

Freedom of Information Internal Review decision

Internal Reviewer	Lawyer – Legal Workplace and Information Rights
Reference	RFI20201080 – IR2020055 RFI20201103 – IR2020056
Date	6 October 2020

Requested information

On 27 July 2020, you requested that the BBC provide the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') under the name 'O Jones' (RFI20201080):

- "1. What involvement did the BBC have in "Event 201"? Please provide full details.*
- 2. Can you provide a list of all BBC staff who were involved in "Event 201"? Please provide full details.*
- 3. Did the BBC make any financial contribution to "Event 201"? Please provide full details.*
- 4. Did "Event 201" make any financial contribution to the BBC? Please provide full details."*

On 30 July 2020, you made another request under the FOI Act, under the name 'M Hannity' (RFI20201103):

"How much has George Soros (including any of his foundations) donated to the BBC in each of the last twenty years?

Please give the original figures and the figures adjusted for inflation."

The requests were made under the names 'O Jones' and 'M Hannity' respectively, and both were made via a What Do They Know email address linked to 'Sean Moran'.

On 25 August 2020, the BBC responded to both requests, advising that neither request was considered to be valid under section 8 of the FOI Act, as a valid name had not been provided. The BBC advised that for a request to be valid under the FOI Act, it must provide the following: name, address for correspondence, clearly describe the information, be legible and be in writing.

On 14 September 2020, you requested an internal review in respect of these decisions. In support of both requests for an internal review, you said that *"Please provide the requested information as there is no good reason to withhold it"*.

The issues for review

This review will consider whether the BBC correctly decided that your requests for information in RFI20201080 and RFI20201103 were not valid requests under section 8 of the FOI Act.

Decision

I am satisfied that the BBC correctly decided that your requests for information in RFI20201080 and RFI20201103 were not valid requests under section 8 of the FOI Act.

As the original decision maker explained in the responses to each of the requests, for a request to be valid under the FOI Act, it must provide the following: name, address for correspondence, clearly describe the information, be legible and be in writing.

Your requests have been made under two different names, and both requests are linked to a What Do They Know email address under another name altogether. As the FOI Code of Practice explains, “*Section 8(1)(b) requires that a request for information must state the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence. Applicants must provide their real name and not use a pseudonym.*”¹

This requirement has not been met for RFI20201080 and RFI2020103.

I am therefore satisfied that the BBC correctly decided that your requests for information in RFI20201080 and RFI2020103 were not valid requests under section 8 of the FOI Act. The BBC will be able to consider any new request if it meets the validity requirements under section 8 of the FOI Act.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your 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 <https://ico.org.uk/>

¹ See paragraph [1.14] of the FOI Code of Practice, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744071/CoP_FOI_Code_of_Practice_-_Minor_Amendments_20180926_.pdf