

Archived BBC public responses to complaints

2018

Today, Radio 4, 4 January 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from listeners who felt that John Humphrys' interview with Tony Blair was aggressive and biased against him.

Response

Listeners of the Today programme expect robust and challenging questioning, and it was no different in the interview with Mr Blair. If a presenter interrupts, the intention is simply to keep the topic on track and ensure that a guest's views are properly scrutinised. Interviewees and panels often need firm steering, and a balance of politeness and persistence is needed. Today aims to achieve firm and fair probing of important issues. We're satisfied that John's questioning was appropriate and in keeping with what our listeners expect. The interview came after Mr Blair published an article for the Institute for Global Change website, in which he outlined what has been learnt since the June 2016 EU referendum and in which he also stated that it is "no secret" of his desire for Britain to stay in the EU. During the interview Mr Blair argued that voters should get the chance to reverse Brexit, possibly through another referendum. John reminded Mr Blair on a few occasions that the June 2016 EU referendum was a democratic one, that 52% of the people that came out to vote decided that they wanted to leave the EU and that going against this result could lead to "civil disobedience". We believe it was fair for John to challenge Mr Blair on these points. BBC News aims to show the political reality and provide a forum for discussion on issues, giving full opportunity for all sides of the debate to be heard and explored. Senior editorial staff within BBC News keep a close watch on programmes to ensure that standards of impartiality are maintained. The key point is that the BBC as an organisation has no view or position itself on anything we may report upon - our aim is to identify all significant views, and to test them rigorously and fairly on behalf of our audiences.

BBC Gender Pay Gap, January 2018

Complaint

We received a wide range of feedback following publication of details of BBC staff and talent pay.

Response

The BBC believes that fairness in pay is vital. A significant number of organisations have now published their gender pay figures and the results show that the BBC is performing considerably better than many and our pay gap for staff is about half that of the national average. But we have been clear that there is more to do. We have already conducted an independent judge-led audit of pay for around 18,000 staff at the BBC which found no systemic discrimination against women. We have also published a separate review into on-air presenters, editors and correspondents which found no evidence of gender discrimination in pay decision-making. However, this review identified a number of issues in relation to pay which have resulted in anomalies that need addressing. Following the reviews, we announced a five-point plan to help create a fairer and more equal BBC. We are also addressing individual pay cases which have been raised with us. The BBC is required by its Royal Charter to disclose the pay of those it directly employs who have received over £150,000 from the licence fee in each financial year. We will not be providing a breakdown of the 2016/17 figures or more detailed information relating to individual stars' contracts. However, we have said that we will do more to explain the pay of each presenter paid over £150,000, especially where they do more than one role, in future. This is an area where we've made progress already, but we recognise there is more to do and we are pushing further and faster than any other broadcaster. The Director General has committed the BBC to closing the pay gap by 2020 and if we can get there earlier, then we will.

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

You can find further information on these links:

Review of Gender Pay and Equal Pay – October 2017:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/gender_equal_pay_october_2017

Review of On-Air Pay – January 2018:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/bbc_on_air_review

BBC Management Response to the Pay Reviews:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/gender_equality_bbc

The full BBC Annual Report is available to read at:

www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/annual-report

www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/ara

(Statement updated on 7.2.2018)

Today, Radio 4, 12 January 2018

Complaint

We received complaints about the off air conversation between Jon Sopel and John Humphrys.

Response

The BBC has been clear that this was an ill-advised conversation and has stated that it is committed to getting its pay structures right. It is conducting a comprehensive analysis of presenter pay which is expected to be published at the end of the month. John Humphrys is bound by the same rules on impartiality as all other BBC presenters. Staff are entitled to their own opinions but if they choose to campaign on a topic publicly, then judgements are made as to whether they can go on to interview people on that subject. In this case, John was clearly not 'campaigning' on the topic.

Silent Witness, BBC One, 29 and 30 January 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that the portrayal of the care home, its staff and its residents were inaccurate. Others felt the portrayal of the police was inauthentic.

Response

The BBC has a long record of tackling difficult and thought-provoking subject matters and *Silent Witness* is a long-running and well-established drama, set in a recognizable world. This particular story revolves around two very specific agency staff, both of whom are corrupt and abusive. It also features two police officers: one a young, naïve PC; and the other a seasoned and slightly cynical DI. We believe the audience for *Silent Witness* understands that none of these fictional characters were intended to represent all staff working across the care industry or the police force. In the second part of the two-part story it is clearly stated by the police that the shooting of Kevin McDowd was a mistake and had been reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation. In preparation for this programme we spoke to a number of individuals, charities and organizations that deal with such issues as a matter of course. They felt that the portrayal of these issues in the programme was authentic, and that it was important to be placing disability at the centre of a popular peak-time drama.

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

The Mash Report, BBC Two, 1 February 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that a cartoon of Donald Trump and Piers Morgan was inappropriate or biased against them.

Response

The BBC has a rich heritage of satire and, in this tradition, The Mash Report looks for humorous angles on stories that have been in that week's news. It is not unusual for public figures to have their views and actions scrutinised by the programme and no-one in the public eye is exempt. A few days earlier Piers Morgan conducted an interview with President Trump which had provoked public comment and discussion. The cartoon alluded to the perceived use of flattery to gain favour with the President. The programme was appropriately scheduled at 10pm and we don't believe its regular audience would have found the tone of this item unusual.

BBC Weather, January/February 2018

Complaint

We received feedback about our recent changes to BBC Weather.

Response

We announced a while ago that we would be working with MeteoGroup who are now providing our data for our TV and radio forecasts. This includes changes to our TV graphics, website, and app. We hope once you become familiar with the new features and layout, you'll find it informative and it will meet all your needs. For more details about these changes or help using them, please read our [**blog about BBC Weather's new look**](#) and our [**frequently asked questions about Weather**](#). We have also provided an online video guide to the [**new features on our Weather app**](#), and some [**tips on using our new website features**](#) including finding favourite locations and where to find pressure maps.

Strictly Come Dancing, BBC One, January 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy that Brendan Cole's contract as a professional dancer on the show has not been renewed.

Response

Strictly Come Dancing has a history of evolving the programme, and this includes making changes to the professional dancer line-up. We'd like to thank Brendan for being part of the show since the beginning - winner of the first series - and wish him all the very best for the future. The complete professional dancer line-up will be announced in due course. We acknowledge that some viewers are unhappy about Brendan Cole's departure from the series, and these comments have been not

Match of the Day Live: Swansea City v Notts County, BBC One, 6 February 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with the decision to schedule live coverage of the Swansea City v Notts County FA Cup match.

Response

FA Cup matches are scheduled on set days for each round of the competition, and replays are part of our contractual agreement. Although we had billed a slot for the FA Cup replay on Wednesday 7th, we needed to swap this to Tuesday to avoid clashing with the other live broadcast match, which could only be played on Wednesday due to other matches scheduled for the teams involved. We highlighted the change on-air both the week before and on the day to alert audiences to the changes, and we also made it available on BBC iPlayer.

BBC News, 3 February 2018

Complaint

Some audience members felt there was not enough coverage of the 'NHS in Crisis' march in London.

Response

We discussed this with our News colleagues and senior staff who responded:

"We're sorry you were disappointed with the amount of time we spent on the issue. It can be hard to judge in advance which demonstrations should receive coverage and we accept that some viewers felt we should have covered this march to a greater extent than we did, given its particular size. It is something that our news editors will reflect upon in light of your comments. We did report on the march briefly in the afternoon and evening on the BBC News Channel, the later report carrying comments from activists. We also covered the march online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-42933543/rally-in-london-calls-for-action-on-nhs-crisis>. BBC Radio News bulletins heard from participants and organisers, stating: 'Thousands of health workers, patients and union members are marching on Downing Street, demanding an end to what they describe as the "crisis" in the NHS. They've called for additional government funding to ease the pressures facing the health service.' We'll continue to report on developments in NHS funding and performance, following our special reports in January."

BBC News, February 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some people who felt we didn't sufficiently cover the allegations about the nature of Jeremy Corbyn's contact with the Czechoslovakian Intelligence Service in the 1980s.

Response

The BBC has covered this story on a range of outlets. We looked into the allegations made by Jan Sarkocy, a former Czech agent, about the nature of Jeremy Corbyn's contact with the Czechoslovakian Intelligence Service in the 1980s, after they first appeared on social media. We secured the first broadcast interview with Mr Sarkocy. We interviewed the director of the Czech secret service archive, Svetlana Ptacknikova.

Our coverage reflected the political reaction, including Mr Corbyn's denials, his attacks on some newspapers for their coverage and the debate that followed. The BBC is committed to factually accurate journalism and we check stories containing serious allegations before broadcasting them.

Match of the Day Live: Swansea City v Sheffield Wednesday, BBC One, 27 February 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with the decision to schedule live coverage of the Swansea City v Sheffield Wednesday FA Cup match.

Response

The FA Cup is one of the biggest competitions in the sporting calendar and while we are pleased to be able to bring it live to viewers, our commitment to broadcast does mean that schedules are subject to change. We always think carefully about our audience when we decide how to reschedule our programmes. With Shetland and Holby City we tried to balance this by rescheduling the displaced episodes to the following night. We highlighted the change on-air both the week before and on the day to alert audiences, and we also made the programmes available on BBC iPlayer. However, we appreciate that some viewers will disagree with this approach and we're grateful for the feedback we've received.

BBC News, March 2018

Complaint

We received some complaints from people who felt there was not enough coverage on BBC News regarding developments in the Telford child sexual exploitation case.

Response

A long-term exclusive investigation by the Daily Mirror was published on Sunday, which we addressed that day in our online coverage of the papers. The BBC News website published the front page of the Sunday Mirror on March 11, linked to the article and contained a commentary on the paper's 18-month research. On Monday, our paper reviews again linked to the Daily Mail and Daily Mirror's analysis of the investigation, followed by detailed articles which were on our News website front page:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-43371805>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-43385049>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-43386247/telford-abuse-i-was-sold-twice-a-night>

We also covered the reaction from the local Council, MPs and charities like the NSPCC. The item was further covered across the BBC as follows:

- Radio 5 Live's 'Emma Barnett' and '5 Live Drive' programmes spoke to our Radio Shropshire reporter and covered the issue
- BBC Two's 'Victoria Derbyshire' had a live interview with a child abuse lawyer on the subject, as well as one of the victims
- BBC News at Six, Ten and News Channel all covered the story this week, as have Midlands Today bulletins
- Radio 4's 'The World at One' and 'Six O'Clock News' both had items, and local radio heard from the leader of the local council in Telford.

We have previously reported on Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford on a number of occasions, including the last call from Lucy Allan MP for an independent inquiry: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-37769350>. As well as the work being done in the London newsroom, we will continue to cover the story at a local and national level, as developments happen.

Newsnight, BBC Two, 15 March 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy with a backdrop used in the programme, which showed Jeremy Corbyn alongside Russian imagery.#

Response

The backdrop ran during a report on the relationship between sections of the British Left and Russia, prompted by the debate within the Labour party about how Jeremy Corbyn had reacted to government sanctions against Russia. Newsnight is a late night current affairs programme with a distinctive style and the picture sat firmly within its long-running tradition of arresting graphics, applied to all types of stories. The backdrop was used earlier in the year, when the Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, was similarly superimposed. Mr Corbyn has been photographed wearing this particular hat and coat many times, and they were not in any way altered or 'photoshopped' to appear 'more Russian.' The report on the Left's relationship with Russia was an entirely serious analysis of the issues concerned, with a discussion that featured a key ally of the Labour leader.

The One Show, BBC One, 19 March 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy with a film showing the cast from the musical *The Band* releasing balloons into the sky from the roof of the Theatre Royal Haymarket in London.

Response

The One Show team is very aware of the impact such activities can have on the environment; it regularly reports on and highlights environmental issues for our audience, as is evident from our report on plastics in the same broadcast. On this occasion, *The One Show* weren't involved in the production of the musical performance. The event was organised, filmed and distributed to the media by the team behind the musical *The Band*, and they have since released the following statement:

"Yesterday at the launch of @TheBandMusical at the Theatre Royal Haymarket in London we released balloons – balloons are an integral part of the story in our musical – we had not thought this thru in terms of the environment and apologise profusely".

We would like to offer our assurances that *The One Show* takes the effects to the environment very seriously and will continue to do so.

Below the Surface, BBC Four, 24 March 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy that episodes 5 and 6 of *Below the Surface* were replaced with the film *Two Days, One Night*.

Response

Given the similarities between the show's narrative and tragic hostage siege in France the previous day, out of respect for those who were killed and injured, we took the decision to delay the broadcasts of episodes 5 and 6 and replace them with a film. We would like to assure our audience that we did not take this decision lightly. We acknowledge that late changes to the schedule can be frustrating but we hope our viewers will understand our reasons for doing so. Episodes 5 and 6 will now air on BBC Four Saturday 31 March at 21.00 and 21.45 respectively.

BBC News, March 24, 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some people who felt there was insufficient coverage of pro-EU marches on this date.

Response

We raised this with BBC News colleagues and senior staff who responded:

"We're sorry to hear you were disappointed with the amount of time we spent on the issue. We realise some viewers felt we should have covered this march to a greater extent than we did. On this occasion, the sacking of Owen Smith as Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary specifically for his stance on a second Referendum was a significant new development in the political debate. However, we did report on the Leeds march on Look North bulletins on Saturday and other events through BBC News online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-43527517>. We know that not everyone will agree with our choices on which stories are covered or the level of exposure – the hundreds of thousands protesting in the US on gun control was a notable development, with support from cities in the UK as well. We accept that not everyone will agree with the outcome on each occasion. We'll continue to report on Brexit developments and public reaction, as the story continues.

BBC News, March 2018

Complaint

We received some complaints from people who felt that our coverage of accusations of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party has been biased against Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party.

Response

Criticism of a major British political party and its leader by some representatives from one of the UK's major faiths is a news story. The BBC is not biased against the Labour party or Jeremy Corbyn, and the BBC would treat any other political party or leader faced with the same accusations in a similar fashion. The comments made by the Council of Jewish Leaders and the Board of British Deputies have been set out accurately and with due impartiality, as has Mr Corbyn's response, which acknowledged anti-Semitism exists in pockets in the Labour Party. The BBC has also reported on the internal party debate, including the views of Labour's own backbenchers who have spoken against the leadership, as well as Jewish groups and others who support Mr Corbyn. The issues Labour's leadership have had with allegations of anti-Semitism go back some years and it is right that the BBC covers developments in this story which we believe to be in the public interest. BBC News never takes a position on anything that we cover, but we always aim to reflect a broad range of voices on any given subject.

BBC News at Six, BBC One and BBC News Channel, 3 April 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt we inaccurately reported Jewdas's views on anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Response

In our coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's attendance at a Jewdas event we carried a report from our political correspondent that explained the issues fully and fairly. A graphic in the report accurately explained Jewdas's position and quoted it as saying the furore was "anything but an attempt to address anti-Semitism. It is the work of cynical manipulations by people whose express loyalty is to the Conservative Party and the right wing of the Labour Party. It is a malicious ploy to remove the leader of the Opposition." We accept that in our studio introduction to the report, however, that we should have been more specific by saying that Jewdas has referred to complaints of anti-Semitism as being politically motivated rather than not being a problem in the Labour Party. We are fully committed to covering this story fairly and explaining its complexities to our audience.

BBC News, April 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt our coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's attendance at a Jewdas event was biased against him.

Response

Jeremy Corbyn's attendance at a Jewdas event followed several days in which he had faced criticism for his handling of allegations of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party from prominent Jewish groups, including the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council, and from within his own party. The strength of this feeling led to these groups organising protests outside Parliament, which were attended by some of Mr Corbyn's own MPs. Jewdas had dismissed allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party as a "malicious ploy" to remove Mr Corbyn as Labour leader. Mr Corbyn's attendance at this event was perceived by some who had been critical of his stance on anti-Semitism as an inflammatory act. It led to criticism from the Board of Deputies and some Labour MPs. We covered this story impartially and reflected Jeremy Corbyn's response to this criticism and statements on anti-Semitism. We featured the voices of those supportive and critical of him.

BBC News, April 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that there has been insufficient coverage of the comments, made by Boris Johnson, that Porton Down had identified Russia as the source of the Salisbury nerve agent.

Response

The BBC has covered the latest Porton Down statement and related developments extensively across its output, including prominently on the BBC News at Ten, on Tuesday 3rd April, with our security correspondent, Frank Gardner. In our News at Six and News at Ten programmes on Wednesday 4th April, James Landale's report investigated the comments made by the Foreign Secretary in a German television interview and also reported a Foreign Office tweet posted last month, and subsequently deleted, that suggested Porton Down suspected that Russia was behind the Salisbury poisonings. Mr Johnson's claims and Jeremy Corbyn's thoughts on the issue were discussed by a panel on our Newsnight programme later that evening, and the story has been covered in our other television and radio bulletins, and online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43639801>. BBC News never takes a position on anything that we cover, but we always aim to reflect a broad range of voices on any given subject.

Commonwealth Games 2018, England v Uganda Women's Netball match, 8 April 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy that the England v Uganda Women's Netball match was not broadcast as scheduled.

Response

On this occasion, there was an error in our online listings which incorrectly gave the information that we would be covering the England v Uganda match live, and for this we apologise. Although it was not shown live, there were long form highlights on the BBC Red Button in the afternoon – a timeslot more favourable to a UK audience - and there were also highlights later that day on BBC Two. We are bringing live action and highlights of key moments of this global sporting event across our platforms, providing a comprehensive mix for fans. We will do our best to show all the home nations in action, however there will at times be other priorities, especially if medals are being won elsewhere.

Archive on 4, 50 Years On: Rivers of Blood

Complaint:

We received complaints from people who feel it is irresponsible to broadcast Enoch Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech.

Response:

BBC Radio 4's well established programme Archive on 4 reflects in detail on historical events. Many people know of this controversial speech but few have heard it beyond soundbites and, in order to assess the speech fully and its impact on the immigration debate, it will be analysed by a wide range of contributors including many anti-racism campaigners. This is a rigorous journalistic analysis of a historical political speech. It is not an endorsement of the controversial views and we believe people should wait to hear the programme before they judge it.

BBC News website, 10 April 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from readers following our decision to launch a new market data service in the business section of the BBC News website.

Response

BBC News Online has launched a new market data service under its Business section. The new section ensures our audience can access market data information on all devices, in a fully responsive design, with interactive price charts and supported by BBC Business editorial. As part of the project to refresh our market data service, we have launched improved pages on popular company share prices (500+), global indices (15), commodities (5) and currencies (4), as well as an overview area that summarises the main global market movements that day. We have also consolidated the number of market instruments that we offer data on in order to bring audiences an editorially-led experience that focuses on those entities that are newsworthy and drive the markets. In short, this means our audience now benefits from a vastly-improved experience albeit across a scaled-back number of market data pages. For share price data, search for the listed company of your choice in the 'Companies in the news' box at the top of the new Market Data [overview page](#). For additional price data on markets, commodities and currencies, click on the market/commodity/currency of your choice in the table on the new Overview page to access more data across a range of time periods. We are investigating ways to make the interactive nature of these pages more obvious, thanks to feedback like yours, and we have also published a [blog](#) which outlines the reasons for these changes in more detail.

Scheduling, BBC Two, 4 May 2018

Complain

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy that Gardeners' World was not broadcast due to World Snooker Championship coverage.

Response

Gardeners' World is a key part of the BBC Two schedule and wherever possible we try to minimise disruption to our output. But our commitment to live sport, which is also enjoyed by the BBC Two audience, does sometimes mean that programming is subject to change. When it comes to scheduling of events like the World Snooker Championship which comes around every year, we always try to balance the needs of our entire audience and find a compromise which works for as many viewers as possible. Just as Gardeners' World viewers may have concerns around schedule changes, we also have a commitment to ensure snooker fans get to see their sport played in real time. We do realise that not everyone will agree with every choice we make, but we always appreciate it when viewers get in touch and share their views as this kind of feedback can be very useful when making similar decisions in the future.

Jo Whiley and Simon Mayo, Radio 2, 14 May 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from some listeners unhappy with Radio 2's new early evening show hosted by Jo Whiley and Simon Mayo.

Response

We made an editorial decision to pair up two of our most popular and much loved presenters in an exciting partnership. We were delighted that Jo and Simon responded positively to this idea, having known each other for over 25 years. We're aware that Radio 2 has a very special relationship with its audience and we acknowledge some regular listeners are unhappy with the changes. Every new show needs time to settle down and so we hope listeners will continue to listen and give it a chance.

BBC News, 25-28 May 2018

Complaint

We received some complaints regarding a lack of news coverage following the arrest of Tommy Robinson and the protests which followed.

Response

The BBC reports every story depending on its editorial merit. Where reporting restrictions are in place, we follow them to ensure a fair trial and to avoid being in contempt of court. In this case, the BBC reported the arrest and sentencing of Tommy Robinson once those reporting restrictions were lifted. The Judge had imposed the restrictions in order to safeguard an ongoing trial. The story was featured on TV, radio and online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-44287640>.

BBC News website, 14 May 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from readers unhappy that a breaking news notification on the BBC News app on 14th May directed users to an article reporting that Meghan Markle's father, Thomas, may not attend the royal wedding.

Response

We are sorry if you didn't like this notification. While we are able to see which stories are capturing reader interest, and over 500,000 people were sufficiently interested in this story to read it, we appreciate that many others considered it to be drawing too much attention to a development which wasn't newsworthy. We also appreciate that these notifications can be disruptive and so have increasingly started to send them without a noise alert. In the longer term we would like to move towards giving users the option to sign up for more personalised notifications.

BBC News, June 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who feel we didn't sufficiently report on the pro-Brexit march which took place on 23 June.

Response

BBC News covered the pro-Brexit demonstration which took place on 23 June, across our bulletins, on television, radio and online. We reported on this march alongside our coverage of the "People's Vote" demonstration which took place on the same day, calling for a public vote on the final Brexit deal. As with our wider on-going coverage of the Brexit process, we reported on both demonstrations impartially and accurately, which included reflecting the numbers of attendees at both.

BBC Sport, Russia 2018, Disruption to the usual BBC schedules

Complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy with the disruption to the BBC schedules during the World Cup.

BBC Response

The World Cup is one of the highest-profile and biggest sporting events in the world with millions of viewers and listeners following every match. While we are glad to be able to bring the coverage of the tournament to our audience, our commitment to broadcast it does mean that schedules are subject to change particularly if matches overrun. Ultimately, our aim is to bring our audience the most comprehensive coverage of all the key moments across our network. We try and ensure that our published schedules carry notices that overrunning may impact on later programmes, and when this happens we strive to find a solution which will satisfy as many viewers as possible. We do appreciate that moving or postponing programmes can be frustrating, and we carefully consider the available options and aim for the least amount of disruption.

BBC Sport, Russia 2018, Quarter-Final: Sweden v England

Complaint

We've received complaints from viewers unhappy with the comment Martin Keown made about people reading books instead of watching the match.

BBC Response

During the Sweden v England match, Martin made a light-hearted comment. This was simply intended to reflect upon the enormous public interest across the country in England's crucial quarter-final game, and was in no way meant to be taken seriously or cause any offence.

BBC News, July 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt we gave too much coverage to those protesting against President Trump during his visit to the UK.

Response

Donald Trump's visit to the UK had proved to be controversial, both beforehand and during, not just because of actions and statements made by President Trump, but also because of the public reaction it provoked. This was an eventful trip which generated several news stories, which we reported in depth, including detailed analysis of Mr Trump's policies and stances on different issues, such as international trade and Brexit. We covered President Trump's joint press conference with Theresa May, along with other comments he made during the visit. The anti-Trump demonstrations which took place across the UK, over three days, were attended by tens of thousands of people. It is extremely rare for a visiting head of state to provoke protests on such a scale, so it was legitimate for us to report these protests as part of our overall coverage of President Trump's visit. It was also right that we featured the voices of some of those protesting and heard their motivations. However, we also reflected the voices of those supportive of Mr Trump, and those critical of the protesters, such as International Trade Secretary, Liam Fox, whose remarks we featured prominently across our coverage. Donald Trump's trip to the UK was a significant news story and we covered the many implications of it comprehensively, accurately and impartially.

BBC Sport, Wimbledon 2018, 13 July 2018

Complaint

We've received complaints from viewers unhappy that programmes were displaced due to the Djokovic v Nadal match.

BBC Response

Wimbledon is one of the highest-profile and biggest Tennis events in the world with millions of viewers and listeners following every game. While we are glad to be able to bring the coverage of the Championships to our audience, our commitment to broadcast it does mean that schedules are subject to change particularly if matches overrun. On this occasion, we were faced with an extraordinary set of circumstances where the longest semi-final in Wimbledon history between Anderson and Isner had a knock-on effect on the Djokovic v Nadal match. Our aim at the time was to bring our audience the most comprehensive coverage of all the key moments. We try and ensure that our published schedules carry notices that overrunning may impact on later programmes and when this happens we strive to find a solution which will satisfy as many viewers as possible. When we changed the schedule to drop Our Girl we did signpost this information to our viewers as soon as we could. We do appreciate that moving or postponing programmes can be frustrating, and we carefully consider the available options and aim for the least amount of disruption.

BBC, Sir Cliff Richard ruling, July 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who were upset by the BBC's live coverage of the raid on Sir Cliff Richard's house in 2014 and are concerned about the BBC's response to the court ruling on 18 July 2018.

Response

The BBC has apologised for the distress that Sir Cliff has been through and said that it understands the very serious impact these events have had on him. Fran Unsworth, the BBC's Director of News and Current Affairs, has issued a statement in relation to the ruling, which you can read in full here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/statements/cliff-richard-ruling>

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

BBC News, August 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from people who feel our coverage of Boris Johnson's comments about the burka has been biased against him.

Response

The controversy caused by Boris Johnson's comments about Muslim women wearing face veils has highlighted not just the issue of the wearing of burkas and niqabs, but also the wider implications of the debate surrounding free speech and what constitutes Islamophobia. We have given full context in our reporting of this story and explained that Mr Johnson's comments were taken from an article in which he was arguing against a ban on the burka. We have reflected that the reason these comments have been contentious for some is due to the language used by Mr Johnson when referencing the appearance of women wearing face veils. We have reported on the criticism and calls for an apology that Mr Johnson has received from several senior figures from within his own party, including the Prime Minister. Our coverage has also, however, featured the voices of those supportive of Mr Johnson's stance. Our analysis of this story has explored the motivations behind Mr Johnson's comments but also of those critical of him. We have asked Mr Johnson for a comment but he has not been available. BBC News has covered and scrutinised the many implications of this story, impartially and in detail, featuring a range of viewpoints. We will continue to report on any developments in this story in this manner.

Red Rock, BBC One, 24 August 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from some viewers who are unhappy that Red Rock is taking a mid-season break.

Response

We're sorry to disappoint viewers but the remaining Red Rock episodes are yet to air on TV3 in Ireland who commission the series. This means Red Rock is unable to return to BBC One until next year.

EastEnders, BBC One, September 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from some viewers who were unhappy with scenes of violence in the Mick Carter prison storyline.

Response

We're aware that any scenes of violence and unpleasantness can sometimes be upsetting for some of our audience but occasionally it's necessary to the narrative. EastEnders has a long established relationship with its audience who have come to expect big dramatic moments such as these and as our regular viewers will know, the scenes in question were part of an ongoing storyline which has seen Mick pushed to his limits after he was falsely imprisoned. We are always extremely mindful of the content within an episode and the time slot in which it is shown. All of our content, including language must be editorially justified and we're always careful to film and edit scenes in such a way that they do not exceed reasonable expectations for the programme – with much of the violence being implied rather than explicit. It's also important to note that EastEnders is a fictional drama but, like society, it's made up of many different character types. We feel the scenes in question are crucial aspects of the overall storyline of Mick's time in prison, and that they were not included gratuitously.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 23 September 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from people who felt Andrew's interview with Jeremy Corbyn was biased against him and focused too much on the allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Response

Andrew used his interview with Jeremy Corbyn to explore in detail Labour's position on Brexit and scrutinise what negotiating stance the Labour Party would take on issues such as the Irish border question and the possibility of a second referendum on the EU, or a so called "People's Vote". Andrew also examined Labour policy on other issues such as housing and the economy. The row over anti-Semitism in the Labour Party is a significant and ongoing news story. Mr Corbyn has received strong criticism from senior figures in the Jewish community and even some of his own MPs over his handling of anti-Semitism allegations. There are even some who have accused him of being anti-Semitic. It was legitimate for Andrew to explore this issue in depth, and give Mr Corbyn the opportunity to respond to this criticism and give his explanation for specific allegations made against him. Andrew approached his interview with Mr Corbyn in exactly the same manner he would an interview with any political leader.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 30 September 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Andrew's interview with Theresa May was biased against her and aggressive in tone.

Response

Ahead of the Conservative Party Conference, Andrew used his interview with Theresa May to scrutinise the Prime Minister on the party's record and the challenges they are facing. With less than 6 months to go until the UK is due to leave the EU, we would have been remiss if we didn't scrutinise in detail Mrs May's Brexit negotiating strategy, the various Brexit scenarios, and ask her to respond to the criticism that the government's Chequers' plan has received from the EU and also from some within her own party. She was given ample time to explain her position on these issues. The controversy surrounding the treatment of the Windrush generation was a significant news story because of the consequences for those affected, as well as the wider political implications. Sometimes we feel it is important to return to issues that the programme and other broadcasters did not have the opportunity to discuss with the politician involved when the story was headline news. We felt that the Windrush issue, while it had emerged some time ago, has never been fully explored with the Prime Minister. It was particularly important to do so given the close association of her time as Home Secretary with the Windrush affair. This also gave Mrs May the chance to address the matter, and those affected, directly. Mrs May was also given the opportunity to speak about Conservative policy on issues such as housing and dealing with the rough sleeping crisis. Andrew would use exactly the same approach when interviewing any political leader from any party.

Newsnight, BBC Two, 10 October 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who were unhappy that Sophie Cook was the sole interviewee in the section on the Wellcome Collection's recent treatment of inclusive language.

Response

Sophie Cook was invited to speak as a writer and broadcaster, with experience on the topic of inclusive language. Newsnight welcomes a variety of views and representatives over time. Some viewers expressed concern over her comments on including women of colour, however at this point Sophie was referring to another alternative spelling - 'womyn' – and how this was seen by some females to be elitist and exclusive, not 'women'. While some may not like what they hear or who offers the opinion, it's important to consider all perspectives in due time. A broad range of contributors are regularly involved in our items on gender and inclusivity.

Strictly Come Dancing, BBC One, October 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who felt that Seann Walsh and Katya Jones should no longer be able to take part in the competition.

Response

We appreciate that you feel Seann Walsh and Katya Jones should no longer be able to compete in the competition. Although Katya and Seann have both made public apologies for their actions, this is ultimately a personal matter. Katya and Seann will continue on the show as normal.

BBC News, October 2018 - Peoples Vote March

Complaint

We have received complaints from people who felt that giving Nigel Farage or Leave Means Leave spokespeople airtime during the reports on the People's Vote march that took place in London displayed bias in favour of Brexit.

Response

We began our News coverage of the People's Vote march from 10am on Saturday, and included a pre-recorded interview with Sadiq Khan shortly after the march began at 1pm. This was a significant event involving hundreds of thousands of people, and throughout our live coverage we broadcast aerial pictures to show the amount of people attending the march and the rally. We also heard from our political correspondent, Chris Mason, and our News reporter, Chi Chi Izundu, who spoke to people participating in the march. As the News Channel isn't bound by the same time constraints as our News programming in the rest of our output, we believe it was reasonable to seek a response to the argument being put forward by protesters attending the Leave Means Leave event. We broadcast pre-recorded interviews with Richard Tice, who had been interviewed earlier on our Breakfast programme, and Nigel Farage, speaking from the Harrogate event. Our live coverage concluded just before 5pm. We continued to cover this story throughout the rest of the evening in our News programming. In his report, Chris Mason described the event taking place in Harrogate as "a much smaller gathering". As he attended the Harrogate event, and given his role in the EU Referendum, we believe Mr Farage's counterview is relevant. However, there was no intention to draw any equivalence between the People's Vote march and the Leave Means Leave protest. We clearly reflected the numbers involved in both of the events, and we believe we gave an appropriate amount of coverage in proportion to each.

BBC News, October 2018

Complaint

We received some complaints from people who felt there should have been more BBC News coverage of the People's Vote march in London on October 20.

Response

We reviewed our coverage with these concerns in mind. This was the lead item on our Weekend News bulletins on BBC One, with reports on BBC News Channel throughout the day. It was the first story on several news bulletins on BBC Radio 1, 2 and 4. Online coverage ran live through the event, headlines remained on the main News page until 5am the following day, and the following articles remain available:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45925542>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-45927564/people-s-vote-march-campaigners-take-over-london-s-streets>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-45927245/people-s-vote-march-sadiq-khan-says-young-people-s-voice-should-be-heard>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45926996>

It's common for news stories to move on following the many marches across UK cities on a Saturday especially - but Sunday's news items still included the latest developments in relation to Brexit. Both Tom Barton and Chris Mason's reports on Sunday's main TV news looked at the Conservative leadership story by opening with the previous day's march as a backdrop. It was also discussed on The Andrew Marr Show, which opened by not apologising for still addressing the Brexit story. Inevitably there may be disagreements about the level of prominence we give to stories. However, we feel the amount of coverage was proportionate and fair.

Today, Radio 4, 25 October 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy that John Humphrys said, "Let's assume that we have what is called, ludicrously, according to many people, a People's Vote", when interviewing John McDonnell.

Response

The BBC is committed to impartiality in its coverage of Brexit. While the phrasing could have been clearer, John Humphrys was reflecting the views of others during the interview with Mr McDonnell, not giving a personal opinion. As you may be aware, there has been some comment around the use of the term 'a People's Vote' and John was highlighting this in his question. He was not referring to the campaign itself, but the debate about the name.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 2nd November 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that the interview with Malcolm Brabant and his family was biased in favour of anti-vaccine campaigners.

Response

Mr Brabant, his wife and his son were on the programme to discuss their film, 'Malcolm is a Little Unwell', which explores his experience of psychosis, his stays in mental health hospitals and his subsequent recovery. The Brabant family believes that Malcolm's psychosis was caused by a yellow fever vaccination that he received before a work trip to Africa. We believe the item made clear that his claims surrounded this particular vaccination, and not other vaccinations or vaccinations in general. The segment also reported that an investigation had been carried out by the vaccine manufacturer, Sanofi Pasteur. Our presenter also read out in full a statement provided to the programme by the company.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 4 November 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from some people before transmission about Arron Banks being interviewed on 'The Andrew Marr Show'.

The BBC's response

There is strong public interest in an interview with Arron Banks about allegations of funding irregularities in relation to Leave.Eu and the 2016 EU Referendum. The Electoral Commission has laid out concerns about this in public and it is legitimate and editorially justified for Andrew Marr to question Mr Banks robustly about them, which he will do on Sunday morning.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 4 November 2018

Complaint

We received a range of complaints from viewers who were unhappy about the interview with Arron Banks on this edition. Some felt it displayed a bias against him, while others thought it was biased in his favour. We addressed both types of concerns.

Response

Andrew Marr approaches interviews with the same firm but fair manner. As our audience would expect, this involved tough lines of questioning, but that is not indicative of political bias. The Electoral Commission has publicly laid out concerns about funding irregularities within Leave.EU - it was legitimate and editorially justified for Andrew Marr to robustly question Mr Banks about them. The relationship between Rock Services and Rock Holdings was an important one to explore, as well as allegations that the funds were actually received from Russia. Mr Banks made several replies to those issues in his own defence, though a clear answer about the precise source of the money was not forthcoming. He outlined his objections to the Electoral Commission's work and the timing of their referral with their Select Committee appearance in mind that week. With serious questions remaining unanswered, it is only right that we scrutinise those involved. The task of informing the public sometimes demands a degree of persistence which might be out of place in other settings. Any interruptions are simply intended to keep the topic on track and ensure that a clear reply is obtained. Interviewees often need firm steering, and persistence is often needed. Such rigour is commonplace in political interviews, regardless of the guest's political stance – it is no indication of bias or personal opinion on the interviewer's part. While some viewers felt we pressed too hard, others suggested that it failed to properly challenge Mr Banks. Andrew pressed Mr Banks repeatedly to obtain clear answers, returning to fundamental issues when necessary. He was challenged throughout, on the source of the money, the role of Eldon Insurance in Leave.EU, and his conduct towards the DCMS, Parliament and the Electoral Commission. We wouldn't agree that the standard of interviewing fell short here. As we can see from the opposing views received, a robust and firm approach was taken. We feel the tone and content were rightly judged and just what the Andrew Marr audience would expect. The programme Editor, John Neal, responded to a range of questions and outlined other issues at stake on this edition of Newswatch on November 9: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0bqw15c/newswatch-09112018>. As with many interviews, it's not unusual to receive a variety of responses about how it came across at home. The range serves to illustrate the diversity of our audience and how the same piece can prompt opposing reactions from viewers.

David Baddiel Tries to Understand: Wi-Fi, Radio 4, 24th October 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people that there were inaccuracies in this programme's explanation of Wi-Fi.

Response

This programme, broadcast on Radio 4 on October 24 contained a number of serious inaccuracies. We regret this very much and apologise. The programme has therefore been removed from BBC Sounds. We are currently considering how best to correct the errors it contained in future Radio 4 and podcast programming.

Update (14/11/18)

In the final episode of Series 4, the programme returned to its attempt to understand Wi-Fi. It acknowledged that it had failed on that occasion, but that it does try to understand.

BBC Presenter, Social Media Use, November 2018

Summary

We received complaints from people unhappy with a tweet posted by Andrew Neil about Carole Cadwalladr.

Response

We have spoken with Andrew's team and senior members of staff about people's concerns. They have spoken with Andrew, who acknowledges that the tweet was inappropriate, and it was removed shortly after it was posted. The tweet was sent from Andrew's personal account, however the BBC has social media guidance which it expects all staff to follow and these have been discussed with Andrew.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 28 October 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Andrew Marr didn't sufficiently challenge Philip Hammond on comments he made about the Loan Charge.

Response

Andrew used his interview with Philip Hammond to discuss a number of issues, including concerns over the Loan Charge which will come into effect in April 2019. Mr Hammond reflected HMRC's position that disguised remuneration schemes have always been illegal, and Andrew Marr challenged him, making the point that many people who have been affected are under the impression they were acting legally at the time. Andrew also spoke to Mr Hammond about the anxiety this is causing some of those affected and the serious implications this could have.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 18 November 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that Andrew's interview with Baroness Chakrabarti was biased against her and aggressive in tone.

Response

Andrew used his interview with Shami Chakrabarti, Shadow Attorney General, to explore Labour's position on the draft Brexit withdrawal agreement negotiated by the Prime Minister. The Labour leadership have said they don't support this deal. Andrew sought to clarify what areas of this deal Labour had issue with, what they would seek from an alternative agreement and the logistics of how they would achieve this. When interviewing any politician from any party, Andrew's intention is to scrutinise their position on any given issue. Andrew didn't intend anything other than to robustly question Baroness Chakrabarti on the proposed Brexit deal. He contacted her to make this clear afterwards.

Newsnight, BBC Two, 23/26 November 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from viewers concerned that Pastor Lynn Hayter, who expressed support for Theresa May's Brexit plan, was a paid actor playing a role.

Response

Claims that Lynn is a paid actor who was hired to play a role within this debate are simply not true. Lynn appeared on Newsnight as part of a panel of members of the public expressing their views on Brexit. The panel appeared on Newsnight on Friday 23 November and again on Monday 26 November. Lynn is a pastor for an online ministry and chose to wear her dog collar, as she normally does, and did not 'dress up' for the programme. Lynn and the rest of the panel members were recruited via our usual production methods and all were selected for their differing views on Brexit, not because of their jobs or religious beliefs. At no point in the programme did we refer to Lynn as a vicar or reverend, or by anything other than by her name. We didn't mention the jobs of any of the members of the public on the panel either on screen or in the introduction. Lynn carries out acting work as an extra using her middle name, but this is not relevant to the capacity in which she appeared. Like all of the members of the public taking part in the discussion, Lynn gave her genuinely-held beliefs about Brexit.

Brexit Debate, BBC One, 9 December 2018

Complaint

We received complaints ahead of the BBC's plans for a televised debate on Brexit. Concerns were raised that it would only feature the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Response

We are disappointed that we could not reach an agreement on the BBC's proposal for a debate on Brexit. We were clear throughout the process that in addition to a head-to-head debate, we wanted to include other voices and political parties in our programme. The public and parliamentarians hold a wide range of opinions - from those who want a different form of Brexit, to those who want another public vote. We wanted to reflect that in the programme. Our final proposal was for:

1. a head-to-head debate between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition
2. a discussion between eight panellists with a wide range of views on Brexit (including politicians)
3. a further head-to-head debate and closing statements

We believe ours was a fair and appropriate format for our audiences and those taking part. It's a shame we will not be able to offer this programme as intended. However, we will continue with extensive news coverage and analysis around the vote. **Note:** Updated on 5/12/18. This replaces a previous response published when it appeared the debate would take place.

BBC News, 19 and 20 December 2018

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt we gave too much coverage to the allegations that Jeremy Corbyn called Theresa May a "stupid woman", and that our coverage of this story was biased against Mr Corbyn.

Response

Allegations that Jeremy Corbyn had called Theresa May a "stupid woman" during Prime Minister's Questions generated a heated political row and accusations of misogyny. Our coverage of this story made clear it wasn't possible to verify what had been said. We showed the footage and let our audience make up their own minds. We fully reflected that Mr Corbyn denied saying this, and his explanation for his comments. We also reported that senior figures in Labour felt this was contrived furore from the Conservatives. This story has wider implications on issues such as sexism in politics and the current climate of political debate, which we explored in our coverage. We believe our reporting of this story was proportionate to its significance. We continued to give prominence to other stories such as the government's post Brexit immigration policy and other issues related to Brexit.

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2018, 16 December 2018

Complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy that some sports and sporting achievements were not featured on the programme.

Response

BBC Sports Personality of the Year aimed to reflect the major sporting moments of 2018 and after such an incredible year of sport we had to carefully consider what we were able to include on the show. Sadly, the nature of the show means we cannot feature everything in the two hours we have for the programme. This is a challenge we face every year, however we can assure you that along with the eight awards we featured, our goal was to get the right balance and reflect on as many sports and achievements as possible in the time we did have available.