



Information Policy & Compliance

bbc.co.uk/foi



3 October 2012

Dear

Freedom of Information request – [RFI20120883]

Thank you for your request to the BBC of 20th August 2012, seeking the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

“Could you please provide a breakdown of the amount, by political party, for the total amount of money the BBC has spent with all registered political parties in United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, during the last 10 years?”

The BBC will on occasion pay money to UK Registered political parties, never in the form of political donations, but for costs incurred in the course of the BBC carrying on its business. For example, political parties charge the media for: travelling with the leaders’ campaigns during the general election; space in their conference exhibitions for a BBC stand promoting its output which is also be used for broadcasting; or room hire in venues where a political party block books rooms and then sells them on. In addition, although the majority of BBC editorial staff do not pay for accreditation at conferences, political parties will often charge fees for late accreditation.

We have therefore looked at monies paid direct to a political party, and those we have been able to identify as major contractors on behalf of a political party.

I can confirm that the BBC has spent the following amounts with registered political parties in United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, in the last 10 complete financial years (being 01 April to 31 March for the Financial Years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011). These figure comprises items such as conference fees, exhibition space and conference pass fees.

	<u>£000's</u>
Labour Party	335
Liberal Democrats	295
Conservative Party	96

However, the figures above show only direct spend with the political parties themselves. As noted above, political parties can, and do, enter into agreements with 3rd parties to run their events and collect all fees on their behalf. For example, the organisation of the Conservative Party conference is routinely contracted out to a third party supplier. To answer your request in the detail that you require means that I would need to manually review each vendor held within our finance system to ascertain what they were paid for, the location of the event, when the event occurred, and then match that data to the dates for each political party event for 10 years. I estimate that to deal with your request would take more than two and a half days; under section 12 of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

Appeal Rights for information covered by the Act

If you are not satisfied that we have complied with the Act in responding to your request, you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, 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. Contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF telephone 01625 545 700. <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Etienne
Projects & Planning Manager
Finance & Business

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, S4C and MG Alba are the only broadcasting organisations 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 Audience Services 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 Audience Services.

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 one of Europe’s most widely visited content sites. Around the world, international multimedia broadcaster BBC World Service delivers a wide range of language and regional services on radio, TV, online and via wireless handheld devices, together with BBC World News, the commercially-funded international news and information television channel.

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.