

Ref: FOI2025-024

17 July 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to your request for the following information:

According to the section of the AWE's website called "AWE's major programmes" (<https://www.awe.co.uk/our-supply-chain/our-projects/>):

With regard to the work on the Replacement Warhead programme/Astraea that AWE has begun undertaking, please can you provide me with a list of all of your suppliers and/or partners, where the value of the work they have been contracted to do exceeds £1million? For each supplier/partner, please can you provide:

- 1. The name of the organisation*
- 2. The financial value of the work they have been contracted to do*
- 3. A brief summary of the work they have been contracted to do*

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 all the information in scope of your request, however the information falls within scope of the following exemptions; Sections 24, 26, and 27 of the Act.

Section 24 – National Security: This exemption protects information from being disclosed if it could compromise national security. This exemption ensures security operations remain safeguarded.

Section 26 – Defence: This exemption applies to information which, if disclosed, would be prejudice to the defence of the UK, including military operations, strategic defence policies, and security arrangements.

Section 27 – International Relations: This exemption applies to information that if disclosed could harm the UK's relationship with other nations or international organisations.

These 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 National Security

Section 24(1), National Security, states that information is exempt information as it is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. AWE recognises that there is an understandable public interest in transparency and accountability of spending and who commercial contracts are awarded to; release of this data would therefore provide greater openness and transparency about our commercial contract partnerships. However, there is also a vital public interest in protecting national security and AWE considers that the information requested meets this exemption, on the basis that releasing information relating to our commercial contracts could be pieced together by potential adversaries to cause harm to national security and also to individuals associated with the contracts

The nature of the work carried out by AWE is of critical national importance and of interest to potential adversaries. The Astraea programme will ensure that the UK can maintain a safe, secure and resilient warhead capability, making a vital contribution towards the renewal of the UK's nuclear deterrent. Releasing the contract details requested would make the suppliers and their employees vulnerable to potential attacks and intimidation from hostile actors seeking to disrupt the Astraea programme supply chain. This would in turn prejudice the UK's ability to maintain the UK's Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD).

The balance of public interest was found to lie in favour of withholding this information to safeguard the national security of the UK.

Section 26 Defence

Section 26(1), Defence, states that information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice a) the defence of the British Islands or of any colony, or b) the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

Releasing the requested information would provide openness and transparency around AWE's procurement processes, and in ensuring contracts are awarded fairly. However, it could lead to potential adversaries sabotaging suppliers involved with the Astraea programme and therefore disrupt the delivery of the programme and harming the companies and their employees. This would threaten the UK's ability to maintain CASD, which would in turn prejudice the defence of the British Isles and the capability and effectiveness of the Royal Navy. The balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding this information as its release would prejudice the defence of the British Isles and the capability, effectiveness and security of the Armed Forces. As the exemption is prejudice based, the level against release of the exempted information has been set at the higher 'would' rather than the lower 'would be likely to'.

Section 27 – International Relations

Section 27(1) provides an exemption for information, if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the UK and any other state. Releasing the information would demonstrate the collaboration between the UK and its international partners in support of the UK's nuclear deterrent. However, releasing the information could also damage the UK's reputation as a credible partner and therefore reduce confidence that the UK's allies have in our ability to appropriately protect information they share with us as part of our mutual defence. This would negatively impact future collaboration on nuclear matters and may also affect wider defence and government collaboration. Like section 26, the exemption at section 27 is prejudice based and the level against release of the exempted information is set at the higher

‘would’ prejudice, rather than the higher ‘would be likely to’ as its release would be likely to prejudice the UK’s relations with any other state.

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