



Mr David Martin  
(by email only: request-17239-1c498f7b@whatdotheyknow.com)

6 November 2009

*Dear Mr Martin,*

**Freedom of Information request ref: E/165/2108/4 Request for an Internal review**

Thank you for your email of 28 September 2009 requesting an internal review on your Freedom of Information request regarding information that the Big Lottery Fund may hold on grants made to Thornbury FM under the Awards for All programme.

In your email of 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009, you requested information, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('FOIA'), regarding two grants awarded to Thornbury FM under the Awards for All programme.

You requested the application forms and end of grant reports for the following grants:

- £4,326 awarded on 06/10/2005; and
- £5,674 awarded on 23/01/2007.

Punim Anda, Freedom of Information Adviser, responded on 21 September 2009. In this response he provided some, but not all of the information requested. He informed you that that the files you were seeking are held offsite with a third party storage provider, and that we were unable to locate the application form and end of grant report in relation to the 2005 grant. He informed you of other records that we hold about the grant relating to assessment and grant monitoring which are held on our grant making database.

In your email of 28 September, you requested an internal review into the handling of your Freedom of Information request.

You asked for the following to be considered under the internal review.

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Big Lottery Fund  
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F 020 7211 1750  
☎ 0845 039 0204  
[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

UK Chair  
Sir Clive Booth

UK Chief Executive  
Peter Wanless CB

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We are committed to bringing real improvements to communities and to the lives of people most in need



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Direct line:  
020 7211 1760

Email:  
[peter.wanless@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:peter.wanless@biglotteryfund.org.uk)

*I cannot accept that you "have been unable to locate the file for the grant awarded in 2005". I find the suggestion to be preposterous. If you pay for an offsite storage facility, then you should have been able to locate a file for a grant given less than four years prior to by application.*

As the Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund it is my responsibility to ensure that our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act are met and therefore your request has been passed to me to review.

At the time that your original request was made, an extensive search was made through records held by the Big Lottery Fund and records held by our offsite storage provider, Iron Mountain. Internal records on the grant making database indicated that the file should have been archived off site, which is consistent with our archiving and retention policy. We would normally retain a file of this nature for 7 years.

Our offsite storage provider however had no record of the file. When you made your request for an internal review, these searches were intensified, which included a visit to an Iron Mountain storage facility by our Head of Corporate Governance to check the records that they hold.

The file that you requested was created in 2005. At that time, our organisational structure was different, with smaller regional offices assessing and monitoring grants within their locality. The Thornbury FM file from 2005 was created and assessed by the South West office. Following organisational restructuring in 2006, the grant assessment and monitoring activities from this office were transferred to a larger operational centre in Birmingham.

Files were archived but the records of the files transferred to archive by the South West team in 2005 were not transferred to the Birmingham Operations Centre. There are problems therefore of retrieval from files archived from the South West office in 2005, as we do not have a record of which files were sent to Iron Mountain. These records would have contained contents lists of the boxes, along with a copy of the barcode that the box was given by Iron Mountain when it was collected.

As part of our agreement with Iron Mountain, all of our boxes are opened on receipt, and all of our files are entered onto their system using the unique reference number that we assign to each application that we receive. The unique reference number for the file that you are seeking is A4E/3/010176093. Iron Mountain does not hold this number in their records. Iron Mountain also searched for similar reference numbers, but none of these originated from the South West office for that time period.

We are therefore in the position where we have no evidence that the file was actually sent to Iron Mountain, as the records of which files were

transferred were lost in the reorganisation and Iron Mountain have no record of having received this file from us.

We cannot therefore prove that the file was ever archived, and have to consider the strong possibility that the file was inadvertently destroyed during the reorganisation.

Accordingly, I therefore conclude that we do not hold the information that you are seeking. We do however hold some records about this grant on our grants making database as indicated, and would be happy to supply this information if it is of interest to you.

We appreciate that internal reviews should be completely swiftly, and that it is recommended that public bodies respond within 20 working days. The complexity of unravelling the moments of this record unfortunately took longer than we would have liked, but we have still been able to respond to you well within the 40 day maximum time limit suggested by the Information Commissioner's Office.

If you are not content with the outcome of this internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

*Yours sincerely,*



**PETER WANLESS**  
Chief Executive