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# Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

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## Introduction

This Bulletin reports on complaints made to Ofcom about the BBC's online material. It gives the outcome of Ofcom's consideration on each complaint received and where relevant, provides Ofcom's opinion on whether the BBC observed the relevant standards for its online material.

Under the BBC's Charter and Agreement, set by Government and Parliament, the BBC is responsible for the editorial standards of its online material. Ofcom has a responsibility to consider and give an opinion on whether the BBC has observed relevant editorial guidelines in its online material<sup>1</sup>. This came into effect with the Digital Economy Act on 27 April 2017.

Online material means content on the BBC's website and apps. This includes written text, images, video and sound content. It does not extend to social media, Bitesize, BBC material on third party websites and World Service content, among other things.

Ofcom's published arrangements and procedures for handling complaints about BBC online material can be found here on the Ofcom website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/ofcom-and-the-bbc/bbc-online-material>. These documents contain more information about the types of complaints we will consider and the process we will normally follow when handling complaints.

Complaints about BBC online material must follow the 'BBC First' approach, where they are made to the BBC in the first instance. If a complainant is not satisfied with the BBC's final response to a complaint about its online material, they may seek an independent opinion on it from Ofcom.

Unlike our role regulating the standards of BBC broadcasting and on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), Ofcom has no enforcement powers for BBC online material.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include content on BBC on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), which must comply with relevant rules in Ofcom's [Broadcasting Code](#).

## Complaint taken forward for consideration

Below is a complaint which, after careful assessment, Ofcom considers raises potentially substantive issues under the relevant BBC editorial guidelines and therefore warrants further consideration by Ofcom. Ofcom will reach an Opinion on this complaint in accordance with its published procedures: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf).

<b>BBC online material</b>	<b>Date<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
BBC News website: "Concerns raised over Commonwealth leadership"	26/01/2017	Fairness, contributors and consent	1

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<sup>2</sup> This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.

## Complaints assessed, not accepted

### Closed between 3 April and 31 October 2017

Below is an alphabetical list of complaints which, after careful assessment, Ofcom considered did not raise substantive issues under the relevant BBC editorial guidelines that warranted further consideration by Ofcom.

For more information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material go to:

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf).

### Complaints about BBC online material

BBC online material	Date <sup>3</sup>	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: "Does Middlesbrough deserve its unenviable reputation?"	24/11/2016 <sup>4</sup>	Accuracy; Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Dutch election: PM Rutte sees off anti-EU Wilders challenge"	15/03/2017	Accuracy; Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Election results 2017: May stays, for now"	08/06/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Finsbury Park attack: What we know so far"	10/07/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Germany warns the City over Brexit risk"	10/02/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Is there institutional racism in mental health care?"	05/07/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Israel and the Palestinians: What are alternatives to a two-state solution?"	17/03/2017	Accuracy; Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Labour manifesto vision: More spending, more tax, more borrowing"	16/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News Website: "Landmark chronic fatigue trial could treat two-thirds"	01/11/2016 <sup>5</sup>	Accuracy; Impartiality; Conflicts of interest	1
BBC News website: "Manchester United announces record quarterly revenues"	09/02/2017	Editorial integrity and independence from external interests	1

<sup>3</sup> This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.

<sup>4</sup> This complaint was transferred to Ofcom by the BBC Trust which was unable to consider the appeal before it ceased its regulatory functions on 2 April 2017.

<sup>5</sup> As above

BBC News website: "Nazi war crimes suspect Laszlo Csatory dies"	04/05/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Three Palestinians killed after stabbing in Jerusalem"	16/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC Sport website: Formula 1 pages	01/07/2017	Editorial integrity and independence from external interests	1

## BBC First

### Complaints closed between 3 April and 31 October 2017

#### Complaints about BBC online material, made to Ofcom in the first instance

The table below is an alphabetical list of complaints about the BBC's online material which Ofcom has not assessed. This is because Ofcom only considers complaints about the BBC's online material if the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final view on the complaint. The complaints in this table were made to Ofcom before completing the BBC's process.

BBC online material	Date <sup>6</sup>	Category	Number of Complaints
BBC Humberside website: "Every pictures tells a story"	25/09/2017	Fairness, contributors and consent	1
BBC News app	30/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	04/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	11/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	20/04/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	18/07/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	22/07/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: general complaint	27/07/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: homepage	03/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Charlottesville: Trump criticised over response to far-right"	12/08/2017	n/a	1
BBC News website: "Climate change: Ministers should be 'sued' over targets"	27/09/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Election 2017	27/05/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Election 2017	02/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Election 2017 - live reporting 27 May 2017	27/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Former Tory aide renews call for anti Brexit party"	10/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Gary Haggarty: Ex-senior loyalist pleads guilty to 200 terror charges"	23/06/2017	Harm and offence; Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "General Election 2017: BBC cameraman injured by Corbyn car"	11/05/2017	Impartiality	1

<sup>6</sup> This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.

BBC online material	Date <sup>6</sup>	Category	Number of Complaints
BBC News website: "General election 2017: Corbyn pressed over IRA comments"	21/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "General election 2017: Corbyn quizzed on Trident and IRA"	26/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "India police pair sacked over faked Everest climb"	08/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Is it OK to use black emojis and gifs?"	15/08/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: "Israel and the Palestinians: What are alternatives to a two-state solution?"	28/02/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Jeremy Corbyn opposes 'shoot to kill' policy" (video)	04/06/2017	Impartiality	3
BBC News website: "Jeremy Corbyn opposes 'shoot to kill' policy" (video)	05/06/2017	Accuracy; Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Jeremy Corbyn opposes 'shoot to kill' policy" (video)	06/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Jeremy Corbyn struggles over cost of childcare policy"	30/05/2017	Impartiality	2
BBC News website: "Kenya election: Raila Odinga urges supporters to strike"	13/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Labour manifesto vision: More spending, more tax, more borrowing"	16/05/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Labour manifesto vision: More spending, more tax, more borrowing"	16/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Labour manifesto vision: More spending, more tax, more borrowing"	17/05/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Labour manifesto vision: More spending, more tax, more borrowing"	17/05/2017	Impartiality	3
BBC News website: "Laura Kuenssberg report on Jeremy Corbyn inaccurate, says BBC Trust"	17/03/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Lauren Singer: Zero waste star sets up package-free shop"	08/07/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: "Michelle Thomson: Fraud case against former SNP MP dropped"	01/08/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Moors Murderer Ian Brady dies"	15/05/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: "MP Anne Marie Morris suspended for racist remark"	10/07/2017	Harm and offence	1

BBC online material	Date <sup>6</sup>	Category	Number of Complaints
BBC News website: "Netanyahu in Paris to commemorate Vel d'Hiv deportation of Jews"	16/07/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Player protests force change on GTA V mod kit"	28/06/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: "Sir Cliff Richard: BBC says legal spending 'grossly unreasonable'"	04/05/2017	Fairness	1
BBC News website: "Thai man kills baby on Facebook Live then takes own life"	25/04/2017	Harm and offence	1
BBC News website: "The last hours - the general election conclusions"	07/06/2017	Impartiality	2
BBC News website: "The triumph that wasn't - Theresa May and the general election gamble that failed"	12/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website "The 'Aggressive Brexiteer': Would I still vote Leave?"	24/05/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC Newsround website: "The Labour party in 60 seconds" and "The Conservative party in 60 seconds"	08/06/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Unite boss calls for co-ordinated pay strikes"	12/09/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: "Viewsnight: 'We should not stand for the British national anthem'"	13/10/2017	Reporting crime and anti-social behaviour	1
BBC News website: "White supremacy: Are US right-wing groups on the rise?"	13/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: "Who are Britain's jihadists?"	12/10/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC Scotland Sport website	23/07/2017	Accuracy	1
BBC Sports website: football	11/08/2017	Impartiality	1
BBC Three website: "Jacob Rees-Mogg's hashtag is hijacked by LGBT tweeters"	07/09/2017	Impartiality	1

## Out of remit complaints

The table below includes complaints which have not been assessed by Ofcom because they fall outside of Ofcom's remit under its arrangement with the BBC.

BBC online material	Date <sup>7</sup>	Number of Complaints
BBC Breaking News Twitter: photos inside the Grenfell Tower	15/06/2017	8
BBC Have Your Say	18/04/2017	1
BBC Match of the Day Facebook page	05/02/2017	1
BBC News website – comments section	02/05/2017	1
BBC News website: "US will 'not repeat' claims GCHQ wiretapped Donald Trump"	17/03/2017	1
BBC North West Twitter	11/06/2017	1
BBC Radio Bristol Facebook page	14/04/2017	1
BBC Radio One Twitter	24/06/2017	1
BBC Sport, Scottish football website	04/07/2017	1
BBC Stories, BBC Three Facebook page	20/07/2017	1
BBC Sport, Rugby Union website	18/06/2017	1
BBC Sport, Rugby Union website	14/06/2017	1
BBC Store	15/06/2017	1
BBC This Week Facebook	13/10/2017	1
BBC This Week Twitter	13/10/2017	4
BBC Three Facebook	20/04/2017	1
BBC Three Facebook page: "Here we go" video	08/06/2017	1
BBC Three Facebook page: "Things not to say" videos	16/08/2017	1
BBC Three Twitter: "Here we go" video	08/06/2017	1
BBC Three Twitter: "Here we go" video	07/06/2017	1
BBC Twitter: @BBCNormanS	03/05/2017	1

For information about how Ofcom deals with different types of BBC complaints, go to:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint/how-ofcom-deals-with-bbc-complaints>

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<sup>7</sup> This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material.