



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

REQUEST NUMBER: FOI Request 003949-17

REQUEST DETAILS:

"Please tell me: the number of seizures you have made in Suffolk under the category of production of cannabis in the calendar years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 to date.

Please itemise this list by dates, location (town or village), number of plants found, number of arrests and number of charges.

Should it take too long to provide the information for all three years please provide the data for 2015, 2016 and 2017 to date."

RESPONSE:

Suffolk Constabulary has considered your request for information and our response is below.

This response is correct as of 1 March 2017

A search has been completed of the Constabulary's crime system for all investigations recorded under the 'production of cannabis' offence for the 2014 – 2017 calendar years.

The total number of offences and arrests recorded was as follows:

Year	Crimes	Arrests
2014	119	105
2015	109	70
2016	52	32
2017	11	5

Please note that in relation to arrest data, the crime and arrest data does not always link properly and consequently, the arrest data can be viewed as a minimum number of arrests.

The table provided on the attached excel spreadsheet confirms all production offences including the data, town, outcome, number of plants and number of arrests.

Please note that production of cannabis may relate to one or two or to several hundred plants.



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

Some locations have been removed as a result of the investigation being live and the locations not being publically acknowledged at this early stage.

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at s1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at s1 (1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires that Suffolk Constabulary, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) is to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) States that fact
- (b) Specifies the exemption(s) in question and
- (c) States (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption(s) applies.

The information is exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 30(1) – Investigations

Section 30 is an absolute prejudice based exemption and I am therefore obliged to consider the public interest in disclosure.

Please consider the following when reviewing the data:

The number of plants recorded on the crime system is not always accurate. The numbers included in the data were extracted by case reading each of the investigation files; as such they are sometimes approximate numbers rather than actual figures. In addition to this it is not always clear whether the officer is referring to the number of plants at the locus or the number of plants seized by police.

Police forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide crime statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the crime data. It should be noted that for these reasons this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.

Please be aware that the information provided/researched from the 19 October 2015 has been extracted from the Athena crime system. The information provided is subject to change as processes are amended to ensure accurate and precise crime recording.



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

Public interest test in the application of Section 30

Favouring Disclosure

Investigations are expensive and use the resources provided from public funds. To disclose information about production of cannabis offences would identify where police resources are being allocated and reaffirm that we appropriately investigate such matters.

Favouring Non-Disclosure

Information that relates to an ongoing investigation will rarely be disclosed under the FOI Act. By doing so we could risk prejudicing the investigation by providing to any suspect or suspects information that may result in a tactical advantage over the Constabulary or the disruption of an investigation.

We are law enforcers and we aim to provide a sufficient and positive approach to the way we conduct our investigations, we would not want a disclosure of this nature to compromise this in any way.

Balancing Test

In certain cases there will be a strong public interest in disclosing this information if to do so would have a positive effect on core policing purposes. In this case, any disclosure would highlight the capabilities of the Constabulary showing how the investigation is progressing. It would not serve any policing function should a disclosure be made.

The timing of the request is crucial in the application of Section 30 and it is recognised that the exemption will not necessarily be applicable once the investigation has been finalised. However, until such a time that this occurs, or it is publically acknowledged by the Constabulary that such investigations are ongoing, it cannot be considered in the best interests of the public to release information at such early stages of the investigations.

Having weighed up the factors favouring disclosure and those favouring non-disclosure, I have decided that the balance lies with non-disclosure.