



Information Policy and Compliance  
[bbc.co.uk/foi](http://bbc.co.uk/foi)

27 April 2007

Dear Mr

**Freedom of information request – RFI2007000374**

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) dated 23 February 2007, seeking further information about TV Licensing. Your request was originally sent to the Chairman of the Trust at the BBC and was hence somewhat delayed in reaching us. Please therefore accept our sincere apologies for the delay in providing you with a response.

Your request referred to a number of issues and I have answered your questions below.

- 1 a. The number of persons Prosecuted*
- 1 b. The number of persons found guilty  
throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, England; Wales; Scotland; Ireland. Isle of Man;  
Channel Islands.*

The BBC received a Freedom of Information request from you on 5 April 2005 for similar information, but for 1978/9 – 2006/7. This information was provided to you in a letter dated 4 May 2005 from Kate Boyle, Policy Advisor, BBC TV Licensing Management Team (reference number RFI2005000423). It was provided again by Rachel Hallett, Information Coordinator, in a letter dated 9 May 2006 in response to another request received from you on 1 April 2006 (reference number RFI2006000251).

Both responses stated that official statistics are retained by the Home Office and published in their annual report *Criminal Statistics England and Wales*. Please note the latest versions of the report (up to 2005) can be found on the Home Office website at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

However, as you know TV Licensing does compile data in relation to numbers of television licence offences. Further to the information provided to you on 4 May 2005 (which provided figures up to 2004/05), details of recorded convictions for 2005/06 split by nation are as follows:

Year	England/Wales	Scotland	N Ireland	Isle of Man	Channel Islands
05/06	140,490	13,617*	3,248	70	27

\* This is the number of cases which were laid before the court in Scotland. As stated in our previous responses to you, prosecutions in Scotland are carried out by the Procurator Fiscal and not TV Licensing, hence we are not aware of the number of actual convictions. The Scottish Executive may have these figures.

In practice, TV Licensing has a 99.9% conviction rate for cases of TV licence evasion which are prosecuted in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (and similar for the Isle of Man). The figures for persons prosecuted and persons found guilty are therefore broadly the same.

2. *The total FULL costs of the operations involved by:-*

a. *The Field-Force officers*

The answer to your question is contained in the attached document *TV Licensing Costs of Collection* which you will see contains general information on collection costs, including call centres, field force, detection and over the counter services.

b. *The Prosecution processes*

Enforcement activity is carried out by Capita on the BBC's behalf. Legal expenses in relation to enforcement of the licence fee (including the cost of the prosecution processes and the Courts costs) are not held by us and are not held by Capita on our behalf (as per section 3(2) of the FOI Act) and is thus outside the scope of the FOI Act.

c. *The Courts costs*

Please refer to the answer I gave for your question 2b.

d. *The total FULL amounts levied in fines and costs.*

The total full amount levied by the courts in fines for 2005-06 was £17,616,689. The total full amount levied by the courts in costs over the same period was £6,467,333.

e. *The FULL cost of \*running\* Bristol, and ALL satellites in UK. The full FACTUAL evidence. The statistics relevant. The Annual Report and Accounts of the Bristol organisation and throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, England; Wales; Scotland; Ireland; Isle of Man; Channel Islands.*

As you may know, "TV Licensing" is a trading name 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 Ltd, who are based in Bristol. The administration of our cash related payment schemes is contracted to Revenues Management Services Ltd (RMS). PayPoint Network Ltd and PayPoint Collections Ltd are contracted to provide over-the-counter services. The marketing and public relations activities are contracted to the AMV Consortium. The consortium is made up of the following four companies: Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO Ltd, Fishburn Hedges Boys Williams Limited, PHD Media Limited and Proximity London Ltd. The BBC is a public authority in respect of its television licensing functions and retains overall responsibility.

As a broad answer to your question, the latest annual reports for some of the companies who work with the BBC can be found at the following URLs or by contacting them at their addresses.

- Capita: <http://www.capita.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9F345050-D852-45D9-80EC-A7C8B43ABF86/0/CapitaAR2006.pdf>.
- Paypoint: <http://www.paypoint.co.uk/uploads/Annual%20Report%20-%20Year%20ended%2031%20March%202005.pdf>

However, in relation to further details regarding the costs of the companies who work with the BBC, I confirm that the BBC does hold the information you requested. However, I am withholding this information under s43(2) of the Act. Section 43(2) states that information will be exempt under the Act if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

The disclosure of this information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the BBC since the BBC has entered into contracts with its partner companies in respect of administering the collection of television licence fees and enforcing the television licensing system. Revealing the total costs would reveal our partners' costs and as these relationships are in themselves commercial, releasing the figures we hold would prejudice their commercial interests and thus, in turn, the BBC's commercial interests.

I am satisfied in terms of section 2(2) of the Act that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. I have considered the public interest test in the section on why information has been withheld below.

3. *The latest complete plan of the BBC, and the Bristol organisation, throughout the whole of the United Kingdom (etc, etc).*

I am unsure what you are specifically referring to when you mention a 'complete plan'. If you would contact us at the address below with a clarification, I will be happy to address this point.

4. *The total Full value of the cheque forwarded by the Auditor of the Bristol organisation - - - to the BBC in London, by the BBC in London - - - to the Secretary of State, Media, by the Secretary of State, Media - - - to the BBC in London and, —, of course, — the Treasury involvement.*

I assume by this question you are referring to the total financial sum collected by TV Licensing through its activities. This figure is included in the attached document *TV Licensing Costs of Collection* under the heading 'licence fee revenue'.

5. *The telephone/Fax/Email/Website of the BBC TV Licensing Department. The ditto/ditto/ditto/ditto of BBC Freedom of Information Department.*

Contact details for the BBC TV Licensing Department are as follows:

BBC TV Licensing Management Team  
MC5 A4, Media Centre,  
Media Village,  
201 Wood Lane,  
London W12 7TQ

Fax: 020 8008 2488

Web: <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/index.jsp>

You can send an email to the TV Licensing department via a webform found on the above website. The URL is [https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/gethelp/cu\\_step1.jsp?recipient=contact](https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/gethelp/cu_step1.jsp?recipient=contact)

Contact details for the BBC Information and Compliance Unit (the department responsible for answering requests under the Freedom of Information Act) are:

BBC Freedom of Information  
MC3 D1, Media Centre  
Media Village  
201 Wood Lane  
London W12 7TQ

Fax: 020 8008 2398

Email: [foi@bbc.co.uk](mailto:foi@bbc.co.uk)

Web: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/foi/index.shtml>

### **Why information has been withheld**

I am required under s 2(2) of the Act to assess whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The following factors are in favour of disclosure:

1. ensuring that public funds are being appropriately applied, that is:

- a. ensuring that the TV Licensing system is being efficiently run; and
- b. ensuring that value for money is being obtained.

I consider that the above public interest factors in favour of disclosure are served by the following:

1. The BBC is required to satisfy the National Audit Office ('NAO') as to the value for money of the collection and enforcement arrangements and is accountable for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of such arrangements. NAO's most recent audit is published at [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao\\_reports/06-07/0607183.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/06-07/0607183.pdf).
2. The BBC has reduced the cost of collection from 6.2% of the total licence fee collected in 1991/2, when it took over from the Home Office, to 5% for the financial year 05/06. This demonstrates that the TV Licensing system is being efficiently run. This and further related information is available in the BBC's annual report (see [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)), the TV Licensing Annual Review and the *About TV Licensing* document (see <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/aboutus/index.jsp>). A key part of this success has been the use of detection as a significant deterrent element.

There is hence a greater public interest in ensuring the effective collection of the licence fee than in disclosing the information you have sought. I am therefore satisfied, in terms of section 2 of the Act, that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest (outlined above) in disclosing the information.

### **Appeal rights**

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address provided, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. 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, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**Natalie Saunderson**  
**Policy Adviser**  
**BBC TV Licensing Management Team**