



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Press Release
For immediate release

Date: 8 July 2008

ICO orders the BBC to disclose annual staff costs for Eastenders

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has ordered the BBC to disclose the annual staff costs for Eastenders under the Freedom of Information Act. The ICO's decision follows a request to the BBC for the total annual staff costs for the programme and the annual value of performers' contracts.

The BBC refused to release the information maintaining that the requested information was not covered by the scope of the Act. This view is dismissed by Assistant Commissioner, Anne Jones. She considers that the information was held by the BBC for operational purposes such as financial and administrative reasons and therefore it does fall within the scope of the Act.

The BBC also highlighted that disclosure of the annual staff costs would prejudice commercial interests and could, in the future, lead to entire programme budgets being disclosed. The BBC notes that this could have an effect on bids from independent production companies. The ICO believes that this argument is flawed as it is unlikely that all separate cost elements of an in-house production will be disclosed under freedom of information. After carefully considering the arguments put forward by the BBC the ICO is not satisfied that disclosing the annual staff costs would prejudice the BBC's commercial interests.

The ICO does however agree that the BBC was correct to withhold information regarding the average and range of values of performer's contracts as

providing the information to the complainant would exceed the cost limit set out under the Act.

The full decision notice can be viewed at

[http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/decisionnotices/2008/fs_50115188.p
df](http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/decisionnotices/2008/fs_50115188.pdf)

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580.

Notes to Editors

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk
3. The Decision Notice reference number for this case is FS50115188