| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 25-1888Responded to: 15 July 2025 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am requesting access to all information held by Police Scotland and relevant associated parties in relation to an abnormal load incident on the M8 motorway, at or near Junction 26, at approximately 04:00hrs on Friday, 13 June 2025.  I am familiar with abnormal loads being transported on motorways due to my work commitments during the night, these loads always have police escorts, this abnormal load did not and I witnessed other road users having to take evasive actions to avoid this load as it merged on to the live lanes of the M8.  The abnormal load was of such width that it required to use two lanes of a live motorway. I believe the abnormal load caused a danger to other road users. Specific Information Requested:

## All records, reports, and correspondence (including but not limited to emails, logs, planning documents, risk assessments, internal and external communications) relating to the movement of the abnormal load in question, which consisted of two very large units and was observed to be straddling two lanes of on live lanes of the M8, with an escort vehicle at the rear but no visible police escort.

## Any internal or external communications (from Police Scotland staff, contractors, or other agencies) regarding:Notification of the abnormal load movement.Planning, approval, or decision-making surrounding this transport.Risk assessments, risk matrices, and any associated mitigation or control measures.

I have attached separately emails relating to this subject. Some information has been redacted which I am refusing to provide in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the following exemptions apply:

**Section 30(c) - Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs**

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under the Act would otherwise prejudice substantially, or be likely to prejudice substantially, the effective conduct of public affairs.

In this instance e-mail addresses and telephone numbers cannot be disclosed. To release these details publicly through FOI legislation could negatively impact on the operational effectiveness of the service and partner agencies. They are used for operational/business purposes and this information has been removed in order to ensure that internal processes are protected.

This is a non-absolute exemption which requires the application of the Public Interest Test.

**Section 38(1) (b) - Personal Data**

Personal data is defined in Article 4 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as:

*‘Information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person’*

Section 38(2A) of the Act provides that personal data is exempt from disclosure where disclosure would contravene any of the data protection principles set out at Article 5(1) of the GDPR which states that:

*‘Personal data shall be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject’*

Article 6 of the GDPR goes on to state that processing shall be lawful only if certain conditions are met. The only potentially applicable condition is Article 6(1)(f) which states:

*‘Processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child’*

Whilst I accept that you may have a legitimate interest with regards the disclosure of this information and that disclosure may well be necessary for that purpose, I am nonetheless of the view that those interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject. On that basis, it is my view that disclosure of the information sought would be unlawful.

This is an absolute exemption and as such does not require the application of the Public Interest Test.

**Public Interest Test**

To release e-mail addresses and telephone numbers which are not in the public domain could negatively impact on the operational effectiveness of Police Scotland. Accordingly, to ensure that internal processes are protected, this information cannot be disclosed.

It is not in the public interest to disclose information that would make it difficult to offer an efficient and effective service.

## Copies of relevant Police Scotland and Scottish Government policies and procedures that guide the escorting, risk assessment, and approval of abnormal load movements on public highways, specifically:Policies determining when a police escort is required.Justifications or criteria applied in this specific case to permit the load to travel without police escort.Specifically which police officer sanctioned the above deviation from the agreed policyPolicies or procedures concerning the temporary halting or breakdown of such loads on open, live motorway lanes.

I have provided separately a copy of our Abnormal Loads SOP. Some information has been redacted which I am refusing to provide in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the following exemptions apply:

**Section 30(c) - Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs**

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under the Act would otherwise prejudice substantially, or be likely to prejudice substantially, the effective conduct of public affairs.

In this instance e-mail addresses and telephone numbers cannot be disclosed. To release these details publicly through FOI legislation could negatively impact on the operational effectiveness of the service and partner agencies.

They are used for operational/business purposes and this information has been removed in order to ensure that internal processes are protected.

This is a non-absolute exemption which requires the application of the Public Interest Test.

**Section 31(1) - National Security and Defence**

**Section 35(1)(a)&(b) - Law Enforcement**

**Section 39(1) - Health and Safety**

Disclosure of resources attributed to escorts would undermine the safeguarding of national security, and operational law enforcement by allowing those with a criminal intent to gain an operational advantage. This would, in turn, put the safety of officers and the general public at risk.

This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

**Public Interest Test**

The exemptions listed above are non-absolute and require the application of the Public Interest Test. While it could be argued that public debate and accountability in terms of resources used for escorting these vehicles would favour disclosure, releasing e-mail addresses and telephone numbers which are not in the public domain could negatively impact on the operational effectiveness of Police Scotland.

Accordingly, to ensure that internal processes are protected, this information cannot be disclosed.

Similarly, it is not in the public interest to disclose information that would make it difficult to offer an efficient and effective police service and keep people safe from harm.

## Details of any risk assessments or matrices used to evaluate the safety and traffic implications of this particular load and its movement.

The slight increase in the abnormal load width escorting from 4.6m to 4.7m was communicated to the Haulier with an instruction that prior to this trial being commenced a Road Policing Supervisor would be actioned to attend to carry out a dynamic risk assessment, observe the movement and assess the safety of the and suitable provision of self-escort vehicles.

This load moved without that being carried out and was stopped by Road Policing on the M8 where this assessment was completed. The load was escorted to its destination.

## An explanation as to why no police escort was provided, and under what authorisation or protocol the decision was made.

A decision (as articulated in the attached e-mails) was made to increase the self-escort provision for abnormal load movements from the King George 5th Docks in Glasgow from 4.6m to 4.7m to enable certain windfarm components to move from the port more frequently to maintain commercial operations and reduce the resourcing commitments from Police Scotland which could be preserved for other policing requirements . This is in line with the demands placed by the UK and Scottish Government to meet Renewable Targets for 2030 and ongoing requests from all sections of the renewables industry to accelerate delivery of Windfarm Project builds. No police escort was provided to this convoy as the Haulier was informed that a 6-month trial to allow movements of up to 4.7m would be permitted for a trial period of 6-months, with the demand that no convoy was to leave the docks prior to 2100hrs. The convoy left at a time of the morning with traditionally light commuter traffic to cause the least amount of disruption and was under the control of escort vehicles.

## Given the potential safety implications for road users and the unusual nature of this transport operation, I believe there is a strong public interest in understanding the decision-making processes and protocols involved.

Abnormal Loads are commonplace for commuters on Scotland’s roads and various commercial industries require to move indivisible loads to ensure equipment, property and associated large items such as windfarm components reach construction destinations. Many are suitable for self-escort and Police Scotland officers are also required when it is assessed that an escort is necessary due to the size and route being taken. This particular load was 7cm larger in width dimensions than others that have permission to be self-escorted on request to Police Scotland.

The slow moving and highly visible nature of abnormal loads generally mitigates the risk to the public as they are clear and obvious to observant road users and generally courteous in pulling in when the opportunity allows for overtaking and reduction in journey delays. In terms of describing this as unusual, it is a fact that Windfarms construction has been ongoing in Scotland for several years and most road users have observed these components travelling towards project sites, it is competent to take precautions as per the Highway Code to ensure there is no conflict on the road and to prevent collisions and subsequent injury.

If you wish further assistance regarding this I would advise contacting The UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Scottish Government Energy and Climate Change Directorate who are working to deliver a low carbon society with sustainable economic growth and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

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](https://www.foi.scot/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.