

14 August 2025

FOI Ref 21630

Request - You asked us the following:

A list of all the new models or types of equipment classed as "less lethal equipment" (including but not limited to restraints, incapacitant sprays, Conducted Energy devices or tasers, and Attenuating Energy projectiles such as baton rounds) that your constabulary procured between January 2022 and March 2025. Less lethal equipment or weaponry can be defined as equipment designed to incapacitate an individual or group, mitigating a threat without causing permanent or serious injury or death.

Could this be broken down by:

- The date of procurement.
- The number of pieces of equipment procured.
- The name of the company that the equipment was procured from.

We received your request on 23/07/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Staffordshire Police's response to your enquiry is as follows:

Staffordshire Police holds the requested information.

- A list of all the new models or types of equipment classed as "less lethal equipment" (including but not limited to restraints, incapacitant sprays, Conducted Energy devices or tasers, and Attenuating Energy projectiles such as baton rounds) that your constabulary procured between January 2022 and March 2025.
- Less lethal equipment or weaponry can be defined as equipment designed to incapacitate an individual or group, mitigating a threat without causing permanent or serious injury or death.
- Could this be broken down by:
 - The date of procurement.
 - The number of pieces of equipment procured.
 - The name of the company that the equipment was procured from.
 - **Withheld, please see the below exemptions.**

The following exemptions have been applied:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for this particular request.

- Section 31(1)(a)(b) Law Enforcement

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31(1)(a)(b) where the release of Information would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and/or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This exemption is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

- **Section 43(2) Commercial Interests**

This is a prejudice based qualified exemption which means there is a requirement to provide evidence of harm and a public interest test needs to be considered.

Harm:

The release of any information relating to new models or types of 'less lethal equipment' owned and used by Staffordshire Police would allow those with ill intent to cause disruption to policing and prejudice the prevention and detection of crime. Knowing this specific information and associated details such as the number of pieces of equipment would allow individuals to calculate force capability and research any known weaknesses or defects of equipment so identified. This may then be exploited, allowing individuals to take measures to counteract the effectiveness of any identified equipment.

To release the information could therefore have a detrimental impact on how individuals behave in any given circumstances based upon this perceived capability, or to use any known weaknesses to avoid apprehension, all of which could then lead to an increase in criminal activity.

Furthermore, release of information relating to the procurement date, purchase number and company name for procured pieces of equipment such as restraints, incapacitant sprays, Conducted Energy devices or tasers, and Attenuating Energy projectiles would harm Staffordshire Police's negotiating position with regards to future contracts for equipment or services.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 31(1)(a)(b)

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, it would also lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force and the systems used.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 31(1)(a)(b)

Releasing such data would give those individuals with the intent to do so, the intelligence required to disrupt policing. This knowledge would allow those with ill intent to target their offending more effectively or avoid apprehension, which would inevitably lead to an increased likelihood of criminal activity and an increased danger to the public. Any disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 43(2)

Disclosure of the requested information would allow the public to be aware of how public funds are spent or allocated and thereby would provide transparency and accountability, showing that funds from the public purse are used appropriately and proportionally.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 43(2)

Through disclosure of the requested information, Staffordshire Police would find that its negotiating position would be greatly impaired through the release of details that would not only likely be prejudicial to Staffordshire Police but also to the agencies/companies involved. Releasing this information would be

expected to have a detrimental effect on their ability to be competitive in the future and would be exceedingly likely to deter further enterprises submitting offers for tender in the future. This then would impede Staffordshire Police obtaining the most competitive or appropriate services in the future and negatively impact upon the public purse.

Balance test

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, we must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to prevent and detect crime and hindering our ability to protect the public, then non-disclosure takes precedence.

It is the responsibility of Staffordshire Police, when dealing with commercial businesses, to not only protect their commercial interest but also that of Staffordshire Police. Commercial interests must be protected so that the best possible value for money is obtained through open competition, both for businesses and Staffordshire Police. This would not be achieved if full details were to be made available to the market.

Although the use of public funds must be open and transparent, Staffordshire Police is accountable for the money that it spends and utilises and if to release the information means the force is unable to negotiate future tendering and have the ability to secure value for money due to business relationships having been impaired, then this would not be in the public interest.

Having considered the public interest test factors with both exemptions, we are required to determine whether, on balance, the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is our view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour withholding the details. Therefore, Staffordshire Police declines to provide the information for the reasons stated above.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Staffordshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit

Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Central Disclosure Unit within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Central Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

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

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit