

10 September 2026

FOI Ref 23347

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

Please could I request information relating to the use of drones and AI over the past 3 years:

For the period from 1st SEPTEMBER 2023 to 1st SEPTEMBER 2026:

1. How many drones do you have in your police force
2. What hours do your drone team work and what hours can a drone be requested
3. How many officer are trained drone operators
4. The number of operational incidents attended by police drones
5. The number of these incidents where the drone was deployed before police officers arrived at scene
6. The number of incidents where information obtained by the drone was recorded as contributing to a police decision or deployment.
7. The number of incidents where the use of a drone resulted in a person being located, identified, arrested or otherwise assisted in resolving an incident.
8. The average response/deployment time for police drone operators, where this information is recorded.
9. The number of complaints received relating to police drone use
10. The number of occasions on which a drone deployment was discontinued because of safety, technical or regulatory concerns
11. A list of AI-enabled technologies currently being used for policing purposes and any that are possible going to be implemented in the near future.
12. Number of complaints or formal concerns relating to the use of AI technologies.

Any information provides would be greatly appreciated.

SP received your request on 04/09/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

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

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 12(1) where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit.

Section 12(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the prescribed limit'.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

There is no method by which SP can readily retrieve information from local police systems to answer parts of this request. This is because, for the time period requested, questions 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 would involve the manual review of all incident logs related to drones within that time period as the data is not held in a readily retrievable format. To retrieve the data for question 7 alone would involve them manual review of over 500 incident logs, taking approximately 15 minutes per record. This would equate to over 125 hours, with further time required to retrieve the data for the other questions. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by a considerable margin.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, to comply with this obligation please see below.

If your request was refined, SP may be able to provide the following information, however, it may be subject to further substantive exemptions:

1. The number of drones SP currently have.
2. As of September 2026, the number of officers that are trained drone operators.
3. Between 01/09/2023 and 31/08/2026, the number of complaints received relating to police drone use
4. A list of AI-enabled technologies currently being used for policing purposes and any that are possible going to be implemented in the near future.
5. Between 01/09/2023 and 31/08/2026, the number of complaints or formal concerns relating to the use of AI technologies.

Please be advised that SP do not hold data for questions 2 and 5 (What hours do your drone team work and what hours can a drone be requested, and the number of these incidents where the drone was deployed before police officers arrived at scene).

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:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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 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 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 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 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