

FOI 2022-309

I write in connection with your request for information dated 5 April 2022 concerning hunts.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

You wrote:

Below is the screenshot of a reply by the PCC to a member of the public. This reply makes very serious allegations which must be substantiated or withdrawn.

This is all you are going to get from me. I have been to two hunts covertly and saw black clad, balaclava wearing thugs shouting and screaming abuse in the face of children simply because they were riding ponies. Ref the inducements to violence and give hunt supporters a good kicking I saw those posts with my own eyes before they were taken down. I will monitor hunts and deter and enforce the law but not because of prejudiced individuals.

Therefore, I would like to know:

- 1) On what date did these 'covert visits' take place?
- 2) At What location did these 'covert visits' take place?
- 3) Which hunt was hunting when these 'covert visits' took place?
- 4) Screaming at children on ponies is a public order offence, if he witnessed this, he must have reported it. I would like a crime reference number and details of any evidence and recording, from himself, and from other hunt support too.
- 5) Were other officers from [Wiltshire Police](#) or [Wiltshire Rural Crime Team](#) present when these offences took place?

Response:

Questions One to Five

No Information Held.

Under our Section 16 obligation to provide advice and assistance, please see the press release from the Police and Crime Commissioner which relates to your request:

Statement from Philip Wilkinson, Police and Crime Commissioner.

The subject of hunting is divisive and people on both sides of the argument defend their position with passion, I understand this and respect each viewpoint.

Much has been made of my use of language in the context of attending a hunt. I have attended hunt meetings in my personal capacity, as a resident, a few times to witness, first-hand, what happens. I used to make it clear that I was not attending in an official capacity and was not recognised as such

when doing so. The use of word 'covert' in this instance was loose terminology. I should have made that clearer.

Strong campaigning by each side of the argument means that often my true aim is overlooked. I would like to make it clear: Wiltshire's countryside is open for all to enjoy lawfully and legitimately – and my role as PCC is to ensure this happens.

As I have made clear on many occasions my job is to ensure Wiltshire Police enforces the law impartially, without fear or favour, against whomsoever should break it, from whatever background or whichever side of the hunting argument they sit – and I continue to work with the Chief Constable on this.

I will not allow undue influence or pressure from any private or protest group to affect the operational independence of Wiltshire Police.