



Ref: FOI2024-020

[REDACTED]

18th April 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to our previous correspondence regarding your request for the following information:

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request information pertaining to the decision-making process involved in the recent declassification of documents related to the UK's nuclear testing programme. This request seeks to uncover the full scope of communications and documentation that informed and resulted from the declassification process, aiming to understand the considerations and criteria applied in these decisions.

Specifically, I am requesting:

- 1. All correspondence (including emails, memos, letters, and notes) between Ministry of Defence officials, Ministers, and Members of Parliament concerning the declassification of documents related to the UK's nuclear testing program, dated within the last 18 months.*
- 2. Any communications between the Ministry of Defence and the National Archives regarding the declassification, including discussions on the timing, scope, and public access to the declassified documents, dated within the last 18 months.*
- 3. Documentation of the decision-making process for declassification, including meeting minutes, internal memos, and any assessments or reports that outline the criteria and rationale for declassifying these documents, dated within the last 18 months.*
- 4. Any guidance, policies, or procedural documents referenced or generated as part of the declassification process, dated within the last 18 months.*
- 5. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).*

Thorough searches have been carried out to locate the information you requested and we can confirm that the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) has not been able to locate any relevant information.

Under Section 16(1) of the Act, public authorities should provide advice and assistance, as far as it would be reasonable to do so. It may be helpful to note that the documents relating to historic nuclear test events, which were recently reviewed by the Minister for Defence People and Families and reported to Parliament, have been declassified over several years dating back to 1985. However, they required a recent review to ensure that their security classification was appropriate for today's security environment. The review carried out by officials at AWE and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) was completed in March this year, with a view to releasing the documents into the public domain. It should be noted that prior to this review there were two documents held at a higher security classification due to national security concerns and that these documents have since been declassified.

The database that includes these documents is hosted by AWE on behalf of the MOD. AWE is considered a separate public authority from the MOD for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act and as such,



Aldermaston ▪ Reading
Berkshire ▪ RG7 4PR

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separately administers requests for information and therefore under the legislation is unable to transfer the request to the MOD. You may wish to direct your queries regarding guidance and policies on the declassification process to the MOD at CIO-FIO@mod.gov.uk, as they may hold information within the scope of your request.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications. If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled you have a right to request an internal review within 40 days of receiving this letter, by writing to information.requests@awe.co.uk or our postal address: Information Requests Team, AWE Aldermaston, Reading, RG7 4PR. If you are still unhappy after an internal review has been completed, under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 you have the right to take your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office. Please note the Commissioner will generally not consider a complaint until you have exhausted AWE's internal complaints process.

Yours sincerely,

AWE Information Requests Team