



HM Revenue
& Customs

Silkie Carlo

By email: silkie.carlo@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk

Chief Digital & Information Officer Group
Freedom of Information Team
6TH Floor
Central Mail Unit
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE98 1ZZ

Email foi.request@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Web www.gov.uk

Date: 5th April 2018
Our ref: FOI2018/00523

Dear Ms Carlo,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Thank you for your request under the FOIA, which was received on 6th March, for the following information:

'I write to request information and records under the FOIA, regarding the use of voice identification ("Voice ID").

Please could you provide me with:

a) Details of how much HMRC / the Government has budgeted, has already paid, and continues to pay for use of this software and any related on-going costs. b) Details of which territory, and by whom, the Voice ID data is stored. c) An itemised list of the public authorities and/or other persons, including the software provider, who have access to the stored Voice ID data. d) Any/all procedural guidelines accompanying the storage, use and access to Voice ID data. e) A copy of the Privacy Impact Assessment for the voice ID scheme. f) Details as to whether HMRC has consulted the Biometrics Commissioner on Voice ID.'

a) Details of how much HMRC / the Government has budgeted, has already paid, and continues to pay for use of this software and any related on-going costs;

I can confirm HMRC holds this information but it is withheld, as it is exempt under Section 43(2), Commercial interests, of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Disclosure at this time could weaken HMRC's ability to secure best value for money for the public purse.

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

HMRC acknowledges that there is a strong public interest in the department being transparent about its contracts with commercial entities, and the public have a right to

know that the public money is being expended wisely and that departments are delivering value for money with their suppliers.

However, disclosure of commercially sensitive information at this stage could inhibit our ability to obtain the best value for public money in the procurement process, which is not in the public interest.

Therefore, the conclusion is that the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

b) Details of which territory, and by whom, the Voice ID data is stored

Please note, the specific information requested for these contracts have been withheld under FOIA Exemption s31(1)(a) (prejudice to the prevention or detection of crime). Disclosure of specific information could potentially be used by individuals for criminal activity; departmental IT systems could be exposed or left vulnerable to interference or attack. Section 31 is a qualified exemption which means if it applies I must consider whether the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

I accept the public interest in our procedures being transparent and generally understood. This facilitates the proper public scrutiny of our processes and procedures which in turn helps reinforce high standards of performance and governance.

On the other hand, there is a clear public interest in avoiding likely prejudice to the prevention of crime. It is also in the public interest that HMRC is able to assess and collect tax as efficiently as possible, at the least cost to the public purse and the minimum of additional burden to taxpayers at large.

So, on balance, I conclude that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

c) An itemised list of the public authorities and/or other persons, including the software provider, who have access to the stores Voice ID data

Please note, the specific information requested for these contracts have been withheld under FOIA Exemption s31(1)(a) (prejudice to the prevention or detection of crime). Disclosure of specific information could potentially be used by individuals for criminal activity; departmental IT systems could be exposed or left vulnerable to interference or attack. Section 31 is a qualified exemption which means if it applies I must consider whether the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

I accept the public interest in our procedures being transparent and generally understood. This facilitates the proper public scrutiny of our processes and procedures which in turn helps reinforce high standards of performance and governance.

On the other hand, there is a clear public interest in avoiding likely prejudice to the prevention of crime. It is also in the public interest that HMRC is able to assess and collect tax as efficiently as possible, at the least cost to the public purse and the minimum of additional burden to taxpayers at large.

So, on balance, I conclude that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

d) Any/all procedural guidelines accompanying the storage, use and access to Voice ID data; and

Please note, the specific information requested for these contracts have been withheld under FOIA Exemption s31(1)(a) (prejudice to the prevention or detection of crime). Disclosure of specific information could potentially be used by individuals for criminal activity; departmental IT systems could be exposed or left vulnerable to interference or attack. Section 31 is a qualified exemption which means if it applies I must consider whether the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

I accept the public interest in our procedures being transparent and generally understood. This facilitates the proper public scrutiny of our processes and procedures which in turn helps reinforce high standards of performance and governance.

On the other hand, there is a clear public interest in avoiding likely prejudice to the prevention of crime. It is also in the public interest that HMRC is able to assess and collect tax as efficiently as possible, at the least cost to the public purse and the minimum of additional burden to taxpayers at large.

So, on balance, I conclude that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

e) A copy of the Privacy Impact Assessment for the Voice ID scheme

Please note, the specific information requested for these contracts have been withheld under FOIA Exemption s31(1)(a) (prejudice to the prevention or detection of crime). Disclosure of specific information could potentially be used by individuals for criminal activity; departmental IT systems could be exposed or left vulnerable to interference or attack. Section 31 is a qualified exemption which means if it applies I must consider whether the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

I accept the public interest in our procedures being transparent and generally understood. This facilitates the proper public scrutiny of our processes and procedures which in turn helps reinforce high standards of performance and governance.

On the other hand, there is a clear public interest in avoiding likely prejudice to the prevention of crime. It is also in the public interest that HMRC is able to assess and collect tax as efficiently as possible, at the least cost to the public purse and the minimum of additional burden to taxpayers at large.

So, on balance, I conclude that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

f) Details as to whether HMRC has consulted the Biometrics Commissioner on Voice ID

HMRC has not consulted the Biometrics Commissioner on Voice ID.

If you are not happy with this reply you may request a review by emailing foi.review@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk. You must request a review within 2 months of the date of this letter. It would help us carry out our review if you set out the aspects of the reply that concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO will not usually consider a case unless you have exhausted the internal review procedure provided by HMRC. You can make a complaint through the ICO's website at: www.ico.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Team