

Gloucestershire Constabulary
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www.gloucestershire.police.uk



Our reference: FOI_26_0708

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Date: 30/09/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_26_0708

On 27/07/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information please:

1. The total number of police officers currently employed by your force.
2. Whether your force has a dedicated rural crime team or dedicated officers responsible solely for rural crime.
3. The number of dedicated rural crime officers currently employed by your force.
4. The number of officers and staff who have received specialist rural crime training in each of the following years:
 - a. 2023/24
 - b. 2024/25
 - c. 2025/26
5. Details of specialist equipment and resources allocated specifically for rural crime operations, including (but not limited to):
 - a. drone surveillance equipment
 - b. 4x4 vehicles
 - c. high-powered torches
 - d. other specialist equipment used for rural crime activity
6. The annual funding allocated specifically to rural crime teams or rural crime operations for the following financial years:
 - a. 2023/24
 - b. 2024/25

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

- c. 2025/26
- d. 2026/27

7. The median response time for emergency and priority incidents, broken down by rural and urban classification where available

8. A copy of the force's current rural crime strategy, action plan, or equivalent document. If no such document exists, please state this.

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

Please see the response to your request below.

1. The total number of police officers within the Constabulary are 1,300.
2. The Constabulary has a dedicated Rural Crime Team (RCT) but police officers outside of the team can also be deployed to incidents of rural crime should the need arise.
3. The Rural Crime Team consists of 6 Police Officers and 1 Police Sergeant.
4. All members of the Rural Crime Team receive additional training specific to their role within the RCT. However, all officers are also provided a learning input surrounding rural crime. The RCT training covers a range of wildlife and rural crime elements.
5. The Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information relating to question 5a, b, d of your request relating to the use of specialist equipment as the duty in s1(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

In relation to Q5.c, high-powered torches are not defined as specialist equipment within the Constabulary, but the RCT are issued with torches.

6. The budget of the RCT falls within a larger operational policing budget. Due to the way in which our systems record data, we are unable to further break down the data.

7. The Constabulary has the following target response times:

For a grade 1 emergencies, the target response time is within 15 minutes.

For a grade 2 priorities, the target response time is within 1 hour.

These are not median times but our response timeframe targets. The targets do not differ between rural or urban areas.

8. The Constabulary does not have a standalone document and follows National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) national guidance which is typically issued via the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU).

In relation to Q5 5a, b, and d. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest test. Sections 24 and 31 are qualified, prejudice-based exemptions and require evidence of harm and a public interest test to be carried out.

Evidence of harm

The disclosure of information under the FOIA is a release to the public at large. It is an accepted fact individuals involved in nefarious activities and criminality monitor the release of information under the FOIA and this must be considered when deciding whether to disclose the requested information.

Confirming or denying any information surrounding the use of specialist equipment and/or tactics involved within rural crime policing would risk causing significant harm to covert investigations, tactical policing capabilities of the constabulary, and overall covert policing.

Threats from terrorism cannot be ignored, and it is noted that nationally police forces use covert tactics in order to detect, disrupt, and prevent high harm criminality which includes threats from terrorism. Confirming or denying that the constabulary hold any other information in relation to the RCT and the use of drones for surveillance purposes, types of vehicles used, and other specialist equipment which may or may not be used would limit and impact on operational capabilities as criminals would gain a greater understanding of the constabulary's methods and techniques used in the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Confirming or denying would also enable a localised and national picture to be developed in relation to where the use of certain tactics or are not deployed which would not only harm policing efforts within the county but also on a wider scale.

Public Interest Test

Section 24

Factors favouring Confirming or Denying

The public hold the police to account and are entitled to know what public funds are spent on and what security measures are in place, by confirming or denying whether any information is held regarding RCT specialised equipment would improve public confidence in policing.

Factors favouring Neither Confirming nor Denying

By confirming or denying whether any other information is held would render the use of any specialised equipment measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or national infrastructure of the UK and increase the risk of harm posed the public.

Section 31

Factors favouring Confirming or Denying for Section 31

Whilst it can be said that there is some public interest in how specialist policing is undertaken, there is an overwhelming public interest in maintaining police legitimacy through having the effective means to conduct effective policing.

Confirming or denying whether any other information is held regarding the use of specialised equipment within the RCT would provide an insight into the operational policing tactics used by the constabulary and reassure the public that the constabulary has sufficient measures in place

Factors against Confirming or Denying for Section 31

Confirming or denying whether any other information is held regarding the use of specialised equipment within the RCT would provide an insight into the operational policing tactics used by the Constabulary. Which would provide an insight into what measures the Force does and does not have the ability to deploy it would also risk compromising and undermining the effectiveness of operational law enforcement tactics and risk impacting on the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. Disclosing any information which risks undermining law enforcement activities is not within the public interest to disclose and the public would not expect the police to release information which risks a detrimental effect on policing.

Balance test

Ensuring that operational policing is not impacted by the disclosure of information and maintaining national security is of paramount importance to the Force and the Force will not release any information which would or would risk impacting upon core operational policing capabilities and/or undermine national security.

Whilst it can be said that there is public interest in the measures used by the Force to combat rural and wildlife crime, there is an overwhelming interest ensure that operational policing is not affected and that the Force can respond to and investigate crime without delay or undue hindrance.

Therefore, for the aspects raised within the public interest test, it is the stance that the Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information relating to question 5a, b, d of your request.

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