

**Information Governance Unit
Information Management Branch**

8th April 2010

Dear XXXX

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: XXXX

I write in connection with your request for information dated 09/03/2010, which was received by Greater Manchester Police on 12/03/2010, having been transferred from Manchester City Council. I note you seek access to the following information:

Under the FOI act I wish to know all the technical information about the secondary units that are installed near a Gatso camera unit .

I would like to know :

- 1) Do all your active Gatso cameras have them installed ?**
- 2) How many of these secondary flash units are active?**
- 3) To what purpose do they serve?**
- 4) Why have they been necessary?**
- 5) What failing does it serve to the Gatso unit or other?**
- 6) Since they have a small remote aerial who does this report to and what does it report?**
- 7) Does the aerial link back to the Gatso unit?**
- 8) If for another purpose, as well, or otherwise, please state what that purpose is.**
- 9) If they are as a slave flash then:
Can you explain why this slave is required?**
 - a)- Is it to aid illumination of non-retro-reflective plates?**
 - b)- Is it to aid illumination of the more distance graduation marks? (which I thought are semi-retro-reflective anyway)**
 - C)- Is it to aid illumination of other parts of the vehicle - to help determine the position of the vehicle relative to those graduation marks?**
- 10) To what benefit is the reason the units exist in the first place ?**
- 11) Please source all references for facts and information supplied where you can.**

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that the information you have requested is held by Greater Manchester Police, (GMP).

Responses

- 1) No, they are required only where the installation uses digital technology.
- 2) This information is exempt by virtue of Sections 31 – Law Enforcement and 38 – Health & Safety, of the Act – please see the Harm & Public Interest Test below.
- 3 & 4) They provide light for nighttime digital photography.
- 5) It does not rectify a failing.
- 6) If there is an aerial then there is probably 3G technology in use.
- 7) It is likely to be for 3G data transmission.
- 8) No other purpose.
- 9 a, b, c & 10) It is understood, from the manufacturers, Serco, that the brightness of the single flash, necessary to photograph a second shot, as used in the wet film installations, would be too great for digital photography. It is, therefore, necessary to reduce the intensity of the flash and spread the light more evenly. This creates the need for a secondary unit to illuminate the area for the second image to be properly captured.
- 11) GMP/Drivesafe procure and use the technology. Technology expertise lies with the manufacturers and whilst we need a ‘working understanding’ of the equipment functions, our staff are trained to use it in accordance with manufacturers instructions.

In compliance with Section 16 (Advice & Assistance) of the Act, the following websites may prove useful in obtaining further information on this subject:

<http://www.drivesafe.org.uk/>

http://www.serco.com/markets/transport/index.asp?qclid=CKGKy-fi9qACFSaEIAod5S_uq

Harm & Public Interest Test

In relation to question 2 of your request. To disclose how many of the secondary flash units are active would, potentially, hinder future law enforcement and compromise the safety of the public that GMP serve to protect. It would, potentially allow those individuals intent on criminal activity to identify those cameras and avoid them when a crime has been or is likely to be committed. To disclose this information may compromise the effectiveness of GMPs ability in preventing and detecting crime and apprehending and prosecuting offenders.

On a national level in 2007 a camera was identified on the A303 (the main road between Basingstoke in Hampshire and Honiton in Devon) within a response to a Freedom of Information request – within hours of the media release the site was attacked and criminal damage caused.

Please see the links below that relate to two Information Commissioners Office decision notices that upheld Hampshire Constabulary's application of Section 31 and Section 38 for similar requests.

<http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/decisionnotices/2005/67279%20dn.pdf>
<http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/decisionnotices/2005/68017%20dn.pdf>

On a more local level and more relevant to GMP, during the year 2009 three cameras were vandalised, including being set on fire, resulting in excess of £75,000 worth of damage. Furthermore, just over two years ago one other camera was also set ablaze, however the preventative measures in place at the time resulted in damage of £1,500.

The disclosure of the requested data would enable the public to have a better understanding of how GMP are using speed cameras in working towards the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. It would also empower the public to make more effective decisions about their own activities or contribute to more accurate public debate, raising awareness that GMP are making the roads a safer place for both drivers and pedestrians. It is also true to say that the disclosure would show GMPs accountability in the use of public funds – especially in the prevention & detection of crime and apprehension & prosecution of offenders as previously mentioned.

Conversely the disclosure of the data, as evidenced above, would enable individuals to identify those cameras and avoid them when a crime has been or is likely to be committed. The case may be that, by confirming how many flash units are active may potentially lead to an increase of crime, similar or worse to those described above. This may compromise the effectiveness of GMPs abilities in the prevention and detection of crime and apprehending and prosecuting offenders. There may be occasions where the release of information relating to public safety may not be in the public interest. Public safety is of paramount importance to the policing purpose and must be considered in respect of every release. It is in the interest of the public that our roads are kept safe. The ability for speed/safety camera technology to impact on road safety would be diminished by the disclosure of such information and therefore prejudice law enforcement. In regards to the Health and Safety exemption a detailed programme could put pedestrians and other drivers at risk as people would not adhere to the speed limits if they thought the chance of getting caught were minimal.

When balancing the public interest test we have to consider whether the information should be released into the public domain. Arguments need to be weighed against each other. The most persuasive reason for disclosure is accountability, which needs to be weighed against the strongest negative reason, which, in this case is public safety. As previously stated, releasing this data could have an impact on the increase of casualties due to speeding.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular part of your request.

Complaint Rights

Your attention is drawn to the attached sheet, which details your right of complaint.

Should you have any further inquiries concerning this matter, please write or contact me on telephone number 0161 856 2529 quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

Information Access Officer

COMPLAINT RIGHTS

Are you unhappy with how your request has been handled or do you think the decision is incorrect?

Information Governance Unit, Information Management Branch, Police Headquarters,
Chester House, Boyer Street, Manchester M16 0RE
Tel: 0161 856 2529, Fax: 0161 856 2535, Minicom: 0161 872 6633,
Email: freedomofinformation@gmp.police.uk

You have the right to require Greater Manchester Police to review their decision.

Prior to lodging a formal complaint you are welcome and encouraged to discuss the decision with the case officer that dealt with your request.

Ask to have the decision looked at again –

The quickest and easiest way to have the decision looked at again is to telephone the case officer that is nominated at the end of your decision letter.

That person will be able to discuss the decision, explain any issues and assist with any problems.

Complaint

If you are dissatisfied with the handling procedures or the decision of Greater Manchester Police made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding access to information, you can lodge a complaint with Greater Manchester Police to have the decision reviewed.

Complaints should be made in writing and addressed to:

Corporate Information Manager
Greater Manchester Police
Police Headquarters
Chester House
Boyer Street
Manchester
M16 0RE

The Information Commissioner

After lodging a complaint with Greater Manchester Police if you are still dissatisfied with the decision you can make an application to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

For information on how to make an application to the Information Commissioner please visit their website at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk. Alternatively, phone or write to:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Phone: 01625 545 700