



Ref: FOI2024-021

[REDACTED]

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

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

*Please provide the following details:*

1. *What data storage vendors do you currently use for your primary storage (e.g. DELL, HPE, NETAPP, NUTANIX, PURE STORAGE, HITACHI, IBM)?*
2. *How large in Terabytes is your primary storage across these groups? (>50TB, 50-200TB, 200-500TB, 500-1PB, 1PB<)?*
3. *When is the primary storage up for renewal/refresh?*
4. *Do you use containerized applications anywhere within your IT infrastructure?*
5. *Do you use Kubernetes anywhere within your IT infrastructure?*
6. *Who do you use for your backup data storage software?*
7. *How large is your backup data storage in Terabytes?*
8. *When is your backup data storage due for refresh?*
9. *Do you use the public Cloud (AWS/Microsoft Azure/Google Cloud)?*
10. *If you use Public Cloud, what applications are you using it for?*
11. *How large in terabytes is your public cloud estate?*
12. *Do you use Azure VMware Solution?*
13. *Which VAR (value-added resellers) have you used to purchase your primary data storage across the business units? (E.g., CDW/Softcat/MTI/Telefonica Tech, etc.)*
14. *Which frameworks does your procurement use?*

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

We can confirm that the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) holds all of the information in scope of your request.

We are able to release the following information:

1. *Which VAR (value-added resellers) have you used to purchase your primary data storage across the business units? (E.g., CDW/Softcat/MTI/Telefonica Tech, etc.)*
2. *Which frameworks does your procurement use?*

In response to the above points, our reseller is Softcat which was procured through Crown Commercial Services RM6068 Technology Products and Associated Services. This agreement has now been superseded by RM6098 Technology Products and Associated Services - Future VAR procurements will be via RM6098.



However, after careful consideration we have decided that some of the information is exempt from disclosure under sections 24(1) and 26(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Sections 24(1) and 26(1) are qualified exemptions subject to a Public Interest Test (PIT) which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure. We can confirm the PIT has been conducted and it has concluded that the information should be withheld in full.

For each of the exemptions applied, we will now set out arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest with the reasons for our conclusion.

#### Section 24(1) – Safeguarding National Security

Section 24(1) applies where withholding the information is “required for the purposes of safeguarding national security”. The Act makes a presumption towards disclosure wherever possible and includes a general obligation to promote openness and transparency, and we recognise that there is some public interest in transparency around public spending; in public authorities being held to account for their decisions.

However, there is a strong public interest in safeguarding national security and in withholding any information that might prejudice it. Providing the requested information would impinge on the national security of the United Kingdom (UK). If AWE were to disclose this, it would be highly likely to result in AWE and its assets becoming vulnerable to cyber-attacks instigated by unfriendly actors, both within and external to the UK. If AWE’s systems were to be accessed inappropriately it would provide a better understanding of the UK’s capabilities and potential vulnerabilities in relation to the nuclear deterrent. The very nature of our deterrent requires information on its scope, scale and potential vulnerability to be withheld so that it remains effective in its role as a strategic defensive weapon.

Taking these factors into consideration, the PIT finds that the benefit of promoting openness and transparency relating to public spending must be weighed against the threat to national security that such a release would pose. There is no wider public interest in making the nuclear deterrent more vulnerable. Therefore, the public interest lies strongly in this information being withheld.

#### Section 26(1) – Defence

Section 26(1) states that information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act release of the information ‘would’ or ‘would be likely’ to prejudice the defence of the British Isles and the capability, effectiveness and security of the Armed Forces.

The factors for release are similar to those provided for the use of section 24(1) in as much as release of the information would provide greater openness and transparency in relation to public spending and public authorities being held to account for their decisions.

The very nature of the nuclear deterrent however requires information on the IT support infrastructure that underpins the programme to be withheld so that it remains effective in its role as a strategic defensive weapon. By extension, any undermining of the capability, credibility and effectiveness of our defence



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nuclear programmes undermine the UK's nuclear deterrent which is the apex of the UK's national security strategy. Its credibility is vital to it remaining an effective capability. There is a high likelihood that release of this information would provide the ability to an adversary to access information that underpins the nuclear deterrent programme, consequently prejudicing the capability and effectiveness of the UK's nuclear deterrent and prejudicing the defence of the UK.

Therefore, the PIT falls in favour of withholding the requested information.

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](mailto: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