

23 September 2026

FOI Ref 23165

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

I am writing on behalf of GSE Media Ltd, producers of the long-running investigative podcast *The Mysterious Case of Fred the Head*.

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 Dan Ison 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

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

Physical Exhibits

1. 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?

Investigation Update

1. 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?
2. 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.

SP received your request on 22/07/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP refinement

SP have provided this refinement after receiving another almost identical request, where more data was provided. Please find below the revised responses to your questions.

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? – **Withheld, Section 30.**

Investigative Genetic Genealogy

1. Has Staffordshire Police ever uploaded the victim's DNA profile to AncestryDNA or any other public consumer genealogy database? – **SP Response: No**
2. Has Staffordshire Police undertaken any form of investigative genetic genealogy in an attempt to identify the victim? – **SP Response: No**

Physical Exhibits

1. Does Staffordshire Police still retain the following exhibits?
 - the partial upper denture
 - the wedding ring
 - the socks
 - the binding cords – **Withheld, Section 30.**

If any of these exhibits are no longer retained, have they been destroyed, returned, transferred to another organisation, or buried with the human remains? – **Withheld, Section 30.**

Investigation Update

1. 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? – **Withheld, Section 30.**
2. If any of the investigative avenues referred to above have not been undertaken, can Staffordshire Police confirm whether they have been considered and discounted? – **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. It is SP's view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

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

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



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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, 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