



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

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Reference FOI-1811
Date 17 April 2025

£22 BILLION 'BLACK HOLE'

Thank you for your FOI request to the National Audit Office (NAO) dated 25 March 2025. You asked for the following information:

"Have you ever investigated Labour's "£22bn black hole" claims?

If you have, what were your conclusions?

Was there actually a "black hole"?

If there was, how, much was it?

Why did it exist?

What did it comprise of?

Was it something that Labour should have known about before winning the General Election?"

We have considered your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), and I can confirm that we do not hold any of the information you requested.

It may be helpful to outline the role of the NAO. The NAO is the UK's independent public spending watchdog and has three main functions. The first is to certify the accounts of central government departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies, and to express an opinion on those accounts. The second is to carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure of public money. And the third is to maintain a Code of Audit Practice and issue guidance to external auditors of local public bodies.

You will note that our role covers public spending. It is the role of the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) "to provide independent and authoritative analysis of the UK's public finances". More about the OBR's work can be found here: [What we do - Office for Budget Responsibility \(obr.uk\)](https://obr.uk/what-we-do).

On economic growth, HM Treasury publishes a helpful summary of independent forecasts for the UK economy. The latest is available here: [Forecasts for the UK economy: March 2025 - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/economy/forecasts).

Within our role, the C&AG speaks regularly on spending issues, highlighting where efficiencies might be made. For example, he made a keynote speech to Parliament in January 2024 – available here: [Improving productivity could release tens of billions for government priorities - NAO insight](https://nao.org.uk/insight/improving-productivity-could-release-tens-of-billions-for-government-priorities).

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. I hope this explanation is helpful and you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: <https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>.

Yours sincerely,

FOI and Correspondence Officer