
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 material¹. 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.

¹ 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](#).

Complaints assessed, not accepted

Closed between 10 November 2018 and 18 January 2019

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.

Complaints about BBC online material

BBC online material	Date²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	16/08/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Storm Florence: Disaster declared in North Carolina	15/09/2018	Accuracy	1

² This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC First

Complaints closed between 10 November 2018 and 18 January 2019

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 ³	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	18/10/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	20/10/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Amphibian that buries head in sand named after Donald Trump	19/12/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Bank of England raises UK interest rates	03/08/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: British Neo- Nazis suggest Prince Harry should be shot	05/12/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Fortnite teen hackers 'earning thousands of pounds a week'	21/12/2018	Sex	1
BBC News website: Fukushima nuclear disaster: Japan confirms first worker death from radiation	07/09/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Michelle Obama and me: How former US first lady changed my life	03/12/2018	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Nehanda, the Shona spirit medium that inspired Mugabe	22/10/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Pound drops close to dollar on Brexit uncertainty	14/12/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Sabarimala: India activist held for 'explicit' thigh photo	28/11/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Should there be a tax on red meat?	07/11/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: The iPhone at 10: How the smartphone became so smart	17/01/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Three adults and baby killed in Sheffield crash after police pursuit	10/11/2018	Impartiality	1

³ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC online material	Date⁴	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: Vote Leave chief on watchdog's findings	04/07/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC website	17/11/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC website	29/11/2018	Accuracy	1
BBC website	30/11/2018	Accuracy	1

⁴ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

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	Date⁵	Number of Complaints
BBC News website: Theresa May awaits result of Tory MPs' confidence vote (message board comments)	12/12/2018	1
BBC Persian on Twitter	04/10/2018	1
BBC 3 (Facebook app BBC3 page)	n/a	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>

⁵ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.