

Archived BBC public responses to complaints

2019

This Week, BBC One, 10 January 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Owen Jones was treated in a disrespectful manner while appearing as a guest on the programme.

Our response

Following the verbal abuse which he and others had sustained from protesters outside Parliament, Owen Jones, journalist, left wing commentator and activist, used his "Take of the Week" section to give his personal take on the current state of political discourse, the rise of the far right and, as he deemed, the reasons for this. This is a prominent section of the programme in which the author gives their views unchallenged. During his video and the studio discussion which followed, Mr Jones made allegations about the Conservative Party and right wing media which some would consider contentious. As our audience would expect, Andrew scrutinised what Mr Jones said. Michael Portillo, who disagreed with Mr Jones, also gave his opinion. Mr Jones was given ample time to express his views and respond to points made to him. When Mr Jones made allegations about The Spectator magazine and Andrew's role with the publication. Andrew legitimately pointed out that this was nothing to do with the BBC and it wasn't right for Mr Jones to use the programme to make personal accusations against him.

Today, BBC Radio 4, 26 January 2019

Summary of complaint

We received a range of complaints following the interview of Helen McEntee. Some listeners felt the tone and content were not appropriate, suggesting a personal bias from the interviewer.

Our response

We raised the main concerns with the programme team, who respond to the issues as follows: "Thank you for getting in touch. We are sorry to hear you objected to John's interview with Helen McEntee on Saturday. However we do not agree that John's questioning was unfair. Our job is to put arguments to interviewees to test their opinions and to see how firmly held they are. We've done this with guests responsible for the UK's role in these affairs too. We take the same firm but fair approach to each interview. It can be useful to approach an issue from an alternative point of view - the question about Ireland 'throwing its lot in' with the UK was an attempt to do just that. We think it is a legitimate question to ask, as a different way to discuss the importance of the trading relationship between the nations. John also queried the position of the Irish Government, as stated by Leo Varadkar at Davos. This wasn't a challenge to Minister McEntee personally. At Davos, the Taoiseach said: "I think we'd end up in a situation whereby the EU and Ireland and the U.K. would have to come together and in order to honour our commitment to the people of Ireland that there would be no hard border, we would have to agree on full alignment on customs and regulations." Perhaps at some point Ireland may choose to prioritise its desire to avoid a hard border over its obligations as an EU member. We have to ask to find out. A question like this doesn't reflect a presenter's own personal view. Part of their job is putting other people's views forward. Presenters have to be impartial and it is their job to play devil's advocate. John put it to Ms McEntee that even though the UK voted to leave the EU, and thereby its rules and regulations, the Taoiseach's position suggested that the UK was expected to abide by those rules after all. His remark, 'and it sounds a bit arrogant to a lot of people on this side of

the Irish Sea', reflected the argument that the Irish and the EU are not acknowledging this. Minister McEntee made the point that the Irish want to avoid a hard border with Northern Ireland, that the UK's red lines include leaving the Single Market and the Customs Union and that the backstop is there to protect the peace process after two years of negotiations. Today is required by the BBC's Editorial Guidelines to be duly impartial and accurate, and we believe we achieved that here. We think this kind of robust questioning is well within the bounds of what our listeners expect."

BBC Action Line, Call the Midwife, 3 February 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about the BBC Action Line's support for issues in 'Call the Midwife', 3 Feb 2019.

Our response

The BBC's off-air Action Line service is for people across the UK who may be affected by issues raised in BBC programmes. It provides details of organisations willing to offer further information, advice or support. 'Call the Midwife' covers many issues arising in pregnancy and childbirth and so the Action Line information available online for this series lists a range of sources of advice and information about a wide range of issues relating to pregnancy. There is no reason why the BBC cannot link to advice sites which include information about abortion and our Action Line has provided links to the websites for NHS services where there is NHS information about it. There continues to be debate about abortion in the UK. The Abortion Act 1967 reformed the law relating to abortion but does not apply in Northern Ireland, where the framework for abortion therefore differs from other parts of UK. Given these differences we have added a direct link to the relevant NHS page which has information on abortion for England, Scotland and Wales. As with some other widely debated issues, the Action Line does not link to all organisations.

The One Show, BBC One, 19 February 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Julia Bradbury made inappropriate comments during a discussion on new equipment being used by police to tackle bad driving.

Our response

We appreciate that some viewers were unhappy with Julia Bradbury's comments about the police's new equipment that is used to tackle unlawful and prohibited driving on the roads. We feel that the film was informative and balanced to make viewers aware of the new cameras and their purpose. The film included a range of comments from members of the public as well as from a man behind the camera and was clear to explain the positive aims of the methodology and that the majority of drivers spoken to by the RAC are in favour of the new longer lens. In the live studio discussion that followed the film, guest Julia Bradbury expressed her own views and her comments were challenged by the presenter and by fellow guest Matt Allwright.

BBC Panorama

Summary of complaint

We received complaints in February 2019, following the third party release of secretly recorded material related to a Panorama investigation for BBC One.

Our response

BBC Panorama is investigating Tommy Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon. The BBC strongly rejects any suggestion that our journalism is 'faked' or biased. Any programme we broadcast will adhere to the BBC's strict editorial guidelines. BBC Panorama's investigation will continue. John Sweeney made some offensive and inappropriate remarks whilst being secretly recorded, for which he apologises. The BBC has a strict expenses policy and the bill in this video was paid for in full by John.

BBC News, February 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt we have given too much coverage to Shamima Begum's case, and that our reporting of this story has been biased in her favour.

Our response

The story of three Bethnal Green schoolgirls running away to join IS in 2015 gained a lot of public attention at the time. Similarly, the re-appearance of one of these women, Shamima Begum, in a Syrian refugee camp, and her expression of a wish to return to the UK, has provoked a wide public debate, which has been reflected in our coverage. This is a complex story which has raised moral, legal, security and political questions. Our reporting has sought to explore these issues and the wider implications Ms Begum's case could have on other similar cases. Some of Ms Begum's statements to the media, along with her perceived lack of remorse, have caused condemnation. During the BBC's interview with her, our Middle East correspondent, Quentin Sommerville, robustly challenged her on her actions and views, and gave her the opportunity to respond to this criticism. Our coverage has featured many voices critical of her, but there have also been those who are more sympathetic to her situation, and we would have failed to accurately reflect the nuances of this debate if we hadn't also heard from them. BBC News doesn't have a view on Shamima Begum's case or what the outcome should be. While reporting this story, our aim has been to scrutinise the issues involved and present our audience with the facts and range of views. We will continue to report on significant developments in this story as they occur.

Question Time, BBC One, 7 February 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about the selection of our audience for this edition of the programme.

Our response

Question Time receives tens of thousands of audience applications per year. We welcome over 5,000 members of the public every year to our recordings and we are grateful for such a high level of interest. Audience selection is a significant undertaking and the process of selection is afforded the highest priority by the Question Time team. We reject accusations that last week's audience (7 February) was not representative of a range of views. Our system for selection includes asking a detailed series of questions, sometimes by phone. Every potential audience member is spoken to individually. Data supplied by potential audience members is also routinely cross referenced and verified. We regularly seek guidance on best practice in this area. Given the strict rules on data

protection we are not routinely able to talk about individual cases. Although there are no hard and fast rules about how many times someone can appear in a Question Time audience, we want to allow as many people as possible the chance to be part of the programme so we would not normally allocate a seat to someone if they had appeared recently. We continually review our systems and processes in this area.

The One Show, 26 February 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about the Comic Relief item included in this episode of The One Show.

Our response

This film visited the organisation Positive Futures and aimed to show how money raised by Red Nose Day is helping young people in Liverpool who are facing a variety of issues – from depression through to neurological conditions. The film focused on support Luke has received which helped him to deal with stress and anxiety as well as improve his confidence. In no way did the piece intend to suggest that ME can be treated through exercise or cured by boxing training and the causes of Luke's anxiety were explained separately to his ME diagnosis at the start of the film. We appreciate that some viewers were nonetheless disappointed with the film.

MotherFatherSon, 6th March, 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who were unhappy with some of the content of the broadcast.

Our response

We understand some viewers were unhappy with some of the content in this programme. This is a post-watershed drama and the audience was advised at the beginning of the programme that there would be sexual content and use of very strong language. We therefore felt viewers would be able to make an informed decision on whether to watch. However, we appreciate all feedback from our audience and have noted the comments received.

BBC News, 19 March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt our interview with House of Commons Speaker John Bercow was inappropriate.

Our response

BBC News attempted to talk to Mr Bercow about his decision the previous day to not allow the Prime Minister a third Parliamentary vote on Brexit. Mr Bercow's decision had caused widespread political comment on its parliamentary applicability and its impact on the Government's Brexit plans. We acknowledge audience views on the nature and circumstances of our interview, but we felt that striving to get answers on behalf of our audience was the right thing to do here. The ruling has huge implications for Brexit from a constitutional perspective, so we felt it vital to seek clarity on the matter.

BBC News, March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints about our description of the attack in Christchurch.

Our response

We appreciate some of our audience were unhappy with how we described events in the news headings for these reports. When the story broke late morning on Friday 15 March we used the phrase 'mosque attacks'/ 'mosque shootings' in order to convey the fact that these attacks took place at places of worship. We also reported and quoted the Prime Minister from New Zealand referring to this as a terrorist attack. Regarding the use of the word "terrorist" in our news reporting, the BBC has clear editorial guidelines that are publicly available:

<https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/war-terror-emergencies/guidelines#useoflanguage>

We believe that by comprehensively conveying the facts, the circumstances surrounding these attacks are clear to our audience.

BBC News, March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt it was inappropriate for us to name the alleged perpetrator in our coverage of the Christchurch mosque shootings.

Our response

BBC News' extensive coverage of the Christchurch mosque shootings has fully reflected the nature and impact of this atrocity. This has been a significant global news story which has drawn attention to several wider social, political and security issues, including the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, Islamophobia, gun laws and social media regulations. While our analysis of this story has explored all these issues, we have also focused on the effect this attack has had on those living in Christchurch, across New Zealand, and the Muslim community in other parts of the world. We have reflected the global response to this attack, and covered vigils that have taken place. We have reported on the victims and their backgrounds, spoken to their families, and others caught up in the violence. We have reported in detail the response of New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, to the tragedy, outlined her statements and actions, and reflected the perception of those who feel she has handled the situation with compassion. She has vowed to never speak the name of the alleged perpetrator. While we have reflected her reasons for this, our role, as an independent news organisation, is to give our audience accurate information related to this story, which includes when relevant, naming the suspect. We appreciate this is a story that some of our audience will find distressing, and we will continue to report on developments with sensitivity.

Newsnight, BBC Two, 15 March 2019

Summary of complaint

Some viewers felt it was not appropriate to interview a representative of Generation Identity during a report on the Christchurch attack.

Our response

The programme team and senior staff responded: "We know there's been criticism about the decision to interview a representative from Generation Identity on Newsnight and that people are repulsed by the views of this group. We believe examining the ideologies which motivate such horrific crimes is a legitimate subject for journalistic enquiry. Newsnight is a programme with a long history of investigating difficult subjects, and has recently been reporting on the rise of the far right both in the

UK and abroad. Whilst defending the right of the programme to explore the potential motivation behind such a terrible event we accept the tone of the challenge in this particular interview should have been more robust. We're continually reflecting on and reviewing our coverage, especially after dreadful events such as this."

BBC News, March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that there was insufficient coverage of the People's Vote march that took place in London on Saturday 23rd March.

Our response

The People's Vote march was covered extensively across TV and radio, with reporters in situ updating audiences as the march progressed. It was the lead story for much of the day and there was live coverage of the speeches made in Parliament Square by Labour's Deputy, Tom Watson and Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, as well as interviews with leading figures such as Anna Soubry MP and the Director of the People's Vote, James McGrory. We reported there were an estimated one million people taking part and showed aerial pictures of the crowds, and spoke too to members of the public to find out their reasons for taking to the streets. We don't agree this underplayed the scale of the demonstration or its support. It was also important to show the Leave campaign was also protesting, albeit in a different fashion and on a different scale, on Saturday. Brexit and what it means for the UK is a major story for us, and has many different sides. The BBC has a duty to report developments with due impartiality and accuracy, as we did here.

BBC News, March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that there was insufficient coverage of the 'Leave Means Leave' march.

Our response

Many marches and protests take place in cities around the UK and we do not cover them all. Instead, we consider each protest on a case by case basis. Inevitably there may be disagreements about the level of prominence we give to stories. That said, we provided coverage of this march when it first set off in Sunderland:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-47595598>

The march was then one of the top stories on our News Channel on Friday 29th March. We provided live coverage from Parliament Square, as well as live broadcasts of speeches from Tim Martin, Peter Bone and Nigel Farage. It was also one of the lead stories on our News at Six and Ten programmes, as well as during our Radio News bulletins throughout the afternoon and evening.

Business Briefing, BBC News Channel, Thursday 28 March

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that Sally Bundock was rude towards Tim Martin, and that this was biased against Brexit.

Our response

Mr Martin was invited onto the programme to talk about the way the government are handling the Brexit negotiations. We're sorry if you felt Sally was rude, this was not her intention. Sally was trying to get to the bottom of what a 'No Deal' Brexit would look like from a business perspective, so her interruptions were simply to try and extract a clear explanation. It is the job of the interviewer to put across the questions that we think the listeners would like to be asked, and this was the case when Sally challenged Mr Martin on the point of tariffs. Regular listeners to the Business Briefing programme will be familiar with Sally's interviewing style. She treats all of the programme's contributors in a similar manner, and challenges or pushes for clarification when necessary. We're satisfied that by the end of the interview Mr Martin was able to put across his argument in full. The BBC continues to report Brexit impartially and features a wide range of different perspectives across our news coverage.

BBC News, March 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who feel our coverage of the petition to revoke Article 50 was biased against Brexit.

Our response

Different groups clearly desire different outcomes in terms of what they hope to achieve at the end of the Brexit process. We have reflected the many nuances of the ongoing debate, ranging from the campaign for a second referendum to those who would like to leave the EU without a deal. We have reported on the petition to revoke Article 50 as part of our overall coverage of this story. There have been many petitions related to Brexit which have featured in our reporting, including one advocating a "no deal" Brexit. The petition to revoke Article 50 is notable in being the most popular ever submitted to the UK Parliament website and we have reflected the numbers involved. While we have explored the possible implications this could have, we have never taken a position on how this should influence the process. BBC News has covered the Brexit process comprehensively, reflecting views from across the spectrum of the debate. We will continue to offer detailed analysis of the facts and arguments related to the many issues involved.

Question Time, BBC One, 9 May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt the panel on this programme was biased against Brexit.

Our response

Question Time always chooses both our panel and audience to reflect views from across the political spectrum, as was the case with this edition. We have specific rules with regards to the representation of political parties on the panel, and political support in the audience. When it comes to positions on different topics, however, we can't choose a panel in advance to represent equally a range of views on each issue that we discuss. This is partly because we aren't aware at the time of booking our panellists what questions will be put forward by the audience and therefore what subjects will be discussed. Also given several topics could be discussed in one programme, it would be almost

impossible to pick a panel with an equal breakdown of views on each issue. Although Question Time isn't a single issue programme, given the current situation, we are aware that it is highly likely that Brexit will be discussed on every programme. As Fiona pointed out, we therefore ensure that our audience is split between Remainers and Leavers. As she also made clear, while Charles Moore may have been the only person on the panel who voted to leave in the Referendum, Jeremy Wright, a government representative was on the panel, and their position is to leave, so Mr Moore wasn't the only leave supporter on the panel. There are many nuances amongst both Brexiteers and Remainers in terms of what they now want from the Brexit process, so it may be that even if we have two or three panellists who voted the same way in 2016, it doesn't mean they now want the same outcome as each other. The makeup of the panel, in relation to Brexit, varies from week to week. The previous week the panel had been made up of three supporters of Brexit and two against. Undoubtedly Brexit will continue to be a significant topic of discussion on the programme, and we will continue to facilitate a debate where a range of views can be heard.

BBC News, April 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who feel we've given too much coverage to the launch of the Brexit Party.

Our response

Nigel Farage, while considered controversial by some, has been an influential figure in British politics in recent years. He was leader of UKIP when the party gained the highest share of the UK parties in the European elections in 2014, and also when their calls for an EU referendum were instrumental in bringing this about in 2016. He then played a significant role in the campaign itself, with his side winning. In the context of the current situation with regards to the Brexit process, the launch of his new party, the Brexit Party, is significant because of the influence they could have on the process, especially since the UK could be participating in European elections this summer. The party could also have an impact on the wider political British landscape, potentially taking away support from other parties. As we would with any new political party, our coverage of the Brexit Party has offered analysis of their values and objectives, scrutinised their funding and explored what effect they could have on British politics.

BBC News, 19 April 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt there was insufficient coverage of a veterans' march in London in support of 'Soldier F'.

Our response

Many gatherings take place in cities around the UK and we do not cover them all. Instead, we consider each protest on its own merits and take into consideration a range of factors before we decide what level of coverage is appropriate. We have reported on the Bloody Sunday trial, including hearing a range of voices reacting to the recent prosecution decision made regarding 'Soldier F'. We'll continue to follow the story and make further updates when there are significant developments.

BBC News Channel, 21 April 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with comments made by Thusiyan Nandakumar during an interview on the BBC News Channel.

Our response

BBC News has reported extensively on the Easter Sunday bomb attacks in Sri Lanka since the news first broke. This has been a fast developing story, and as with all our news coverage, we were careful to only report verified facts. On the day of the attacks, it was still unclear who had carried out the bombings. We told our audience this, and reflected that at this point the Sri Lankan government were saying they didn't know who was responsible. The magnitude of this story, and the rate at which it developed, meant we featured many contributors on the day, in London and Sri Lanka, from a wide range of backgrounds whose knowledge and experience could add additional insight to our coverage, including a Sri Lankan government minister. We also heard from Thusiyan Nandakumar amongst many others. We clearly identified Mr Nandakumar as a journalist for the Tamil Guardian. We believe it would have been evident to our viewers that he was giving his personal analysis of the political situation in response to a specific question from our presenter about past violence and tensions in the country. At no point in his interview did Mr Nandakumar attribute blame for these attacks on any group. As we have reported, Sri Lanka has experienced relative peace since the end of the civil war nearly ten years ago, but there have been some incidents of tensions between different religious and ethnic groups. The recent history of the country means that our analysis of these bombings has explored this story in the context of the wider religious, political and social implications these attacks could have on Sri Lanka. We have reported information about the perpetrators of these attacks as soon as it emerged, and have explored their backgrounds in detail. We will continue to report on this story as it develops.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 14 April 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy with comments made by David Lammy.

Our response

As a prominent Labour backbencher and campaigner for a second EU referendum, David Lammy was on the programme to discuss his views on the potential of a Brexit deal between the government and Labour frontbench. He also advocated his own preference for another referendum. Andrew Marr raised the topic of the current state of political discourse in the country and used an excerpt from a speech Mr Lammy had made to highlight the point. Andrew closely questioned Mr Lammy on his views, putting it to him that by implication he was comparing the ERG to the Nazis and that this was unacceptable. When Mr Lammy defended his remarks, Andrew put the leader of the ERG's Jacob Rees Mogg's denial to him and said it was dangerous of Mr Lammy to accuse him of being close to Nazi ideology. Andrew also made it clear that many would find his remarks to be offensive. We do not agree that this amounted to a platform for Mr Lammy to expound his views. He was repeatedly and robustly challenged on his assertions, specifically his allegations about particular politicians. The Andrew Marr Programme prides itself on holding politicians and others in the public eye to account, and we are confident that this was the case here.

Danny Baker, Radio 5 Live, May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some people unhappy with the image Danny Baker posted on his social media account, and also complaints from some who are unhappy that he will no longer be presenting on Radio 5 Live.

Our response

Danny Baker's tweet was a serious error of judgment and goes against the BBC's values we aim to embody. Danny is a brilliant broadcaster, however he will no longer be presenting a weekly show with us on Radio 5 Live.

Have I Got News for You, BBC One, 10 May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy with the decision to drop the billed episode. Some people felt this was biased in favour of Brexit.

Our response

The BBC has specific editorial guidelines that apply during election periods which mean it would be inappropriate to feature a single party leader on a weekly programme such as Have I Got News for You during the short time available if other parties are not also represented on the programme during the same period. When the fact of Heidi Allen's appearance on the show was brought to our attention, we took the decision to withdraw the show. We can assure you this would have been the case whichever party was involved. A number of our viewers have referred to 2014, when Nigel Farage also appeared on the programme in the period before the European Parliamentary elections. Those episodes of Have I Got News for You were planned in the run-up to the election to ensure an appropriate range of guests from different political parties were represented. In the circumstances of this year's election, a similar approach was not practical. We refute any suggestions that the BBC has favoured Mr Farage. In contrast, Question Time is a political debate programme and, in accordance with the guidelines, will feature representatives from a range of political parties throughout the election period. The 9 May edition, for example, featured Anna Soubry MP (Change UK), Amber Rudd MP (Conservatives), Jonathan Reynolds MP (Labour), and Nigel Farage MEP (Brexit Party). Other parties will have appeared on different editions of Question Time during the course of the election period. Similarly, the Andrew Marr Show ensures that over the course of the campaign, an appropriate range of party representatives appear on the programme. Senior editorial staff within BBC News keep a close watch on programmes to ensure that standards of impartiality are maintained. We consider that the BBC continues to report Brexit impartially and features a wide range of different perspectives across our news coverage. The team are sorry for the disappointment to viewers that this episode featuring Ms Allen was pulled at short notice. Have I Got News for You will return to our screens this week, and we will look to broadcast the episode featuring Ms Allen at a later date.

BBC News, May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who feel our analysis and coverage of the 2019 local elections didn't accurately reflect the results.

Our response

Local elections, while fought on local issues, can also be a strong indication of the attitude towards political parties nationally. BBC News covered the 2019 local elections comprehensively and in depth. We scrutinised the results and explored the wider implications of what this meant for the parties involved, and in the context of the current state of the Brexit process, looked at what this could signify about the public's attitude towards Brexit. We reported the numbers of losses and gains that each party experienced, and the number of councillors and councils that each now has. There were a mixed set of results across the country. Our coverage made clear that the Liberal Democrats had a very good set of results, gaining the most seats, and that the Conservatives suffered the most losses. While Labour didn't experience losses on the same scale as the Conservatives, at this stage of the election cycle, the main opposition party, hoping to win a forthcoming general election, would usually be expected to do better. We reflected the view of the Labour leadership that this was a disappointing set of results for them, but as with other parties, highlighted their significant wins such as Trafford. We offered analysis on reasons for disillusionment with the two main Westminster parties and looked at the possible impact of Brexit on these elections. Remainers and Brexiteers interpreted these results in different ways. While we reflected what both sides were saying, we reported that these results were ambiguous with regards to Brexit. We also reported that all parties, whether they are advocating Brexit or a second referendum, said Brexit was a factor. Throughout our coverage we heard from many politicians from all parties, including many councillors, who gave their own analysis.

Question Time, BBC One, 9 May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Fiona Bruce didn't adequately control the panel on this edition of the programme, and that certain panel members were allowed to dominate the discussion.

Our response

As chair, Fiona Bruce's role is to facilitate a lively discussion where a range of voices can be heard. She treated all members of the panel fairly and in the same manner. She interrupted them all at various points when it was necessary to keep the discussion on track, or when she felt they weren't responding to audience questions. She also scrutinised assertions they were making. All panellists were given ample time to voice their opinions on all topics discussed. As is often the case, different panel members had different styles of expressing themselves, with some having a more robust manner than others. There were various points when panel members challenged each other. While Fiona allowed the debate to flow, she did step in when panellists were being unfairly interrupted or not having the opportunity to make their points.

One Day in Gaza, BBC Two, 13 May, 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt this broadcast was biased.

Our response

We are confident that our journalism fairly reflected the experience and perspective of witnesses to the events of that day from both sides of the fence. In doing so, we ensured that the resulting documentary upheld the BBC's duty to be duly impartial. In response to specific points made about the translation in this broadcast, we sought expert advice before this was aired and we believe the translation of 'Yehudi' as 'Israeli' in this documentary is both accurate and true to the speakers' intentions.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 12 May, 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints from viewers who felt the interview with Nigel Farage went beyond expectations and suggested a bias against Brexit.

Our response

Andrew Marr has interviewed representatives from all the main parties standing in the European Election in the run up to voting this week and we felt it was important that Nigel Farage, as leader of the new Brexit Party was questioned closely. We take great care to ensure our coverage is duly impartial at all times, and especially in the weeks before an election. Andrew Marr scrutinised the Brexit Party platform and Mr Farage's previous statements on a range of issues. As a new party, it was particularly important to enable our audience to gain an understanding of what it stands for. The Brexit Party doesn't have a manifesto going into these elections but are advocating a "clean" Brexit. Andrew questioned Mr Farage on what this means and explored the party's vision for Brexit and how this would be achieved. He also challenged Mr Farage on his current stance regarding both a "no deal" Brexit and a second referendum and statements he has made in the past, as well as positions he has taken on other national issues in the past. Andrew approached this interview in the same manner he does all political interviews, challenging the arguments made with facts and other opinions.

BBC News, May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints from people who felt there has been too much coverage of Nigel Farage.

Our response

BBC News programmes aim to feature the most prominent politicians in the UK, and we've heard from leading figures from all of the main parties standing in the European Elections. We think this is in the public interest as it can help our audience form a view of where different parties stand, although we recognise that not everyone will agree with the stance that certain parties or politicians may take. The Brexit Party is a new party and untested at the polls, so it was particularly important to enable our audience to gain an understanding of what it stands for. The party was fielding a full slate of candidates and it became apparent early in the campaign, from robust opinion polling evidence, that it was likely to do well and even win the election. It was right, therefore, that we heard from its leader as part of our European Election coverage. BBC News has scrutinised the Brexit Party platform and Mr Farage's previous statements on a range of issues, and we've similarly heard from other parties standing including representatives from pro-EU parties who are advocating a second referendum. We take great care to ensure our coverage and programmes are duly impartial at all times and that we always represent a range of views, especially in the weeks before an election.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 19 May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who felt the range of guests on the programme indicated a bias in favour of remaining in the EU, and that pro-Brexit views were absent as the European election approached.

Our response

The Andrew Marr Show has interviewed representatives from all of the key political parties standing in the European Election during the election period. It is a legal obligation to do so. The programme on the 19th May featured guests from the Labour and Conservative Parties which are both - as in 2017 – committed to delivering Brexit in some form. We explored at length Jeremy Corbyn's position on Brexit and that of the International Development Secretary, Rory Stewart, who promotes a cross-Party Brexit deal. As always we represent a wide range of views during the programme and, this week, the news review featured two out of three guests who advocate Brexit in different forms. During the election period we have already heard from a range of parties including Gerard Batten, the leader of UKIP, and from Nigel Farage, the leader of the Brexit Party. Mr Farage was asked to appear on the programme on the 19th May but instead preferred to appear on the 12th. We take great care to ensure our coverage is duly impartial at all times, and during an election period, we are required to interview the key parties over a number of programmes – as we have in this case.

Victoria Derbyshire, BBC Two, 3rd June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints that we included a small version of the Donald Trump 'blimp' in the studio.

Our response

BBC News has been reporting on all aspects of President Trump's state visit, including protests against his visit and the controversy around the Trump 'blimp' and whether it should be allowed to fly. The Victoria Derbyshire programme had a smaller version of this blimp in the studio during an interview with Anna Vickerstaff, one of the blimp's organisers, and Daniel McElhinney from Trump UK, a group supporting the president. Some viewers have asked about the costs of this; the blimp was brought in by the contributor, and the BBC neither hired, nor manufactured it, so there were no additional costs involved. While we appreciate that some viewers felt that it was not suitable to have the small blimp in the studio, we felt its use was appropriate to illustrate the nature of the protests against the President, and both Ms Vickerstaff and Mr McElhinney were robustly challenged during the interview.

BBC News, June 2019

Summary of complaint#

We received complaints from people who felt our coverage of President Trump's state visit was biased against him.

Our response

President Trump's state visit to the UK generated much interest and discussion from politicians and public alike and was viewed by some as controversial. Some of the comments he made during the trip, for instance on the Conservative leadership race, the NHS, Brexit and calling the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan a "stone cold loser", breached what many would deem to be normal diplomatic protocols. Our analysis reflected this, but we did not take a view. As part of our overall coverage, we reported on the demonstrations against President Trump; reflected the numbers involved, spoke to some of those participating and questioned their reasons for doing so. These protests were viewed in a negative light by some members of the public and politicians, and we featured these voices in our coverage. We also spoke to those supportive of Mr Trump and we made clear there were counter-demonstrations. We reported on many aspects of his visit, including his participation in the D-Day commemorations and his speech at the state banquet.

BBC News: EU Elections 2019, BBC One and BBC News Channel, 26 May 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Alastair Campbell wasn't sufficiently challenged on comments he made about the funding of the Brexit Party.

Our response

Our EU Elections 2019 special featured a wide range of contributors throughout the night, representing views from across the political spectrum and the Brexit debate. The format of the programme facilitated interaction between these representatives. At one point, Alastair Campbell, who is clearly a prominent campaigner for another referendum, made a passing comment about the funding of the Brexit Party. Richard Tice, Chair of the Brexit Party, robustly challenged Mr Campbell on these comments, called them a "smear", and asked him to apologise. Mr Campbell described his remarks as "humour" and refused to apologise. These results had many implications for the prospects of the parties involved and the Brexit process, and there were clearly many important issues to discuss. The presenter, Huw Edwards, then moved the conversation on to address some of these issues.

Heresy, Radio 4, 11 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about comments made by Jo Brand in this edition of Heresy.

Our response

Heresy is a long-running comedy programme where, as the title implies and as our listeners know, panellists often say things which are deliberately provocative and go against societal norms but are not intended to be taken seriously. We carefully considered the programme before broadcast. It was never intended to encourage or condone violence, and it does not do so, but we have noted the strong reaction to it. Comedy will always push boundaries and will continue to do so, but on this occasion we have decided to edit the programme. We regret any offence we have caused.

Changes to the over 75 TV licence scheme

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about changes being made to the over 75s TV licence scheme from June 2020.

Our response

The Government decided to stop funding free TV licences for all over 75s from June 2020. Parliament - under the law - then gave the BBC the power to decide the future and consult. The difference in any funding would have to come from the BBC's budget for programmes and services. We consulted and over 190,000 people took part - this was the largest consultation the BBC has ever run. There was a small majority who wanted to change the concession and many who felt strongly that the concession should continue. There was little support for abolishing the concession. Many raised pensioner poverty and social isolation as key concerns, others raised concerns about cuts to the BBC. There was little public appetite to cut BBC services. The BBC decided that the fairest thing to do is protect the poorest older pensioners - that is why we have decided to provide free TV licences to those over 75 who receive Pension Credit. This will cost the BBC £250 million, around 6% of the budget. This is also the fairest thing to do for all licence fee payers - as the overall cost of continuing the scheme for everyone would be £745 million and rising. This would lead to profoundly damaging cuts and closures of key BBC services including BBC Two, BBC Four, Radio 5 Live, the Scotland Channel and some local radio stations. Some people have suggested to us that the £745 million cost of paying for free TV licences for all those over 75, could be covered if we cut pay for our talent, senior managers and staff. This is simply not true. Even if we stopped employing every presenter currently earning over £150,000 that would save less than £20 million. If no senior manager were paid over £150,000 that would save £5 million. This would not make up anywhere near the difference. This has not been an easy decision to make, but we have put fairness at the heart of our decision – fairness to the poorest older pensioners and fairness to all licence fee payers. If we had continued with the scheme in its current form, its quickly rising cost would have meant profoundly damaging closures of major services that we know audiences - and older audiences in particular - love, use, and value every day. We have published further detailed information about this at www.bbc.co.uk/age, including reports from the consultation which the BBC Board considered before reaching its decision. If you or someone you know is approaching or is over 75, there is no need to do anything since the free licence continues until June 2020 and TV Licensing will be in touch before then about what to do. More information is available on the TV Licensing website at www.tvlicensing.co.uk/age.

Victoria Derbyshire, BBC Two, 10 June, 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints about the occurrence of strong language on this edition.

Our response

We appreciate some viewers were offended by Victoria misspeaking while saying Jeremy Hunt's name on 10 June. She apologised immediately for the mistake. We also recognise that some viewers were unhappy with how she phrased her apology. As you will appreciate this is a live show and she did not intend to cause any further upset with her remarks, and is sorry if that was the case. Please note also we have removed that section of the broadcast from BBC iPlayer.

Our Next Prime Minister, BBC One, 18 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that two of our question contributors were inappropriate choices of guests to appear on the programme.

Our response

We carried out background research into the online and social media profiles of all our questioners for the programme. Following the broadcast, one of our contributors reactivated a public twitter account he had previously deactivated, whose tweets were not visible during our research period. Had we been aware of the views he expressed then he would not have been selected to take part in the programme. We consider the question put forward itself to be topical, due to recent allegations of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party. However we accept that it would have been better if this question had been put forward by someone else. Our last contributor is a solicitor who was seconded by his law firm to the Labour Party in the past, rather than being a Labour 'staffer'. He is a Labour supporter and once stood as a councillor. A background in politics doesn't disqualify anyone from taking part in a debate show. The contributors on the programme held a range of political views and we did not specify these views nor their backgrounds, although some chose to do so themselves. The BBC is now looking at its vetting process and reviewing to see if we need to include any additional steps.

Our Next Prime Minister, BBC One, 18 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that Emily Maitlis was a poor choice of chairperson and failed to control the debate.

Our response

In Emily's opening statement she explained that her role was to "seek clarification and direct answers when none are forthcoming." The programme itself wasn't styled on a typical debate programme, rather a hustings for the candidates and to give the audience a chance to get to know the candidates better. However Emily ensured that all of the candidates were given the chance to answer the questions and put their views across. We highly regard Emily as one of our regular presenters, she is extremely experienced and well versed with dealing with politicians. We consider that she did a good job during this programme.

BBC News, June 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from people who feel our coverage of the Conservative leadership race has been biased against Boris Johnson.

Our response

As the Conservative leadership contest will determine the next Prime Minister, we have given the contest the comprehensive coverage and scrutiny that our audience would expect. Since it began, we have heard from all candidates participating and offered detailed analysis of the policies they have been advocating. Boris Johnson has been a prominent figure in British politics for several years, notably being a former London Mayor and Foreign Secretary. As we have with all contenders, we believe it is legitimate to scrutinise Mr Johnson's track record in public office, his previous policy positions and statements he has made. As with many politicians, Mr Johnson provokes a range of opinion, and this has been reflected in our coverage. We have heard from his supporters and political

opponents. We will continue to report on the final stage of the leadership contest impartially, applying the same principles to our coverage of both remaining candidates.

BBC Radio 4, Today programme, 7 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some listeners who were unhappy with John Humphrys' interview with Andy McDonald MP.

Our response

Whilst this was a robust set of exchanges, we feel that Andy McDonald had the time to make his points and answer the questions John asked. Issues discussed included Labour's performance in the Peterborough by-election, the party's Brexit stance and whether it needs changing, and Jeremy Corbyn's approach to President Trump and trade negotiations with the US. We approach every interview individually and while no two interviews are ever the same, politicians from all parties are questioned closely and challenged on the facts across BBC News programmes on behalf of our audiences.

Tennis, BBC One, Two and Four, 26 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints about the scheduling of the Tennis at Queen's on 23 June 2019.

Our response

We appreciate some viewers were unhappy the Tennis matches moved between BBC One, Two and Four. The run of consistently bad weather that week created a very congested schedule of matches at the weekend. Feliciano Lopez, the Singles winner and Andy Murray's Doubles partner bore the brunt, having to play back to back singles and doubles matches over Saturday and Sunday. On the Sunday we were committed to showing the Men's Doubles Final and Singles Final with Lopez playing in both, as well as the England v Cameroon Women's World Cup match. We fully appreciate that moving the matches between channels wasn't ideal, but in order to accommodate both Finals from Queen's and honouring the planned schedules on BBC One and Two, the Tennis coverage was moved to BBC Four so viewers could stay with the match on a Network channel and see the conclusion. The changes were unplanned and we were dealing with a unique set of circumstances, however we acknowledge the inconvenience and frustration caused.

Our Next Prime Minister, BBC One, 18 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who felt that Emily Maitlis was biased against Boris Johnson.

Our response

The purpose of Our Next Prime Minister was for the public to put questions to the men running for the leadership of the Conservative Party and to be Prime Minister. Emily Maitlis' role was to pursue answers to these questions and seek further clarification when required. This sometimes required firm handling of the debate and interruptions where necessary. Emily did so in an appropriate and even-handed manner. She did not favour one candidate or another and the number of interruptions she made depended on the clarity, or otherwise, of the candidates' answers. All of the questions put by the

public on the programme were directed at all candidates. For example, the question on how candidates have talked about Muslims in Britain was directly relevant to all five given allegations of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party. Jeremy Hunt, Michael Gove and Boris Johnson were also asked specific questions about language they had used or endorsed. We're satisfied that Emily treated all of the candidates in a similar fashion, and challenged comments made by all candidates appropriately.

BBC Sport, Wimbledon 2019, Disruption to the usual BBC schedules

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy with the disruption to the BBC schedules during the Wimbledon Championships.

Our response

Wimbledon is one of the highest-profile and biggest tennis 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 competition 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 to ensure that our published schedules carry notices that overrunning may impact on later programmes, and when this happens we endeavour to find a solution which will satisfy as many people as possible. We do appreciate that moving or postponing programmes can be frustrating especially for those who are not interested in tennis however we do carefully consider the available options and aim for the least amount of disruption.

Top Gear, BBC Two, 30 June 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who felt that Chris Harris was being bullied on the show.

Our response

Top Gear's producers do not and never will condone bullying in any shape or form – on or off screen. Chris, Freddie and Paddy have a great rapport. They've become true friends and have a lot of fun together both on and off-camera. Any mocking is meant in the most playful way without any malice. They each get their moment when they find themselves on the receiving end of the jibes of the other two, it certainly isn't one sided. The show has a long tradition of the presenters teasing each other, the banter is intended to be amusing, but we accept that humour can be subjective. Chris has publicly gone on the record to deny that he is being bullied. He said: "Need to tell you all that Fred and Paddy are two of the kindest people I've worked with....We're good pals and I've never felt remotely picked-on.... I'm small - so what? We all give as good as we get.....And who gets to slide the supercars? Me! It's just telly, and I'm loving it!"

BBC Sport, Wimbledon 2019, Commentary

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy with some of the commentary and presenting during the Wimbledon Championships.

Our response

The Wimbledon Championships is one of the biggest events in the sporting calendar and we aim to bring our audience extensive coverage of the action there. We have put together a very strong international line up, with a wealth of experience, talent and knowledge covering all aspects of the game at the very highest level. However, we appreciate thoughts on commentating and presenting style can vary considerably. Any issues that are raised by audiences about our Wimbledon coverage are fed back to the Wimbledon production team on a regular basis. They take a keen interest in what our audience are saying as feedback can help shape future programmes.

The Andrew Neil Interviews: Jeremy Hunt and Boris Johnson, BBC One, 12 July 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that Andrew was too rude or aggressive in his interviews with both of the candidates.

Our response

The interviews were an important opportunity to examine the candidates' plans for the UK, should they become the next Prime Minister. Viewers of our political programming expect tough questions from Andrew Neil. They also expect him to pull interviewees up on unanswered questions. Each candidate was asked tough questions and they were both given the chance to put across their answers in full. If a presenter interrupts, the intention is simply to keep the topic on track and ensure that the guest's views are properly scrutinised. Interviewees and panels often need firm steering, and a balance of politeness and persistence is needed. We're satisfied that this was the case here. We understand that viewers don't like too many interruptions but they also insist, quite rightly, that our journalists ensure that the questions are answered.

Wimbledon 2019, Scheduling, 14 July 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy that the Women's Doubles Final interrupted The Horizon Guide to Space Shuttles.

Our response

The tennis was overrunning due to the longest-ever Men's Final on Centre Court between Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, and rather than further delay the last episode in the current series of Top Gear on BBC Two, we took the decision to move the Women's Doubles Final to BBC Four to replace a repeat of The Horizon Guide to Space Shuttles. However, due to a technical error, the announcement of the change was unfortunately not transmitted. We do appreciate that moving or postponing programmes can be frustrating especially for those who are not interested in tennis, however we do carefully consider the available options and aim for the least amount of disruption. If you would like to watch The Horizon Guide to Space Shuttles, it is available on BBC iPlayer.

BBC News, July 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that our coverage of Donald Trump's tweets about four US congresswomen was biased against him.

Our response

Donald Trump's tweets about four US congresswomen from ethnic minority backgrounds provoked condemnation from politicians in the USA, and also from figures across the political spectrum in the UK, including the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, and her successor, Boris Johnson. While our coverage reflected the furor these tweets generated, we didn't take a position but gave full context to this story. We featured the tweets in full, heard the response of the women concerned, and President Trump's subsequent explanation of his tweets. Mr Trump made statements and allegations about the political views of these women. We reported their political standpoints on various issues, and scrutinised the claims being made by Mr Trump. This story also raised wider questions over the current state of political debate. Our analysis sought to explore this, and the possible motivations behind the tweets, and what implications this row could have on US politics.

BBC News, 08 August 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that our coverage of the latest IPCC report was biased against the farming industry.

Our response

We reflected the IPCC's conclusions about the latest scientific research that meat-based diets have a higher carbon footprint than plant-based ones and that switching to a more plant based diet means more people can be fed using less land. We pointed out in our reporting that the final report held back from telling people to stop eating meat and we repeatedly stated that the authors of the report themselves made clear that they would not 'tell anyone what to do.'. We also spoke to a number of the authors and lead authors of the IPCC report including Professor Peter Smith from the University of Aberdeen. Our reporting reflected what these contributors told us together with the published IPCC report itself. We also spoke to others to get their expert opinion on the report including Bob Ward, policy director for Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Stuart Roberts, National Farmers Union Vice President. The IPCC report is a global assessment of issues of land use and food production so our reporting reflected the worldwide nature of the work. It was not an in-depth look at UK farming techniques. We did point out that low intensity farming on grassland has benefits, and where we mentioned high carbon beef farming and the impact on deforestation we made clear that the cattle concerned were in the Amazon region of Brazil. We also looked at innovative farming and food production techniques that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Collectively, the global agricultural industry accounts for about one quarter of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions but we did not limit our reporting to emissions from farming. We also discussed the carbon cost of food waste prominently in our reports, along with soil management, desertification and biofuel production. Meanwhile, on many previous occasions, over many years, we have reported on the greenhouse gas emissions from other sectors of the economy, including power generation, transport, homes and industries. By comparison, emissions from agriculture have received comparatively little attention. The BBC is committed to providing fair, impartial and informative news stories to our audience and we feel we accurately reported on what was in the IPCC report.

BBC News, August 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from people who feel our coverage of the current situation in Kashmir has been biased against the Indian government.

Our response

We have given extensive coverage to rising tensions in Kashmir following the Indian government's decision to revoke the special constitutional status which had previously been granted to the parts of the state that fall under Indian control. We have reported on the circumstances this provoked in the region, including the heavy military presence, curfew and communication lockdown. Our reporting has explored what this means for the people of Kashmir. While we have reflected the response to this situation from within the province, from both the Indian and Pakistani administered sides, we have by no means implied that there is only one view on this issue. We have also reflected the other contrasting views from across India. BBC News has attended several official Indian government briefings, and featured many clips from their representatives throughout our coverage of this story. We have fully reflected the Indian government's position, their reasons for this decision, and made clear that the BJP, the ruling party of India, were advocating this policy in their election manifesto earlier in the year. Given the long history of clashes over this region between India and Pakistan, we have offered analysis on what effect this could have on the relationship between the two countries, and as both nations are nuclear powers, explored the possible wider implications. Our coverage has included the Pakistani government's response, along with that of other members of the international community. At no point has the BBC taken a position on this story. We will continue to report on developments accurately and impartially.

Songs of Praise, BBC One, 18 Aug 2019

Summary of complaint

Some viewers felt the inclusion of a same-sex wedding was not appropriate.

Our response

Songs of Praise tells the stories of Christians across all denominations in the UK and, in so doing, aims to reflect the balance of opinions on different issues. The programme explained that three years ago the United Reformed Church - one of the UK's largest denominations - decided to permit each of its congregations across the country to decide whether to allow same-sex marriages to take place. Not all URC congregations, or other denominations, agree with this. In an episode about Faith & Marriage, we broadcast the wedding of James and Ian, who married in Rutherglen in Glasgow, and explored what it meant to them as Christians to take their vows in church. The programme team have monitored the full range of audience reaction, following this edition.

Today, BBC Radio 4, 22 August 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about an interview which followed a news report on a Tango dancer who had been disqualified from a competition for punching his dance partner. Some complainants felt certain comments made during this interview made light of domestic violence.

Our response

There was no intention to make light of domestic violence, a subject which the programme regularly covers with the seriousness it deserves.

The Missing Cryptoqueen, BBC Sounds, 19 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints ahead of the publishing of this podcast, with concerns about accuracy, impartiality and fairness. An organised lobby group has been identified behind the complaints.

Our response

The BBC takes its commitment to fair and impartial journalism very seriously. We are confident this series will adhere to our Editorial Guidelines as required. We stand by the rigour and quality of our work here. We have offered a right of reply to OneCoin and await their response. This dynamic series remains ready to include contributions from the key people involved, as well as listeners who may be affected in some way. Over the course of the 8 episodes, we will include a range of perspectives. This is a significant public interest case where some people have lost substantial amounts of money. It is right and proper that we hear from them as one part of our approach. We look forward to a reply from those who have been asked for comment.

BBC Presenter, Social Media Use, 18 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from people unhappy with a Tweet from Laura Kuenssberg identifying Omar Salem, and appearing to direct people towards his account.

Our response

Laura Kuenssberg is a journalist that uses social media as part of her job. Like many others, Laura quote-tweeted a thread by Omar Salem, who had written himself about his encounter with the PM on social media. He also describes himself as a Labour activist, so we don't consider it was inaccurate to describe Mr Salem this way. Our editorial guidelines require us to give 'appropriate information' about the affiliations of the people involved in our News stories. Giving our audience as much information as possible enables them to make up their own minds and gives them the chance to hear the story in full. We also made it clear in our News coverage the reasons as to why Mr Salem was at the hospital in the first place. Mr Salem has stated on Twitter, "@bbclaurak is doing her job without fear or favour, which is a vital part of democracy." We strongly refute any suggestions that there was malicious intent behind Laura's Tweets.

Last Night Of The Proms, BBC One, 14 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who objected to the range of flags used during the celebrations.

Our response

The Proms is a long standing music festival which has taken place at the Royal Albert Hall since 1895. The BBC is responsible for the broadcast coverage of the festival. Part of the Proms philosophy is to enable a diverse range of artists to perform for a broad audience and to make classical music more accessible to everyone, whatever their background. Over the years various traditions have developed amongst the audience including the wearing of costumes and the carrying of flags at the Last Night. Jamie Barton delivered an outstanding performance on the Last Night and as part of her performance chose to wave the rainbow Pride flag. This was entirely her own decision and was very much in keeping with the atmosphere and traditions of the Last Night. Previous Last Nights have seen artists choosing to dress as Inca Warriors, Admiral Nelson, Brunnhilde and even in football kits. This artistic freedom is a traditional part of the Last Night celebrations and is a right which is also recognised within the BBC's guidelines.

Question Time, BBC One, 5 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt the debate was chaired poorly and remain-supporting MPs were allowed to dominate the panel.

Our response

We seek to allow each panellist sufficient time to make their argument, but as is the nature of a live debate programme, panellists do speak over each other. The chairperson will always try to move the conversation on where needed and give everyone the opportunity to answer the questions posed by the audience. The Brexit debate was particularly intense during the week of 5 September. Many of those appearing feel strongly about the topics being discussed, which can lead to opinions being expressed which can be disagreeable to others, either in their content or the manner in which they are articulated. All the panellists were given time and they all had the opportunity to respond to the pre-selected audience questions. When Ms Thornberry tried to either interrupt or overrun with her points, Fiona Bruce did ask her to stop in order to let someone else answer. Fiona is proving to be a fantastic Question Time host who's been warmly received by audiences and commentators alike and the programme has seen audiences increase since she has been presenting. People understandably feel very passionately about the current political climate and sometimes things can get heated, but the programme is more often constructive and civil than confrontational and argumentative.

Scheduling, BBC Television, September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who were unhappy about the changes to the weekday schedules on BBC One and Two.

Our response

In order to accommodate our coverage of the World Athletics Championships on BBC Two, some programmes will be displaced for two weeks. From Monday 23rd September, Pointless will be at 16.30 on BBC One and Strictly: It Takes Two will be at 17.15 on BBC One. Pointless will move back to its usual 17.15 slot and Strictly: It Takes Two will move back to BBC Two from Monday 7th October. We fully appreciate that any schedule changes can be frustrating but we hope our audience will appreciate that on occasion we have broadcasting commitments to honour. Both Pointless and Strictly: It Takes Two are available on BBC iPlayer for 30 days following transmission.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 17 July 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about the BBC Executive Complaints Unit's findings about exchanges between presenters on BBC Breakfast.

Our response

In response to issues raised about this issue the BBC's Director-General Tony Hall sent this email to BBC staff in relation to the ECU ruling on BBC Breakfast:

"The Executive Complaints Unit ruling has sparked an important debate about racism and its interpretation. Racism is racism and the BBC is not impartial on the topic. There was never a finding against Naga for what she said about the President's tweet. Many of you asked that I personally

review the decision of the ECU. I have done so. I have looked carefully at all the arguments that have been made and assessed all of the materials. I have also examined the complaint itself. It was only ever in a limited way that there was found to be a breach of our guidelines. These are often finely balanced and difficult judgements. But, in this instance, I don't think Naga's words were sufficient to merit a partial uphold of the complaint around the comments she made. There was never any sanction against Naga and I hope this step makes that absolutely clear. She is an exceptional journalist and presenter and I am proud that she works for the BBC. I have asked the editorial and leadership teams to discuss how we manage live exchanges on air around these topics in the future. Our impartiality is fundamental to our journalism and is what our audiences expect of us."

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 26 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints following an interview with James Cleverly about Parliamentary behaviour and conduct.

Our response

During the interview Naga Munchetty questioned James Cleverly on Parliamentary behaviour and conduct. Mr Cleverly spoke in detail and at length and was given the opportunity to give his answers in full. Our audience expect our presenters to challenge interviewees in a position of responsibility. Naga appropriately challenged James Cleverly throughout the interview and kept the discussion on track. We felt the interview was appropriately robust with the approach and tone being firm, but fair.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 29 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that Andrew Marr interrupted Boris Johnson too frequently, and was biased against him.

Our response

We don't believe that Andrew Marr was rude towards the Prime Minister, or that he interrupted him too often. Mr Marr is always careful to be courteous but the task of informing the audience sometimes demands a degree of persistence on a point in order to obtain a clear answer. We had a lot of ground to cover on this occasion and as the interview was being conducted live, there was a need to move the interview along to make sure we were able to cover a wide range of issues. The issue of language in relation to Brexit has been a big talking point for a while but particularly after Boris Johnson responded to a question in the Commons from a Labour MP who challenged him on his choice of words. We consider it was entirely appropriate for the Prime Minister to be questioned on this subject.

BBC News, September & October 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt our coverage of a Parliamentary debate over the use of inflammatory language in Brexit policy has been biased against the government and the Prime Minister.

Our response

We broadcast much of the debate live on our News Channel, and in its entirety on BBC Parliament. We reported the language used by people from a number of political parties – and discussed the issue of language with a wide range of contributors over the next few days. We consider we made it

clear in our reporting that the questions relating to inflammatory language and Jo Cox were put forward by Paula Sherriff and Tracey Brabin. As with any story we cover, BBC News does not have an opinion on the European Union, or on the UK's position within it. Instead we try to explain the different and sometimes complex issues affecting our audience during Brexit. Our aim is to give them the information they need in order to follow the process, and the latest updates clearly.

Politics Live, BBC Two, 27 September 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who were unhappy with Brendan O'Neill's comments about Brexit.

Our response

During the programme whilst discussing Brexit, Brendan O'Neill stated "I am amazed that there haven't been riots yet." When asked if he thinks there will be, he responded with "I think there should be." This statement was immediately picked up on and pushed back by Adam Fleming and other guests. It was for Mr O'Neill to defend his position and we cannot know what a guest is going to say in advance. These were not views Brendan O'Neill had previously expressed and we had no prior knowledge of them. When a guest on live television makes a controversial statement of this sort, all the presenter can do is push back on air and allow other guests to challenge the comment which is exactly what Adam Fleming did.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 05 October 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints following an interview with Harvey Proctor.

Our response

This story raises important issues about the conduct of the police and the former Conservative MP Harvey Proctor was invited onto the programme to discuss the impact on his life and fallout from the Operation Midland report. He explained that the investigation had exerted a very high cost, that the past five years had been harrowing and that he had lost his job and home as a result. However, as the interview progressed it was also important to reflect part of a statement from the Metropolitan Police. Mr Proctor was given plenty of time to make his points about the way the case had been handled by the Met and others. BBC Breakfast needed to ensure we fairly reflected all sides. When Naga interrupted it was to keep the interview on track but this was done politely and professionally as would be expected by our presenters. It was then Mr Proctor, not the BBC, who decided to terminate the interview. At this point Naga reflected with "I think what is very clear there is the impact that this investigation has had on his life as he said at the very beginning." We believe Naga Munchetty conducted the interview in a fair and understanding manner.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 13 October 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt that Andrew Marr suggested Priti Patel was laughing during their interview.

Our response

Guests who appear on the Andrew Marr show expect robust interviewing that includes back and forth

between themselves and Mr Marr. Andrew Marr commented on Priti Patel laughing after he glanced up while reading a list of business leaders concerned about the impact of Brexit on their industries. He thought he saw the Home Secretary smile but now accepts this was in fact her natural expression and wasn't indicating amusement at his line of questioning. There was no intention to cause offence and we are sorry if viewers felt this to be the case.

PDC Champions League of Darts, October 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy with the camera work during the competition.

Our response

BBC Sport acknowledges there were some issues with the coverage of the Champions League of Darts. Its production partner IMG would like to apologise to viewers for missing some of the key moments. Darts is one of the quickest sports to broadcast when in full flow with the need for split-second decisions. IMG has been successfully producing major darts tournaments for a number of years and in this instance didn't reach the high standards expected of them.

Strictly Come Dancing: the Results, BBC One, 27 October 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who are unhappy that Catherine Tyldesley was eliminated from the competition.

Our response

We realise that not everyone will agree with the judges' decisions, but it's important to note that the judges vote on each Dance Off routine independently, based on its merits and in their expert opinion alone. This has always been the case and was no different on 27 October.

Have I Got News for You, BBC One, 1 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from viewers who were unhappy with strong language regarding the Queen.

Our response

Jo Brand's joke was aimed at the fact that the Queen's former dresser claims in a book that the Queen wears bright colours to 'stand out in a crowd', but she should be instantly recognisable anyway as she's the Queen. Although we appreciate that strong language is not to everyone's tastes, we would like to assure you that this language was not directed at the Queen herself. Have I Got News For You is a satirical entertainment show which offers a humorous take on recent News stories. Regular viewers expect the panellists and presenters to make comments about stories that are in the news and understand that these contributions are intended to be funny.

Strictly Come Dancing: the Results, BBC One, 3 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who are unhappy that Mike Bushell was saved by the judges and not eliminated from the competition.

Our response

We realise that not everyone will agree with the judges' decisions, but it's important to note that the judges vote on each Dance Off routine independently, based on its merits and in their expert opinion alone. This has always been the case and was no different on 3 November.

Strictly Come Dancing: the Results, BBC One, 3 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who are unhappy about the coupling during the Professionals' dance.

Our response

Strictly Come Dancing is an inclusive show and is proud to have been able to facilitate the dance between Johannes and Graziano during the Professionals' dance. They are dancers first and foremost, and their sex had no bearing on their routine.

Question Time, BBC One, 31 October 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from viewers who claimed that Fiona Bruce incorrectly stated that Vote Leave were found not guilty of breaking electoral law by overspending.

Our response

UPDATED RESPONSE:

This was a genuine misunderstanding which can occur in a debate style programme which is broadcast as live and we do acknowledge that this may have created the wrong impression that what was said immediately prior to Fiona's comments were incorrect. The auditorium is noisier than it appears on the broadcast, and Fiona misheard the member of the audience who was sitting at the back and who said that Vote Leave "is accused of breaking electoral law", giving the impression that this is not correct. Vote Leave was fined £61,000 by the Electoral Commission and a police investigation into its activities during the EU referendum campaign is still active. Leave.EU, to which Fiona mistakenly referred after mishearing the audience member, was also fined for electoral offences but is not facing further criminal investigation.

ORIGINAL RESPONSE (05/11/2019):

This was a genuine misunderstanding which can occur in a debate style programme which is broadcast as live. The auditorium is noisier than it appears on the broadcast, and Fiona misheard the member of the audience who was sitting at the back and who made a valid observation about Vote Leave. Fiona believed the audience member was referring to Leave.EU and her comments in relation to that were correct. We're happy to clear up any confusion and clarify that the subsequent panel discussion did not refer to Vote Leave.

BBC News, November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who were unhappy with our coverage of Jacob Rees-Mogg's comments regarding Grenfell.

Our response

Our coverage accurately reflected Jacob Rees-Mogg's comments and the reaction to them, including from families of the victims of the Grenfell tragedy. The Leader of the House of Commons was speaking on the findings of a Grenfell inquiry report when he said: "The more one reads over the weekend about the report and about the chances of people surviving; if you just ignore what you're told and leave you are so much safer. And I think if either of us were in a fire, whatever the fire brigade said, we would leave the burning building. It just seems the common sense thing to do." Mr Rees-Mogg "profoundly apologised" for his comments last week which we also reported.

Have I Got News for You, BBC One, 8 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who thought the programme was biased against Boris Johnson and biased against Brexit.

Our response

HIGNFY has always covered the biggest news stories of the week and it is the case that the upcoming general election and Brexit are currently dominating the news at what is an extraordinary time in politics. We don't therefore feel the amount of coverage given to these stories, and the people involved in them, in this episode was disproportionate. The BBC has a long tradition of satire and it isn't unusual for public figures to have their actions scrutinised. No-one in the public eye is exempt. Nonetheless we have noted that some people feel that the focus on the Prime Minister on this occasion was unfair.

BBC News coverage 31 October 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints that our news coverage of the Labour Party general election campaign launch was excessive and biased in favour of the Labour Party.

Our response

The Labour Party's launch of its general election campaign was naturally the focus of our reporting, as it would be for other campaign launches. We questioned Jeremy Corbyn in detail about his policies at his press conference and separately examined Labour's proposals, including criticism of their possible cost. Impartiality is a core value of the BBC, and we apply this principle when reporting on any political party. We have outlined our approach to reporting the election here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/2752f335-c6b7-43af-a3cc-797d330301cc>

As we did at the Labour party launch, we will scrutinise the facts and endeavour to provide our audiences with the information they need - so they can make up their own minds.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 06 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt an interview with James Cleverly was biased against him.

Our response

Our audience expect our presenters to challenge interviewees in a position of responsibility. Louise Minchin gave Mr Cleverly an appropriate amount of time to respond to the questions posed to him. A presenter will sometimes intervene with a guest if they have moved away from the point raised, or challenge with a different point of view. We felt the interview was appropriately robust with the approach and tone being firm, but fair.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 11 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about incorrect footage from the Remembrance Day service in 2016.

Our response

The BBC has apologised for using an archive clip of Remembrance Sunday in its on-the-day coverage. The archive footage of Remembrance Sunday from 2016 was restored to the production system early on Sunday 10th November to preview the Remembrance Day service. It was mistakenly re-used after the service, the following day, on Armistice Day. On the day of the mistake we apologised for the error on the BBC Breakfast social media account and posted a response on the BBC Corrections & Clarifications site https://www.bbc.co.uk/helpandfeedback/corrections_clarifications/. Additionally the Editor of BBC Breakfast appeared on the weekly BBC programme 'Newswatch', which is also transmitted during BBC Breakfast, to explain the error in more detail. The episode is available here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000bd32/newswatch-15112019>. It was a human error which will happen from time to time in the high-pressure environment of the newsroom, but we are reflecting on what happened and it's clear there is a lesson to be learned from the confusion which was caused.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 15 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints about the style and tone of an extended interview with the Prime Minister.

Our response

Naga Munchetty explained that each party leader had been invited for an extended interview, which hoped to bring clarity to policies but also understand more about our politicians as people. Mr Johnson made detailed points at length and was appropriately challenged throughout. We believe he was given sufficient time to make his points, but was also held to account with due rigour. It's right and fair that opposing policies or the comments of critics are put to a guest. It allows Mr Johnson to reply to the claims of others. We'll take the same approach with each party leader. We think the exchange was firm, but fair and within the range viewers would expect from an in-depth political interview. No two interviews are ever the same and nor do we approach them as such. The range of subjects covered, the time taken and the questions asked will all vary, but we approach each interview with due impartiality, as required under the BBC's Editorial Guidelines. Presenters adopt a range of techniques when they speak to different guests to get the most out of the interview. They'll intervene when a guest has moved away from the point raised, or challenge with a different point of view. We feel Naga's manner and line of questioning was professional and appropriate.

BBC News Bulletin (Weekend), BBC One, 23 November 2019

Summary of complaint

Some viewers raised concerns of misrepresentation and bias, following the use of an edited clip from the previous night's Question Time Leaders Special.

Our response

BBC News has responded to concerns about the way in which our weekend bulletin used a clip from 'Question Time: Leaders Special' as follows: 'This clip from the BBC's Question Time special, which was played out in full on the News at Ten on Friday evening and on other outlets, was shortened for timing reasons on Saturday's lunchtime bulletin, to edit out a repetitious phrase from Boris Johnson. However, in doing so we also edited out laughter from the audience. Although there was absolutely no intention to mislead, we accept this was a mistake on our part, as it didn't reflect the full reaction to Boris Johnson's answer. We did not alter the soundtrack or image in any way apart from this edit, contrary to some claims on social media.'

Question Time: 2019 Leaders Special, BBC One, 22 November 2019

Summary of complaint

Some viewers felt the audience selection process resulted in a biased crowd, or that particular activists should not have been allowed to contribute as studio audience members.

Our response

The Question Time production team selected this audience, with a roughly equal split between Conservative and Labour supporters, and a smaller number for each of the Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party. There was a slim majority for those who voted Leave over Remain, except for those who were too young to vote at the last election. The audience for this Question Time special consisted of self-identified supporters of the four parties involved - some of whom may be active in their local political parties. It's not surprising that people who are actively interested in politics should also be interested in being in the audience for a political debate programme. Question Time does not bar people from its audience because they are political activists. We generally discourage multiple appearances, but on the night we think the audience represented a range of political opinions fairly. We feel each leader received a mixture of support and scrutiny in turn. Each one faced tough questions from the audience. Some members can be more vocal than others, but the volume of reaction isn't a clear indicator of the carefully worked out composition of those in attendance. The Head of BBC Newsgathering, Jonathan Munro, explains our approach in more detail: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/51a07ee4-a608-4bd9-ab18-722931a53e1e>. Further debates will follow with representatives from other parties – we take a duly proportionate approach to the panel and audience in these special editions of Question Time.

Strictly Come Dancing: the Results, BBC One, 24 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who were unhappy with the sound levels coming from the audience during Andrea Bocelli's performance.

Our response

Thousands of people apply for tickets to be in the audience, and the lucky ones are inevitably very excited to be there and this comes across by their reactions. This was a genuine response to the performances. We hope that this didn't mar our viewers' overall enjoyment of the show.

Your Questions Answered: Boris Johnson, Radio 5live, 15 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from people who were unhappy with the approach to the interview with Boris Johnson.

Our response

This programme was the first in a series inviting our listeners to question the leaders of the main political parties in the lead up to the 12th December general election. This edition featured the Prime Minister, and covered a lot of ground, with questions on issues such as the Withdrawal Agreement, transport and mental health services. The BBC believes political figures and others in positions of responsibility should be given the opportunity both to explain their thinking on matters of public concern and answer criticisms of it. The job of BBC presenters is to put forward the questions likely to be in the minds of our audience, and to challenge our interviewees when a point needs to be clarified. While courtesy should always be observed, it is worth noting that politicians are no less professional in handling questions than our interviewers are in posing them, and that the task of informing the public sometimes demands a degree of persistence which would be out of place in ordinary social conversation. Rachel Burden was firm but fair, intervening to keep the interview on track and challenge Mr Johnson when necessary. This was a live programme, and we were trying to give the chance to as many listeners as possible to put their questions forward to the Prime Minister. Please be assured that leaders from other political parties featured in future programmes will be questioned in a similar manner.

BBC News, November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints regarding the nature and extent of our News coverage, regarding statements from Ephraim Mirvis about anti-Semitism in the Labour party and from the Muslim Council of Britain about Islamophobia in the Conservative party.

Our response

Both the intervention by the Chief Rabbi and the comments made by the Muslim Council of Britain were covered by BBC News. It is unprecedented for the leader of one of the major faith groups in Britain to express a view about how people should vote in a General Election and it was our independent news judgement that this was an important news story. We reported what the Chief Rabbi said and responses to it over the course of the day, including Jeremy Corbyn's remarks on the election campaign and later in a BBC interview with Andrew Neil. We reported too the Muslim Council of Britain's support for the Chief Rabbi, as well as its comment that it was "abundantly clear to many Muslims that the Conservative party tolerates Islamophobia". We have previously reported the MCB's request for an investigation into Islamophobia with the Conservative Party. Some people expressed

concerns about the amount of prominence given to each story. Our guidelines require us to report with 'due impartiality' and accuracy. The Chief Rabbi is a significant figure for Britain's Jews and in this role is looked to for religious and spiritual guidance. The Muslim Council of Britain plays a different role, and it is an umbrella body representing affiliated organisations such as mosques, schools and charities. We are confident our coverage reflected each organisation's stature properly.

BBC News Election Coverage, 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received a range of complaints about BBC News, suggesting elements of our General Election coverage display bias for or against a range of political parties.

Our response

BBC News does not take any position in its reporting. The BBC is independent of any political interests, and our news agenda would never be influenced by any outside organisation. Impartiality is a core value of the BBC, and one reason why we believe our news coverage is trusted and respected around the world. In addition, there are specific editorial guidelines in an election period (<https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/election-guidelines-archive>). We take our obligation to provide fair and impartial coverage very seriously with every political party. We take great steps to ensure our reporting is objective, proportionate and in line with the relevant guidelines. We apply the same rigour to scrutinising the policies and claims of each party, and report a range of support and criticism over time, as the debate unfolds. Fran Unsworth, Director of News and Current Affairs, has written in more detail about the BBC's approach to covering this election here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/2752f335-c6b7-43af-a3cc-797d330301cc>. The Head of BBC Newsgathering, Jonathan Munro, has also explained our approach to the BBC Prime Ministerial and other debates here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/51a07ee4-a608-4bd9-ab18-722931a53e1e>. Editors are required to follow the BBC's Editorial Guidelines and the Ofcom Code to ensure that political parties receive an appropriate level of coverage during an election campaign. This means we are required to assess "past and current electoral support" in making a judgment about the relative weight of coverage for each party. We receive a wide variety of reaction from our audience about how our news coverage comes across. This illustrates the diversity of opinion we serve, the breadth of our output, and also how a range of items can prompt wide ranging, and at times opposing views, of the material involved. We are careful to check and report the facts surrounding any debate, examine relevant arguments, and offer detailed analysis. We aim to give due weight to events, opinion and the main strands of argument over an appropriate timeframe so that no significant strand of thought is under-represented or omitted. We believe that by doing this our audience can make an informed decision. We hope this goes some way to explaining the principles involved, and the significant effort we make to maintain our impartiality.

Today, Radio 4, 13 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from listeners who felt Nick Robinson was rude and interrupted Michael Gove too frequently during his interview.

Our response

Presenters have to judge when to let politicians make their points and when to intervene to keep an interview on track. This is particularly important during the General Election campaign. In this case Nick challenged Michael Gove each time he felt Mr Gove was not answering the questions about the Tories' own record in office but focusing elsewhere, for example on Labour. Nick also pressed him on criticisms made by former Conservative Cabinet members about Boris Johnson's Brexit strategy and whether it left open the possibility of a hard Brexit at the end of next year. We appreciate that some listeners found this an uncomfortable interview. While we accept that Nick was forceful, we don't think the exchanges were beyond the range that regular listeners to Today would expect in an interview with an experienced senior politician.

Question Time: 2019 Leaders Special, BBC One, 22 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about a particular member of the public who had already appeared in the studio audience and contributed in previous episodes in this series.

Our response

Question Time is an audience led programme and we aim to ensure those who attend represent a range of views with broadly representative political backgrounds. We actively discourage people from repeatedly applying to take part in the programme and our application process makes this clear. This system does in part rely on the honesty of those who apply in relation to previous appearances. While we carry out checks, we cannot always prevent people who are determined to abuse the system.

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 29 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received some complaints regarding the tone and style of an interview with Stanley Johnson.

Our response

Stanley Johnson had been invited by Channel 4 News to attend their 'Climate Debate', and it was legitimate to question him on the Prime Minister's decision not to attend the debate. By Mr Johnson's own admission, he had some additional knowledge related to the decision and what the Prime Minister had said about not attending. The job of a BBC interviewer is to put forward the questions likely to be in the minds of our audience, and so Charlie Stayt questioned Mr Johnson on the reasons why the Prime Minister sent Michael Gove as his replacement in the debate. At times there were interruptions when it was necessary to keep the topic on track and to ensure that the questions were being answered. We consider that Mr Johnson was given ample time to put across his views, and that this was a professional interview conducted by Charlie Stayt. BBC Breakfast presenters treat all of their guests and contributors in a fair and similar manner. This interview ended politely with both presenter and guest thanking each other.

Match of the Day Live, Disruption to the usual BBC Two schedules, 23 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers unhappy with the disruption to the BBC Two schedules due to unbilled coverage of the Copa Libertadores Final.

Our response

The rights to the Copa Libertadores Final between Flamengo and River Plate were secured very late in the day which meant it was only possible to update some of the schedule listings. BBC Two did advise viewers of the change through the usual means, but we regret that some may have missed them. Our aim is to give our audience the opportunity to watch live football on the BBC and the South American Club Final is one of the biggest club finals outside of the Champions League. The winner of the final, Flamengo will now play in the FIFA Club World Cup which we have the live rights to show.

Meat: A Threat To Our Planet? BBC One, 25 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt the programme displayed a bias against meat, and was biased against UK farming practices.

Our response

The programme's focus, as its title suggests, was global meat production and demand. It explored the industry's huge impact on the global environment, from climate change to water pollution and biodiversity collapse. It was clear that the programme was not a study of British farming. It focused largely on farming practices in the USA and Brazil as these countries are two of the world's leading meat producers. As we heard at the beginning of the film, people eat more meat in the USA than anywhere else on earth and, as also stated in the programme, Brazil is the world's biggest exporter of beef. The film also makes clear that the farming methods shown are not the same the world over and that some farmers, including in the UK, farm livestock in a more sustainable way. The programme also depicted the humane slaughter of a chicken. In order to highlight that many of us are disconnected from the process of slaughtering meat, it was important to show how livestock is killed. It was clearly signposted to viewers that the chicken was going to be killed before the slaughter took place.

Strictly Come Dancing: the Results, BBC One, 30 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who experienced difficulties voting online for Strictly Come Dancing on Saturday 30th November 2019.

Our response

When the online vote opened a technical issue meant that some voters were presented with an incorrect error message when trying to cast their vote. We believe this technical issue presented itself for a short period during the vote window before we were able to remedy it. In response we extended the vote window by a further 20 minutes. The results were independently verified and a valid result was recorded. We can confirm that no votes were cast from anyone's BBC Account without their direct action, and for all online voters only the first 3 valid votes were counted as outlined in the terms and conditions. We would like to take this opportunity to reassure our viewers that we take the voting very seriously across the BBC and conduct thorough examinations to ensure that all methods of voting are robust, and that when an issue occurs it is investigated thoroughly.

The Andrew Neil Interviews, BBC One, 26 November 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints about Andrew Neil's interview with Jeremy Corbyn.

Our response

Viewers of our political programming expect tough questions from Andrew Neil. They also expect him to pull interviewees up on unanswered questions. We're satisfied that the interview with Jeremy Corbyn was appropriately robust and in line with what our audience would expect from a political interview. The Andrew Neil Interview is designed to be a tough and rigorous test of the party leaders in the General Election campaign. Throughout this election period Andrew Neil has similarly conducted interviews with representatives of other parties, including Nicola Sturgeon, Jo Swinson and Nigel Farage. It was reasonable for Andrew to challenge Jeremy Corbyn on the claims of anti-Semitism in the Labour party as well as his views on issues such as the WASPI women, tax cutting and spending and national security. All our coverage is required to be duly impartial and factually accurate, and we are confident that this was the case here.

The Andrew Neil Interviews, BBC One, 5 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people unhappy with Andrew Neil's closing remarks about Boris Johnson at the end of the last scheduled leaders' interview.

Our response

BBC News has a responsibility to our audience to scrutinise our politicians and the policies they advocate, and this is certainly true during a general election campaign. Leaders' interviews have been a key part of our election coverage for decades. During this campaign Andrew Neil has so far conducted in depth half hour interviews with all the main political leaders apart from Boris Johnson, who will not agree to one. Andrew has robustly questioned the leaders on their policy platforms and record. Andrew's statement at the end of the last scheduled leaders' interview was in no way an attack on Mr Johnson. He simply gave the reasons why it is so important that all political leaders subject themselves to scrutiny. He wasn't criticising Mr Johnson but setting out the main issues of contention that he would like to discuss with him, as he has with the other leaders, and give him an opportunity to respond by accepting the invitation to appear. As Andrew said, we would like to question Mr Johnson on these issues on behalf of our audience. Mr Johnson, by refusing the invitation, has made it impossible for audiences to hear his side of the story.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 1 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who were unhappy that we interviewed Boris Johnson on The Andrew Marr Show even though he hadn't agreed to be interviewed by Andrew Neil, and felt this demonstrated bias in Mr Johnson's favour.

Our response

Following the London Bridge attack we believed it was in the audience interest to hold the Government to account over the circumstances that had led up to this incident and the lessons that might be learnt as a result. Andrew Marr closely questioned Boris Johnson on the jailing and release of Usman Khan and the conditions in place to keep the public safe. He was also pressed on strains in the prison service and the Government's own record in this area. Mr Johnson was questioned too on other issues of public interest in the election campaign, including the state of the NHS and social care and Brexit. We appreciate that Mr Johnson has not been interviewed by Andrew Neil although he has been invited. The BBC cannot force politicians to do particular interviews and it is up to the audience to make its own mind up about why this might be the case.

The Andrew Marr Show, BBC One, 1 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt Andrew Marr's interview with Boris Johnson demonstrated bias against Mr Johnson.

Our response

Throughout the general election campaign Andrew Marr has been interviewing leaders and senior representatives from the main political parties. As viewers would expect from one of our flagship political programmes, Andrew is using these interviews to explore the policies they advocate, challenge them on their track records and give them an opportunity to respond to criticism levelled at them by their opponents. Two days after the London Bridge attack, a significant part of this interview also examined the circumstances leading up to it, including the Conservatives' record on law and order and the measures they might put in place as a result. Andrew also robustly challenged Mr Johnson on other election issues, including the NHS, child poverty, social care, and Brexit. These are clearly all important to our audience, and Andrew sought to challenge Mr Johnson with facts and alternative arguments. It is not uncommon for politicians, from all parties, to attempt to steer the interview onto their own agenda and when this happens, the presenter may intervene to get the interview back on track, as Andrew did at times here. This is a part of the cut and thrust of political interviewing which viewers understand and which would be the case whoever Andrew was facing.

BBC News, December 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from viewers who felt reports on a young boy sleeping on a hospital floor have been biased against Boris Johnson and failed to verify the circumstances in which the photo was taken.

Our response

We have been careful to report the facts of the story concerning the photo of a young boy sleeping on the floor of a hospital. In most of our reporting we have included a statement from Leeds General Infirmary, the hospital in question, which confirms that the young boy did sleep on the floor and that it was experiencing its busiest week since 2016. However we have also explained that a chair was offered to the boy's mother for him to use and that a bed was made available to him later in the evening. Throughout our coverage we have reported on the reaction of this photo from representatives from different political parties. Our editorial guidelines require us to achieve due impartiality. This does not mean that each report or programme must include the views of every political party but we must ensure that parties are given proportionate coverage over an appropriate period of time. We have previously reported on different issues with the NHS, and in the run up to the general election this is a hotly debated subject. We will continue to report on similar stories in a fair and factual manner.

Politics Live, BBC Two, 11 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints that postal votes were mentioned in this edition of Politics Live.

Our response

Laura Kuenssberg appeared on Politics Live to give her analysis of the closing days of the election campaign and the prospects for the parties involved. The remit of the complaints process is to investigate possible breaches of our editorial guidelines, not electoral law, and we are confident that they were adhered to in this instance. For your information the BBC has, however, issued a statement saying it "does not believe it, or its political editor, has breached electoral law."

The Prime Ministerial Debate, BBC One, 6 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from people who felt the chairing of the debate was biased against Jeremy Corbyn and in favour of Boris Johnson.

Our response

Nick Robinson's role during the BBC Prime Ministerial Debate was to facilitate a forum where both Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn could, based on the questions asked by the audience, talk about and challenge each other on their policy platforms. As Nick stated at the start of the programme his job was to ensure that the debate was as free and fair as possible, and that the questions posed by the audience were actually answered. He intervened at points with both men when he felt they weren't responding to the question or to a point made by the other leader. Nick also asked both Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson to address criticism levelled at them by their opponents, and issues of contention associated with them. In the case of Mr Johnson, this included allegations of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party, how he would fund public spending, and the fact he doesn't currently have a trade deal in place with the EU. Throughout the debate Nick was monitoring how much time both men were talking, and intervened to redress the balance when this was necessary by reminding Mr Johnson of the need to keep his answers brief and providing Mr Corbyn the opportunity to expand on his answers.

Have I Got News for You, BBC One, 13 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that the programme was biased against Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party.

Our response

HIGNFY has always covered the biggest news stories of the week in a light-hearted and humorous manner, and it is the case that the results of the general election were dominating the news at what is an extraordinary time in politics. The BBC has a long tradition of satire and it isn't unusual for public figures to have their actions scrutinised. No-one in the public eye is exempt and we don't consider that this programme treated any politician or political party any differently from one another.

Sports Personality of the Year 2019, BBC One, 15 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We have received complaints from viewers who claimed that Gary Lineker announced the winner before the voting lines were opened.

Our response

The comment that Gary made was human error and he corrected himself as soon as he could on-air. It was impossible for Gary, or anyone else to know who the winner was before the voting opened.

Question Time Results Special, BBC One, 13 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that the audience and programme were biased against Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party.

Our response

Question Time selects local audiences which reflect a broad range of political views. People apply to be in the audience for Question Time via the website and by phone and producers get in touch to ask questions on their previous voting record and future voting intentions, whether they have party political membership and also how they voted in the EU Referendum. This is to ensure a range of views are represented in the audience. Occasionally, if production staff feel any group or view is under-represented in the applications, they will promote the programme through relevant local media channels to encourage people to apply. In this case the programme team recruited more Conservative Party supporters to participate in the audience than supporters of any other political party in order to reflect the outcome of the general election. As with the make-up of the panels, Question Time is aiming to achieve due impartiality in the membership of the audience across the series as a whole, rather than being confined to an exact mathematical formula for each programme. We don't consider that the programme was biased against Boris Johnson or the Conservative Party. We heard from many people who provided their own analysis of the events of the previous day, and the Labour Party representative, Stephen Kinnock, was held to account on a number of issues. Of course, given this is a programme driven by questions and comments by audience members, we have no way of predicting how the debate will develop or which issues will spark a reaction.

EastEnders, BBC One, 17th December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers who had concerns about some of the content featured in the Phil Mitchell/Jack Branning storyline.

Our 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. Our regular viewers will know that Phil and Jack share a very turbulent history and that the scenes in question were part of an ongoing storyline where Phil learned that he was not the father of wife Sharon's baby, and wrongly believed that Jack was. We are always extremely mindful of the content within an episode and the time slot in which it is shown. All of our content 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. 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 and Phil's intent on seeking revenge whatever the cost over this betrayal, and that they were not included gratuitously. The content and placing of EastEnders has been carefully considered at a senior level, and although we know that children do watch, it isn't aimed at them. We believe that the general tone and content of EastEnders is now widely recognised, and that parents can make an informed decision as to whether they want their children to watch it.

Have I Got News For You, BBC One, 20 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We've received complaints from people who were offended by Charlie Brooker's joke which referenced the Holocaust.

Our response

HIGNFY looks at the biggest news stories each week and in this episode that included the General Election. Charlie Brooker's comment was a reference to the allegations of anti-Semitism which have plagued the Labour party since 2016. It was in no way directed at victims of the Holocaust or their families, however, we have noted that some people felt it was inappropriate.

Match of the Day Live: Club World Final, BBC One, 21 December 2019

Summary of complaint

We received complaints from viewers unhappy that the trophy ceremony was not shown at the end of our coverage on BBC One.

Our response

We would always aim to show the trophy lift but it was going to be difficult with the long delay to the presentation and the packed BBC One schedule. We stayed with coverage as long as we could but sadly we had to take the decision to move audiences to our other digital platforms to watch Liverpool receive the trophy. This was clearly signposted in the programme and we offered the coverage across multiple platforms, on BBC iPlayer, BBC Sport Online and the Red Button, so viewers could watch the ceremony.

A Christmas Carol, BBC One, December 2019

Summary of complaint

We were contacted by viewers who were disappointed by this new adaptation of a Dickens' classic. They felt it was of poor quality and/or were unhappy with some of the language that featured.

Our response

This new adaptation of the timeless classic, in conjunction with FX, was a unique and original take on the Charles Dickens' iconic ghost story by Steven Knight. This post-watershed adult drama was a haunting, hallucinatory, spine-tingling immersion into Scrooge's dark night of the soul. We aimed to provide a timely interpretation of a classic story, with characters speaking and reacting in ways which we believe were authentic, while retaining the essence of Dickens' original work. Each of the episodes were preceded by warnings that they contained some strong language and scenes which some may find upsetting, so that viewers wouldn't be taken by surprise.

Gavin & Stacey Christmas Special, BBC One, 25th December 2019

Summary of complaint

We were contacted by viewers who were unhappy that a certain lyric from the song Fairytale of New York was sung during the programme.

Our response

Fairytale of New York is a well-established, much-loved Christmas song which tells the story of a troubled couple in 1940s New York. The descent of their relationship is reflected in the increasingly abusive and offensive terms they use to address each other; insults which are intended to reflect the language that such characters might have used in that era. The origin of the word includes a definition which describes it as a contemptuous and antiquated word for laziness, and the author of the song has cited this inference behind his inclusion of that line. While the word 'faggot' is now widely acknowledged as having the potential to offend, the song never suggests or implies that this is, or was ever, an appropriate way to address another person, nor does it link it to homosexuality. Nessa and Bryn were seen singing the original lines and we can assure you there was no intention to offend viewers. We understand that some people will find it offensive in any context but we also recognise that the song is widely played and enjoyed in its original form. Ofcom have previously stated that they feel it is "unlikely that audiences would widely perceive [the song] as a serious attempt to denigrate the homosexual community".

BBC Breakfast, BBC One, 19 December 2019

Summary of complaint

Some viewers were unhappy with the nature of the interview with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rishi Sunak.

Our response

The interview focused on the Government's priorities in the Queen's Speech, including spending on the NHS and social care, and how realistic promises of improvements are, given the resources being made available. Naga Munchetty questioned Rishi Sunak closely on the differences between the real terms increase and the headline £34 billion figure being invested in the NHS, as well as the 100 days pledge on social care. She intervened at points in order to elicit direct answers to her questions and move the interview on, which is the role of the presenter in any interview. We believe her approach, while firm, remained polite. All of our presenting team maintain the same firm but fair standard of interviewing irrespective of the person or political party that is being represented. We do not believe Naga's interview was rude or aggressive - in our view Rishi Sunak was able to answer the questions in a timely manner.

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Today, Radio 4, 28 December 2019

Summary of complaint

Some listeners were disappointed that Andrew Sallis was on the programme.

Our response

The Master of the Kimblewick Hunt, Andrew Sallis was invited by guest editor Charles Moore to talk about the role of music and hunting. He explained the role of the horn, how it works in hunts with the followers and hounds. The sound of the horn was aired to illustrate the points he was making. Following the item, Nick Robinson made it very clear in his interview with Charles Moore that hunting has been banned and that the government had no plans to overturn it. We don't agree this item promoted hunting.