



Information Policy and Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

5 September 2007

Dear Mr

Freedom of information request – RFI2007000755

Thank you for your request dated 07 August 2007 seeking further information about TV Licensing. Your request is being dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”).

Please note that “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 (which undertakes the majority of the administration of the TV Licensing system), with the administration of our cash related payment schemes 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.

In your request you asked the following:

. . . I would like to know, if possible, the number of TV License holders within Devon & Cornwall, including a breakdown of colour and black and white licence holders.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

As you may know, the TV Licence database holds records of licence holders by address. I can confirm that it would be possible for us to determine the total number of TV licence holders in the location you have specified by manually collating postcodes relevant to the Devon and Cornwall area. However, I am withholding this information under section 31(1)(a) of the Act which relates to law enforcement, specifically that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prevent the prevention or detection of crime.

I am 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 in disclosing the information. I have considered the public interest test in the section on why information has been withheld below.

I can, however, provide you with the following statistics for licences in force in the UK as at 31 March 2007:

| Region | Total licences in force (m) |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| England | 20.415 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.624 |
| Scotland | 2.178 |
| Wales | 1.235 |

I can also confirm that at of the total licences in force at that time in the UK, there were 40,532 black and white licences (the remainder being colour licences).

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.
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 4.1% for the financial year 06/07. 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), the TV Licensing Annual Review and the *About TV Licensing* document (see <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/aboutus/index.jsp>).

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