

**Investigation into  
“A Year with the Queen”**

**STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

## Introduction

The terms of reference for this Inquiry, set out by the Director General, are:

To seek to establish a full understanding of the events surrounding the publication by the BBC at a press launch for the BBC One Autumn season of misleading footage relating to Her Majesty the Queen.

In order to do so, we would expect the inquiry to review, consider, and where appropriate to make recommendations around the following:

1. BBC editorial standards, compliance, systems and enforcement in relation to independent TV suppliers to the BBC
2. BBC systems and controls in relation to publicity materials
3. BBC commissioning, editorial supervision and control of *A Year with the Queen*
4. Events surrounding the preparation of the promotional material published, to include:
  - The role of the BBC and its staff
  - The role of RDF and its staff
  - The role of Red Bee and its staff
  - The exposure of the material in advance of its publication by the BBC at the BBC One Season Launch
5. Events following the publication of the promotional material, to include:
  - The relationship between different parts of the BBC, information flows and decision-making
  - The publication of an apology by the BBC
  - The management of promotional material subsequent to the press launch showing
6. The relationship with the Palace throughout

## **Process.**

I have interviewed relevant individuals from the BBC, Red Bee and RDF. All interviews were conducted by me supported by Andrew Bell of the BBC Editorial Complaints Unit. A note of each interview was taken and shown to interviewees for their comments or additions. I also had informal talks with several independent production companies about the general practice of commissioning and editorial oversight by different broadcasters. We had access to preliminary reports carried out in the BBC and RDF, to e-mail trails, relevant contracts, guidelines and job descriptions.

This report considers two chief questions:

How did footage of Her Majesty the Queen which appeared to show her walking out of a formal photography sitting come to be shown at a BBC1 press launch?

Why did the BBC wait so long to correct the story and issue an apology?

## **Findings**

It is worth emphasising that I do not believe that anyone consciously set out to defame or misrepresent the Queen in the tape which was prepared for the BBC One season launch. Nor was there ever a possibility that the misleading sequence could have been included in the finished documentary to be broadcast by the BBC.

That said, the incident reveals misjudgements, poor practice and ineffective systems as well, of course, as the usual helping of bad luck that often accompanies such sorry affairs.

## **The Launch**

\*A fuse was inexcusably lit when RDF edited footage of the Queen in a cavalier fashion for a promotional tape which the company intended showing to co-investors at a sales convention in Cannes earlier in the year. The edit made it appear that the Queen walked out of photo shoot, when she did not.

\*RDF sent this tape with other footage for use in the BBC launch tape without checking it.

\*Red Bee Media which compiled the launch tape for the BBC did not show their work to RDF in spite of being asked several times.

\*The BBC signing off procedures for the launch tape did not include it being checked by anyone working on the series.

\*The idea that the Queen had “stormed off” first emerged in an e-mail from the BBC executive producer reporting a briefing he received from RDF. This note went to the channel controller and the RDF executive producer; the RDF executive producer never challenged it.

\*The RDF-supplied material in the launch tape appeared to corroborate this error and the channel controller pointed it up at the event.

\*No-one in the channel team spotted the news potential of what the tape appeared to show.

\*The BBC devolved too much of the relationship with Buckingham Palace to the independent producer.

### **The Aftermath**

\* Those handling the issue were slow to appreciate the magnitude and import of the mistake and consequent press story and failed to involve enough people swiftly enough.

\*The decision, taken with the Buckingham Palace press office, to delay a correcting statement until the following morning was a mistake by the BBC.

\* RDF’s realisation that their mis-edited footage was the cause of the problem was either not passed clearly enough or not passed at all to the BBC, which became aware of it from its own inquiries the following afternoon.

\* Communications within and between BBC Vision and BBC MC&A failed as wrong assumptions were made about what was known by whom.

\* Throughout the morning on the day after the launch, BBC News was running with a story that two or three senior BBC staff had known since

the previous evening was wrong. It took too long to for anyone to address this and to ask, “How did this happen in the first place?”

## **Narrative**

### **The BBC One Press Launch**

**A Year with the Queen** is a five part documentary series which, according to the BBC press handout, has:

*...remarkable behind the scenes access, this momentous series reveals how the Monarchy impacts on so many aspects of British Life. Never before have television cameras been allowed to observe so comprehensively the working life of Her Majesty The Queen and other members of the Royal Family...*

It is produced by RDF Media in conjunction with History Television International, a partnership which produced the three part series **The Queen’s Castle** about Windsor shown in 2005. It was the success of this earlier series, the access it achieved and the relationship built up with the Royal Household during the making of it that enabled **A Year with the Queen** to be commissioned by the BBC in March 2006.

The BBC’s executive producer on **A Year With The Queen** is highly experienced and had been RDF’s executive producer on **The Queen’s Castle**. He thus had a good knowledge of the production team and the issues involved in filming the Royal Household.

#### **1. “It made more sense.”**

RDF prepared a tape of extracts from **A Year with the Queen** to take to MIP, the television marketing convention held in Cannes in April 2007. RDF says that the purpose of this eleven-minute tape was to provide three co-investor companies with a taste of the material being gathered and to show it to a fourth, potential, investor. Although RDF says that only these four broadcasters ever saw this tape it was the material they chose to take to the main television market.

This tape was compiled in the absence of the director/cameraman. The assembly was shown to RDF’s Chief Creative Officer who made several changes, one of which was to alter the order of the four shots from the

sequence showing Annie Leibovitz photographing the Queen. The Chief Creative Officer knew that in doing this, the sequence shown in the rushes tape was being changed.

A shot of the Queen striding towards the photo-shoot in which she is heard to say, obviously disgruntled, "*I'm not changing anything.... I've had enough...*" was moved from the beginning to the end of the sequence. (The Queen was uncharacteristically late after having to put on the Garter robes and was being briefed that there might have to be "changes later"). This shot was now placed after the Queen responding to the photographer's request that she remove the crown, to look "less dressy", by saying, "Less dressy! What do you think this is?" The clear impression created is that the Queen had walked out. She did not. In fact the rushes show that after her irritated response she paused, then chuckled and carried on with the photo shoot.

RDF said that it was not clear in the original sequence why the Queen was in a bad mood. "It made more sense" this way, they said. Representatives of the company later conceded that this had been an error of judgement.

This was a cavalier way of treating any footage, let alone of the head of state going about her duties. No thought was given to what the re-cut sequence now appeared to show.

RDF initially told the BBC it had been done to make the sequence more exciting for potential clients. Subsequently, they withdrew this explanation and argued that the tape was just a taster, and that such compilations are often put together out of chronological order.

The fact remains, however, that shots within a single sequence may have an important chronology. While different sequences or single shots of scenes may be placed kaleidoscopically in such a trail, altering or reversing the order of shots within a sequence may, and in this case most assuredly did, appear to depict something which did not happen.

## **2. “It’s the Queen!”**

Various BBC executives told us that the significance and high profile of this series was recognised but there is no evidence that this led to it being managed differently from any other observational documentary series.

The BBC has a Managed Programmes Risk List that is monitored at senior editorial meetings in the BBC. This list is mainly to track programmes that have identifiable editorial dangers such as undercover filming, possible defamation or issues of taste. However, it is also intended to cover reputational risk to the BBC. Had this series been on the list it is possible extra questions might have been asked about its progress and editorial oversight.

No-one at any level in the Vision or Marketing, Communications and Audiences divisions seemed to spot that a series with unprecedented access to the Royal Household had the potential to explode in the BBC’s face. Several BBC staff interviewed referred to this in retrospect as if it were obvious but this awareness, if it existed, seemed not to inform the way that the project was handled from the outset.

## **3. “Just a stupid oversight.”**

In May, Red Bee Media, the company contracted by the BBC to make the BBC1 launch tape, asked RDF for filmed material from the series to include in the tape. The launch was to take place on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July.

RDF had only about 60 minutes of material that was in a format suitable for inclusion. This included the MIP compilation, which was sent to Red Bee along with the other suitable material.

No-one at RDF thought to look at the tapes before sending them to Red Bee. In fact, there was other uncleared footage on the MIP tape with the potential for causing displeasure at the Royal Household. “It was just a stupid oversight” we were told by RDF. It did not register that the sequence mis-edited for MIP was being sent.

## **4. “We resist sending material due to pressure of deadlines.”**

Red Bee’s clients are the MC&A division of the BBC and the channel controllers. Red Bee’s guidelines for the production of launch tapes make clear that they are answerable only to these clients who alone are

responsible for signing-off the tapes. Programme makers are excluded from the process as getting sign-off from fifteen or more producers can hold things up. "It's a matter of principle" a Red Bee producer told us.

Thus, when RDF asked in three separate e-mails (albeit cast in low key terms) as well as telephone calls, to see the launch tape they were fobbed off, even though RDF's edit suite was only a few minutes walk away from Red Bee and the director/cameraman had offered to come in.

Red Bee say they had no reason to question the material sent as RDF was a known and trusted supplier.

Red Bee has to complete a compliance form for programme trails but not for launch tapes.

## **5. "They have some AMAZING stuff."**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the RDF executive producer met the BBC executive producer to discuss scheduling and the number and duration of programmes. He also gave an update on the filming. Recollections of this meeting differ.

The RDF executive says he had his portable DVD player with him and thinks, though he is not certain, that he showed the MIP tape at the meeting. The BBC executive is certain that he did not.

The BBC executive producer made detailed notes of the meeting and within 30 minutes of it ending, he sent an e-mail to the channel controller and others. It said:

*I think they have some AMAZING stuff, both in the can, and planned, especially in America for the State Visit. Sequences in the can include HMQ provoked into a huge fit of pique by photographer Annie Leibovitz and storming out of room...*

He copied that email with the channel controller's response ("That sounds really quite exciting") to the RDF executive who acknowledged it. He says its contents did not register with him although "I am aware that I must at least have speed read it". He challenged nothing in the description of the incident.

This meeting was the first time that the erroneous notion that the Queen walked out of the photo-shoot took hold in the BBC. The RDF executive



says that he did not mislead the BBC executive producer, but concedes that the BBC executive producer must have misinterpreted something he said, or gained the wrong impression from the MIP tape if indeed he had shown it to him. The BBC executive producer took detailed notes at the meeting, wrote the e-mail with the conversation fresh in his mind and copied his account to RDF.

## **6. Sign Off**

The channel controller and the head of communications for BBC1 viewed the launch tape three times before signing it off. Two other people from the channel team also saw the finished version. No one questioned what the sequence appeared to show. Nor did anyone grasp the potential news value of what they saw.

Several senior people in Vision already believed that there was such a sequence in the series from the earlier briefing note so, as far as they were concerned, the tape was simply corroborating what they had been told.

There was no editorial check of the tape by anyone connected with the programme. This was custom and practice. Only the BBC's Controller, Fiction previews launch tapes for editorial approval.

Even if the sequence had been authentic, questions arise as to whether the material should have been released at this early stage, and whether the Palace knew and was happy that it was being included.

## **7. "No need to run by Palace."**

There had been a meeting of BBC publicity, RDF and the Buckingham Palace press office at the beginning of the year to discuss publicity arrangements. It was agreed by all parties then that the RDF executive producer would be the main point of contact with the Palace until the BBC team began working on publicity for the transmission of the series and had been fully briefed about the content. At the time of the launch that was a week away. Of the written material for the launch the RDF executive producer advised, "No need to run by the Palace."

The BBC publicity team did not inform Buckingham Palace about the launch. This was left to the RDF executive producer who did so by e-mail two days beforehand. The Palace assumed that any clips shown would be from the edited material they had already seen and knew nothing about the MIP tape. Nor were they aware that DVDs of the tape would be

handed out at the launch and that two thousand more were to be sent out afterwards. (This mass mailing was later prevented). The RDF executive could not tell them about this because he had not been told.

This was the first time that DVDs had been handed out at a BBC1 launch though it had recently been done by other channels. It was established practice to mail them to press contacts after the launch. The risks of how they might be used when handed out had not been appreciated nor had enough thought been given to the legal or compliance issues raised by this course of action.

The clip from **A Year with the Queen** opened the launch tape but the information about it in the press pack was brief. A question and answer page dealing only with generalities had been prepared but did not find its way to the controller.

Neither of the two publicists working on the series had seen the launch tape nor a single frame of the series.

The guest list for the launch included the commissioning executive (who was unable to go as she was acting in another job) but not the BBC executive producer nor anyone from RDF. Neither the marketing team nor RDF had copied the BBC executive producer in on any of the requests for footage. No one with close knowledge of the programme was present.

At the launch event the controller's comment that the Queen was "losing it a bit and walking out in a huff" alerted the press, if they had not spotted it themselves, to the mis-edited clip. I have already discussed how this idea came about.

## **8. "A sneaky peek"**

It later transpired that at the end of June RDF had shown the Buckingham Palace press office one whole programme from the series, half of another programme, including the Annie Leibovitz shoot, and some other edited sequences. The BBC knew nothing about these viewings. The BBC executive had formal viewings of the series scheduled for the end of July.

Such private viewings are of concern because they might undermine the BBC's right to final editorial control over the programme. RDF says the viewings were to encourage the Royal Household to offer still more

access by demonstrating the quality of the edited films and that no changes were made as a result.

It should also be said that RDF had invited the BBC executive producer to the cutting room to see work in progress before the Palace viewings; “come for a sneaky peek” he was told. He was carrying a considerable workload, however, and decided to wait for the formally scheduled viewings. Nevertheless, this invitation does make clear that RDF were not trying to conceal anything from the BBC in advance of a private viewing with the Palace.

## **9 “Editorial control rests with the BBC”**

In both publicity and editorial matters BBC Vision and BBC MC&A devolved too much of the relationship with the Palace to the independent producer. The RDF executive producer encouraged this as he had built up his relationship with the Royal Household over several years and was understandably protective of it.

However, the independent producer has a temporary relationship with Buckingham Palace, the BBC an important and long term one. It is this that stands behind all BBC projects with or about the Royal Household.

The contracts between the BBC and RDF and RDF and the Palace both stated that editorial control lay with the BBC.

The corporation should have asserted its own position and interests more clearly and more forcefully.

## **The Aftermath.**

### **1. “That’s not what happened.”**

The first sign that something was wrong came early in the afternoon of July 11<sup>th</sup>. The series publicist spoke on the phone with the RDF executive producer and told him about the launch. She mentioned the “storming off” and he replied that this “doesn’t sound right.” He thought there had been “a mistake in the editing of the launch tape.” He asked to see the launch tape and one was biked to him immediately, arriving at about 4.15pm.

Soon after this call the RDF executive producer was rung by the **Sun** asking for a comment on the “Queen walking out”; the reporter said he was at that moment showing the DVD to his boss. The RDF executive producer tried to explain “that’s not what happened.”

### **Recollections differ in some important respects as to what happened thereafter.**

#### **2. At RDF: “We both realised.”**

The director/cameraman of the series, working that afternoon in Buckingham Palace, received a phone call from a member of his team to say that the MIP footage with the swapped shots had apparently been used at the launch. He went to the Queen’s Private Secretary “*to apologise and told him that I hadn’t seen it before the launch.*” At this stage he did not discuss who had been responsible for the mis-edit.

At around six the director/cameraman spoke to the RDF executive producer and “*we both realised by then what a terrible mistake had been made sending the MIP tape along with all the other on line material.*”

#### **3. At the BBC: the story is running.**

By 7.00pm the BBC One Channel Controller and his head of communications knew from further conversations with RDF that the order of the shots in clip was wrong and that the **Sun** was going to splash the story of the “walk out”.

The Head of Communications for BBC1 spoke more than once to the RDF executive producer whose main response at that stage, she recalls, was to emphasise the fact that they had not been allowed to see the launch tape in spite of asking several times.

The channel controller spoke more than once to the Chief Creative Officer of RDF who also complained about RDF not having been able to see the tape.

The Chief Creative Officer of RDF’s recollection of the phone conversations with the channel controller is that it went further: that the channel controller had said that Red Bee were saying that RDF had supplied the shots in the wrong order. “*I told (the channel controller) that I agreed that it was very likely that we had supplied footage of the Leibovitz sequence in the wrong chronological order*”

The channel controller is quite certain, however, that he was not told by anyone on Wednesday night that RDF might have been responsible, that he did not put it to the CCO of RDF, and that the CCO of RDF did not concede that it was RDF's responsibility.

There is, in fact, nothing in the channel controller's behaviour over the next 22 hours, or in any other evidence I have seen, to suggest that he did know on the Wednesday evening and much to suggest he did not.

If the channel controller's recollection is accurate, it means that RDF waited almost twenty-four hours before admitting what they knew to be the case – that the the mis-edited sequence had its origin in the MIP tape, edited by them and provided to Red Bee. In the intervening period, the BBC struggled to manage the story and came under considerable critical fire.

### **3. Wait “to check the temperature”**

Three-way conversations took place that evening about what statement should go out. For the BBC, the channel controller and the Head of Communications for BBC1 handled this, for RDF it was the Chief Creative Officer and the series executive producer, and for Buckingham Palace, the Queen's assistant press secretary.

By 9.44pm a statement had been agreed:

*The BBC and RDF Television, the producers of the BBC1 series ‘A Year with the Queen’ would like to clarify that the clips shown in the promotional trailer on 11 July were not intended to provide a full picture of what actually happened or of what will be shown in the final programme.*

*This was an important photo-shoot prior to the Queen's visit to the United States. In this trailer there is a sequence that implies that the Queen left a sitting prematurely, this was not the case and the actual sequence of events was misrepresented.*

It was agreed between the Palace press office and the BBC people - neither party aware of just how strongly the storm was brewing - that this statement should be held over until the following morning when both parties could “check the temperature of the story.”

It was naïve of the BBC team to think that the story might just blow over. The channel controller and his head of communications believed that it was up to them to handle things, were in effect “in a bubble” and consequently misread the mood. The BBC press office was aware but did not intervene. There was also a feeling that as the BBC had seriously upset the Palace it ought to heed the Palace’s wishes over the statement.

Regardless of any wishes the Palace may have had the BBC should have asserted its own interests in setting the public record straight and issued a correction that evening.

Those handling the situation had by now known for two and a half hours that the BBC had put seriously misleading footage into the public domain. The footage was already running on websites, it was known to be on the front page of at least one tabloid and to be running in other national papers. The BBC had a responsibility to correct this but did not.

#### **4. Misunderstanding**

The Royal Liaison Officer who oversees relations with the Palace was not informed until after ten o’clock. What was needed was a crisis management meeting or conference call of a kind the BBC has machinery in place for. It was not called.

Those handling the issue did not share the problem widely enough, early enough. Had they done so more, and possibly more experienced, heads would have focussed on the problem, and most likely spotted what they did not – that this had the capacity to be very damaging and required an immediate public response.

The channel controller did brief his director and then sent her an e-mail copy of the statement but there was a misunderstanding between them about what the problem actually was. The director believes the channel controller acted responsibly in ringing and e-mailing her, nevertheless she was left thinking that the issue was the way the controller had introduced the clip at the press launch. Certainly, she was unaware that DVDs of the footage had been distributed and as she did not realise that the agreed statement had been e-mailed to her that evening, she did not read it. She accepts however, that she did realise that the matter was “serious” and that the Palace was “very upset”.

The Director-General was not alerted. He should have been.

## 5. Behind the story.

The following morning the story played prominently in the papers. On the Today programme a **Sun** journalist said he understood that the shots in the clip had been switched. BBC News, however, carried the story that the Queen had stormed out of the photo shoot throughout the morning, and, like other news channels, began running the offending clip.

At 8.58 am the BBC's Royal Liaison Officer, by now briefed by the BBC press office, e-mailed the central players to say that the BBC owed a private apology to the Palace for not letting it know the series was in the BBC One launch and a public apology for the misleading footage. The Palace press office was now asking for an apology to accompany the statement.

There was a dire need for a crisis meeting on the Thursday morning especially as one had not taken place the night before. The story was still in the hands of the BBC One team and there was still no urgent BBC inquiry as to how the clip came to be edited as it was.

The statement agreed the previous evening eventually went out just before noon with the addition that:

*The BBC would like to apologise to both the Queen and Annie Leibovitz for any upset this may have caused.*

It ran on PA at 11.54am and on BBC News Online at 12.11pm

It is hard to see how the channel controller would have been satisfied with the statement not mentioning that RDF had been responsible for the mis-edit, if he had been told the previous evening, as RDF's Chief Creative Officer claims, that RDF were in fact responsible. In any event, RDF had been involved in the final drafting of the statement and apology on Thursday morning and had a clear opportunity at this point to put the record straight. They did not.

An internal e-mail to recall the press packs had gone out at 9.51am, many hours after the BBC press and marketing staff knew the packs carried the misleading clip.

Shortly before noon the channel controller asked BBC News to stop running the clip. Pictures had already been taken down from the BBC picture publicity website, but when the apology was released, the footage

itself became the subject of the story and continued to be carried in bulletins and on News24. Eventually, after consultations with the Deputy Director General, it was decided that the clip could be used until midnight as part of the coverage of the day's news but not afterwards.

## 6. Finding out

Throughout Thursday, there were serious failings in communication within and between BBC Vision and BBC MC&A as wrong assumptions were made about what was known by whom. The Director of Vision was not briefed in the morning on the press coverage but even given the information she did have, she displayed a lack of curiosity in not getting to the bottom of what exactly the BBC was apologising to the Queen for. As it was she was still not aware that the shots in the clip had been shown in the wrong order when she gave an interview to **The Guardian** early on Thursday afternoon referring to “a compression” of material being the problem.

It was not till just after 1pm, at almost exactly the same time that the channel controller asked his team to find out about the order of the clips delivered by RDF to Red Bee, that the Royal Liaison Officer e-mailed the BBC1 team to say the Queen's private secretary was asking whether it was RDF or the BBC who made the mis-edit. The Head of BBC One Communications replied, “I am finding out this piece of information right now.”

RDF say that by late morning they had been able to check the material that they had sent to Red Bee and ascertained that that they had sent no other version of the Annie Leibovitz sequence which might, at least, have alerted Red Bee to a possible problem with the sequence. Even if this had been the case, however, it would not have affected the basic issue that it was RDF and not Red Bee which was responsible for the misleading edit.

At the BBC it was not till a little after 3.30 that Red Bee reported definitively, after checking the tapes, that they had taken a direct lift from the tape supplied by RDF.

By chance the BBC One channel controller had a previously arranged business meeting with RDF at 4pm. He had been told minutes before by e-mail that the BBC knew that the mis-edit was RDF's and had replied, “I am about to meet RDF and will tell them this”.



Recollections of the meeting differ. The channel controller recalls that he put it to RDF that they were in fact responsible for the mis-edit and that the reply from RDF's Chief Creative Officer was something like, "So it appears." The meeting then went ahead.

The Chief Creative Officer of RDF, however, remembers it differently; that it was "not news" to the controller at that meeting that RDF was responsible for the mis-edit. It was simply a confirmation of something already disclosed.

After that meeting the Director of Vision took the lead in a conference call drawing up a new statement in consultation with RDF to put this new information into the public domain, hopefully in BBC One's 6 o'clock news bulletin. The statement was e-mailed to the BBC from RDF one minute before the bulletin began and ended up being reported in an inaccurate form. The statement said:

*The BBC and RDF Media, the independent producers of A Year with the Queen, want to clarify further the process by which two scenes in the sequence featuring the Queen and Annie Leibovitz were edited in the wrong order.*

*The extracts shown from A Year with the Queen were supplied by RDF, who had made an early assembly of the footage several months ago. This assembly was never intended to be seen by the public or the press. Unfortunately, this assembly was given in error to the BBC personnel who were preparing the BBC1 autumn launch tape. RDF did not have an opportunity to review the autumn launch tape, but would like to apologise to the Queen and Annie Leibovitz for this error.*

*Peter Fincham, Controller BBC 1, used the sequence in good faith without any knowledge that the error had been made.*

It was now nearly 24 hours after anyone in the BBC first knew the clip was erroneous and 24 hours after RDF realised that the clip must have come from their MIP tape.

## **7. Putting it right.**

The channel controller appeared on several bulletins that evening attributing the mis-edit to "human error" on behalf of RDF. This, he would discover only later, was a rather charitable explanation. Sending

the tape to the BBC may have been human error; the original mis-edit in the MIP tape was deliberate.

In the meantime, the BBC had come under considerable criticism for the initial error, which was assumed to be the BBC's, and for the delay before an apology was issued. The BBC was openly accused of "lying" about the Queen, and there were public calls for the resignation of the channel controller. A vital relationship – that between the BBC and the Royal Household - had been, at the very least, placed under strain, and the reputation of the BBC, already having sustained recent damage over the issue of trust, was tarnished further in the eyes of the licence fee paying public.

## **Recommendations**

### **RDF**

It is not for me to make recommendations for RDF though they did furnish me with their new compliance procedures, including procedures for promotional material. These include the introduction of compliance forms for these materials as there are for completed programmes. The company has taken heavy financial punishment for its mistakes both in its share price and in the commissioning halt by the BBC and ITV.

### **BBC**

#### **Independent commissions.**

Nominated executive producers for the BBC should be accorded a greater sense of ownership of independent commissions. This person must be recognised as the formal and unavoidable link between the BBC and the production. In addition to the existing responsibility for programme editorial compliance this person should be informed of all publicity and marketing activity for the programme including launches and sign off all press and publicity materials for factual accuracy and fairness of representation.

Director of Vision should ensure that executive producers for independent productions must have a workload that enables them to fulfil these responsibilities.

The BBC should introduce a contractual requirement for independents to inform BBC executive producers of any intended viewings of unfinished programmes by participants.

### **Launches for Channel, Network or Genre.**

There should be a formal compliance procedure for completed launch tapes. There is no practical difference between broadcasting on air and broadcasting to the press especially when DVDs of the material are to be distributed.

All material supplied by productions for launch tapes and for trails should be accompanied by written confirmation that they are editorially accurate.

A full copy of launch materials should go to the divisional content head and director of MC&A for information 24 hours ahead of event.

Launch teams must preview launch materials to a senior press officer.

The inclusion of a programme in a seasonal launch must be considered as part of the marketing strategy for that programme and not merely as grist to the channel's mill. The BBC executive producer, the programme producer and the assigned publicist should all be party to that strategy. In the case of independent commissions, the independent executive producer should be involved as well.

The BBC should inform any organisation or person who is a central party in an access documentary about the timing and content of channel launches as well as of publicity plans for the programme. The Royal Household is one such organisation.

### **BBC Communications**

“When in any doubt, refer up” has long been a rubric in the BBC. Staff should be reminded that ( unless they are always in doubt ! ) this is neither weakness nor passing the buck but sharing a problem with others whose seniority and experience will help to achieve the best possible solution to a problem.

A protocol is required to help determine when a divisional press story may have become a BBC corporate story and thus when leadership in the handling of it should transfer to, or at least be shared with, the corporate press office.

The BBC should conduct an audit of the differing press, publicity and marketing skills in MC&A to ensure that the right mix and experience is in place in the content divisions.

The BBC should review the level of press support available and how it is brought together in crises.

Directors of the chief content divisions, News, Vision and Audio should receive a morning press briefing either one to one or through an editorial meeting.

When anyone in the BBC becomes aware that the corporation has put something misleading or untrue into the public domain a correction must be issued at the earliest opportunity. It must be understood that the BBC's honesty with the public has to be the first concern.

### **The BBC and Buckingham Palace.**

When the BBC commissions any programme with or about the Royal Household from an independent producer the BBC must establish its own direct editorial and publicity or press office link with the Royal Household.

All programmes with significant coverage of or content about the Royal Household should be flagged in the Managed Programmes Risk List. BBC antennae must be sensitive here. This is not to do with deference, although deference to the head of state would not be out of place; it is about recognising the Queen's constitutional role as well as her personal standing as someone widely and fondly admired.

A senior member of the BBC Press office should be appointed as a permanent press liaison with Buckingham Palace press office. This person and the Royal Liaison Officer should share information regularly.

### **Editorial Oversight.**

At the point of commissioning independent and in-house productions alike the commissioning executive concerned should decide whether the programme carries sufficient editorial or reputational risk to go on the Managed Programmes Risk List. Inclusion on it should mean that the programme effectively carries a "handle with care" notice, not so that BBC staff tread softly but to ensure that through all editorial, promotional

or commercial activities staff are aware of the possible risks attached to that programme and act accordingly.

This list should be more actively managed in the divisions.

### **BBC Induction and training**

The BBC should introduce crisis spotting and crisis management elements in the induction or training plans for relevant editorial and MC&A staff, in particular identifying when risks or problems require the attention of senior management, and should be referred up

BBC staff should work collaboratively with independents to bring the best possible programmes to the screen and to promote them effectively and honestly. But it must be made clear to BBC staff that they are also the eyes and ears of the publicly funded broadcaster and must bear in mind that the interests of the independent and the BBC will not always be aligned. When things go wrong it is most likely the BBC that will be held accountable.

Several of the above recommendations relate to the way that the Marketing, Communications and Audiences division relates to the content divisions. It is generally accepted that professionalising the BBC's marketing has brought many benefits. It also, however, opened some cultural rifts between marketers and producers and commissioners. The content divisions accept that the current leadership of MC&A is seeking to heal these. However, some senior executive time spent establishing greater clarity and fostering more collaboration could help speed this up.