

Freedom of Information
Internal Review decision

Internal Reviewer	Lawyer – BBC Workplace and Information Rights
Reference	RFI20171455/ IR2017088
Date	15 January 2018

Requested information

On 3 October 2017, Mr Connor Gurney via what do they know (“**the applicant**”) made a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**the FOIA**”) for the following information:

“Please provide me with copies of the following Future Media Guidelines:

- * .htaccess Standards*
- * Application Tracking*
- * Clickthrough (Go-) Tracking Standards*
- * (Implementing Page Layout Standards) Using Barley*
- * RSS Guidelines*
- * (Server-Side) Application Development Standards*
- * Using Barlesque to Develop bbc.co.uk Sites*
- * XSSI Standards”*

On 27 October 2017 the BBC responded with the following:

We have now processed your request and I can confirm that, under section 1(1) of the Act, the BBC does not hold the information you have requested.

However, as you may be aware, there is more information in relation to Future Media on our website and the following link may be of interest to you:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/>

On 20 December 2017 you requested an internal review of the BBC’s decision:

I am writing to request an internal review of British Broadcasting Corporation's handling of my FOI request 'Future Media Standards'.

In response to my request, you state that you hold no copies of the standards that I have requested. However, I have since found a copy of the RSS Guidelines on [bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) at the following URL:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/technical/previous_versions/rss_v1.shtml. As such, your response is incorrect and I would ask that you review my request at once.

A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/future_media_standards

Issue for review

This review considers whether the BBC's response that it did not hold the requested information was consistent with its obligations under section 1(1) of the FOIA.

The law and decision

Section 1(1) provides that '*any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –*

- (a) To be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and*
- (b) If that is the case, to have that information communicated to him'.*

The BBC apologises for not providing the applicant with the RSS Guidelines which we note you have located on our publicly available website.

It is not, however, correct to say that the BBC did not provide any information that fell within the scope of the request as the response highlighted a further page on our publicly available website that details all standards and guidelines for developing and delivering products and services for BBC online:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/>

In reviewing the remainder of the BBC's response, I liaised with the relevant division of the BBC, Digital Distribution, who confirmed that they did not hold the information. That team conducted searches of their records to determine this.

In addition, I contacted the BBC Archives team to determine whether the information has, previously, been held by a division of the BBC. This team was also unable to locate any further information held by the BBC that fell within the scope of your request. These two steps amount to a reasonable and exhaustive search of relevant BBC records as required by ICO Guidance when the ICO is determining whether it is reasonable to conclude whether a public authority holds requested information. Such determinations will consider the 'the scope, quality, thoroughness and results of the

searches'.¹ We conclude that this review has instigated a significant search of relevant records to conclude that the BBC does not hold the requested information.

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 www.ico.gov.uk

¹ https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1169/determining_whether_information_is_held_foi_eir.pdf paragraph 60.