



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Mr Mike Post

Sent by email to: request-61319-bbd7150c@whatdotheyknow.com

10th February 2011

Dear Mr Post

Freedom of Information request – RF120110144

Thank you for your request to the BBC of 5th February 2011, seeking the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

“I am a rugby fan and a huge supporter of BBC coverage of the Six Nations rugby competition. I hate Murdoch's malign influence. I was delighted today to listen to Eddie Butler commentating on the Italy vs Ireland match less than 24 hours after I had listened to his excellent commentary on the match in which England defeated Wales in Cardiff. I presume that Mr Butler flew from the UK to Rome to enable him to commentate on both events. Can you please confirm whether or not carbon offsets were purchased when his airline tickets were purchased?”

The unique reference number for your request is RF120110144, and I now respond as follows;

The information you have requested is excluded from the Act because it is held for the purposes of ‘journalism, art or literature.’ The BBC is therefore not obliged to provide this information to you and will not be doing so on this occasion. Part VI of Schedule 1 to the Act provides that information held by the BBC and the other public service broadcasters is only covered by the Act if it is held for ‘purposes *other* than those of journalism, art or literature’. The BBC is not required to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities.¹

¹ For more information about how the Act applies to the BBC please see the enclosure which follows this letter. Please note that this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive legal interpretation of how the Act applies to the BBC.



However, on this occasion we can inform you that Mr Butler did indeed fly from the UK to Rome to enable him to commentate on the Wales v England and Italy v Ireland rugby matches last weekend. I can also confirm that carbon offsets were not purchased by the BBC when his airline tickets were purchased.

We make thousands of radio and television programmes every year and recognise that this does have an impact on the environment. We are working to reduce these impacts and have a number of environment targets, as well as a recently launched sustainability strategy “The Difference” which sets the framework for embedding sustainability across our business.

Specifically with regard to travel, we aim to strike the balance of reducing emissions from travel without compromising our ability to deliver the high quality coverage of events that our audience expects from the BBC. We have set a target to reduce emissions from travel by 20% over a five year period, which we aim to achieve by a variety of means - for example by challenging the need to travel, encouraging lower carbon modes of travel, or use of local crews, sharing vehicles etc.

At present, we do not buy carbon offsets – in considering such questions, the BBC must balance our environmental policies against our responsibility to our licence fee payers, and we do not believe buying offsets represents good use of licence fee income.

Appeal Rights

The BBC does not offer an internal review when the information requested is not covered by the Act. If you disagree with our decision you can appeal to the Information Commissioner, whose contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 700.

Website: <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Please note that should the Information Commissioner's Office decide that the Act does cover this information, exemptions under the Act might then apply.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Land
Chief Adviser & Business Manager, BBC Sport

Freedom of Information

From January 2005 the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. The Act also sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The term “public authority” is defined in the Act; it includes all public bodies and government departments in the UK. The BBC, Channel 4 and S4C are the only broadcasters covered by the Act.

Application to the BBC

The BBC has a long tradition of making information available and accessible. It seeks to be open and accountable and already provides the public with a great deal of information about its activities. BBC Information operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week handling telephone and written comments and queries, and the BBC’s website bbc.co.uk provides an extensive online information resource. It is important to bear this in mind when considering the Freedom of Information Act and how it applies to the BBC. The Act does not apply to the BBC in the way it does to most public authorities in one significant respect. It recognises the different position of the BBC (as well as Channel 4 and S4C) by saying that it covers information “held for purposes other than those of journalism, art or literature”. This means the Act does not apply to information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output (TV, radio, online etc), or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities.

A great deal of information within this category is currently available from the BBC and will continue to be so. If this is the type of information you are looking for, you can check whether it is available on the BBC’s website bbc.co.uk or contact BBC Information.

The Act does apply to all of the other information we hold about the management and running of the BBC.

The BBC

The BBC's aim is to enrich people's lives with great programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain. It broadcasts radio and television programmes on analogue and digital services in the UK. It delivers interactive services across the web, television and mobile devices. The BBC's online service is Europe's most widely visited content site. Across the world, the BBC broadcasts radio programmes in 32 languages on the BBC World Service and the 24 hour television service, BBC World News.

The BBC's remit as a public service broadcaster is defined in the BBC Charter and Agreement. It is the responsibility of the BBC Trust (the sovereign body within the BBC) to ensure that the organisation delivers against this remit by setting key objectives, approving strategy and policy, and monitoring and assessing performance. The Trustees also safeguard the BBC's independence and ensure the Corporation is accountable to its audiences and to Parliament.

Day-to-day operations are run by the Director-General and his senior management team, the Executive Board. All BBC output in the UK is funded by an annual Licence Fee. This is determined and

regularly reviewed by Parliament. Each year, the BBC publishes an Annual Report & Accounts, and reports to Parliament on how it has delivered against its public service remit.