



[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Date
05 June 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [Redacted],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00817

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 19 May, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”).

In your email you have requested the information shown verbatim in bold below:

“What is the total number of Drop & Collect branches rolled out to date?”

We can confirm that Post Office does hold the information you have requested.

However, network figures, including the number of Drop & Collect branches go through a rigorous process of auditing and are currently being prepared for publication as part of our annual Network Report.

Therefore, we are not obliged to provide the information as it is intended for future publication and as such the information is exempt under S22(1)(a) of the FOIA.

Section 22 provides for the exemption to apply where it is reasonable in all the circumstances for public authorities to delay the provision of information until it is made generally available through publication.

Section 22(1)(a) is a qualified exemption and therefore also requires Post Office to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption is greater than the public interest in disclosing it.

We have considered the public interest in disclosure, which includes being open, encouraging transparency and allowing for greater understanding in how Post Office operates.

However, Post Office believes that providing the requested information now under an FOI request would not serve the public interest. The number of Drop & Collect branches go through an audit process ahead of publication to ensure they are accurate. This has not yet been completed, and releasing the figures now would give the public an inaccurate picture of the Post Office's network. As we will publish the audited figure as part of our Network Report, we consider that the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption, and thus, withholding the information.

It may be helpful to note that our most recent audited figures are published in our Network Report on our website, available at:

corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/key-reports-statements/network-report/.

What is the average customer footfall for each of these branches?"

We do not measure 'customer footfall', although we do measure the number of customer transactions for Drop & Collect branches. However, this information is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43(2) of the FOIA, which relates to information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the authority holding it).

In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

We recognise that there is a public interest in the disclosure of information concerning transaction volumes as this promotes transparency in Post business and reassurance about the way public money is being spent.

However, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information as it would, if disclosed, prejudice the commercial interests of Post Office and third parties. This is because disclosing information about the number of transactions completed at our branches would prejudice Post Office's commercial interests by allowing competitors in the area to have an unfair advantage. Third parties could respond to this information if disclosed which would affect both Post Office's and the postmaster's income. It

would not be in the public interest to disclose information if Post Office would be unable to operate in a fair marketplace regarding the competitive dialogue procedure and are commercially damaged by the release of the information.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

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