

16 July 2026

FOI Ref 23010

Request - You asked Staffordshire Police (SP) the following:

- The number of Attenuated Energy Projectile launchers and ammunition rounds currently held in your force's armoury
- The number of officers in your force currently authorised to use these weapons
- Details of any public order events in the past 20 years in which authorisation has been given for these weapons to be deployed.

If this request is denied in full or in part, please can you outline the reasons why, with reference to the statute

SP received your request on 15/06/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP holds the requested information.

- The number of Attenuated Energy Projectile launchers and ammunition rounds currently held in your force's armoury – **Withheld.**
- The number of officers in your force currently authorised to use these weapons – **Withheld.**
- Details of any public order events in the past 20 years in which authorisation has been given for these weapons to be deployed. – **Withheld.**

The following exemptions have been applied:

- 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) Law Enforcement

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31(1)(a)(b) where the release of Information would, or would be 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 38 (1) (a) (b) – Health and Safety

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual. 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.

Harm:

The requested information relates to SP's capability to deploy Attenuated Energy Projectiles (AEPs), including the number of launchers held, the quantity of available ammunition and the number of authorised officers trained to deploy them. Whilst this information may appear limited when viewed in isolation, disclosure under FOI is effectively disclosure to the world at large.

The release of such information would provide insight into the force's operational capability, resilience, specialist resources and tactical capacity to respond to serious public disorder and other high risk incidents. Disclosure would enable those intent on criminality, disorder or activities that threaten public safety to better understand the availability and scale of specialist policing capabilities.

Furthermore, information disclosed under FOIA can be combined with information already in the public domain, including published operational guidance, previous disclosures, media reporting and other open-source material. This cumulative impact may enable a more detailed picture of policing capabilities and vulnerabilities to be developed via a mosaic effect.

Disclosure would therefore be likely to undermine operational effectiveness, prejudice law enforcement activities, compromise the ability of policing to respond effectively to serious incidents and increase risks to the safety of officers, staff and members of the public.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 24

Disclosure would promote openness, transparency and accountability regarding specialist policing capabilities, support public understanding of the tactical options available to policing and the use of public funds for equipment, training and operational preparedness, and may enhance public confidence in the governance and oversight of public order policing capabilities.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 24

There is a strong public interest in safeguarding national security, and disclosure could provide individuals or groups with valuable insight into policing capabilities, capacity and resilience, potentially assisting those seeking to identify or exploit perceived vulnerabilities in policing responses; furthermore, information disclosed under FOIA is released into the public domain without restriction and cannot subsequently be controlled, and whilst the risks may not be apparent from the information in isolation, they may arise through its aggregation with other publicly available material, thereby increasing the importance of protecting information that supports policing's ability to respond effectively to serious incidents, disorder and threats to public safety.

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 31

Disclosure would promote transparency and accountability regarding police resources and operational capability, assist public understanding of how policing prepares for and responds to serious public

disorder, contribute to informed public debate concerning the use of less lethal tactics and equipment, and support the legitimate public interest in understanding how public authorities utilise specialist operational resources.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 31

Disclosure could prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders by revealing the extent of the force's specialist capability, resilience and operational capacity; it could assist individuals in assessing the availability, scale and effectiveness of specialist public order resources, enable those involved in criminality or serious disorder to inform their planning, tactics or decision-making, and undermine the effectiveness of operational tactics and policing's ability to respond to future incidents, whereas there is a significant public interest in ensuring police forces retain the ability to prevent crime, maintain public order and protect communities without disclosing operationally sensitive capability information.

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 38

Disclosure would promote openness and accountability regarding specialist policing resources, improve public understanding of the equipment and training available to officers responsible for maintaining public safety, increase public confidence that appropriate governance and oversight arrangements are in place, and contribute to informed public debate concerning the use of less-lethal tactical options within policing.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 38

Disclosure may increase the risks faced by police officers, police staff and members of the public during future operational deployments, as knowledge of specialist capabilities, equipment holdings and authorised personnel levels could be exploited by individuals involved in criminality, violence or serious disorder; this may reduce the effectiveness of operational tactics intended to resolve incidents safely and effectively, increasing the potential for harm to officers and the public, whilst there remains a very strong public interest in protecting the safety and wellbeing of police personnel and the communities they serve and ensuring that operationally sensitive information is not disclosed where doing so would be likely to endanger the safety of any individual.

Balance Test

There is a recognised public interest in transparency, accountability and public understanding of policing activities, resources and tactics. Disclosure may assist public debate and contribute to confidence that policing resources are subject to appropriate oversight and governance.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the very significant public interest in protecting national security, maintaining effective law enforcement capabilities and safeguarding the health and safety of officers, staff and members of the public. The requested information relates directly to specialist operational capability and resilience. Disclosure would provide insight into policing resources and tactical capacity which could be exploited to undermine operational effectiveness or increase risks during future incidents.

Given the substantial weight that must be afforded to protecting national security, preserving the effectiveness of law enforcement and safeguarding public safety, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

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

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 SP 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, considering 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



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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