



Date: 27/03/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/016474/V

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/016474/V

I write in connection with your request for information dated 27/02/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in connection with the prosecution of [REDACTED] and others — conspiracy to riot and conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm between 1 and 25 April 1990 at HMP Manchester (Strangeways). All convicted at Manchester Crown Court. My previous request (01/FOI/24/012227/Y) was refused under Section 12 as searching the full case archive would exceed the cost limit. I have significantly narrowed this request to target a single, identifiable document.

I am requesting:

- 1. The schedule of exhibits for the prosecution case [REDACTED] et al. This is the list of all physical exhibits produced for the committal proceedings and Crown Court trial, giving each item an exhibit reference number (typically the officer's initials and a sequential number). It would have been compiled by the officer in charge of the case or the investigating officer as part of standard prosecution procedure. As an index to the case rather than a record within the body of the case files, it is normally stored at the front of the case papers or as a standalone document, and should be locatable without a general search of the individual records.*
- 2. Whether the schedule of exhibits records any of the following: (a) an audio recording (tape cassette, reel-to-reel, or other format) of a church service at HMP Manchester chapel on 1 April 1990, recorded by or on behalf of [REDACTED] and/or a prison prayer group; (b) a transcript of that recording; (c) [REDACTED], also known as the Chaplain's Journal, seized as evidence following the disturbance.*

4. *If the schedule of exhibits cannot be located: where exhibit schedules for Crown Court prosecutions of this era (1990–1992) are typically stored within GMP's holdings, and whether any disposal or retention schedule has been applied to exhibit records from this case.*

Context

The recording is known to have existed. The National Archives holds a transcript of it (HO 370/204/1, released November 2024) with precise audio timings confirming a 37-minute physical tape. A three-minute extract was played at the Woolf Inquiry on 12 June 1990 and reported in The Guardian the following day ('Prayer group taped start of disturbance', [REDACTED])

The Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Crown Prosecution Service, and The National Archives have all confirmed they do not hold the audio. In June 2022, TNA advised (CAS-86342-Y9G3D5) that the recording was likely seized by GMP as evidence, and recommended directing enquiries here. No department has stated the recording was destroyed. GMP is the only remaining body that has not confirmed whether it appears in its evidence holdings.

Cost

This request targets a single index document, not the thousands of individual records in the case archive. I believe it falls well within the appropriate cost limit. If you consider otherwise, I would be grateful for advice under Section 16(1) on how to refine further. I am also aware that a Subject Access Request from one of the convicted individuals would not be subject to the Section 12 cost limit, and would welcome guidance on whether that would be a more practical route.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police to locate information relevant to your request.

GMP does not hold our relevant information in an easily retrievable format, if indeed it is held at all. Given that material relevant to this case is now in deepstore and the fact that this FOI request is very specific, it would take in excess of 18 hours to establish whether this material was in existence or not as there will no doubt be thousands of records and reports that would need to be reviewed in order to identify if this item exists or not. As such, it is anticipated it would take more than 18 hours to locate the requested information.

Therefore, as per section 12(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the cost of searching for the information is above the amount to which we are legally required to respond i.e. the cost of locating the information exceeds the 'appropriate level' as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice.

In this instance, Greater Manchester Police will be unable able to provide advice for you to reduce the request in order for the force to keep this within the fees limit in accordance with Section 16(1), the duty to provide advice and assistance, of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.