



Home Office

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10 June 2014

Dear Ms Symons,

Freedom of information request (Ref: 31761)

Thank you for your e-mail of 21 May, in which you ask for information on seizures made at UK Borders. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am pleased to write and supply in **Annex A** to this letter details of seizures made by Border Force at the UK borders. Some of the information you have requested is already readily available to you. It can be found on the GOV UK website. Further details and links to the website are set out in the annex.

Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts the Home Office from having to provide you with this information, because it is already in the public domain. If you have any difficulties in accessing this information at the source which I have indicated, please contact me again.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference 31761. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Access Team
Home Office
Ground Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
e-mail: info.access@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely,

S. Khanom
Information Access Team

Annex A

Freedom of information request from Ms Jade Symons (Reference: 31761)

- 1) **How many seizures of cigarettes and tobacco products were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

Please see the data in the table enclosed with this letter. Data is published on the quantity of cigarettes and weight of hand rolled tobacco (HRT) seized on the GOV UK website – link to data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/borders-and-immigration-transparency-data>

- 2) **How many seizures of alcohol were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

Please see the data set out in the table below. Data is published on the quantity of alcohol seized or referred by Border Force on the GOV UK website. This information can be accessed via the link provided above under question 1.

- 3) **How many seizures of illicit drugs were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

The Home Office publishes data on the number of seizures of drugs by Border Force as well as quantity seized by weight, on the GOV UK website, which covers 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and quarter 1 and 2 of 2013/14. The published data can be accessed via the link set out under question 1 above and at the link set out below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seizures-of-drugs-in-england-and-wales-2010-to-2011>

We cannot provide data for the remainder of 2013/14, as this information is intended for future publication. We have decided this information is exempt from disclosure under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest, with the reasons for our conclusion, are set out in **Annex B**.

- 4) **How many seizures of firearms, explosives and ammunition were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

Please see the data set out in the table below.

- 5) **How many seizures of live animals were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

Please see the data in the table below for seizures of live animals under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES). Data for 2013/14 including the amount seized by volume and weight is published, and can be found at the same link provided for question 1.

- 6) **How many seizures of dead animals were made at UK borders in each of these financial years (2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014)?**

Please see the data in the table below for those seized under CITES.

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Seizures made at UK borders

Year	Cigarettes	Tobacco (HRT)	Alcohol	¹ Firearms	Ammunition	² Explosives	³ Live Animals	⁴ Dead Animals
2010/11	28,787	10,814	984	278	52	7	10	163
2011/12	28,750	11,533	1,172	316	65	6	25	34
2012/13	30,011	12,552	1,430	412	80	6	23	0
2013/14	35,814	12,217	1,599	605	93	7	See published data	6

Caveats

The figures quoted above are management information, subject to internal quality check and may be subject to change.

1: Firearms include Air/gas guns, realistic imitation and readily convertible firearms.

2: Explosives includes fireworks.

3: The Live animal figures are only for those seized under CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species). Data for live animals for 2013/14 is published, on the GOV.UK website, link provided above. For live animals, this also includes live corals.

4: Data for dead animals reflects the number of seizures where dead animals were found within seizures of live animals.

Annex B

Freedom of information request from Ms Jade Symons (Reference: 31761)

Public interest test

Some of the exemptions in the FOI Act, referred to as 'qualified exemptions', are subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest in disclosure against the public interest in favour of withholding the information, or the considerations for and against the requirement to say whether the information requested is held or not. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information.

The 'public interest' is not the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. The 'right to know' must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public.

The FOI Act is 'applicant blind'. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

Considerations in favour of disclosing the information

There is a general public interest in statistics relating to seizures of illicit drugs at the UK borders. Disclosure of the information requested would increase accountability and transparency and enhance the public's understanding of work undertaken by Border Force to protect and secure the borders of the UK. In recognition of the public interest and the importance placed on publication of this type of information, we publish statistics on seizure of drugs on the GOV UK website quarterly.

Considerations in favour of withholding the information

The department publishes seizure statistics quarterly and intends to publish statistics for the seizure of drugs for the remainder of 2013/2014 in the near future. Premature disclosure of statistics without adhering to established pre-publication procedures (which includes internal consultation about the final statistics being published) would undermine the department's ability to use its staff resources effectively in a planned way, so that reasonable publication timetables are not affected.

Conclusion

We conclude that the overall balance of the public interest lies in favour of withholding the information to ensure that the Home Office is able to conduct publication of drug seizure statistics in a managed and coherent way.