



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Mr Wyllie
By email: request-28560-700ddc7d@whatdotheyknow.com

11 March 2010

Dear Mr Wyllie,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – RFI20100198

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act ('the Act') of 08 February 2010, seeking:

"Information about correspondence between the BBC Trust and the National Audit Office about the role and work of the National Audit Office in respect of the BBC since 1st January 2009."

Following our letter of 16 February 2010 seeking clarification about your request, you confirmed that you seek:

"correspondence between a member of the BBC Trust and an officer of the National Audit Office about the extent to which the NAO works with the BBC. This does not include correspondence about the results of any value-for-money assessments to which you refer, or indeed the results of, or information relating to, any ongoing audit the NAO is undertaking of the BBC for the Trust. This request only applies to correspondence issued since 1st March 2009."

In accordance with section 1(1) of the Act, I can confirm that the BBC holds two letters relevant to your request, which I have enclosed with this letter.

I thought it would be helpful to outline further background about the BBC's relationship with the NAO. It is an important component of the BBC's independence – as set out in its Royal Charter - that the BBC Trust rather than Parliament should take responsibility for oversight and scrutiny of the BBC.

As you may be aware, the Trust already enjoys a close relationship with the NAO through, for example, commissioning them to undertake reports like the recent one into the BBC's management of major estates projects. This helps the Trust actively and robustly hold the BBC to account on behalf of licence fee payers, and to ensure that the corporation achieves value for money in all its activities.



The Trust is always looking to strengthen its relationship with the NAO while staying within the bounds of the BBC's Royal Charter. These boundaries should be observed for the following reasons:

- The BBC Trust is responsible for ensuring it meets the various duties it has in its Royal Charter.
- Value for Money is an important duty: but not the only duty of the Trust (e.g. maintaining the editorial independence of the BBC is another important duty).
- The Trust has an explicit duty under the Charter & Agreement to ensure that 'the independence of the BBC is maintained'.
- The evidence gathered by the Government during the Charter renewal process showed that public opinion was against further restrictions on the independence of the BBC by Parliament or Government.
- The BBC is not a Government department or agency. A fundamental aspect of its editorial role is to cover the affairs of Government and Parliament. In order that this is carried out with due impartiality and is seen to be carried out with due impartiality it is essential that there is appropriate separation from Government and Parliament.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied that we have complied with the Act in responding to your request, 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,

Katie Paxie,
Advisor, Information Policy and Compliance