

**OFFICIAL**

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-1957  
Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 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.

**1) Cost of Operation Unicorn (the operation put into effect by the death of the Queen in Scotland) to Police Scotland, broken down by budget line and including any planning costs.**

I must advise that Police Scotland do not currently hold this information. As such, in terms of Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, this represents a notice that the information requested is not held by Police Scotland.

By way of explanation, claims for overtime as well as mutual aid recovery claims are still in progress and will take some time to be received and then processed. At present we therefore do not have a total cost figure. We do not have an estimated time this will be completed at present.

**2) Correspondence sent to and from officers within the Executive Team (this link for reference <https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/who-we-are/executive-team/>) which referenced the Queen, Royal Family or Operation Unicorn from September 9 to 19 of this year. For clarity, this should include, but not be limited to, emails, text or other instant messages and briefing notes.**

Following a clarification request, you confirmed that by “officers within the Executive Team” you meant all members of the Executive Team as per the link above and not just those that are police officers.

In response to your request, I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested, as it would prove too costly to do so within the context of the fee regulations.

As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request.

As such, and in terms of Section 16(4) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where Section 12(1) of the Act (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

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By way of explanation, each member of the Force Executive was contacted and was requested to provide all the information held relevant to your request. Following this process, 1,072 documents were returned with the majority of these being email chains containing attachments.

As an initial assessment it was determined that at a minimum the names, emails addresses and contact details within each document would need to be redacted with there likely being additional information that would need to be redacted for law enforcement and national security reasons. Redacting each email chain and any document attached to these emails was estimated to take between 5 and 10 minutes on average for each of the 1,072 documents including attachments. This equates to between 89 and 178 hours of work to provide the requested information. It should however be noted that the above estimate does not include the time the Force Executive spent locating the requested information once it became clear information was held by Police Scotland. It is estimated this would be around 30 minutes per mailbox which in this case extends to 18 mailboxes and so around 9 hours.

This would give a total estimated time to complete the request of between 98 and 187 hours.

Police Scotland have assessed that the £600 cost limit within the Act equates to 40 hours of work and so this part of your request would breach the cost threshold.

It was however noted that as many of the documents involved were duplicated across the various members of the Force Executive, for example where an email had been copied to several members of the Force Executive at the same time. I therefore decided to sift the 1,072 documents to see if the number of documents to review could be reduced to a scale which could be provided within the cost limit.

It should be noted that the time taken to sift the documents to remove duplicates is also included within the cost limit to provide the requested information but as simply redacting documents without a sift had been ruled out, this was proportionate in this case.

The sift took approximately 21 hours to complete with the result being that of the initial 1,072 documents found, 551 remained. This was due to the removal of duplicates as well as 2 documents being found that did not meet the search criteria of the request.

During the process the attached documents for emails were also separated and it was discovered that a higher number than expected and accounted for in the initial time estimates were found. 296 unique documents were retrieved and following review it was determined that the estimate of between 5 and 10 minutes for each email chain including its attached documents was incorrect. An estimated time to redact each email chain and each individual attachment would be between 5 and 10 minutes.

This redaction estimate equates to between 70.5 and 141 hours of work to provide the requested information. With the addition of the 21 hours of sift time and 9 hours needed to retrieve the information initially this equates to between 100.5 and 171 hours of work.

Police Scotland have assessed that the £600 cost limit within the Act equates to 40 hours of work and so this part of your request would breach the cost threshold.

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Unfortunately, due to the large scale of Operation Unicorn and the large amount of correspondence involved, I do not believe there is a way to refine your request to meet the cost threshold within the Act.

You had already helpfully asked for a limited period and limited number of mailboxes which ordinarily would allow a request of this type to be progressed. I had initially thought that reducing the mailboxes to be included further would assist but as so many of the emails have been sent to multiple mailboxes within the Force Executive and the high number of lengthy documents/attachments found, this will not materially reduce the scale of the task involved and certainly not to a point that would meet the cost threshold. It would also require a fresh sift which would take somewhere up to 21 hours to complete.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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.