



Information Policy & Compliance  
[bbc.co.uk/foi](http://bbc.co.uk/foi)

Mr James Snowdome  
[Request-986-bb9bd5d7@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:Request-986-bb9bd5d7@whatdotheyknow.com)

1 August 2008

Dear Mr Snowdome

#### Freedom of information request – RFI20080716

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) dated 2 July 2008, for the following information:

*Can you please let me know, under the Freedom of Information Act, the total number of complaints received in 2007, and so far in 2008, relating to political bias. Could you also please split these in terms of complaints about left-wing bias and right-wing bias.*

The BBC will not be providing you with part of the information you requested as we believe it is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”).

The BBC and the other public service broadcasters are covered by the Act only in respect of information held for purposes “other than those of journalism, art or literature” (see Schedule 1, Part VI of the Act). This means that we are not obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output or which is closely associated with these creative activities.

The dominant purpose for which the BBC holds complaint information is for reviewing audience reaction to our programme content and informing decisions on how that content will be produced and broadcast in the future. The information you have requested is held to support the BBC’s creative output and is not covered by the Act and does not have to be disclosed.

#### BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee

While the BBC is not required under the Act to provide complaint information, the BBC considers that once complaints reach the BBC Trust’s Editorial Standards Committee (ESC), they fall within the scope of the Act as they are held for the primary purpose of enabling the BBC Trust to fulfil a regulatory function under the Charter, rather than to inform decisions around programme content.

ESC complaints are published on the Trust's website:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/appeals/editorial\\_appeal\\_findings.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/appeals/editorial_appeal_findings.html). Editorial Appeals Findings are published quarterly and provide a summary of decisions about complaints to the ESC.

In 2007 there was one appeal heard which related to a complaint of anti-Labour bias and two relating to a complaint of anti-Europe bias. Between January and July 2008 there have been three appeals heard relating to complaints of left-wing bias, two relating to right-wing bias (anti Labour/pro Tory) and one complaint about anti-independence in Scotland. These are available from the Trust website except two which are in progress and will be published in due course. None of the finalised complaints have been upheld.

#### *Appeal Rights*

Where the BBC has determined that the information requested falls outside the scope of the FOI Act, we do not offer an internal review. However, if you are not satisfied with this response you can appeal directly 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

A Chard  
Adviser, Information Policy & Compliance