



Freedom of Information Internal Review Decision

Internal Reviewer: Josephine Warren, Head of Legal and Business Affairs,
BBC World News Limited

Reference: RFI2008040

Date: 21st January 2009

Original Request:

The requestor asked the BBC for a list of all the geographic phone numbers corresponding to the four non-geographic 0844 and 0845 phone numbers sent to the requestor from TV licensing. This list was refused by the BBC on the grounds that the information was exempt under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act as it would prejudice the commercial interests of the BBC and of RMS and Capita who provide phone call services to the BBC for TV Licensing. This was because use of the geographic numbers might:

- A. lead to a compromise of the telephone switch, in particular if a lobby group choose to attack the switch by calling directly;
- B. lead to Capita and RMS being unable to reliably report on traffic numbers which are very important for their performance of their contract with the BBC;
- C. cause Capita and RMS to be unable to use pre recorded messages for people calling on the geographic numbers, making it difficult to manage the services;
- D. overall lead to a less efficient telephone customer service for the Television Licensing.

Request for Review:

The requestor has asked the BBC to review this decision on varying grounds including the following:

- People outside the UK cannot call 0844 numbers;
- 0844 numbers are often more expensive than geographic numbers;
- the BBC is making money from these calls and there is considerable public concern about organisations making money off such numbers.



Review Decision:

The BBC TV Licensing Management Team has informed me that, following discussions with Capita and RMS, they have discovered that all of the numbers requested except the minicom number (0844 8006778) have call plans attached to them. Call plans have the following functionalities:

- Time of day routing – so calls can be diverted to different numbers dependent on the time the call is made;
- Queue managers – to answer calls automatically by the queue manager system and hold them in the networks when there are not enough resources to handle the calls;
- Call forwarding – providing for call diversion to another number when lines are busy;
- Interactive Voice Responses – providing for calls to be answered by an auto attendant.

In summary therefore these numbers do not have fixed equivalent geographical numbers because the calls can be routed differently dependent on business needs and therefore this information requested is not in the possession of the BBC.

Therefore I have only to consider the strength of the BBC's arguments as to the application of section 43(2) of the Act in relation to the minicom number. These arguments were raised in respect of the numbers as a whole, not in relation to this particular number and I do not believe that disclosing the geographic equivalent of the minicom number is likely to cause commercial prejudice.

My decision therefore is that the geographic equivalent of the minicom number should be disclosed.

Therefore I can confirm that the geographic number for 0844 8006778 is 0117 302 1910.