

**Information Management Section  
IT Services Branch**

9 October 2007

Dear XXXX

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: XXXX**

I write in connection with your request for information dated 30/08/2007, which was received by Greater Manchester Police on 31/08/2007, for the following information:

1. The total number of firearms seized by the force in 2006/07, broken down where possible to the method of seizure, for example by a stop-and-search, during a search following an arrest, during a planned raid, or handed in voluntarily or during an amnesty.
2. A list giving the details of the type of each weapon seized during the same period, stating where possible its make, model, calibre and size and any other information.
3. The total number of firearms seized by the force in 2005/06, broken down where possible to the method of seizure, for example by a stop-and-search, during a search following an arrest, during a planned raid, or handed in voluntarily or during an amnesty.
4. A list giving the details of the type of each weapon seized during the same period, stating where possible its make, model, calibre and size and any other information.

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.

Result Of Searches

Question 1. The total number of firearms seized by the force are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31 Dec 2006 was 2764. 1<sup>st</sup> Jan - 26 Sept 2007 was 2021.

Information relating to the method of seizure/recovery, make, model, calibre and size of the weapons is exempt by virtue of s30(1) & s31(1) of the Act.

**S30 Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities** relates to investigations in general terms and covers information that has been held by a public authority gathered at any time in relation to a specific investigation, criminal or otherwise. In this case the information you have requested in relation to method of seizure is likely to have been gathered only for the purposes of an investigation.

**S31 (1) Law Enforcement**

Information Management Section, IT Services Branch, Police Headquarters,  
7th Floor, Chester House, Boyer Street, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0RE  
Tel: 0161 856 2528/2668/2702, Fax: 0161 856 2535, Minicom: 0161 872 6633,  
Email: freedomofinformation@gmp.police.uk

Information is exempt from disclosure under s31(1) where the release of information would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders and/or the administration of justice.

Section 17 of the Freedom Of Information Act requires Greater Manchester Police, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies. I trust the above paragraph covers these requirements.

Both these exemptions are qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, I am required to apply both the public interest test and evidence the harm in disclosure. (See below).

Question 2. Type of weapons seized 1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31 Dec 2006:

Count of WEAPON TYPE	
WEAPON TYPE	Total
UNKNOWN	43
AIR PISTOL	394
AIR RIFLE	553
BB GUN	756
BLANK FIRER	235
DEACTIVATED	3
MACHINE GUN	1
OTHER	204
PISTOL	108
REVOLVER	117
RIFLE	96
SHOTGUN	250
STUN GUN	3
Grand Total	2764

Type of Weapons seized 1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 26 Sept 2007:

Count of WEAPON TYPE	
WEAPON TYPE	Total
AIR PISTOL	226
AIR RIFLE	405
BB GUN	851
BLANK FIRER	116
OTHER (E.G Cig lighter)	49
PISTOL	90
REVOLVER	58
RIFLE	47
SHOTGUN	179
Grand Total	2021

Question 3. The total number of firearms seized by the force, 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2005 – 31 Dec 2005 was 2321.

Information relating to the method of seizure/recovery, make, model, calibre and size of the weapons is exempt by virtue of s30(1) and s31(1), please see comments at Question 1 above relating to this exemption.

Question 4. Types of weapons seized 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2005 – 31 Dec 2005

Count of WEAPON TYPE	
WEAPON TYPE	Total
UNKNOWN	29
AIR PISTOL	225
AIR RIFLE	438
BB GUN	838
BLANK FIRER	136
DE-ACTIVATED	1
OTHER	161
PISTOL	84
REACTIVATED	1
REVOLVER	92
RIFLE	78
SHOTGUN	238
Grand Total	2321

Information relating to the method of seizure/recovery, make, model, calibre and size of the weapons is exempt by virtue of s30(1) and s31(1), please see comments at Question 1 above relating to this exemption.

### **HARM**

Future police operations may be prejudiced if information relating to the method of seizure/recovery, make, model, calibre and size of weapons, could allow the identification of particular weapons and the locations of specific operations, alerting criminals to covert policing activity and thereby compromising police operations and future prosecutions.

Furthermore, some of the information you have requested may relate to current investigations or ongoing court processes. Ongoing police investigations and/or pending trials may be compromised, or the disclosure of the information could be used as counter intelligence against the police service.

### **PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

#### **Public interest considerations favouring disclosure:**

Accountability - when information disclosed relates directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the force or its officers. The purpose of the Act is to make public authorities more accountable and this factor, therefore, may be applied to a wide range of scenarios from how an individual or the force fulfils their role or function, to policy decisions that have been taken in relation to investigations or general policy issues. In this case, forces may be obliged to demonstrate to the general public that they are actively involved in the prevention and detection of firearms in order to keep the public safe.

Public Awareness and debate - where release of information would contribute to the quality and accuracy of public debate. This factor applies where the release of accurate information will inform and enhance public debate on particular subjects that may be topical. The release of accurate information may inform public debate and boost levels of confidence within the community that firearms are being removed from the streets within GMP's policing area.

#### **Public interest considerations favouring non-disclosure:**

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Investigations - information relating to an investigation will rarely be disclosed under FOIA and only where there is a strong public interest consideration favouring disclosure. It is the Association of Chief Police Officer's approach that information relating to an investigation will rarely be disclosed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Whilst such information may be released in order to serve a 'core policing purpose' – to prevent or detect crime or to protect life or property - it will only be disclosed following a Freedom of Information request if there are strong public interest considerations favouring disclosure. The further the considerations favouring disclosure are from a core policing purpose, the lighter the considerations will be.

#### Public Safety

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 police service and must be considered in respect of every release. In this case, information that would potentially thwart the security of the public or causes more crime will adversely affect public safety.

Efficient and effective conduct of the service/a force - where current or future law enforcement role of the force may be compromised by the release of information. In this case, information relating the method of seizure/recovery, make, model, Calibre and size of weapons is sensitive and inappropriate disclosure may compromise the ability of the force in the future to prevent and detect crime and protect life and/or property.

#### Balancing Test

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 Public Awareness and Debate, which needs to be compared to the strongest negative reason, which in this case is Investigations.

#### 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 2528 quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,