

Ref: FOI2026-041

29 July 2026

We refer to your request for the following information:

** A copy of all information, including but not limited to reports and minutes of meetings, relating to Project Merlin*

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

We can advise that whilst AWE may hold information in scope of your request, we will not be able to provide an answer without exceeding the appropriate limit set out at Section 12 of the Act.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with these would exceed the appropriate limit, which for public authorities is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 2.25 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

To identify and retrieve all information relating to Project Merlin would require extensive searches across numerous business areas, historic records, archived files, legacy electronic systems, email repositories and other record stores spanning a significant period of time and held in a variety of formats.

In order to determine what information falls within scope, AWE would need to locate, review and assess a large volume of records to establish whether they fall in scope of your request. The work required to identify, retrieve and examine all potentially relevant information would take approximately 388 hours and cost £9,700 to complete which substantially exceeds the appropriate limit prescribed by Section 12 of the Act.

We have considered our duty under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to provide advice and assistance. However, given the age of the records and the manner in which historic documents are stored, including within legacy archives that are not indexed by the subject matter of your request, we are unable to identify a reasonable refinement that would reduce the work required to locate, retrieve and extract the relevant information to within the statutory cost limit. Consequently, we are unable to suggest a practical means by which the request could be narrowed while retaining its original scope and purpose.

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