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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2503
Date: 19th December 2022



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

I refer to your recent request for information which has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

For ease of reference, your request is replicated below together with the response.

Could you please detail how Police Scotland are guaranteeing the identification of the correct vehicle whilst using the Unipar SL700 (or similar devices), sometimes at a distance of up to 700-900m and often times when the officers are operating, hidden, on slip roads with vehicles travelling away from them at great speed?

Especially given that in circumstances any vehicle that has its speed registered by this device is often long gone from the officers view and the Police are required to carry out a high speed pursuit in order to hopefully catch up with the speeder.

The device is fitted with an optic that neither digitally records a video sequence nor is capable of any form of ANPR. It is also incapable of clearly displaying a registration mark at any distance. How are officers able to read registration marks with this device, the registration mark being the only certain identifier of a vehicle.

Given that the eyesight requirement for a general member of the public is the capability to read a registration plate at 20.5m how could it be possible that Police Scotland officers are able to read registration plates at 300m with any certainty that they are then able to convincingly evidence that they witnessed a specific vehicle speeding, if that vehicle has not been in continuous line of sight throughout the speed monitoring and subsequent stopping?

In response to your request I can advise that initially officers identify a vehicle that they believe to be exceeding the speed limit for that given road through general observations. Officers will then use a speed detection device to determine the speed of the vehicle and confirm suspicions of excess speed. The vehicle can be identified through colour, type, make model, and any distinguishing features such as roof bars fitted, driver, occupants and of course the Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM).

Police officers who carry out speed checks in the manner described above are trained to do so and are also trained to a high standard in advanced driving at speed. Members of the public who choose to drive at excessive speed, place themselves and others at risk on public roads. As such, police officers are duty bound to stop this type of unnecessary behaviour. While completing speed checks, at times officers will be required to drive at

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speed in order to apprehend offenders, however these types of circumstances are not classified as a pursuit.

As you rightly point out not all speed detection devices used by the Police Scotland are capable of recording. However, officers are able to read VRM's as vehicles get close enough to do so, but as noted above, the registration mark is by no means the only certain identifier of a vehicle in these circumstances.

With regards to a vehicles initial speed at any given distance, the reading of the registration plate is not essential. A vehicle is clearly visible and identifiable as a vehicle of a certain type and colour, travelling in a particular direction in a given lane by officers who before using the device have already considered that the vehicle is travelling at excessive speed for that particular speed limit.

At this point the device is used to confirm suspicion of the officers as to the speed of the vehicle. As a vehicle comes into view identifying features are noted one of which may be the VRM. There is no requirement to have the vehicle in continuous sight between this point and stopping the vehicle. If officers have stopped and spoken with a driver of a vehicle for any offence then those officers are certain they have the correct vehicle, from the details they have noted.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management quoting the reference number given.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which Police Scotland has dealt with your request, you are entitled, in the first instance, to request a review of our actions and decisions.

Your request must specify the matter which gives rise to your dissatisfaction and it must be submitted within 40 working days of receiving this response - either by email to foi@scotland.police.uk or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. You can apply [online](#), by email to enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

Should you wish to appeal against the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision, there is an appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

As part of our commitment to demonstrate openness and transparency in respect of the information we hold, an anonymised version of this response will be posted to the Police Scotland Freedom of Information [Disclosure Log](#) in seven days' time.