



Dame Melanie Dawes  
Chief Executive, Ofcom  
Via email

28/02/2024

Dear Dame Melanie,

I am writing as chair of the British Broadcasting Challenge, a non-partisan policy and campaigning group set up two years ago to promote the values of public service broadcasting.

In light of recent events, we are asking that Ofcom establish two inquiries as a matter of urgency into GB News. We believe that both its behaviour and ownership now pose serious questions about whether it should be allowed to continue as a licensed broadcaster.

First, it appears that GB News is systematically ignoring impartiality rules laid down by Parliament. As well as numerous complaints upheld by Ofcom, there are now multiple investigations into further alleged breaches. The Prime Minister's recent appearance in an hour-long programme devoid of opposing views, followed by deeply troubling and uncontested remarks by the then Conservative MP Lee Anderson, are just the latest examples of an apparent contempt for the UK's long-standing impartiality laws.

**In view of these repeated and egregious breaches, we ask that Ofcom initiate a wide-ranging enquiry into GB News editorial policies and output.**

Second, we are profoundly concerned by revelations about Sir Paul Marshall, one of two majority share owners of GB News and listed as a PSC (Person of Significant Control). It has now been established that Sir Paul has recently endorsed extremist far right views and conspiracy theories on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). While we are fully committed to the principles of plurality and free expression, the UK has carefully drafted rules about ownership of broadcast licences

Under the 1990 and 1996 Broadcasting Acts, Ofcom must be satisfied that any licence holder is a "fit and proper person". We note that, in making that judgment, Ofcom pays particular attention to "how well they have complied with regulatory standards and licence conditions"; and "how well they have conducted themselves beyond the broadcasting arena".<sup>1</sup>

**On both those counts, there must be serious doubts about GB News, and we ask that Ofcom initiate an inquiry into whether it remains fit and proper to own a broadcasting licence.**

Given the imminence of a general election, and the manifest and multiple breaches by GB News of Ofcom's broadcasting code as well as new concerns about its owners, we urge you to launch these two wide ranging investigations as a matter of urgency.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat Younge".

Pat Younge

Chair, British Broadcasting Challenge

Cc: Ofcom chair, DCMS Committee members, Secretary of State, Shadow Secretary of State, Liberal Democrat and SNP spokespersons

<sup>1</sup> Decision on licences held by BSkyB, 2017, p4:

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/103621/decision-fit-proper.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/103621/decision-fit-proper.pdf)