| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 24-3203  Responded to: 17 March 2025 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**Between the 15th of November and the 15th of December 2024, how many reports were received and logged by your Police Force concerning the use or sightings of** **Drones, UAVs and Unidentified Aircraft?**

I would ask that you note that all incidents which come to the attention of the Service are recorded on STORM, Police Scotland’s incident management system. An incident may well not involve recourse to formal criminal proceedings, as individuals report varying matters to the police, some of which allege criminality, and others merely report observations. All such calls are recorded on STORM as an incident; however, the recorded incident does not always result in a corresponding recorded crime.

If it is deemed a criminal offence has been committed a crime or offence is recorded on the Service’s Crime Management system and a crime report raised. Accordingly, there are two separate processes for the recording of incidents and crimes.

In relation to the number of incidents recorded referencing Drones, UAVs and Unidentified Aircraft, I can advise that a total of 172 were recorded within the time frame stipulated.

**Please provide details, date, time, location, and, if possible, a copy of any log entries relating to sightings of Drones, UAVs, and unidentified aircraft and the outcome of any police enquiries between the above dates.**

Unfortunately, I estimate that it would cost well in excess of the current FOI cost threshold of £600 to process your request. I am therefore refusing to provide the information sought in terms of section 12(1) of the Act - Excessive Cost of Compliance.

By way of explanation, there is no specific crime that relates to your request, to review all incidents and extract the details requested is an exercise which would exceed the cost limit set out in the Fees Regulations.

I can, however, provide the dates and locations of each incident report. This has been provided separately as FOI 24-3203 Data 01.

**During the last 3 months of 2024, how many prosecutions and investigations have been undertaken by your police force into the use, sightings or reports of unidentified UAVs or drones or unidentified aircraft and the outcome of such investigations and prosecutions?**

Police Scotland does not hold criminal conviction/ prosecution data and section 17 of the Act therefore applies. You may wish to contact the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and/ or the Scottish Courts Service.

**Does your police force provide any form of education or liaison with civilian drone operators, such as a drone safety course?**

The information sought is not held by Police Scotland and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

By way of explanation, Police Scotland do not provide drone safety courses to the public.

**What training is provided to your police officers and staff in dealing with reports of drone or UAV use and potential offences or guidance? Could you please provide a copy of the information provided to your officers?**

UAV training is not delivered to all Officers in Police Scotland.

Police Scotland’s Aviation Safety & Security Unit (ASSU) have a cadre of specialist officers who are trained in counter UAS tactics, part of their training is an awareness of police powers in relation to the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Act 2021 and the Air Navigation Act 2016.

ASSU also oversees counter drone mitigation tactical options at operations and events where UAS guidance is provided to both event and specialist officers deployed at that operation / event.

I have attached separately a copy of the Drone Guidance Summary (FOI 24-3203 Data 02) that is provided to event/ specialist officers at relevant event/ operations.

As you will note some information has been redacted. The redacted information is 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.

The exemptions that I consider to be applicable to the information requested by you are:

**Section 30(c) - Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs.**

In this instance, a telephone number has been redacted. It is assessed that disclosure would serve to disrupt the well-established processes which members of the public are encouraged to use when contacting Police Scotland, thus prejudicing our ability to effectively manage such contact appropriately.

Whilst there is a public interest in better informing the public as to the internal mechanisms used within the force, this must be balanced with the need to ensure that the appropriate channels are used for contact and that phone lines are not compromised in any way.

Persons who wish to contact the police should use the information published on our website: [Contact Police Scotland - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/)

It should also be noted that Police Scotland’s Intranet page is available for divisional police officers to refer to as guidance to drone incidents.

ASSU also refer officers to the Drone and Model Aircraft Code -  <https://register-drones.caa.co.uk/drone-code>

**Does your force provide any specialist advice or information to the public and business community regarding drone mitigation near the locations where you provide policing services? If so, please provide details.**

Where Police Scotland implement an Air Restriction and are the sponsors of same, ASSU on behalf of Police Scotland inform the public of the air restriction and its conditions by the following:

* NOTAM (Notice to Aviators) – issued by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) informing members of public of Air Restriction and conditions of same, this is promulgated in advance of Air Restriction going live.
* Where relevant and at the request of Police Scotland, a Radio Frequency NOTAM is issued by CAA informing members of public of the possibility of radio frequency interference within a specified area.
* ASSU contact number and email address is provided within NOTAM’s for members of public to contact seeking advice in relation to relevant Air Restriction.
* NATS Aeronautical Information Circular (AIC) promulgated informing members of public of any Air Restrictions initiated by Police Scotland.
* Drone manufacturer DJI implements a Geo-fence on behalf of Police Scotland (at our request) informing their customers of the Air Restriction in place.
* ASSU place No-Fly Signs at the most popular / common drone take-off / landing sites within the Air Restriction, NOTAM or AIC reference number is printed on No-Fly Signs guiding members of public to the content of Air Restriction. These No-Fly Signs are placed a few days prior to Air Restriction going live.
* Certain Air Restrictions are promulgated to members of public via Police Scotland social media channels

**How many drones are owned and operated by your force? Could you please provide details of the makes and models of such drones and UAVs and the training provided to your officers in the use of UAVs?**

In response to your request, I can confirm that Police Scotland currently use drones to support a variety of policing operations, including missing person searches, major incidents and events, armed policing and public order operations as well as fire investigation and crime scene analysis.

This response is provided in two parts:

In terms of those drones utilised by armed policing, I regret to inform you that I am refusing to provide you with any details.

The information sought is held by Police Scotland, but I am refusing to provide it in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the following exemptions apply:

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

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would or would be likely to prejudice substantially the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. Disclosure of the specific details and capability of those drones would highlight asset resources and capabilities. Revealing this information would substantially weaken the effective use of the availability of such resources with a corresponding risk to law enforcement and to the safety of both the public and officers. This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

**Section 39(1) – Health and Safety**

The release of this information would circumvent the efficient and effective provision of law enforcement by the police service for the reasons described above. This would in turn increase the risk to the personal safety of individuals and to the safety of the police officers responding to incidents. This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

## Public Interest Test

I recognise that public awareness would favour a disclosure as it would contribute to the public debate surrounding the overall nature of unmanned aircraft resources available for deployment by the Police. I would, however, contend that the efficient/effective conduct of the service and public safety favours retention of the information as it cannot be in the public interest to release information that would prejudice law enforcement or which is likely to have an adverse impact upon public safety.

In terms of the remainder, the following information can be provided in relation to makes and models of drones used:

DJI Phantom 4

DJI Mini 2

DJI M300

DJI M30t

All training for the operational deployment of drones in Police Scotland is delivered by the Air Support Unit. The unit has been approved to deliver training by the Civil Aviation Authority and are now a Recognised Assessment Entity.

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](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) 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](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) 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.