| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 23-0598Responded to: XX March 2023 |
| --- | --- |

Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## 1. The total number of police stations currently in the Police Scotland estate.

There are currently 304 operational properties.

## 2. The total number and full list of police stations that have been closed, are set to be closed or are otherwise no longer in use by Police Scotland since 1 April 2013. Please break these down by the aforementioned categories if possible. .

In response to the request for information I have provided a comparison between the earliest national data available (2013) and the same data at the date of request. Please see the attached spreadsheet for details.

To provide some context, Scotland’s policing estate has been built up over the course of several decades and some buildings are no longer in the right place or operationally fit for purpose.

Many police station sales were as a result of properties declared surplus by Legacy Forces although the sales occurred post-formation of Police Scotland. The majority of these decisions, which took place prior to the formation of Police Scotland, were taken after lengthy and detailed consultation with our partners and local communities and this process remains the same today. In the vast majority of cases, police stations which were closed were moved to new modern co-located accommodation within the same towns or officers were moved to new police stations nearby.

The demands and risks facing policing has changed significantly over the years and will continue to do so in an ever changing Scotland and indeed world. However, Police Scotland recognises that local police stations remain important to local communities and that they help to promote and enhance local engagement between our police officers and the communities they serve. We understand how important local police presence is to communities and our Estate Strategy details our intention to enhance visibility and presence and to increase community bases for local officers, whilst identifying more opportunities to share locations with our public sector partners, enabling closer collaboration with our partners and driving quicker, better outcomes for the public and our communities.

We are also increasingly enabling officers to spend more time out in communities through projects such as the roll-out of mobile devices.

In terms of the specific details of properties that are set to be closed or are otherwise no longer in use, details of those properties are considered to be exempt in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (the Act).

Section 16 of the Act requires Police Scotland to provide you with a notice which:

(a) states that it holds the information,

(b) states that it is claiming an exemption,

(c) specifies the exemption in question and

(d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

Where information is considered to be exempt, this letter serves as a Refusal Notice that information is held and an explanation of the appropriate exemption is provided.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information requested. The exemption that I consider to be applicable is:

Section 33(1)(b) - Commercial Interests

This provides that information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice substantially the commercial interests of any person (including, without prejudice to that generality, a Scottish public authority).

It is considered that disclosure would prejudice Police Scotland in that it would be considered commercially and/or operationally sensitive until those properties were formally being declared surplus/marketed.

It could be argued that disclosure of the requested information would allow greater scrutiny of the way public funds are spent or disposed and would increase accountability and transparency in terms of this spending. Police Scotland is a publicly funded organisation and therefore the Service has an obligation to obtain best value for money with particular services.

That said, it is essential to maintain best value in all circumstances and the public interest would not be served if it were no longer possible to make good financial decisions in accordance with the most appropriate and timeous marketing process, particularly if this would result in any confidential financial information being released.

## 3 a). The number of police officers belonging to local police divisions as of 1 April 2013 and the total number in local police divisions as of 31 January 2023. To be clear by officers belong to local police divisions I mean the divisional resources available to the 12 local divisions such as North East, Tayside etc.

Please be advised that Police Officer numbers (by division) are publicly available on the Police Scotland website, broken down by Local Police Officer Resources and Specialised Officers.

As such, in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information sought. Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

(a) states that it holds the information,

(b) states that it is claiming an exemption,

(c) specifies the exemption in question and

(d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at Section 25(1) of the Act - information otherwise accessible:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under Section 1(1) is exempt information”

The information you are seeking for the 2013 data is available via the following link:

[Archived - Police Officer statistics](https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20200114065713/https%3A/www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PublicationPoliceStrength)

For current and more recent data, please follow the link below:

[Police Scotland Officer Numbers - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/police-scotland-officer-numbers/)

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by email or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by email or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.