
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 11

Date: 24 June 2019

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 on the Ofcom website. 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 20 April 2019 and 14 June 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.

[More information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material.](#)

Complaints about BBC online material

BBC online material	Date ²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: 3 ways to fight racism and sexism in video games	24/01/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Coverage of International Women's Day	08/03/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Earth Hour: Switching off lights to save the planet	30/03/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Syria conflict: Bolton says US withdrawal is conditional	16/01/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Syria war: 'IS suicide bomber' kills US troops in Manbij	16/01/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News: Teen admits sex with schoolgirls	16/02/2007	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: US stops all aid to Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza	01/02/2019	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 20 April 2019 and 14 June 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 Bitesize: Tropical rainforests	01/04/19	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website	21/04/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	22/05/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	03/06/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	08/06/18	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: #HotSoundGuy	24/05/19	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: 2019 European elections: What you need to know	16/05/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Activists storm Yekaterinburg Russia park in protest against new church	16/05/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: BBC confirms first Tory leadership debate	06/06/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brexit: Theresa May defends 31 October delay to MPs	12/04/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement Bill 'should include public vote'	18/05/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: European Election 2019: UK results in maps and charts	24/05/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: European Election 2019: UK results in maps and charts	27/05/19	Impartiality	2
BBC News website: How do European elections work?	12/04/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: How do European elections work?	12/04/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Labour MPs urge more action against anti-Semitism	04/02/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Local elections: A bitter flavour for Labour and Tories	04/05/19	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	Date³	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: New York abortion law: Why are so many people talking about it?	19/05/19	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Pet insurance payouts hit record of £785m	19/04/19	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Ramblers demand coastal path in Somerset reopens	28/11/17	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: What did we learn from the Bank of England?	28/11/18	Accuracy	1
BBC Radio 5 Live and BBC website	27/05/19	Accuracy	1
BBC Sport website	18/05/19	Accuracy	1
BBC Sport website: Israel Folau sacked by Rugby Australia for social media post	17/05/19	Accuracy	1
BBC website	20/05/19	Impartiality	1
Newsround: Plastic: It's in the sea, in the sky and on the land	24/04/19	Accuracy	1
Radio 1 Big Weekend website	12/03/19	Accuracy	1
Top Gear Website	12/05/19	External Relationships and Funding	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	Date⁵	Number of Complaints
BBC complaints website	11/06/2019	1
BBC Politics Twitter account	27/05/2019	1
Radio 1 Instagram account	11/04/2019	1
Twitter	08/05/2019	1

[More information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material.](#)

Complaints accepted

Ofcom has considered and accepted a complaint about the following material and is now preparing an Opinion in this case.

BBC online material
BBC news website: British Neo-Nazis suggest Prince Harry should be shot