirming or denying whether any information is held in respect of a specific tactic.

The security of the country and safety of its people is of paramount importance, and the public entrust the police service to make appropriate decisions regarding their safety and protection. To do so, the police must be cautious with any information that is released. It must be considered that a release of information under FOI is a disclosure to the world at large, including to those who have cause to use it for criminal means. Confirming or denying whether information is or isn't held would reveal to the world, specific details about the force's surveillance capability, and that would assist those individuals and groups intent on causing harm in the ways evidenced above. Any incident that results from confirmation or denial would, as a result, affect National Security and undermine operational law enforcement.

Therefore currently, it is our opinion the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any information is held regarding these techniques is not made out.

None of the above can be viewed as an inference that the information you seek does or does not exist.

If you are not satisfied with this response or any actions taken in dealing with your request, you have the right to ask that we review your case under our internal procedure. Please note that a request for an internal review must be made within 20 working days of the response to your original request.

If you decide to request that such a review is undertaken and following this process you are still unsatisfied, you then have the right to direct your complaint to the Information Commissioner for consideration.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following means:

Website - <https://ico.org.uk/>

Call their helpline - 0303 123 1113

Email - casework@ico.org.uk

Post –

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer
Gloucestershire Constabulary