



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Timothy Rogers
By email to: request-30499-e7d130b3@whatdotheyknow.com

7 April 2010

Dear Mr Rogers

Freedom of Information request – reference number RF120100368

Thank you for your two requests to the BBC of 10 March 2010 seeking information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) as follows:

“1. I was hoping that you would be able to provide me data regarding the expenditure of BBC Radio 1 on its SMS service, used so that listeners can contact the station? Listeners are asked to send their message to 81199.

How much is spent on this service, and how do these costs break down? (e.g. administration, moderation, service charges)

2. I have noticed that at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mobile/web/> you provide an SMS service where you can text a keyword (e.g. NEWS or SPORT) to 81010 and receive a link to a BBC mobile website direct to your phone.

How much does it cost for the BBC to provide this service?”

The information you have requested is excluded from the Act because it is held for the purposes of ‘journalism, art or literature.’ Part VI of Schedule 1 to the Act provides that information held by the BBC and the other public service broadcasters is only covered by the Act if it is held for ‘purposes other than those of journalism, art or literature’¹. The BBC is not required by the Act to supply

¹ For more information about how the Act applies to the BBC please see the Guidance at the end of this letter. Please note that this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive legal interpretation of how the Act applies to the BBC.

information held for the purposes of creating the BBC's output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities.

However, on this occasion we're happy to provide the following information in response to your request: the charge made to listeners is between 10 and 12 pence per SMS message for texting 81199 and between 12 and 15 pence per SMS message for texting 81010, although the BBC itself does not make this charge – it is made by the sender's mobile service provider. The BBC does not receive a revenue share of the charge. Information on charges can be found in the cost messages provided during the show whenever there is an appeal or promotion.

We hope you find this information useful.

Appeal Rights

The BBC does not offer an internal review when the information requested is not covered by the Act. If you disagree with our decision you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. Contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF telephone 01625 545 700. <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Yours sincerely

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

Freedom of Information

From January 2005 the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. The Act also sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The term “public authority” is defined in the Act; it includes all public bodies and government departments in the UK. The BBC, Channel 4 and S4C are the only broadcasters covered by the Act.

Application to the BBC

The BBC has a long tradition of making information available and accessible. It seeks to be open and accountable and already provides the public with a great deal of information about its activities. BBC Information operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week handling telephone and written comments and queries, and the BBC’s website bbc.co.uk provides an extensive online information resource.

It is important to bear this in mind when considering the Freedom of Information Act and how it applies to the BBC. The Act does not apply to the BBC in the way it does to most public authorities in one significant respect. It recognises the different position of the BBC (as well as Channel 4 and S4C) by saying that it covers information “held for purposes other than those of journalism, art or literature”. This means the Act does not apply to information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output (TV, radio, online etc), or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities.

A great deal of information within this category is currently available from the BBC and will continue to be so. If this is the type of information you are looking for, you can check whether it is available on the BBC’s website bbc.co.uk or contact BBC Information.

The Act does apply to all of the other information we hold about the management and running of the BBC.

The BBC

The BBC's aim is to enrich people's lives with great programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain. It broadcasts radio and television programmes on analogue and digital services in the UK. It delivers interactive services across the web, television and mobile devices. The BBC's online service is Europe's most widely visited content site. Across the world, the BBC broadcasts radio programmes in 32 languages on the BBC World Service and the 24 hour television service, BBC World News.

The BBC's remit as a public service broadcaster is defined in the BBC Charter and Agreement. It is the responsibility of the BBC Trust to ensure that the organisation delivers against this remit by setting key objectives, approving strategy and policy, and monitoring and assessing performance. The Trustees also safeguard the BBC's independence and ensure the Corporation is accountable to its audiences and to Parliament. The Trust is supported by a network of advisory bodies across the UK.

Day-to-day operations are run by the Director-General and his senior management team, the Executive Board. All BBC output in the UK is funded by an annual Licence Fee. This is determined and regularly reviewed by Parliament. Each year, the BBC publishes an Annual Report & Accounts, and reports to Parliament on how it has delivered against its public service remit.