

BBC denies axing political satire

The BBC has denied reports it is shelving a satirical Radio 4 comedy poking fun at Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell.

Tuesday's Daily Telegraph newspaper claims that the fourth series of Absolute Power has been put on hold because of concerns in the wake of the Hutton report that its content "would upset Number 10".

The show, starring Stephen Fry as a spin doctor, is said to refer to Mr Campbell - the prime minister's former director of communications - as "Alas, it's a shambles".

A BBC spokesman said the series would continue as planned on Thursday.

However, the corporation admitted there were fears within the BBC that it might be "inappropriate" to broadcast such a show so soon after the publication of Lord Hutton's report into the row between the government and BBC that led to the suicide of weapons expert David Kelly.

The head of BBC radio light entertainment, John Pidgeon, said there had been a "very small number of edits".

"I think the suggestion that anything would be dropped from one of our programmes in deference to a politician ... is daft," he told BBC Radio 4's The World At One.

'Slightly inappropriate'

The Telegraph reported that the writer of the show, Mark Tavener, had been told by the BBC that the series had been shelved because of the "current climate".

But a BBC spokesman said that while there had been talk of rescheduling the first episode: "I do not think there was any talk of it being scrapped.

"It was possibly slightly inappropriate to show it at this time.

"They were never going to scrap the whole episode, but they have gone back to the original plan. "

The Hutton inquiry - which examined events before and after Dr Kelly was named as the source for a BBC report into the government's use of intelligence on Iraq - criticised the BBC over its reporting and management.

It led to the resignations of BBC chairman Gavyn Davies, Director General Greg Dyke and the reporter Andrew Gilligan.