UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

14 July 2026

Dear [redacted]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00494

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request received on the 8 June, in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Please provide me under the FOI Act a copy of the review referenced in this April 2026 post about the ATI [*https://www.ukri.org/news/review-to-help-shape-next-phase-of-the-alan-turing-institute/*](https://www.ukri.org/news/review-to-help-shape-next-phase-of-the-alan-turing-institute/)

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request.

The full midterm review of the Alan Turing Institute (ATI) is considered to be exempt from disclosure under Sections 36(2)(b)(ii) and 36(2)(c) of the FOIA. This exemption is considered to apply where disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation and where disclosure would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

In addition, elements of this document are also considered to fall under the exemption at Section 43(2), prejudice to commercial interests. Details of all exemptions applied have been outlined below.

Section 36 – Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs

For Section 36, the opinion of UKRI's Chief Executive Officer, as UKRI's Qualified Person, was sought on engaging this exemption and the level of prejudice. As this is a qualified exemption, we were then required to consider the public interest both in favour of, and against, releasing the information.

<u>Outcome of consideration of Section 36 – Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs</u>

UKRI's Qualified Person's opinion was that Sections 36(2)(b)(ii) and 36(2)(c) of the FOIA would be engaged as disclosure would inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation and would also be likely to otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

EPSRC are conducting a mid-term review of the ATI to provide UKRI, and their sponsors Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), with clear, evidence-based assurance on governance, strategic alignment and future direction for the investment. The assessment exercise is conducted under a duty of confidence that applies to all parties, including the panel undertaking the expert review, where access to sensitive information that is not publicly available is required to inform recommendations, judgements and decisions within the full context.

The primary findings of the review have been published[1], confirming the review recommendations, and the next stages. This review is therefore still ongoing and maintaining free and frank exchange of views throughout the assessment process is essential to its integrity, effectiveness, and trust. Disclosure of the full review before the process concludes risks compromising outcomes and inhibiting processes, thereby likely prejudicing the effective conduct of public affairs and UKRI's ability to make robust funding decisions.

The ATI are currently formulating their response as part of their right to reply. Work on delivery plans and critical success factors, addressing the review recommendations is expected to continue into autumn 2026. EPSRC have planned to reconvene the panel towards the end of the year to review the additional input from the ATI and progress against the recommendations made. The review exercise is expected to conclude by the end of 2026, with further information relating to the outcome and future direction of the institute published early in 2027.

As Section 36 is a qualified exemption, a test was required to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure. The public interest test was conducted by a senior manager, who was not directly involved in the matters that were the subject of your request.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- There is a clear public interest in demonstrating that UKRI is effective in how it administers and allocates funding.

- There is a requirement for UKRI to be open, transparent in its processes and the funding decisions that it makes.

- The primary findings of the review have been published, confirming the review recommendations, and the next stages, and disclosure would provide context to the published information.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- UKRI's ability to protect the safe space for purposes of deliberation, stakeholder input and advice to support effective funding decisions is essential. The disclosure of the information and views provided would have a 'chilling effect', reducing the timeliness and candour of discussions and inhibiting the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation in both current and future processes.

- Without this protected safe space, the chilling effect would significantly increase the risk that funding decisions would be substantially less well-informed, therefore hindering the effective operation of this process, which is crucial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

- More broadly, disclosure of incomplete review outcomes and implementation would cause a chilling effect on candid deliberation, inhibiting officials and advisers from expressing frank or exploratory views. Participants may become more guarded or self-censoring if they expect ongoing reviews to be made public. This is particularly acute where options are still under development or involve sensitive considerations. Premature disclosure would reduce candour and undermine robust policy development, leading to poorer-quality decisions.

- A safe space to debate options fully and rigorously, free from immediate external pressure or misinterpretation is needed for policy development. With an ongoing issue, positions can be fluid and not settled, disclosure risks premature external scrutiny before conclusions are reached.

- The midterm review of the ATI is ongoing. While the first phase has concluded, the panel will reconvene to review additional input from the ATI on progress against recommendations. Full disclosure at this stage is likely to compromise or alter that process, significantly hampering UKRI's ability to conduct its public duties and effectively oversee the ATI.

- As this activity remains live, there is a real risk to prejudicing the policymaking process. Disclosure could lead to misinterpretation, premature conclusions and unintended influence on outcomes. It may also

[1] https://www.ukri.org/news/review-to-help-shape-next-phase-of-the-alan-turing-institute/

mislead stakeholders and the public, causing unnecessary concern, prejudicing the effective conduct of public affairs. Disclosure could also affect negotiations, partnerships, or stakeholder engagement.

- Panel members were asked to provide independent, candid advice based on access to sensitive organisational information. Submissions and evidence were provided in confidence to inform deliberations, and the process relies on maintaining a trusted environment that supports full and frank contributions.

Overall, UKRI considers that on this occasion the public interest is best served by maintaining the exemption, and therefore the relevant information has been withheld from disclosure.

Section 43 – Commercial interests

It has been determined that some of the requested information is subject to Section 43(2) of the FOIA. This exemption is used where disclosure would likely result in a person's (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entities) commercial interests being prejudiced.

This is a qualified exemption, and a test was carried out to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- Detailed disclosure of information included within the findings of the report could materially affect the ATI's relationships with partners and suppliers. This could undermine the ATI's ability to compete for contracts, collaborations or future funding.

- Interim review findings may highlight risks, uncertainties, or performance concerns that are not final or contextualised. Premature disclosure could damage reputation and stakeholder confidence in a way that is disproportionate or misleading.

- Disclosure of incomplete review material could adversely affect relationships with other funders and collaborators. If funders perceive heightened risk based on incomplete review material, they may withdraw or reduce support. This could occur even where final conclusions would have been more balanced.

- A reduction in funding precipitated by loss of support of other funders can lead to reduced financial stability and constrain the ATI's ability to deliver its activities, included those funded in the public interest. There is also a wider public interest in ensuring that funding decisions are made in an orderly and fair manner, without external distortion arising from the premature release of sensitive or incomplete information.

- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information relating to the organisations we engage and work closely with were disclosed. We believe it would damage the trust in UKRI and likely impact our ability to carry out our role and manage our current and future investments.

Taking the above arguments into consideration, we concluded the need for commercial confidentiality outweighs the public interest in disclosure at this time.

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints procedure[2].

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

[2] https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target