

Finding of the Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust

Article by Chris Packham

**BBC Wildlife Magazine,
September 2015**

Finding of 23 September 2016

Summary of finding

Two complainants alleged that Chris Packham breached the BBC's Editorial Guidelines on Impartiality when he expressed his personal views on a controversial conservation subject in the September 2015 edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine. The complainants also said the presenter had breached the guidelines on conflicts of interest.

The Committee concluded that:

- the amount of time contracted and the amount of time on air did not make Mr Packham a "regular" BBC presenter in the sense intended by the BBC's impartiality guideline 4.4.31.
- guideline 4.4.31 referred to BBC staff, regular BBC presenters and reporters and the phrase was meant to create a single description of persons who are associated with news or public policy-related output.
- the output cited by the complainants (to support their belief that Mr Packham was associated with news and public policy-related output) did not justify designating the *Watches* as being news or public policy-related programming. Therefore, even if (contrary to their view) Mr Packham was a "regular" presenter, he was not a regular presenter "associated with news or public policy-related output".
- as a consequence of the above, Mr Packham did not fall within guideline 4.4.31.
- there had not been a breach of the impartiality guidelines when Mr Packham expressed his personal views on a controversial issue in the column because:
 - the column had a strapline describing it as opinion and there had been no complaint about the accuracy of the article
 - a right to reply was given, prior to publication, to those named in the column and readers were provided with an opportunity to respond to the column in a subsequent edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine
 - both complainants had taken up this opportunity and had their letters published.
- the fact that BBC Wildlife Magazine's new editor would not have allowed the reference to those involved in game shooting as the "nasty brigade" to have been published, together with the fact that both complainants had been given a right to reply to it, meant that the issue had been resolved and no further action needed to be taken on this point of complaint.
- regarding the BBC's conflict of interest guidelines, the Committee did not consider that the guideline to do with presenters in news, current affairs and topical programmes (15.4.19) was applicable in this case (since it had already agreed that Mr Packham was not a regular presenter associated with news or public policy-related output).
- Mr Packham was a freelance presenter and as such not a BBC employee. It was therefore open to him to associate himself with wildlife charities without being in breach of the guidelines. Trustees acknowledged that Mr Packham campaigned on a wide range of wildlife issues and supported a number of charities in this field. They

emphasised the importance of the approach taken by both the BBC and Mr Packham to managing any potential conflicts of interest in order to enable the BBC to continue to make use of his acknowledged expertise as a biologist and conservationist and his skill as a presenter whilst not implying that the BBC endorsed his personal views on charities and causes.

- it will be important for both the BBC and Mr Packham to assess regularly and formally his freelance and campaigning work to ensure that it does not undermine the impartiality and independence of his work for the BBC which audiences clearly value highly.
- having considered carefully the instances cited by the complainants, it was clear that Mr Packham had been expressing his personal views as an individual, and that there was no implication that the charities and other causes he supported were endorsed by the BBC. Accordingly, Trustees did not consider that Mr Packham had undermined the BBC's reputation for impartiality.

Overall finding – the complaint was partially not upheld and partially resolved.

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Background

Chris Packham's column for the September 2015 edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine was headlined:

"It's shameful that some conservation charities don't stand up for foxes, badgers and hen harriers".

The column was an opinion piece in which Mr Packham began by criticising two wildlife conservation organisations, the RSPB and The Wildlife Trusts, for not speaking out against what he said was the:

"UK government's attempt to make hunting foxes with packs of dogs in England and Wales ... easier."

He then proposed various reasons for their silence saying:

"Maybe they don't class Britain's largest remaining land carnivore as 'wildlife'. Maybe they don't see it as an essential part of our ecosystems, or think that protecting it is simply not their job. Maybe they just assume that the League Against Cruel Sports and RSPCA can handle all that tricky political work..."

"Or perhaps it's because charities like these two are hamstrung by out-dated liaisons with the 'nasty brigade' and can't risk upsetting their old friends. This might also be why, for the second year, the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts HQ refused to support Hen Harrier Day, an awareness campaign drawing attention to criminal persecution of a threatened bird.

"But then, as grouse moor owners who allow driven grouse shoots, the poor souls at the National Trust are in an awkward position – so much so that they clearly struggle to discern right from wrong. It's a shame – though not as shameful as the absence of any support from both the Wildlife Trusts central office and the Hawk and Owl Trust.

"If you're squirming at this criticism, let me be clear: I keenly support these bodies and their brilliant staff and volunteers, without whom we'd be lost."

Mr Packham concluded his column by saying: "We want more action from Britain's conservation leaders, not the fence-sitting and ineffectual risk-avoidance that have contributed to the mess we're in now."

The column was signposted as opinion and Mr Packham was described as a conservationist and presenter. The magazine offered a right of reply to the opinion piece saying:

"Do you agree with the arguments raised here? We'd love to hear your views – for contact details see page 5."

Complaints

This was a consolidated appeal by two complainants who believed that the article had failed to be impartial and that Mr Packham had breached the BBC guidelines on Conflicts of Interest.

- Both complainants believed that Mr Packham should not have expressed a personal view on a controversial subject, as they considered he was a regular presenter of BBC output that covers public policy-related issues.
- Complainant A said that Mr Packham had failed to be impartial when describing those involved in game shooting as “the nasty brigade” and his comments had inflamed, rather than informed, the debate about the known wildlife conflict between red grouse and hen harriers in England.
- Complainant B said that Mr Packham had breached the BBC guidelines to do with conflicts of interest by urging supporters in a YouTube video to join the League Against Cruel Sports and to sign a petition calling for a ban on driven grouse shooting.

At Stages 1 and 2, the BBC responded to these complaints in the following way:

- In relation to the complainants saying that Mr Packham should not have expressed a personal view on a controversial subject as he was a regular presenter of programmes that cover public policy-related issues, the Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide, said that Mr Packham was not a regular presenter, but was contracted separately each time the *Watch* series is on air. As a result, he said Mr Packham was not under contract to the BBC public service at the time his article was published in BBC Wildlife Magazine. The Head of Editorial Standards said that, while Mr Packham might be described as a recurring presenter, this meant he was not a regular presenter at the time of the article.
- The Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide, said that, while the *Watch* programmes may occasionally touch on areas where there was an associated public policy debate, they were primarily focused on the wildlife and not the policy issues. He said that he considered the examples cited by the complainant did not demonstrate that the *Watch* programmes were news or public policy-related.
- The Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide said that the BBC Guidelines state that “the BBC had a tradition of allowing a wide range of individuals, groups or organisations to offer a personal view or opinion ... this can range from the outright expression of highly partial views by a campaigner, to the opinion of a specialist or professional...” He said that BBC Wildlife Magazine was trying to uphold this tradition by publishing Mr Packham’s article.
- The Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide, said that from May 2015 to November 2015 Mr Packham was commissioned to write a page in every issue covering a variety of topics and giving his personal opinion on the subject. He said that Mr Packham was not the only columnist and his column was labelled “Opinion”.

- The Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide, explained how people mentioned in the opinion columns were provided with an opportunity to respond prior to publication while other comments for and against were published in the November issue in the proportion in which they were received. These included opinions from both of the complainants.
- In relation to one of the complainants saying that Mr Packham had failed to be impartial when describing those involved in game shooting as “the nasty brigade”, the new editor of BBC Wildlife Magazine said:

“Coming to this magazine as the new Editor and with a fresh eye, I will say that I feel some of the language used by Chris Packham in that column was somewhat flippant and the use of a phrase such as ‘nasty brigade’ would not have been let through had I been overseeing the content. My aim for the future is to provide a platform for informed opinion, within the regulatory guidelines and with cogent factual and legal content, and to offer a right to reply in the next available issue to all parties concerned in the debate.”

Appeal to the Trust

The complainants appealed to the BBC Trust and made the following points in relation to impartiality and conflicts of interest:

- Point A. Both complainants said that Mr Packham should not have expressed his personal opinion on a controversial subject in his BBC Wildlife Magazine article because as a presenter of the *Watch* programmes and other output for the past six years he should be classed as a regular presenter of a BBC programme that covers public policy-related output, and by writing the article he breached the BBC’s impartiality guidelines. The complainants cited four examples of public policy-related BBC output presented by Mr Packham - *Springwatch Unsprung*, Red Button, 4 June 2015, *Autumnwatch Day Four*, BBC Two, 5 November 2015, *Chris Packham’s Natural Selection*, BBC Four, 11 June 2015 and *Autumnwatch Unsprung*, Red Button, 2 November 2015.
- Point B: One of the complainants believed that Mr Packham had failed to be impartial by describing those involved in game shooting as “the nasty brigade”.
- Point C: Both complainants believed that Mr Packham had breached the BBC’s guidelines to do with conflicts of interest. One of the complainants cited a video posted by the presenter on YouTube in which he urged supporters to join the League Against Cruel Sports and to sign a petition calling for a ban on driven grouse shooting. The other complainant cited comments made by Mr Packham during a World Land Trust debate in 2014 in which he mentioned BBC *Springwatch* viewers when discussing the conservation management of some grouse moors.

Applicable Editorial Guidelines

The relevant editorial guidelines relating to Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest are applicable to this case. The full guidelines are at www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines

The Committee's decision

The Committee considered the complaint against the relevant editorial standards, as set out in the BBC's Editorial Guidelines. The guidelines are a statement of the BBC's values and standards.

In reaching its decisions, the Committee took account of all of the available evidence, including (but not limited to) the Editorial Adviser's report and the subsequent submissions from the complainants and the BBC.

Point (A): Chris Packham breached the BBC's impartiality guidelines when he expressed his personal views on a controversial issue in a column he wrote for the September 2015 edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine.

The Committee began by considering whether Mr Packham was a regular presenter of BBC output that covers public policy-related issues and should therefore not have expressed a personal view on a controversial subject.

It noted that both complainants alleged a specific breach of the BBC's impartiality guideline 4.4.31 which states:

BBC staff and regular BBC presenters or reporters associated with news or public policy-related output may offer professional judgements rooted in evidence. However, it is not normally appropriate for them to present or write personal view programmes and content on public policy, on matters of political or industrial controversy, or on 'controversial subjects' in any area.

The Committee noted that both complainants believed Mr Packham was a regular BBC presenter because he has been presenting the *Watch* series, produced by the BBC Natural History Unit ("NHU"), since 2009. It further noted that he had made a range of other BBC programmes produced by the NHU, BBC Science and independent production companies. It noted that he was employed as a freelance, self-employed presenter for all of these.

The Committee noted that, using 2015 as an exemplar, Mr Packham was contracted with the NHU for about 119 days, about a third of the year. He was on air for the *Watch* series for a total of 27.5 hours in 2015 and also worked with the NHU that year on an eight-part one-hour series called *The World's Weirdest Events* and a three-part one-hour series called *The World's Sneakiest Animals*. Besides his work for the NHU, he presented *Chris Packham's Natural Selection* on BBC Four, an evening of curated programmes.

The Committee also noted that both complainants had cited examples to support their belief that, not only was Mr Packham "a regular BBC presenter", but that he was also "associated with news and public policy-related output". It noted that these were:

- *Springwatch Unsprung*, Red Button, 4 June 2015 and specifically when Mr Packham interviewed PC Mark Bryant, a wildlife crime officer, about how the police were tackling hare coursing, raptor crime and egg stealing.
- *Autumnwatch Day Four*, BBC Two, 5 November 2015 and specifically an item to do with red squirrel conservation. A sequence in this programme covered a conservation initiative to build a suspension bridge for use by dormice and red squirrels in an area where their habitats had become fragmented. The feature explained a practical conservation initiative and its result.

- *Chris Packham's Natural Selection*, BBC Four, 11 June 2015. Mr Packham had been asked to curate an evening of programmes for the channel. He began the evening with an hour-long discussion with two people he described as "my absolute heroes" - the artist Jeremy Deller and the environmentalist and journalist George Monbiot. Interviews with his two guests were interspersed with a range of clips from wildlife programmes. The evening included discussions about Mr Deller's painting of a hen harrier carrying off a Range Rover and Mr Monbiot's campaign to re-wild parts of Britain.
- *Autumnwatch Unsprung*, Red Button, 2 November 2015 and specifically an interview with George Monbiot about re-wilding and sheep farming.

The Committee noted that the Executive Producer, NHU responded to the complainants' assertion that the *Watches* programmes involve themselves in public policy debates by saying:

"The *Watches* include items about wildlife that are topical, relevant and of public interest, and always have, even before Chris Packham was appointed. We have followed a BBC Trust request to 'deepen and sharpen' our journalism around subjects like these, after a recent review of coverage of rural affairs in the BBC. These subjects are always addressed through the science and biology of the specific wildlife topic and the editorial team remains diligent to ensure each topic is accurately covered within the guidelines of impartiality. We do not cover points of policy directly, and certainly don't campaign.

"Our role, as a specialist factual series for the BBC, is to bring the latest science to the audience's attention and in addition use blogs on our website to give them the full range of balanced information so that they can make up their own minds on the policy arguments. In particularly sensitive or controversial subjects - we often also encourage our audience to air their own views as comments on our blog – and these comments often contain views from the whole range of the debate, which we applaud. Our protocols around these subjects are well known to our audience, and they continue to expect us to do this as part of our specialist factual public service remit.

"We constantly review the current science and policy debates in the public domain (and when necessary consult colleagues from BBC News and BBC Editorial Policy) to make sure that our approach is right up to date in applying our basic principles of balanced reporting on the latest science and biology around a subject."

The Committee further noted that the Executive Producer, NHU, also responded to the specific allegation that Mr Packham's interview with George Monbiot in *Autumnwatch Unsprung* about re-wilding was an example of Mr Packham's involvement in public policy broadcasting saying:

"It is our judgment that 're-wilding' – a broad subject covering everything from the potential future re-introduction of large predators to the UK, to our potential future management of our waterways, woodlands and uplands – is still very much an academic / scientific concept being discussed as theory only by academics, writers and journalists. We believe this is not yet a matter of direct policy debate, as is indeed the case for, for example, badger culling, deer culling, fox hunting, beaver re-introduction etc. We have a very close dialogue with our audience through social

media and other channels, and they have made it plain that re-wilding is an idea that they are interested in and would like to know more about. We have responded with a handful of items, which have explained some of the theories and looked at some of the science and biology behind it. I would not describe it as a major editorial thread or regularly recurring theme on the *Watches*.

"In future, if re-wilding goes beyond the current academic discussion and becomes a matter of policy or controversy (as in the subjects outlined above), our protocols will adapt to match those we apply to areas that have a policy element, allowing for all sides of any policy debate to be heard, and to bring the latest peer-reviewed science to bear.

"George Monbiot appeared as a guest on *Unsprung* in the same way he has appeared on a number of BBC programmes, including *Countryfile*, Radio 4 *Ramblings with Clare Balding* and many others. He is invited as an independent journalist and conservationist to share his views. George Monbiot's work on the theory of re-wilding is well known – in fact possibly the best known in this country, so his invitation to speak about it on a range of BBC programmes would appear logical and appropriate to our audience.

"Regarding our protocols on the day of transmission of the re-wilding item you mention, Chris Packham – who is the sole presenter of *Unsprung* in its current format - was briefed in full by the *Unsprung* team before, during and after the interview as he was on 'talk-back' to the producer and series editor in the live transmission gallery, allowing the production team full editorial control of the item. Chris Packham was fully aware of his role as a *Springwatch* presenter and did not share any of his own personal views during this item."

The Committee observed that the Corporation was of the view that guideline 4.4.31 was concerned with "*BBC staff and regular BBC presenters or reporters associated with news or public policy-related output*" and that, as Mr Packham's work for the BBC was almost exclusively for the NHU, the Corporation believed that audiences did not associate him with news or public policy-related output.

Having considered all these points, Trustees needed then to decide whether Mr Packham fell within guideline 4.4.31.

First, they considered that the *Watch* series were seasonal programmes, and on air for a relatively short period; and that that series taken with the other programme series and the evening of programmes curated by Mr Packham did not amount to regular appearances on air. The Trustees concluded that the amount of time contracted and the amount of time on air did not make Mr Packham a "regular" BBC presenter in the sense intended by the guidelines.

Second, the Committee considered the proper interpretation of guideline 4.4.31, and in particular which of the descriptions of persons mentioned was qualified by the words "associated with news or public policy-related output". In other words, did that phrase refer (i) only to reporters; or (ii) only to reporters and regular presenters; or (iii) to BBC staff, regular presenters and reporters? The Committee concluded that sense (iii) was the proper interpretation, and that the phrase was meant to create a single description of persons, i.e. *any BBC staff, regular presenters and/ or reporters who are associated with news or public policy-related output*.

The Committee did not consider that the output cited by the complainants was such as to justify designating the *Watches* as being news or public policy-related programming. The Committee did not believe that the items on red squirrel conservation and wildlife crime, nor the discussion of re-wilding, demonstrated that the *Watches* had a public policy remit. Therefore, even if (contrary to their view) he was a “regular” presenter, he was not a regular presenter *associated with news or public policy-related output*.

The Committee therefore decided, for both these reasons, that Mr Packham did not fall within guideline 4.4.31.

The Committee considered, however, that guidelines 4.4.29 and 4.4.30, which relate to “personal view content”, were engaged. These are as follows:

4.4.29: The BBC has a tradition of allowing a wide range of individuals, groups or organisations to offer a personal view or opinion, express a belief, or advance a contentious argument in its output. This can range from the outright expression of highly partial views by a campaigner, to the opinion of a specialist or professional including an academic or scientist, to views expressed through contributions from our audiences. All of these can add to the public understanding and debate, especially when they allow our audience to hear fresh and original perspectives on familiar issues.

Such personal view content must be clearly signposted to audiences in advance.

4.4.30: Additionally, when personal view programmes and websites (for example, blogs) cover ‘controversial subjects’, especially those concerning matters of public policy or political or industrial controversy, we should:

- retain a respect for factual accuracy
- fairly represent opposing viewpoints when included
- provide an opportunity to respond when appropriate, for example in a prearranged discussion programme
- ensure that a sufficiently broad range of views and perspectives is included in output of a similar type and weight and in an appropriate timeframe.

The Committee accepted that Mr Packham’s article in the BBC Wildlife Magazine had expressed a personal view about a “controversial subject”. The Committee noted that the column had a strapline describing it as opinion and that there had been no complaint about the accuracy of the article. It noted that the Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Worldwide, had explained that a right to reply was given, prior to publication, to those named in the column and that readers were provided with an opportunity to respond to the column in a subsequent edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine. It further noted that both complainants had taken up this opportunity and had had letters published about the Chris Packham column.

As a result, the Committee considered that there had not been a breach of the impartiality guidelines in relation to Point A.

Finding on Point A: Not Upheld

Point (B): Mr Packham failed to be impartial because his column described those involved in game shooting as “the nasty brigade”.

The Trustees then considered whether Mr Packham had failed to be impartial by describing in his column those involved in driven game shooting as “the nasty brigade”.

The Committee began by noting that the article set out to criticise two wildlife conservation organisations, the RSPB and The Wildlife Trusts, for allegedly not speaking out on what Mr Packham described as the “UK government’s attempt to making hunting foxes with packs of dogs in England and Wales ... easier”.

It noted the various reasons that Mr Packham proposed for their silence (see extracts quoted above). The Committee noted that there had been a long-running dispute between the shooting industry and conservationists over the wildlife conflict between the red grouse and the hen harrier and that the government was seeking to address this.

The Committee then noted that the new editor of BBC Wildlife Magazine had commented on Chris Packham’s use of the term “nasty brigade” at Stage 1 of the complaints process when saying:

“Coming to this magazine as the new Editor and with a fresh eye, I will say that I feel some of the language used by Chris Packham in that column was somewhat flippant and the use of a phrase such as ‘nasty brigade’ would not have been let through had I been overseeing the content. My aim for the future is to provide a platform for informed opinion, within the regulatory guidelines and with cogent factual and legal content, and to offer a right to reply in the next available issue to all parties concerned in the debate.”

The Committee further noted that the complainants were given a right of reply to the Chris Packham column and that both had taken it, with Complainant A saying:

“People involved in game shooting are not the ‘nasty brigade’ – they undertake conservation work across a land area that is 10 times that of the UK’s nature reserves. Research has shown that the biodiversity benefits of managing for games include: woodland managed for pheasants can have 10 per cent more overwintering birds and better habitat for butterflies; ‘shoot cover’ crops can hold up to 100 times as many overwintering songbirds as a neighbouring field of wheat; only on grouse moors is the distribution of breeding golden plovers, lapwings and curlews relatively stable – elsewhere, they are disappearing. Defra is addressing, through talks, the known wildlife conflict between red grouse and hen harriers in England, and Chris Packham’s comments only serve to entrench views when he should be informing the discussion.”

The Committee considered that the fact that BBC Wildlife Magazine’s new editor would not have allowed the term “nasty brigade” to have been published, together with the fact that both complainants had been given a right to reply to it, meant that the issue had been resolved and no further action needed to be taken.

Finding on Point B: Resolved

Point (C): Chris Packham breached the BBC’s conflicts of interest guidelines. Complainant B cited a video posted by the presenter on YouTube in which he

urged supporters to join the League Against Cruel Sports and to sign a petition calling for a ban on grouse shooting. Complainant A cited comments made by Chris Packham during a debate organised by the World Land Trust in 2014 in which he mentioned BBC *Springwatch* viewers when discussing the conservation management of some grouse moors.

The Committee then considered whether Mr Packham had breached the BBC guidelines to do with conflicts of interest.

It noted that Complainant B had said that, when those supporting game shooting had publicly raised their concerns about the BBC Wildlife Magazine article, Mr Packham should not then have urged people to join the League Against Cruel Sports and to sign a petition calling for a ban on driven grouse shooting.

The Committee observed that the Countryside Alliance had requested that the BBC should refuse to employ Mr Packham any more on account of his opinion column in BBC Wildlife Magazine. It noted that this request was published by various newspapers and the media coverage led to an online petition calling for the BBC not to sack Mr Packham.

The Committee noted that Mr Packham responded to the online petition in a video he posted on YouTube. It noted that, after thanking people for their support, he asked people to consider joining several different conservation groups including the League Against Cruel Sports and suggested that people read a book which opposed driven grouse shooting and for which Mr Packham had written the foreword. The Committee noted that Mr Packham then asked people to think about signing a petition to ban driven grouse shooting.

The Committee noted that Complainant A also believed that Mr Packham had breached the guidelines to do with conflicts of interest when he took part in an event in September 2014 organised by the World Land Trust under the headline Controversial Conservation, which debated whether the killing of birds was justified. It noted that when Mr Packham was called on to speak on the issue he referred to BBC *Springwatch* viewers when discussing the conservation management of driven grouse shoots and that Complainant A considered that this was a breach of the guidelines.

The Committee noted that the Executive Producer of the NHU had said there was a standard clause in every presenter's contract about not bringing the BBC into disrepute and that it was rigorous in its ongoing protocols to see this actioned in practice.

The Committee noted that the BBC said it actively managed Mr Packham in his adherence to BBC standards and guidelines, particularly in the area of his views expressed on other non-BBC platforms. It noted that the BBC acknowledged that Mr Packham is regularly and actively involved as an individual in a range of ongoing science and conservation debates and some of these were controversial.

The Committee noted that the BBC said it had a verbal agreement around protocols for Mr Packham so that his widely known personal views on subjects did not affect the output or impartiality of the *Watches*. The Committee noted that this involved Mr Packham desisting from any public comment on potentially controversial subjects while the *Watches* was on air, for two weeks prior to the series airing and a week after it had gone off air.

The Committee noted that the BBC said it did not want to be overly specific in its contract with Mr Packham because it wished to be free to address each situation specifically and

apply the “no disrepute” principle in the contract in the best way appropriate to the huge variety of editorial situations that Mr Packham is put in during his various shows.

The Committee noted that Mr Packham’s contract with the *Watches* did not require his services on an exclusive basis but there was a requirement that other audio/visual engagements were referred to the BBC for consent and that this could be withheld if the proposed third party work competes with the BBC commitment in terms of schedule, content or broadcast. It further noted that there was also a requirement for Mr Packham to refer potential conflicts of interest to editorial leads on the *Watches* and to abide by the BBC standards and editorial guidelines.

The Committee noted that the Executive Producer of the NHU had said that Mr Packham had regularly referred potential conflicts of interest and other concerns about working within the BBC’s editorial guidelines to the editorial leads of the *Watches* and that these were escalated to BBC Editorial Policy where and when necessary.

The Committee further noted that the Executive Producer of the NHU said, for the further avoidance of doubt, that the BBC normally elects to use other members of the presenting team to conduct interviews and present editorial items dealing with subjects in areas where Mr Packham’s personal views were known in order to avoid any potential for viewers’ perception of the impartiality of the *Watches* to be compromised.

The Committee noted that Complainant B had alleged a specific breach of the BBC’s conflict of interest guidelines relating to charities and campaign work (15.4.18 and 15.4.19) which say:

15.4.18: Any work undertaken for, or in support of, a charity, charities or charitable cause should not imply BBC endorsement for one charity or cause above others. There will be particular sensitivities if the charity deals with, and/or campaigns on, matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy, or any other ‘controversial subject’. BBC employees must also take care that their impartiality is not compromised by associating themselves with a charity operating in the same area as the programming on which they work.

Any proposal by individuals to work for, or be publicly associated with, charities and campaigning groups must be referred to the head of department, who may wish to consult Editorial Policy.

News, Current Affairs, Consumer and Topical Programmes

15.4.19: Presenters, reporters and editorial people in news, current affairs, topical and consumer programmes should not normally associate themselves with any campaigning body, particularly if it backs one viewpoint in a controversial area of policy. **News presenters should not normally front a campaign for a charity or campaigning body as this could undermine the BBC’s reputation for impartiality. Any exceptional cases must be referred to Editorial Policy.**

The Committee noted that it had already agreed that Mr Packham was not a regular presenter associated with news or public policy-related output, so it did not consider that the guideline to do with presenters in news, current affairs and topical programmes (15.4.19) was applicable in this case.

The Committee then turned to whether Chris Packham's support for any charity or cause had implied BBC endorsement for that charity or cause.

The Committee agreed that Mr Packham was a freelance presenter and as such not a BBC employee. It was therefore open to him to associate himself with wildlife charities without being in breach of the guidelines. Trustees acknowledged that Mr Packham campaigned on a wide range of wildlife issues and supported a number of charities in this field. They emphasised the importance of the approach taken by both the BBC and Mr Packham to managing any potential conflicts of interest in order to enable the BBC to continue to make use of his acknowledged expertise as a biologist and conservationist and his skill as a presenter whilst not implying that the BBC endorsed his personal views on charities and causes.

The Committee observed that it will be important for both the BBC and Mr Packham to assess regularly and formally his freelance and campaigning work to ensure that it does not undermine the impartiality and independence of his work for the BBC which audiences clearly value highly.

Having considered carefully the instances cited by the complainants, the Committee decided that it was clear that Mr Packham had been expressing his personal views as an individual, and that there was no implication that the charities and other causes he supported were endorsed by the BBC. Accordingly, nor did they consider that Mr Packham had undermined the BBC's reputation for impartiality.

Finding on Point C – Not Upheld

Overall finding – partially not upheld and partially resolved.