

Date: 17/07/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/017067/O

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/017067/O

I write in connection with your request for information dated 15/06/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

- 1. The number of Attenuated Energy Projectile launchers and ammunition rounds currently held in your force's armoury***
- 2. The number of officers in your force currently authorised to use these weapons***
- 3. Details of any public order events in the past 20 years in which authorisation has been given for these weapons to be deployed.***

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP.

However, I am not obliged to provide all the information requested as exemption applies. Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires GMP, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemptions which apply to this request are:

S24(1) National Security
S31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement
S38(1) Health and safety

Overall Harm

The requested information relates to GMP's capability to deploy Attenuated Energy Projectiles (AEPs), including the number of launchers held, the quantity of available ammunition and the number of authorised officers trained to deploy them. Whilst this information may appear limited when viewed in isolation, disclosure under FOI is effectively disclosure to the world at large.

The release of such information would provide insight into the force's operational capability, resilience, specialist resources and tactical capacity to respond to serious public disorder and other high risk incidents. Disclosure would enable those intent on criminality, disorder or activities that threaten public safety to better understand the availability and scale of specialist policing capabilities.

Furthermore, information disclosed under FOIA can be combined with information already in the public domain, including published operational guidance, previous disclosures, media reporting and other open-source material. This cumulative impact may enable a more detailed picture of policing capabilities and vulnerabilities to be developed via a mosaic effect.

Disclosure would therefore be likely to undermine operational effectiveness, prejudice law enforcement activities, compromise the ability of policing to respond effectively to serious incidents and increase risks to the safety of officers, staff and members of the public.

Public Interest Test

The Freedom of Information Act requires public authorities to consider whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemptions. Consideration has therefore been given to the arguments for and against disclosure.

Section 24(1) – Factors Favouring Disclosure

Disclosure would promote openness, transparency and accountability regarding specialist policing capabilities, support public understanding of the tactical options available to policing and the use of public funds for equipment, training and operational preparedness, and may enhance public confidence in the governance and oversight of public order policing capabilities.

Section 24(1) – Factors Against Disclosure

There is a strong public interest in safeguarding national security, and disclosure could provide individuals or groups with valuable insight into policing capabilities, capacity and resilience, potentially assisting those seeking to identify or exploit perceived vulnerabilities in policing responses.

Furthermore, information disclosed under FOIA is released into the public domain without restriction and cannot subsequently be controlled, and whilst the risks may not be apparent from the information in isolation, they may arise through its aggregation with other publicly available material, thereby increasing the importance of protecting information that supports policing's ability to respond effectively to serious incidents, disorder and threats to public safety.

Section 31(1) – Factors Favouring Disclosure

Disclosure would promote transparency and accountability regarding police resources and operational capability, assist public understanding of how policing prepares for and responds to serious public disorder, contribute to informed public debate concerning the use of less lethal tactics and equipment, and support the legitimate public interest in understanding how public authorities utilise specialist operational resources.

Section 31(1) – Factors Against Disclosure

Disclosure could prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders by revealing the extent of the force's specialist capability, resilience and operational capacity, it could assist individuals in assessing the availability, scale and effectiveness of specialist public order resources, enable those involved in criminality or serious disorder to inform their planning, tactics or decision-making, and undermine the effectiveness of operational tactics and policing's ability to respond to future incidents, whereas there is a significant public interest in ensuring police forces retain the ability to prevent crime, maintain public order and protect communities without disclosing operationally sensitive capability information.

Section 38(1) – Factors Favouring Disclosure

Disclosure would promote openness and accountability regarding specialist policing resources, improve public understanding of the equipment and training available to officers responsible for maintaining public safety, increase public confidence that appropriate governance and oversight arrangements are in place, and contribute to informed public debate concerning the use of less-lethal tactical options within policing.

Section 38(1) – Factors Against Disclosure

Disclosure may increase the risks faced by police officers, police staff and members of the public during future operational deployments, as knowledge of specialist capabilities, equipment holdings and authorised personnel levels could be exploited by individuals involved in criminality, violence or serious disorder, this may reduce the effectiveness of operational tactics intended to resolve incidents safely and effectively, increasing the potential for harm to officers and the public, whilst there remains a very strong public interest in protecting the safety and wellbeing of police personnel and the communities they serve and ensuring that operationally sensitive information is not disclosed where doing so would be likely to endanger the safety of any individual.

Balance Test

There is a recognised public interest in transparency, accountability and public understanding of policing activities, resources and tactics. Disclosure may assist public debate and contribute to confidence that policing resources are subject to appropriate oversight and governance.

However, these considerations must be balanced against the very significant public interest in protecting national security, maintaining effective law enforcement capabilities and safeguarding the health and safety of officers, staff and members of the public. The requested information relates directly to specialist operational capability and resilience. Disclosure would provide insight into policing resources and tactical capacity which could be exploited to undermine operational effectiveness or increase risks during future incidents.

Given the substantial weight that must be afforded to protecting national security, preserving the effectiveness of law enforcement and safeguarding public safety, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosure.