



Information Rights

bbc.co.uk/foi bbc.co.uk/privacy

Mr A Willmore

request-800225-628bf921@whatdotheyknow.com

12 November 2021

Dear Mr Willmore

Request for Information – RFI2021557

Thank you for your request to the BBC of 16th October 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') seeking the following information:

"As part of RFI20211450 you were asked: What electronic devices are they issued with? Where held please include model numbers of any devices or equipment.

You responded with

"TV Licensing visiting officers are engaged by Capita, a company contracted by the BBC to administer the television licensing system. I can confirm that visiting officers are not currently issued with any audio/visual equipment in connection with their enforcement duties. Visiting officers are issued with work mobile telephones which are used solely for communication purposes. ". And that was all you wrote, implying that the ONLY electronic device issued was a mobile phone for communication purposes ONLY.

And yet the BBC's own web site <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/6927591.stm> clearly shows a TVL investigator holding an electronic device, which you did not mention. Use of this green hand-held device is also shown at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/legal-loop-hole-being-used-by-hundreds-to-keep-tv-licensing-from-their-door-34629246.html>, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/408356/I-won-t-pay-for-a-licence-not-when-I-stole-the-TV-set>, <https://www.corkbeo.ie/culture/whats-on-news/tv-license-inspectors-being-hired-16363735>, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/jan/10/tv-licence-enforcement-proof-threats> and <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/23100-people-caught-in-west-midlands-147265>

While it is not impossible that all of the photos shown in the links above were made purely for publicity purposes as part of TVL's scaremongering, they all show a chap holding some kind of green electronic device, with no indication as to its purpose.

Can I ask then:

1) Why all of those photos show the green hand-held device?

- 2) What is the purpose of this device? "None at all" or "Scaremongering" are acceptable answers.
- 3) Why did you say that no electronic devices, other than a phone, were issued when your own publicity contradicts this?
- 4) Who makes the green device?

In addition, this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaTiAPpDqAQ> shows a TVL representative using a stylus record something during his visit. There are many other YouTube videos showing what appears to be an identical device (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2iT-ByCUJo>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Txz8eUHdQLI> [worth a watching if only for the "smack in the face" comment], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA5LG4qbAnI>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48BNE4LLSpM>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddk3QpH_qE8 [at 06:27 and 08:10]). This device with an aerial and a large screen seems to be common amongst a lot of TVL visits. Is this the "work mobile phone" to which you refer? If so, what make and model is it? And what "communication" is the stylus being used for in the first video? Question 3 above may apply again.

Please note that "TV Licensing" is a trade mark used by companies contracted by the BBC to administer the collection of television licence fees and enforcement of the television licensing system. The majority of the administration of TV Licensing is contracted to Capita Business Services Limited ('Capita'). Over-the-counter services are provided by PayPoint plc ('PayPoint') in the UK, and by the Post Office in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands. Target Group Limited ('Target') is the supplier for the Simple Payment Plan. Marketing and printing services are contracted to RAPP Limited (formerly Proximity London Limited). Media services are contracted to Havas Media Limited. The BBC is a public authority in respect of its television licensing functions and retains overall responsibility.

Please be advised that the Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities; and that we are not required to create new information to respond to a request, or give a judgement or opinion that is not already recorded. We do not consider that all of parts of your request fall under the terms of the Act because they are queries as opposed to requests for recorded information which the BBC holds. However, as these queries relate to a previous request under the Act (RFI20211450), we are happy to respond to these questions voluntarily – outside the scope of the Act - to clarify and/or elaborate on the BBC's response to that request.

Our response to RFI20211450

The request which you have cited was interpreted to mean whether TV Licensing visiting officers use any electronic devices audio/visual recording capabilities. Accordingly, our response confirmed that the only electronic devices with this capability used by our officers are mobile phones but that these are only used for communication purposes.

I can tell you that visiting officers are currently issued with handheld electronic devices, which are used to gather information relating to the outcome of a visit to a specific address: the devices do not have audio/visual recording functionality and were therefore not referenced in the response to RFI20211450. I can confirm that these are the devices captured in the youtube video links in the last paragraph of your request.

As explained in our response to RFI20211450, TV Licensing visiting officers are engaged by Capita and whilst Capita holds information about these devices, it is not held on the BBC's behalf. For your information, the Act gives rights of public access to information held by public authorities (as defined in section 3 of the Act). Section 3(2)(a) of the Act says that, for the purposes of the Act, information is held by a public authority if it is held by the public authority themselves or if it is held by another person on behalf of the authority. Capita is not a public authority as defined by the Act therefore information it holds but which is not held on behalf of the BBC is not subject to the Act.

Green handheld detectors

The photographs featured on the web-linked articles you have provided are historical. TV Licensing detection technology has progressed over the years and the pictured green hand held detection devices are no longer in use.

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. A request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of receiving the BBC's response to your original request.

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, Tel: 0303 123 1113 or see <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Rupinder Panesar

Freedom of Information Advisor, TV Licensing Management Team

