



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Our Ref: FOI 23390
Your Ref: FOI 23374
Date: 21st September 2026

Internal Review

Re: Request for internal review of response to application for information under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, original request first notified to Staffordshire Police on 10th September 2026.

Staffordshire Police (SP) refer to the above request which is copied below:

I am writing in my personal capacity as a member of the research team for the long-running investigative podcast *The Mysterious Case of Fred the Head*. For clarity, this is a new request made by me personally. It is not a request for an internal review of FOI 23165.

The podcast examines the long-running investigation into the unidentified man whose skeletal remains were discovered in a shallow grave beside the River Trent at the Old Flint Mill, Newton Road, Winhill, Burton upon Trent, on 27 March 1971. As we prepare future episodes, we are keen to ensure that any references we make to Staffordshire Police's investigation accurately reflect the current forensic position.

We appreciate that this remains an open murder investigation and understand there will be matters that cannot be discussed. Our questions are therefore limited to clarification of public statements previously made by Staffordshire Police.

In 2021, Detective Chief Inspector [REDACTED] gave a number of public interviews, including one with Staffordshire Live, in which it was stated that:

- the DNA was last tested in 2017/2018;
- Staffordshire Police now held a "full DNA profile";
- the remains were confirmed as male; and
- DNA comparisons had been undertaken, including reference to websites "such as Ancestry".

To assist us in ensuring our reporting is accurate, we would be grateful if you could clarify the following points.

DNA

1. Is it correct that the DNA work undertaken in 2017/2018 resulted from a new DNA extraction from the remains, rather than re-analysis of DNA previously extracted?
2. Is it correct that the "full DNA profile" referred to in the 2021 interview includes a usable nuclear DNA profile?
3. Is it correct that the DNA profile currently held contains sufficient nuclear DNA markers to determine the biological sex of the remains?



4. Is it correct that Staffordshire Police's conclusion that the remains are male is based upon DNA evidence?
5. Does Staffordshire Police still retain any biological samples from the remains for potential future forensic testing?

Investigative Genetic Genealogy

6. Has Staffordshire Police ever uploaded the victim's DNA profile to AncestryDNA or any other public consumer genealogy database?
7. Has Staffordshire Police undertaken any form of investigative genetic genealogy in an attempt to identify the victim?

Physical Exhibits

8. Does Staffordshire Police still retain the following exhibits?
 - the partial upper denture
 - the wedding ring
 - the socks
 - the binding cords

If any of these exhibits are no longer retained, have they been destroyed, returned, transferred to another organisation, or buried with the human remains?

Exhibit records

9. Does Staffordshire Police hold any exhibit schedule, property record, inventory, disposal record, reinterment record or other record documenting the present status or ultimate disposal of the biological samples and physical exhibits referred to above?
10. If such records are held, please provide copies, subject to any necessary redaction. If the records cannot be disclosed in full, please provide the non-exempt factual information they contain concerning the retention, transfer, destruction, disposal or reinterment of each item.

Investigation Update

11. Could you outline any significant investigative work undertaken since 2021, including any further forensic, genealogical or other enquiries relating to the identification of the victim?
12. If any of the investigative avenues referred to above have not been undertaken, can Staffordshire Police confirm whether they have been considered and discounted?

We appreciate your time and assistance. Our aim is simply to ensure that the information presented in our podcast accurately reflects Staffordshire Police's current understanding of the case.

You have requested an Internal Review which is copied below:

I am writing to request an internal review of Staffordshire Police's response dated 11 September 2026 concerning FOI Ref: 23374.



The response refuses all 12 questions under section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, on the basis that the requested information is reasonably accessible by other means. Under the heading "Advice and assistance", it provides a link to the published response to an earlier request, FOI 23165. Having examined FOI 23165, I do not believe that section 21 has been applied correctly. The linked document does not provide access to the information requested in FOI 23374.

I recognise that section 21 is an absolute exemption which does not require a public-interest test. However, that makes it particularly important that its threshold is correctly established. In this case, the information itself is not available through the source cited. That source merely records that most of it was withheld under section 30, while the new exhibit-record questions do not appear in it at all.

1. Information withheld in FOI 23165

For questions 1–3, 5–8, 11 and 12 of FOI 23374, the linked response to FOI 23165 does not disclose the requested information. It records only that the information was "Withheld, Section 30". Being able to access a published refusal notice is not the same as having reasonable access to the underlying information. No other source through which I could obtain these answers has been identified.

2. Question 4: determination of biological sex

FOI 23165 states:

"The post-mortem examination confirmed the sex to be male."

However, this does not answer the question asked in FOI 23374, which is whether Staffordshire Police's conclusion that the remains are male is based upon DNA evidence.

The linked response therefore does not make the requested clarification reasonably accessible.

3. Questions 9 and 10: exhibit records

Questions 9 and 10 were not included in FOI 23165. They ask whether Staffordshire Police holds an exhibit schedule, property record, inventory, disposal record, reinterment record or similar documentation concerning the biological samples and physical exhibits, and request copies or non-exempt factual information from those records.

As these questions were not asked or addressed in FOI 23165, the linked document cannot provide access to the information requested.

The response to FOI 23374 begins:

"SP holds the requested information."

Please clarify whether this confirmation applies to every question, including the exhibit schedules, property records, inventories, disposal records and reinterment records described in questions 9 and 10.

I ask the reviewer to establish what searches or enquiries were undertaken for these new categories of records before section 21 was applied.

Requested outcome

I ask an independent reviewing officer to reconsider each question separately and either:

- disclose the requested information;
- direct me to a source which actually contains the information; or
- issue a fresh refusal notice identifying and explaining any other exemption considered applicable.

If another exemption is relied upon, please:

- identify which exemption applies to each question or category of information;
- provide the reasoning required under section 17;
- conduct any applicable public-interest test;
- distinguish sensitive investigative information from factual or administrative information;



- consider partial disclosure and redaction.

Substantive public-interest considerations

If the reviewer considers applying section 30, I ask that the following factors be taken into account.

1. Previous public statements concerning DNA

In an interview published by Staffordshire Live/Burton Mail on 26 March 2021, DCI [REDACTED] stated:

"The DNA was last tested in 2017/2018 and obviously refreshing that test doesn't change the outcome as we have a full profile."

The article also referred to work involving the National DNA Database and sites *"such as Ancestry"*.

My questions seek limited clarification of statements Staffordshire Police has already placed in the public domain. I am not requesting disclosure of the DNA profile, names of possible matches or relatives, sensitive forensic results or details of current investigative techniques.

2. Reinterment and retention of samples and exhibits

On BBC Crimewatch Live on 23 March 2021, DCI [REDACTED] publicly discussed the socks and wedding ring.

In Episode 7 of Staffordshire Police's The Beat Podcast, broadcast on 27 March 2021, he stated:

"I've repatriated um Fred's body now um with with the some of the samples that we still err had in our possession that w-were subject to testing."

That statement creates a legitimate question about which samples were reinterred and whether other biological material and principal physical exhibits remain retained. I am seeking only their present status, not access to the exhibits or sensitive results obtained from them.

3. Determination of biological sex

The response to FOI 23165 stated that the post-mortem examination confirmed that the remains were male. The question seeks clarification of whether this conclusion was also established independently through DNA analysis.

A simple yes or no answer would not disclose the DNA profile or compromise an investigative technique.

4. The partial upper denture

In Episode 7 of The Beat Podcast, DCI [REDACTED] described the teeth as *"one of the key elements"* and *"one of the most obvious elements"* relevant to identification.

Our research team subsequently consulted an experienced UK forensic odontologist who acts as an expert witness for the UK government. Having reviewed contemporary dental documentation, the expert advised that, if the partial upper denture remains retained and is in a suitable condition, analysis of its materials might provide information concerning where it was manufactured.

The expert also identified the severe Class III occlusion, or underbite, as a distinctive characteristic which could be relevant when assessing missing-person candidates.

This materially strengthens the public interest in establishing whether the denture remains available for possible modern examination. I am not requesting custody of it, access to it, permission to test it or disclosure of associated forensic results.

5. Accuracy of information in the public domain

While discussing the absence of dental records in Episode 7 of Staffordshire Police's The Beat Podcast in 2021, DCI [REDACTED] stated:

"But of course, in 1971, you could have your teeth worked on in a pub, and then there will be no records."

Contemporary dental documentation identifies the denture materials as ICI Kallodent resin and .039-inch hard-drawn wire and records detailed features of its construction. Although this documentation does not



establish where the denture was made, it demonstrates that potentially significant information about its manufacture and fitting exists and may be capable of further expert assessment.

Establishing whether the denture and associated records remain retained would therefore assist responsible research, help ensure that public information concerning the case is accurate and reduce speculation unsupported by the surviving dental evidence.

6. Adequacy of the previous section 30 assessment

The public-interest assessment in FOI 23165 was expressed in general terms. It did not explain how disclosure of each limited factual confirmation would create a real risk of interference with this particular investigation.

The questions cover markedly different categories of information, including publicly discussed forensic facts, administrative exhibit records and the basic existence or retention of physical items. They should not be treated as one indivisible body of sensitive operational information.

Context of the decision

Staffordshire Police had sight of the proposed grounds for an internal review of FOI 23165 before receiving FOI 23374. I was informed that I could not pursue that review without authorisation from the original requester. I therefore submitted FOI 23374 personally, expressly describing it as a new request and adding the questions concerning exhibit records.

FOI 23374 was received on 10 September 2026 and answered on 11 September 2026. In view of that short interval, the application of section 21 to information absent from the linked document, and the blanket treatment of all 12 questions, I ask the reviewer to determine whether my request was considered afresh and in its entirety.

The practical effect of changing from section 30, which is subject to a public-interest test, to section 21 is that the substantive public-interest issues raised above have not been considered. I am not suggesting that this establishes improper intent. However, section 21 can only be relied upon if the requested information is genuinely accessible by other means, and the source identified in the refusal does not provide that information.

SP Response

After reviewing the response provided in FOI 23374, SP have revised their response. S21 is no longer being cited.

SP will respond to each issue raised in sequence as follows:

DNA

1. Is it correct that the DNA work undertaken in 2017/2018 resulted from a new DNA extraction from the remains, rather than re-analysis of DNA previously extracted?

SP Response: No.

2. Is it correct that the “full DNA profile” referred to in the 2021 interview includes a usable nuclear DNA profile?

SP Response: No information held; there is no recorded information held by SP that answers this specific question.



3. Is it correct that the DNA profile currently held contains sufficient nuclear DNA markers to determine the biological sex of the remains?

SP Response: No information held; there is no recorded information held by SP that answers this specific question.

4. Is it correct that Staffordshire Police's conclusion that the remains are male is based upon DNA evidence?

SP Response: The Postmortem and DNA both identify the deceased to be male.

5. Does Staffordshire Police still retain any biological samples from the remains for potential future forensic testing?

SP Response: Withheld section 30.

Investigative Genetic Genealogy

6. Has Staffordshire Police ever uploaded the victim's DNA profile to AncestryDNA or any other public consumer genealogy database?

SP Response: No

7. Has Staffordshire Police undertaken any form of investigative genetic genealogy in an attempt to identify the victim?

SP Response: No

Physical Exhibits

8. Does Staffordshire Police still retain the following exhibits?

- the partial upper denture
- the wedding ring
- the socks
- the binding cords

If any of these exhibits are no longer retained, have they been destroyed, returned, transferred to another organisation, or buried with the human remains?

SP Response: Withheld section 30.

Exhibit records

9. Does Staffordshire Police hold any exhibit schedule, property record, inventory, disposal record, reinterment record or other record documenting the present status or ultimate disposal of the biological samples and physical exhibits referred to above?

SP Response: Partially disclosed, SP hold some of the above data.

10. If such records are held, please provide copies, subject to any necessary redaction. If the records cannot be disclosed in full, please provide the non-exempt factual information they contain concerning the retention, transfer, destruction, disposal or reinterment of each item.

SP Response: Withheld section 30.

Investigation Update

11. Could you outline any significant investigative work undertaken since 2021, including any further



SP Response: Withheld section 30.

12. If any of the investigative avenues referred to above have not been undertaken, can Staffordshire Police confirm whether they have been considered and discounted?

SP Response: Withheld section 30.

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 this particular request.

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and class based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the information would improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. SP is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities SP serves. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Balance test

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors SP are required to determine whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. The overriding consideration is to the deceased and his relatives. A public interest or curiosity in the case does not mean it is in the public interest to disclose information which may prejudice a criminal investigation. This is an open case and the duty of SP to detect crime and protect the communities is not diminished by the passage of time. It is SP's view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

Please be advised that all FOI requests and response letters are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

If you are not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Information Access Team Management

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