



Information Policy & Compliance

bbc.co.uk/foi

Iain Lane

By email to: Iain Lane [request-21514-2153e358@whatdotheyknow.com]

26 November 2009

Dear Mr Lane

Freedom of information request – reference number **RFI20091458**

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) dated 21 October 2009.

You requested:

“I would like to request documents relating to the BBC's assessment of the viability of the use of open formats for streaming live and listen again radio. If it will assist you in processing your request, you can regard 'open formats' as referring to the flac, musepack and ogg codecs.

- *Whether any discussions have taken place regarding the adoption of open formats across all output.*
 - *What factors affect the continued decision to remain with Windows Media audio (WMA).*
 - *Whether the BBC has any agreement with Microsoft or any other vendor to continue to provide output in a particular format, or any agreement which would make it commercially unfeasible to change.*
- Please summarise the terms of any such agreement.”*

In response:

We can confirm that discussions have taken place about different audio codecs for internet streaming, and we attach a draft discussion document produced in 2006 which sets out our emerging thinking at the time. Please note that a final version of the document was not produced. There have been significant developments in online services and technology in the three years since that draft document was produced and we continue to carry out research around the subject. As an example, please see our postings on the ‘p2pnext’ project on the BBC Internet blog: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbcinternet/2008/02/p2p_next.html

Other, more informal, discussions have also taken place but these discussions have not been minuted and we therefore do not hold this information in recorded form.



Historically we provided all of our internet radio services in Real Media (giving ubiquity of support across almost all platforms at the time), and WMA (giving convenience to Windows users, in particular those without the administrative rights to perform installation of third party software). We have now almost completed migration to Adobe Flash delivery using the underlying AAC family of codecs. With Adobe Flash we provide access by users to our services on a wide range of platforms including PC, MAC, Linux, Sony Playstation 3, and Nintendo Wii with the convenience for users of not needing to install any additional software in the vast majority of cases. We have maintained the use of WMA to provide support for the majority of the devices that do not support Adobe Flash, in particular internet radios. The BBC takes an open-minded approach to new technology, and we will continue to adapt and reflect changes and developments in technology and consumer usage.

We can confirm that we have no agreements with any vendor that commit us to continue to provide our internet services in a particular format.

We hope you find the above information useful. You may also be interested to know that you can read our public research information here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/rd/pubs/index.shtml>

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely

L. Stiller
Legal and Business Affairs Manager
Future Media & Technology