

Date: 20th July 2026
Our ref: FOI/26/017108/G

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/26/017108/G

I write in connection with your request for information dated 22/06/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

***I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 about operational ANPR.
I would be grateful if you could provide the following information for the last three years, broken down into calendar years:***

1. Number of cameras

What is the total number of ANPR cameras in active operation by your organisation? If the numbers have changed, please break down in years (2024, 2025, 2026)

2. Camera operation times and modes

***Please share records showing the operational availability of those cameras, including:
Total operational hours.***

Total hours where cameras were unavailable, offline, malfunctioning or otherwise unable to capture registration plate data.

3. Performance reports, audits or statistics:

Please share any performance report, audits or statistics showing the below:

The percentage of time ANPR cameras were fully operational.

The percentage of vehicle registrations successfully captured or read.

Any recorded failure rates for vehicle registration capture.

4. Guidance on ANPR operation / non operation Please define terminology: share guidance, policies, or technical standards used to determine whether a camera is considered operational vs non operational referencing

5. Network operation

If the information only covers a part of your ANPR network, please provide what's available.

6. ANPR detection failures

For the last three years, please provide the number of instances where a vehicle was detected but:

The number plate could not be read ("unreadable plate" / failed read) The plate was partially captured or unclear Any other recorded error rates for ANPR systems

7. Suspicious or altered plates

For the last three years, please provide the number of recorded instances where a vehicle was flagged as using:

a cloned registration plate

a suspected fraudulent or misrepresented registration plate a non-compliant or altered number plate If recorded, please provide a breakdown of categories used internally.

If data is not held

If any of the above categories are not specifically recorded, please confirm this and instead provide any alternative metric or closest equivalent you hold (for example, failed reads, unreadable plates, or enforcement flags).

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information. I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to provide the information requested as exemptions apply.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires GMP, when refusing to provide such 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 not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The information requested has been exemption by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement

Section 24(1) – National Security

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

Harm Section 31 and Section 24:

Disclosure of operational information and camera numbers in relation to ANPR equipment would provide useful intelligence to hostile actors that could impede law enforcement, would weaken and reduce the effectiveness of preventing and detecting organised crime and terrorist activities, and negatively impact on public safety. Disclosure, whether alone or combined with other information in the public domain, could enable a *mosaic effect* whereby hostile actors build a sufficiently detailed picture of ANPR capability, coverage and performance to identify and exploit vulnerabilities, contribute to a national capability picture, which in turn could be exploited by organised crime groups and those looking to threaten national security.

Releasing the specific information requested would provide criminal and terrorist elements the skills to identify whether equipment is operational, and the means to map and plot more favourable routes and, in turn, the ability to continue, and potentially expand, their activities by working around any faulty equipment. Information relating to availability, performance thresholds and failure rates would be likely

to assist individuals seeking to evade detection by highlighting environmental or technical conditions under which reads are less effective (e.g. lighting, positioning or partial capture scenarios). The release of camera numbers would provide the means to build up a national picture of ANPR capability, and in turn, highlight gaps which could be utilised for criminal activity.

There is a strong likelihood, due to the low level, operational nature of the data requested, that hostile actors would take advantage and utilise the information to vary their behaviour to avoid detection. Providing year-on-year data may allow actors to identify trends, improvements, or recurring weaknesses, increasing the likelihood of successful avoidance. Revealing areas which could be perceived as more vulnerable, due to the reduced operational availability of ANPR, would likely lead to an increased level of crime in those areas. Any increase in criminality would, in turn, increase the level of policing focus required, divert officers away from other duties, and therefore undermine the Police's overall primary function of law enforcement and maintaining public safety.

Public Interest Test - S24(1) National Security

Factors in favour of disclosure:

Disclosing the information would strengthen accountability to the wider Public, show that funding is being spent appropriately, and improve the Public's confidence that law enforcement has the tools for safeguarding national security.

Factors against disclosure:

Whilst there is public interest in transparency and accountability, there is also an understanding that some intelligence is part of a wider picture and needs to be withheld to enable investigations, both locally and nationally, to proceed in order to protect the safety of the UK. Any disclosure of information that allows hostile agents to increase their activities and endanger the safety of members of the public (and infrastructure) would cause a decrease in the Public's confidence and trust. The operational value of ANPR lies not only in its existence but in the uncertainty around its deployment, capability and effectiveness; reducing that uncertainty would be likely to diminish its deterrent effect.

Balance Test:

Whilst there is interest from the Public for information relating to the use of ANPR equipment, the risk of hostile agents being able to extrapolate the data to increase their criminal or terrorist activities, and in turn, threaten national security outweighs disclosure. Therefore, on balance the Public Interest Test lies in favour of withholding the information and engaging the S24(1) Exemption.

Public Interest Test - S31(1)(a)(b) Law Enforcement

Factors in favour of disclosure:

Disclosing the information provides the Public with reassurance that equipment is available to their police force to assist them in the prevention and detection of crime and help keep their local community (and the wider UK) safe; as well as transparency and accountability in respect to public spending.

Factors against disclosure:

Releasing information that enables hostile agents to adjust or increase their criminal activities and prevent law enforcement would endanger the Public and cause them to lose confidence in their police force. Disclosure risks facilitating evasion or crime displacement in and across force boundaries. The release of information which has the potential to risk the safety of the Public, either locally or nationally, would not be in the public interest. There is a strong public interest in preserving the integrity and

effectiveness of systems used to prevent and detect crime, particularly where those systems form part of a nationally coordinated capability.

Balance Test:

As releasing the information has the potential to increase criminal activity, both on a local and national level, and increase the burden on the Police Force to carry out their law enforcement duties, and put the safety of the public at risk, on balance the Public Interest Test lies in favour of withholding the information and engaging the S31(1)(a)(b) Exemption.