NUCLEAR SECURITY TECHNOLOGIES

Ref: FOI2025-075

[redacted]

04 February 2026

Dear [redacted]

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

"This is a request under FOIA for details of instances in which Atomic Weapons Establishment (including, where applicable, any agencies, bodies, or units for which it is ultimately responsible for supplier payments) has failed to pay its suppliers on time, thereby causing liabilities for late payment compensation and/or interest on late payments to be incurred for the public purse.

With the above points in mind, we request under FOIA that you provide, (preferably in Microsoft Excel or an equivalent machine-readable format) the following information in respect of suppliers which were not paid within 30 days for the period starting 1 April 2019 to the date of this request:

1.Supplier Name
2. Invoice Date
3.Gross Invoice Value
4.Payment Date
5.Late Payment Compensation or Interest Paid (if any)"

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

We can confirm that AWE holds information in scope to your request. However, we are withholding the information in relation to question 1 under **sections 24(1), 26(1)(b) and 43(2)** of the Act. These exemptions apply because disclosure would prejudice national security, defence, and commercial interests.

In relation to questions 2, 3 and 4, please find attached an Excel spreadsheet which provides the requested details, including invoice dates, invoice values, and payment dates.

In relation to question 5, AWE does not hold any information in scope of your request as no compensation or interest was paid.

As sections 24, 26 and 43 are qualified exemptions, we have conducted a Public Interest Test (PIT). The outcome of the PIT favours withholding the information in relation to question 1. Our reasoning is set out below.

Section 24(1) – National Security

In considering the public interest in favour of disclosure, we recognise that releasing information about supplier identities, contributes to transparency. Disclosure of supplier identities may also help demonstrate

© 2024 British Crown Owned Copyright / AWE
AWE is the trading name of AWE plc. AWE is a Non-Departmental Public Body owned by the Ministry of Defence.
Registered in England and Wales. Registration no. 02763902.
Registered office: Room 20, F161 2, AWE plc, Aldermaston, Reading, Berkshire RG7 4PR

accountability in AWE's financial processes and support wider public understanding of government payment performance.

However, AWE operates within the UK's nuclear defence infrastructure, and the disclosure of supplier identities presents specific and heightened security risks. Revealing which companies provide goods or services to AWE when linked with invoice values, timing, or frequency of payments could enable hostile actors to map elements of our supply chain. Even routine commercial information can, when cross-referenced with other publicly available data, allow adversaries to identify specialist suppliers, infer operational dependencies, or pinpoint potential pressure points within AWE's procurement network.

Protecting the identities of suppliers is therefore essential to safeguarding the resilience and security of AWE's critical operations. In this context, the risk that disclosure could facilitate targeted interference outweighs any public interest in transparency. We therefore conclude that section 24(1) applies, and the public interest favours withholding the information.

Section 26(1)(b) – Defence

In considering the public interest in favour of disclosure, we recognise that releasing information about supplier identities, contributes to transparency. Disclosure of supplier identities may also help demonstrate accountability in AWE's financial processes and support wider public understanding of government payment performance.

However, the information requested concerns suppliers engaged in defence-related activities, who support the UK's nuclear warhead programme. Releasing supplier names directly exposes those companies providing specialist goods or services to AWE. This risks revealing sensitive aspects of AWE's operational needs, procurement cycles, and capability development activity. Identifying individual suppliers—particularly those delivering niche technologies or materials allows hostile actors to map critical supply routes, assess reliance on specific providers, or target organisations whose contribution to national security may not otherwise be visible.

Protecting the identities of these suppliers is therefore essential to maintaining the security and resilience of AWE's defence supply chain. In this case, the public interest in safeguarding the UK's defence capability outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Section 26(1)(b) is therefore engaged.

Section 43(2) – Commercial Interests

We recognise that disclosure of supplier identities would promote transparency in public procurement and how AWE interacts with its suppliers and manages payment obligations.

However, the information requested includes details that directly identify suppliers providing specialist and sensitive services to AWE. Releasing supplier names alongside invoice values and payment information would expose confidential pricing structures, contract values and financial arrangements. Such disclosure provides competitors with a clear understanding of individual suppliers' commercial strategies, undermines their competitive standing, and results in direct and tangible commercial harm.

Disclosure of supplier identities in this context also damages supplier confidence. Companies engaged in defence-related or nuclear-related work expect their identities and commercial arrangements to remain

© 2024 British Crown Owned Copyright / AWE
AWE is the trading name of AWE plc. AWE is a Non-Departmental Public Body owned by the Ministry of Defence.
Registered in England and Wales. Registration no. 02763902.
Registered office: Room 20, F161 2, AWE plc, Aldermaston, Reading, Berkshire RG7 4PR

protected. Making this information public would erode trust and discourage organisations from supplying materials to AWE, directly weakening the resilience and capability of the supply chain.

Protecting supplier identities and their associated commercial information is essential and firmly in the public interest. Disclosure directly compromises the commercial interests of both AWE and its suppliers, and Section 43(2) is therefore engaged.

Having considered the points above, we conclude that the public interest favours withholding the information in relation to question 1. Disclosure would prejudice national security, defence capabilities, and commercial interests.

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

UK Ministry of Defence
© 2024 British Crown Owned Copyright / AWE

AWE is the trading name of AWE plc. AWE is a Non-Departmental Public Body owned by the Ministry of Defence.
Registered in England and Wales. Registration no. 02763902.
Registered office: Room 20, F161 2, AWE plc, Aldermaston, Reading, Berkshire RG7 4PR