

25 November 2025

FOI Ref 22038

Request - You asked us the following:

Which software is used when dealing with underexposed images? Please provide the name and version of the software currently in use.

Please confirm if your organisation uses any automated or manual assisted tools to enhance poor-quality images for CCTV footage collected.

Please confirm whether your organisation uses any AI- based technology software to enhance underexposed images? Please provide the name of the software and the version.

We received your request on 31/10/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police (SP) holds the requested information.

- Which software is used when dealing with underexposed images? Please provide the name and version of the software currently in use. – **Withheld.**
- Please confirm if your organisation uses any automated or manual assisted tools to enhance poor-quality images for CCTV footage collected. – **Disclosed, all processes are manual.**
- Please confirm whether your organisation uses any AI- based technology software to enhance underexposed images? Please provide the name of the software and the version. – **Disclosed, no AI technology or processes are used in SP digital media enhancements.**

The following exemption has been applied:

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

- Section 24 (1) – National Security

Section 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest.

- 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, SP are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

Harm:

Any disclosure under FOI is a release to the public at large. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, disclosure of a particular policing tool of this type as part of an investigative process would reveal operational tactics linked to policing, compromise police investigations and/or adversely affect the ability of SP and others to safeguard national security.

It is well established that police forces use Digital Forensic techniques to counteract criminal behaviour, detect crime, and assist in the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. Modern day policing is intelligence led, and law enforcement depends upon the development of intelligence and the gathering and security of evidence to disrupt criminal behaviour and bring offenders to justice. As criminals adapt and exploit new technology, the police need to respond by overcoming hi-tech barriers to meet their responsibilities. In this case the information relates to a software and version used by SP to deal with underexposed images.

By disclosing the name and version of software used by SP to process or analyse data from underexposed images would undermine the process of preventing or detecting crime and the apprehension of prosecution of offenders. When considered on a Force-by-Force basis, a malign individual could identify those most critical to the Law-and-Order sector and specifically target those proving the most assistance. This would have a huge impact on the effective delivery of operational law enforcement as it would leave companies open to cyberattacks which could have devastating consequences for law enforcement.

Equally, given the sensitive areas in which tools of this type may be used, such as counter-terror investigations, to disclose if any particular tools are used would allow criminals and other adversaries to focus on evaluating the capabilities of its use. With this knowledge it would allow criminals and other adversaries to take steps to counteract a specific tool – be it adjusting how they interact and present themselves to take advantage of any weaknesses or gaps in capability they identify. More sophisticated adversaries may be able to go further and take more initiative-taking measures to undermine the tool and/or its provider. A specific confirmation allows efforts to be focused accordingly.

This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different law enforcement bodies. In addition to the local criminal fraternity being better informed, those intent on organised crime throughout the UK will be able to 'map' where the use of certain tools are or are not used. This can be useful information to those committing crimes. It would have the likelihood of identifying location-specific operations which would compromise police tactics, operations, and future prosecutions as criminals could counteract the measures used against them.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both National Security and Law Enforcement.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 24

Disclosing would provide the public with information about technologies and SP's capabilities. This would reinforce the wider commitment to openness and transparency with the public and facilitate public debate. Furthermore, owing to the inherent link between transparency and public confidence, disclosing the software name and version would be likely to improve the general public's confidence in SP. Over time, an increase in public confidence would be likely to improve public engagement with the police. This would, in turn, lead to an improvement in our ability to both prevent and detect crime and apprehend and prosecute offenders.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 24

Security measures are put in place to protect the community that SP serve. To disclose the software name and its version would be useful intelligence to terrorists and individuals' intent on conducting criminal activity. The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions regarding their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain. The cumulative effect of those with ill-intent gathering information about force capabilities, would have greater impact when linked to other information gathered from various sources. The more information that is disclosed over time will provide a detailed account of the tactical infrastructure, not only at force level but across the country. Any incident that results from confirming that any information is held would by default affect National Security.

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

The public have a genuine interest in what the police do and how they do it. Their interest is legitimate and to be encouraged within a democratic society where policing is by consent. Public accountability for the use of resources and taxpayers' money, and a willingness to be transparent and open are desirable characteristics in all public authorities. The interest on which software packages are being used and how is therefore to be expected, especially when there is some concern as to whether such expenditure is appropriate and justified.

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

To disclose the software used and how it is used by policing would compromise the ability of SP to protect the public. Disclosing SP's capabilities would provide persons intent on disrupting their work, with information that would assist them to do so. In this case, for the reasons outlined in the evidenced harm, the effectiveness of current and future strategies when conducting investigations and gathering evidence may be compromised. The safety of the public is of paramount importance to policing purposes, and any increase in crime would place the public at risk of harm. When the current or future law enforcement role of the force may be compromised by the release of information, the effectiveness of the force will be reduced.

The personal safety of individuals is of paramount importance to the Police Service and must be considered in response of every release. A disclosure under Freedom of Information is a release to the world and, in this case, disclosing tactical information relating software used in Digital Forensics, would undermine the evidence gathering process of any investigative inquiry relating to offences, some of which may be serious cases such as murder or rape.

Balance test

The points above highlight the merits of disclosure and non-disclosure. Having considered the reasons why SP should opt to not disclose the software name and its version, although openness and transparency is at the forefront when considering the public interest, in this case disclosing the software used and how it is analysed, evaluated and used by the police for investigative purposes would not be in the public interest.

Whilst there is a public interest in appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding National Security. As much as there is a public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of National Security, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances.

The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions regarding their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with any information that is released. Disclosing the software would reveal specific policing activity in the digital sphere of investigations and would assist those with intent on causing harm. Any incident that results from disclosure would, as a result, affect National Security.

SP have concluded that disclosing the software used would directly harm the ability of SP to investigate crime. This could also reveal police capabilities, compromise police investigations and/or otherwise, adversely affect the ability of SP to safeguard national security. SP have attached considerable weight to these interests as the primary role of the Police Service is to both prevent and detect crime and apprehend those responsible for committing criminal offences. Therefore, at this moment in time, there is no public interest in disclosing information that would increase the risk to public safety and harm policing capabilities.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP 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 SP, 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:

IAT@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Information Access Team
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ



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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 Information Access Team 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 a supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team 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 twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to forty working days.

The independent supervisor 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 supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant 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 link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team