

Date: 07/09/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/017439/W

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/017439/W

I write in connection with your request for information dated 12/08/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Can you please tell me how many horses your mounted unit had as at of each of the following dates:

31 January 2024,

31 January 2025,

31 January 2026

31 July 2024,

31 July 2025,

31 July 2026 ?

Result of Searches

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

The information has been exempted from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement

Section 31 is a prejudice-based and qualified exemption. There is a requirement to articulate the harm in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Harm

Disclosing the number of horses available to the Mounted Unit over different time periods would provide insight into the operational capability, capacity, and resilience of GMP's mounted policing function. The disclosure of such information, particularly when viewed over a period of time, could allow individuals to identify trends in resource levels, understand periods of increased or reduced

capability, and make inferences about policing capacity. This information could be combined with other publicly available information to build a detailed picture of operational resources and deployment capabilities.

Criminals and those intent on disrupting police activity could use this information to assess the likely availability of mounted officers at events, public order situations, and other policing operations. Knowledge of resource levels has the potential to undermine policing tactics and operational effectiveness by assisting those seeking to avoid detection, resist policing activity, or exploit perceived gaps in capability.

As such, disclosure would be likely to prejudice GMP's ability to prevent and detect crime and apprehend offenders.

Factors favouring disclosure

There is a public interest in promoting transparency and accountability regarding the use of public funds and police resources. Disclosure of information relating to mounted policing assets could contribute to a better understanding of how GMP allocates resources and could help inform public debate regarding policing priorities and value for money.

Openness assists in maintaining public confidence by demonstrating that public authorities are accountable for the decisions they make concerning operational resources.

Factors favouring maintaining the exemption

There is a significant public interest in ensuring that GMP is able to carry out its law enforcement functions effectively. Disclosure of information that would reveal operational capabilities and resource levels could provide valuable intelligence to those seeking to undermine police operations or commit criminal acts. The public interest is best served by protecting information that could weaken the effectiveness of policing tactics, reduce operational resilience, or compromise the prevention and detection of crime.

Whilst GMP recognises the importance of openness and transparency, the release of information concerning the capacity and capability of specialist operational resources would be likely to cause greater harm to the public interest. Effective law enforcement relies upon maintaining the confidentiality of information that could be used to assess police strengths, capabilities, and deployment potential.

Balance of the Public Interest Test

Having considered the arguments for and against disclosure, Greater Manchester Police has determined that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

Whilst there is a recognised public interest in promoting openness, transparency and accountability in relation to police resources and expenditure, this must be balanced against the need to ensure that GMP is able to carry out its law enforcement functions effectively. Disclosure of information relating to the number of horses within the Mounted Unit over specific time periods would reveal information about operational capability and resource levels. Such information could be analysed to identify trends, assess resilience and capacity, and assist those seeking to understand or exploit policing capabilities.

The public interest in protecting the ability of GMP to prevent and detect crime, maintain public safety, and deploy resources effectively is significant. Releasing information that could undermine operational effectiveness or provide insight into specialist policing capabilities would be likely to cause prejudice to law enforcement activities. The public would not be served by the disclosure of information that could

diminish GMP's ability to protect communities and respond effectively to criminality and public order incidents.

Therefore, whilst GMP acknowledges the public interest in transparency, it is considered that the greater public interest lies in safeguarding operational effectiveness and law enforcement capabilities. Accordingly, the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.