

# **HOW THE BBC (AND OFCOM) HANDLED THREE ROCK SOLID COMPLAINTS LODGED AGAINST IT AND TO WHICH IT HAD NO DEFENCE**

(and how a fourth complaint to Ofcom was just ignored)

Complaints, Exhibits and Correspondence relating to four  
complaints lodged against the BBC and rejected by it and Ofcom  
in 2021-22

Martin Webster's four complaints against the BBC and to Ofcom, together with the  
exhibits in support, and all relevant correspondence.

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In view of the length of this document, the complaints themselves are shown in  
[medium blue text](#) (including that part of document no. 21 which is the fourth  
complaint), and the correspondence in black (save for URLs and email addresses).  
For the sake of privacy, telephone numbers have been removed from the address  
details of some of the letters

14th November 2022

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**1. Mr Webster's Notice of forthcoming complaints:**

**32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London  
SW15 4ND**

Monday 12th April 2021.

BBC Case number CAS-  
6566992-X3Q7F3

BBC Complaints Department,  
Darlington,  
County Durham,  
DL3 0UR. [via Recorded delivery post]

Dear Sirs

**Re: Complaint regarding:**

- (1) *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*, (episodes 2 & 3) BBC Radio 4;**  
and
- (2) *'The Battle of Lewisham'*, BBC World Service podcast.**

I am writing to place you on notice that I intend to lodge a complaint about the above programmes, specifically: the BBC World Service podcast, *'The Battle of Lewisham'*, uploaded to BBC Sounds on Friday 9th October 2020 and episodes 2 and 3 of the 3-part series, *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Friday 26th February and Friday 5th March 2021, and subsequently uploaded to BBC Sounds.

I was National Activities Organiser of the National Front from 1969 to 1983, which covers the period covered by Episodes 2 and 3 of *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*. I was the person who organised the National Front march in Lewisham in August 1977.

Owing to a recent bout of illness I have not yet been able to draw up a detailed complaint, but when I do — and it will be as soon as possible — it will include and amplify the following points:

1. The BBC World Service podcast entitled *'The Battle of Lewisham'* contained content and interviewees almost identical to episode 2 of *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*. It was grossly misleading and blatantly biased. It was, I believe, a 'ranging shot', put out to see if there would be any reaction or complaint. When there was neither (the item was not drawn to my attention until the day before it was uploaded to BBC Sounds) it was decided that it was safe to go ahead with the misleading 3-part series, *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*. The producer of the programme therefore knew that the content of both programmes was biased and one-sided.

2. *'Britain's Fascist Thread'* contained, in all its episodes, a litany of factual errors, particulars of which will be supplied by me in my formal letter of complaint. I will not, however, be addressing the content of episode 1 of the series as it deals

with matters outside my personal knowledge and involving a lapsed organisation whose policies, structure and constitution were not in a number of important respects comparable to those adopted by the National Front, contrary to the "*Fascist Thread*" insinuation of the programme's title.

3. Regarding episodes 2 and 3 of '*Britain's Fascist Thread*', which deal with events and issues within my personal knowledge, all the interviewees were from the organisations on the left/far left which were ranged against the National Front. The programme's makers failed to interview anyone from the National Front. There can be no excuse for the failure to do this, especially in respect of episode 2, which dealt with the "The Battle of Lewisham". As National Activities Organiser of the National Front at the time, I organised the NF's march in Lewisham and had a responsibility for the conduct of participating NF members and supporters. I liaised with the Metropolitan Police concerning detailed arrangements for the event at several meetings with Deputy-Assistant Commissioner David Helm, (then head of the then Metropolitan Police Public Order Division 'A8'), held at Scotland Yard prior to the march, and had conversations with him and his officers during the course of the event at Lewisham. When the BBC programmes about which I am complaining were being researched and made I was readily contactable. Other BBC radio producers have contacted me for interviews in recent years, yet no effort was made to contact me for a response to the serious allegations made by the presenter and interviewees against the NF and its members and supporters, let alone to obtain from me crucial background information which is essential for any true account of a major event. For example, no mention was made of the litigation at the High Court — a 'Mandamus' application — launched by organisations opposed to the NF march the week before it took place. The application was led by the late Sir John Mortimer QC. The court refused to vary the powers of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the matter of allowing/banning marches as set out in the Public Order Act. This was one of several vital aspects ignored by the programme-makers because it didn't suit their agenda. They cheated — and their podcasts are currently still cheating — BBC listeners.

I am recovering from spinal surgery and a bout of shingles, but I shall be in touch with you again as soon as possible with my main letter of complaint containing further and better particulars.

I am lodging a similar complaint with Ofcom and will be sending copies of this letter to:

Richard Sharp, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors;  
and  
Tim Davie, Director-General of the BBC.

Once my formal and detailed letter of complaint has been sent to you and the other above-mentioned recipients by Recorded Delivery post, I am willing for the subsequent correspondence to be conducted by e-mail

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster  
(National Activities Organiser,  
of the National Front, 1969-1983)

## **2. Acknowledgement from the BBC of item no. 1 sent by email:**

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Tuesday, 20 April 2021 at 21:33

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

Reference CAS-6686338-M7T8X8

Dear Mr Webster

Thank you for your recent letter.

We note your intention to provide more detailed complaints in the near future.

Firstly, it might be useful for you to read the BBC Complaints Framework:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC\\_Complaints\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC_Complaints_Framework.pdf)

We would strongly advise reading the framework regarding length of complaint, exceptional circumstances and the options between a general complaint about all output, or specific editorial complaints.

It may work best to provide separate complaints limited to one programme, one for the World Service 2020 podcast, and a separate one for the Radio 4 output from 2021.

We also note you intend to also submit to Ofcom at the same time.

If you do so, we will not be able to begin considering your case until Ofcom respond to you with their decision first.

In the meantime we'll await, your approach on how you wish to submit your complaints mentioned to date.

Hopefully this helps advise you on how best to utilise the BBC Complaints Process.

Thanks again for taking the time to get in touch.

Kind Regards,

BBC Complaints Team

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

### **3. Mr Webster's objection to the proposed method of correspondence:**

**32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London  
SW15 4ND**

Thursday 29th April 2021.

BBC Case number CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3

BBC 'Complaints Team',  
Darlington,  
County Durham,  
DL3 0UR. [via Recorded delivery post]

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Complaint regarding:**

- (1) '*Britain's Fascist Thread*', (episodes 2 & 3) BBC Radio 4;**  
and
- (2) '*The Battle of Lewisham*', BBC World Service podcast.**

This is to acknowledge receipt of and to respond to your e-mail (unsigned by any individual and without a reply address) of Tuesday, 20 April 2021 21:33, a 'hard copy' of which is attached.

I am unable to transact the necessary correspondence involved with my complaint by means of the arrangements which you propose. My *three* separate complaints, which will be ready for issue shortly, cannot be transmitted to you via an e-mail facility offered by your web site. That sort of 'via-the-web-site' facility may be adequate for short messages of exasperation from persons not personally involved in the event being covered by the programme in question. But I *was* personally involved in the events covered by the programmes about which I am complaining. I will take up errors of fact, omissions of facts, distortions, bias, etc., so texts of my complaints will not be short.

From my initial use of your web site facility (on Wednesday 24th February 2021 – I have retained a copy) I doubt if it offers a change of type size let alone bold, italic, and bold-italic options. Such options, along with layout features such as indentations, are necessary to give complex documents proper organisation and 'readability'. Furthermore, my texts will exhibit documents. I doubt if your web site facility can handle attachments.

But in addition to these technical issues, I strongly object to the anonymity of the



system which you seek to impose. I want — am entitled — to know who is dealing with my complaint. “The Complaints Team” is not a fair and appropriate entity for a complainant to address. In view of the controversial issues involved with my complaints, it is necessary and just that I know which person or persons I am addressing.

This complaints procedure is a kind of a ‘trial’, and no ‘trial’ can be conducted by a “Team” of anonymous ‘judges’ if it is to accord with the English Common Law precepts of Natural Justice.

Who would be involved with the “Team”? How are they qualified to be members of the “Team”? Will any of the people who comprise “The Team” be people who were involved — directly or indirectly — with making the programmes about which I am complaining? If not that, will the “Team” be consulting (i.e. taking evidence from) such people? If so, will I be provided with the text of their representations in the same way that they, I assume, will be afforded sight of mine? It is necessary that you answer each of these questions with particularity.

You must see that the anonymity the BBC “Complaints Team” is afforded (or affords itself), together with the ‘at-arm’s-length’ and ‘easy-to-cut-off’ correspondence medium you propose, inspires no confidence in me, a complainant who has already been ignored by the BBC when it made a series of programmes about major events of which I was the publicly-known organiser and for which I took legal as well political responsibility.

I have already stated in my letter of 12th April that after I have submitted my complaints in the form of a ‘hard copy’ letter, I would be willing to transact subsequent correspondence via e-mail. But I am only willing to engage in e-mail correspondence if I am given the real name/s of the responsible BBC official/s dealing with my representations and his, her or their Complaints Department e-mail address. You have all my contact data particulars. Why are those dealing with my complaint so desperate to hide in the shadows?

Do I have to refer my complaints to the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and to the BBC Director-General for their personal attention because the BBC Complaints Department will not treat with me on an open, frank and just basis? Because of that possibility, I will be copying all correspondence about this matter to the Chairman and the D-G.

Finally, I regret the delay in submitting my complaints but as previously explained I am in recovery from major spinal surgery and from two subsequent unrelated illnesses. As a retired 78-year-old I do not have access a secretariat. My complaints, in ‘hard copy’ form, will be with you via Recorded Delivery post as soon as possible. I am anxious to see this matter settled.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster.  
(National Activities Organiser  
of the National Front, 1969-1983)

Copies via Recorded Delivery post to:

1) Richard Sharp, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors;  
Broadcasting House W1A 1AA.

2) Tim Davie, Director-General of the BBC;  
Broadcasting House W1A 1AA.

#### 4. Auto-acknowledgement of item no. 3 by email:

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Friday, 7 May 2021 at 11:01

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3**

We are sorry to learn you weren't satisfied with our earlier response and appreciate that you felt strongly enough to contact us again.

Although we aim to reply at this next stage within 20 working days (four weeks), we hope you will understand that sometimes we are unable to respond by then. We will let you know beforehand if we think it may take us longer. For full details of our complaints process please visit: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>.

Please don't reply to this email because it's an automated acknowledgement sent from an account which can't receive replies. If you do need to get in touch, please use our webform instead at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints), quoting your reference number.

Here is the text of your response to our reply:

-----YOUR COMPLAINT: "I neglected to enclose a copy of your email to me dated Tuesday 20th April. I enclose that item herewith."  
-----

Thank you again for contacting us,

BBC Complaints Team

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints) Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

## 5. Further acknowledgement by email of item no. 3 above:

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Thursday, 13 May 2021 at 17:48

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3**

Reference CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3

Dear Mr Webster,

Thank you for your further letter dated 29 April, with copies sent to the Chairman and Director General.

Thanks for contacting the offices of the Director General and Chairman. As you might appreciate, they receive more correspondence than they can deal with personally. Once correspondence has been read by their offices, it is forwarded to us here in the BBC Audience Services department so we can respond on behalf of the BBC's management.

Our complaints process at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints) explains how we offer an efficient and fair service to all. It provides the best value for money for all TV Licence fee payers, but it does mean we can't guarantee a reply when people contact staff directly. If you wish to contact any part of the BBC on any matter, you can use our contact details, as follows:

ONLINE:

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

(has options for enquiries, comments and appreciations too)

LETTER:

BBC Audience Services, PO Box 1922, Darlington, DL3 0UR

(please mark as enquiry, comment, appreciation or complaint and indicate if a reply is required)

We're sorry to hear you're disappointed in the webform option. Many people directly involved in programmes do use it, and some prefer to send letters if they wish to expand in more detail. But the word limit is there to aid an efficient and focused service, for the benefit of complainants. We understand you plan to separate your concerns into three separate editorial complaints, which sounds like the best way to approach the issue.

We appreciate that you're annoyed that no email address is published on the BBC Complaints website.

We explain the service we offer on our dedicated page "How We Handle Your Complaint" at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>

The main reason we ask people to use our webform, even when replying to an email we've sent, is because we deal with over a million audience contacts every year and we have to ensure they can be efficiently tracked using our handling system. In addition, our complaints and general enquiries webforms ask for essential information such as channel, programme name and transmission date which means we don't have to write back to people unnecessarily. Using a webform also guarantees we can match a return contact up with the previous contact from that person without the need to cross-check thousands of unformatted emails which would then have to be manually transferred into the tracking system.

We try to restrict public email inbox addresses where possible because we receive millions of 'spam' emails and a return email address would attract and generate even more. Junk mail costs the BBC a considerable amount of money because every email has to be checked before we can delete them as it's not always easy to distinguish them from a genuine email, plus of course there is the potential for viruses to be transmitted via email which can be very damaging.

We appreciate this may be annoying, but we did not take this decision lightly. Our policy takes into account what is operationally efficient and avoids the need to employ additional staff to process incoming emails at additional cost to licence fee payers. We have an obligation upon us to operate a complaints service which is efficient and proportionate and thus accessible and fair to all.

As for the anonymity of the system, we have dedicated teams who work together with programme makers and senior staff. We rely on people collaborating together for your benefit, rather than assigning it to one named individual. Given the volume of work we deal with, and the complexity of some cases, that works best as a rule.

Our framework is approved by Ofcom, following public consultation and we'll investigate your specific concerns with the appropriate fairness you expect. If you remain unhappy and take your complaint to Stage 2, the independent Executive Complaints Unit will look further into any remaining issues, including how your complaint has been handled to date. Naturally, we have to speak to the programme makers and staff involved, but our system is rigorous and will explore if any guidelines or policies have been breached or not. We offer this same, fair service, to all who need it - any additional correspondence beyond the formal routes offered above usually only complicate matters and delay proceedings.

Kind regards,

Deborah Dawson

BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

-  
Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

## 6. Further acknowledgement of item no. 3 by email:

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Friday, 14 May 2021 at 11:24

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject:** BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8

We are sorry to learn you weren't satisfied with our earlier response and appreciate that you felt strongly enough to contact us again.

Although we aim to reply at this next stage within 20 working days (four weeks), we hope you will understand that sometimes we are unable to respond by then. We will let you know beforehand if we think it may take us longer. For full details of our complaints process please visit: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>.

Please don't reply to this email because it's an automated acknowledgement sent from an account which can't receive replies. If you do need to get in touch, please use our webform instead at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints), quoting your reference number.

Here is the text of your response to our reply:

-----

### YOUR COMPLAINT:

"I am unable to extract the necessary correspondence... my three separate complaints cannot be submitted through your website... I was personally involved in the programmes and I will take up errors of fact, omissions of fact, bias etc... I strongly object to the anonymity of your complaints system as my previous response did not give me a name... I am happy to continue through email but only if I am given a name and not just 'team'...I am anxious to get this matter resolved."

-----

Thank you again for contacting us,

BBC Complaints Team

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

**7. Complaint no. 1 dated 28th July 2021(re “Battle of Lewisham” broadcast):**

**To:**

(1) BBC Complaints Dept, Darlington, County Durham DL3 0UR.

[BBC Complaints - Case number/s:

CAS-6686338-M7T8X8 / CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3]

and

(2) Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA.

**Copies:**

(1) Richard Sharp Esq., Chairman, BBC Board of Governors  
Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.

(2) Tim Davie Esq., Director-General BBC,  
Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.

**SUBJECT:**

**Detailed complaint brought by Martin Webster against the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for and on behalf of himself and the former members of the lapsed political party known as the National Front (NF) of which he was National Activities Organiser from 1969 to 1983. This complaint is also referred in identical terms to the Office of Communications (Ofcom) for its consideration as the complainant has no faith in the BBC’s ability to be an impartial judge in respect of a complaint against itself and willing to impose on itself the necessary actions to correct injustices perpetrated by its employees and associated other persons.**

This complaint relates to ‘*The Battle of Lewisham*’, presented by Nacheal Catnott, broadcast on the BBC World Service/podcast released on Friday, 9th October 2020 at 8:50am, 12:50pm and 6:50pm and on Saturday, 10th October at 3:50am and available thereafter for listening and/or download at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszmvj> in which she interviewed Lez Henry, who was present in Lewisham on 13th August 1977, being the day that the National Front marched through the town and was opposed by violent counter-demonstrators, leading to the incident becoming known as the “Battle of Lewisham”.

In support of this complaint I am attaching copies of three newspaper articles published shortly after the Lewisham march of 13th August 1977.

(a) A report covering the whole march and counter-demonstrations in Lewisham published in *The Sunday Times* the following day;

(b) An interview with Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm published in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated 26th August 1977;



(c) A report on the sentencing of four London youths to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the NF march published in *The Times* newspaper dated 2nd October 1980.

It is submitted that both the 30 working days time limit specified in the **BBC Complaints Framework** and the 1,000 word content limit do not apply to this complaint on the grounds that:

(a) there are no less than twenty eight (28) complaints embodied in this one complaint, each of which required time to assess and prepare a suitable response, and each of which could, as a separate complaint, use up to 1,000 words, making a total of up to 28,000 words. This complaint contains less than 5,000 words; and

(b) common sense dictates that it would be more convenient for all concerned to have all 28 complaints amalgamated into one complaint.

(c) in view of the above, this complaint is a wholly exceptional and serious complaint that fully justifies waiving both the 30 working days time limit and the 1,000 words content limit.

## **I General Complaint**

(a) This programme is in breach of the BBC Charter (2016), paragraph 6 (1) and the BBC Agreement (2016), Schedule 3, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. The only relevant voices heard were those of the presenter, Nacheal Catnott, who was openly “anti-fascist” and left wing, and the interviewee, Lez Henry, whose opinions were extremely left wing.

(b) The subject matter of the programme was a march staged by the NF in Lewisham on 13th August 1977. The duties of fairness and impartiality imposed on the BBC by its Charter (paragraph 6(1)) demand that, in such a programme, representatives from the NF be interviewed and allowed to give their accounts of the event, in order to counterbalance the views of the presenter and interviewee. It is appreciated that the format of this programme (*‘Witness to History’*) and the time allotted (10 minutes) allows for only one interviewee, in which case it should have been realised that such a controversial subject as that covered was not suitable for a programme with such a restricted format. The programme should therefore not have been made in that format.

(c) No effort was made by the programme makers to contact myself, being the person who could have not only given the NF’s viewpoint on the numerous allegations levelled at it by the presenter and interviewee but also given further, crucial, information concerning the subject matter of the programme, that would have

enlightened listeners and provided them with a fairer, more complete account of what happened. I am still alive, easily contactable, and have been so contacted by BBC TV and radio producers on several occasions in the years after the NF lapsed out of existence (*circa* 1986). The last contact came from a BBC radio producer who included an interview with me in a programme about the National Socialist writer Savitri Devi broadcast about three years ago. Apart from my political involvement with the NF in the 1970s/early 1980s, I could have been a useful interviewee as I had close knowledge of the situation in S.E. London at the relevant time. I worked for more than a year (1963/1964) at the surgery of the late Dr William J. Mitchell LRCP at 387 Queen's Road, New Cross SE14. Dr Mitchell's GP practice had patients of all races from all parts of New Cross, Deptford and Lewisham. His partner in the practice, Dr McConnachie, was an Anglo-Indian. On several occasions during my period with the surgery I encountered elderly white female patients who had been attacked by young Black males for their handbags. These women had been taken to the local hospital A&E in the first instance, then they resorted to Dr Mitchell for follow-up treatment. I will not forget the sight of elderly women with their faces covered with black and blue bruising. I maintained contact with Dr Mitchell's family for decades thereafter, and thereby maintained my knowledge of goings-on in that part of London. In the 1979 general election Dr Mitchell's son, Robert, stood as the NF candidate for Deptford winning *circa* 1,500 votes. Robert qualified as a medical doctor, became a FRCS, and married before taking up a GP practice in the north of England.

(d) The programme contained numerous factual errors which could have been easily avoided if a reasonable amount of research and fact-checking had been carried out, together with the action mentioned in paragraph (c) above.

(e) The tone of the programme implied, contrary to fact, that the National Front was a "fascist" organisation, and that it encouraged and practised violence and intimidation to achieve its objectives. This insinuation is completely false, and could have been easily rebutted had I been interviewed. In fact, the National Front was a political party that contested elections and won serious levels of support, being arguably at that time Britain's third party, not (as implied) a mere street gang. For example, almost 120,000 Londoners voted for the National Front at the GLC elections on 5th May 1977, just three months before the "Battle of Lewisham", and in parliamentary by-elections (Stechford and Ladywood) shortly before and after the "Battle" the National Front polled ahead of the Liberal Party (now the Liberal Democrats). So far from being "smashed" by the "Battle of Lewisham" as the programme-makers suggested, the NF was able to nominate 303 candidates in the 1979 general election. Further, the NF had a comprehensive Constitution which provided for:

- a governing body (the National Directorate) a third of the places on which fell vacant every year and were filled by an annual postal ballot of the entire membership of the party;

- an Annual General Meeting at which all members were entitled to attend and vote on resolutions concerning the party's policies and Constitution submitted by a sufficient number of members;
- a constitution for branches requiring annual elections for posts on branch committees.

(f) The interviewee made serious and unsubstantiated allegations against the NF, its members and supporters, including allegations of violence, intimidation and other unlawful activities, which were unchallenged by the presenter. Again, my inclusion as an interviewee on the programme would have provided a counterbalance to the extreme left-wing presenter and interviewee, as well as further, vital, information that would have given a fairer account to listeners of the event covered. For example, I append a copy of page 4 of *The Times* dated 22nd October 1980 reporting on the sentencing of four London youths to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the National Front march on 13th August 1977. Note that "the prosecution said that they intended to use the petrol bombs on some of the marchers" (i.e. NF members and supporters).

## **II Detailed complaints, all of which breach paragraph 6 (1) of the BBC Charter (2016)**

### **The web page hosting the podcast**

1. The short description on the web page hosting the podcast runs as follows:

"How anti-racists stopped a far-right march in South London in 1977, preventing the National Front from entering the British political mainstream."

The expanded version of this reads, in part,

"...the National Front were forced to withdraw. The so-called Battle of Lewisham is now seen as having halted the rise of the far-right in British politics."

Both of these statements are untrue.

2. The epithet "far-right" in the shorter version is subjective and a matter of opinion, and not appropriate on a web page of the BBC, which has a duty to be unbiased.

3. The march was not stopped. Police reacted to a riot staged by a violent and intimidating mob of "anti-racists" by directing the marchers to vary their route. This was agreed by the NF in order to keep injuries and damage to public property caused by the "anti-racists" to a minimum.

4. The use of the words “far-right” in the expanded version are inappropriate for the reasons set out in 2 above.

### **The programme itself**

[Please note that the times given refer to the time elapsed, to the nearest couple of seconds, from the start of the programme.]

5. 0:28 The presenter says, “...the racist National Front are planning a massive show of strength...”

The presenter thereby immediately set out her credentials as being extremely left wing by inserting the inappropriate and unnecessary adjective, “racist”, in referring to the NF. Whether the NF is or was “racist” is a matter of opinion, and the presenter should not have allowed her personal opinions to colour the content of her broadcast.

6. The National Front were not planning a “massive show of strength”, but rather seeking to draw national attention to the serious problem of young black men mugging elderly white women in places like Lewisham – something that neither the presenter nor her interviewee referred to in the whole broadcast. Why not?

In support of my point, I refer to the report of the march published by *The Sunday Times* of 14th August 1977 and in particular the following two paragraphs:

***“The area was chosen for a march by the National Front to capitalise on a genuine fear in the neighbourhood. Among its slogans were those underlining the fact that a police survey of street crime in South London completed in 1974 showed that 80 per cent of the attackers were black and 85 per cent of the victims were white.*”**

***“There is solid right-wing support in the Clifton Rise area. In a by-election for the local council last year, votes for the National Front and the National Party totalled more than those of the successful Labour candidate.”***

This *Sunday Times* report was compiled by no less than five senior reporters who were unbiased and in no way sympathetic to the NF. The presenter should have come across this report during her research for the programme. Either she failed to locate the report, in which case she is clearly incapable of compiling a programme such as this, or she deliberately suppressed knowledge of its existence from her listeners, thereby betraying the trust placed in her by her listeners to provide them with full and unbiased information on the subject in accordance with the BBC’s Charter referred to in the General Complaint I (a) above.

7. 0:38 The interviewee says, “...when we heard all the noise round the corner where the flares an' the smoke bombs were bein' thrown ...”

This statement clearly implies that the violence and the smoke bombs were the work of NF members and supporters. In fact, all the violence, including smoke bombs and other missiles, came from the counter-demonstrators of the far left. The presenter should have made this clear from the start, but, instead, chose to mislead listeners. She might have taken note of an interview, published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of August 26th 1977, of Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm, in which he said:

***“ ‘There is no difficulty in policing a Front demonstration on its own – it’s only when there is opposition that you get violence.’***

This report also gives us the following information:

***“ ‘On the Saturday at Lewisham’, said Mr Helm, the National Front had obeyed directions all along the line. Before August 13 their march was curtailed. On the day they were formed up on a different route and were diverted three times – and there were no problems.***

***“ ‘They were displaying posters which were anti-mugging, which could have incited racial hatred. They were asked not to display them and they didn’t.***

***“ ‘Compare this with the complete refusal by the SWP and the All Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism marches to agree a route with the police and the subsequent dispersal of the ALCARAF people so that they could go to where the Front rally was starting’.***

I attach to this complaint a copy of that interview, which should be read in its entirety because many of the assertions made by the presenter and interviewee were, in effect, anticipated by him and refuted.

8. 1:05 The presenter alleges that Henry grew up experiencing “racist abuse from the National Front thugs and some white people in his neighbourhood” with no evidence to substantiate this. Given that he had just turned 20 years of age when the Lewisham march took place, he would have been nine and a half by the time the NF was even formed, in January 1967. The use of the term “thugs” in describing NF supporters is grossly misleading, and it is averred, was put in to mislead listeners.

9. :29 The interviewee says, “...this white guy smashed me straight in the face wiv a bit of wood. He actually knocked at least one of my teeth out ...”

This allegation of a serious assault is accepted at face value by the presenter because it suits her case. But it needs corroboration, of which there is none.

(a) Was the assault reported to the police?

(b) Was anyone arrested for it?

(c) Did any prosecution follow?

- (d) Why can't Henry remember how many of his teeth were knocked out?
- (e) His overall description of the assault does not sound credible. The presenter should have pressed him for further details but failed to do so.

10. 2:24 The interviewee says, "...For us it was just a very hostile environment. You know, there were no-go areas for black people. It was quite commonplace for us to be abused on our way to school..."

These are vague allegations which, even if true, were not crimes. The presenter failed to bring in a different viewpoint of what it was like to be growing up in Britain generally, and in Lewisham in particular, at that time.

11. 2:50 The presenter says, "...the National Front seemed to be getting their racist message into the political mainstream ...often insulting black passers-by and handing out racist propaganda".

The use of the terms "racist message" and "often insulting black passers-by and handing out racist propaganda" can only come from an extreme left wing person, not an unbiased broadcaster.

(a) Where is the evidence for these insults?

(b) As for handing out "racist propaganda", this is what only extreme left wing people would call it. The rest of us call it the exercise of freedom of expression in support of patriotism. I submit that this is another example of left wing bias.

12. 3:11 The interviewee says, "If you went to Lewisham market, at the end of where them stalls would be you would get a line-up of members of the National Front. A lot of them were skinheads ... and they would get away with it they knew that if they were confronted by black people and the police were round the police would actually come and defend them anyway so leadin' up to the Ba'le of Lewisham there was a lot of tension and the National Front became involved."

This incoherent rant went completely unchallenged by the presenter. No-one was brought in to challenge this interviewee. He was free to make a string of serious allegations (including one against the police) without a shred of evidence to support them. The presenter should have asked the interviewee to provide examples of what he alleged, but failed to do so.

13. 3:42 The presenter says, "Although there was an obvious danger of violence, the National Front march was allowed to go ahead in Lewisham on August 13th 1977. Suspecting the police would not defend them, community leaders advised black people to avoid the route."

Here, the presenter invites listeners to accept that the mere threat of violence from counter-demonstrators should be enough to require the police to ban a march. The



presenter's second sentence implies that the black people of Lewisham needed "defending" from NF marchers, in spite of a complete lack of evidence of this ever being required, at Lewisham or elsewhere. The presenter should have presented evidence that "community leaders advised black people to avoid the route" if, indeed, that was the case, but she failed to do so.

Neither the presenter nor the interviewee mentioned an extremely important and highly relevant legal action that had taken place in the High Court for a full week in the period immediately before the Lewisham march.

Lewisham Borough Council had made an application to the High Court for an Order of Mandamus against the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, David McNee, to force him to use his powers to ban the forthcoming march on the grounds that violence and destruction of property were bound to occur. Mr McNee opposed the application and won his case. He thereby retained his statutory powers to decide whether or not to ban the march, and he chose to let it go ahead.

This was a massive defeat for the forces of the Left who were determined to stop the march from taking place, and it was inflicted by:

- (a) a judge of the High Court, who had spent days listening to submissions from both sides of the argument and drawing his own conclusions, and
- (b) the Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

As a result, the Left formed an umbrella organisation called the "All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Facism" (ALCARAF) to promote counter-demonstrations against the march at broadly the same time and place as the march itself. It included the Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood, a self-confessed member of the Communist Party at the time, as well as Martin Savitt, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. I refer, again, to the report published by *The Sunday Times* on the following day.

I submit that the reason why neither the presenter nor the interviewee mentioned this "elephant in the room" event was that it would have undermined their case that the march should have been banned and that the threat of violence came only from the NF. They chose to mislead their audience and future historians rather than publish the truth.

14. 3:55 The interviewee says, "A lot of these right wing racist groups they would go to these things they would be tooled up and they would be prepared because a lot of them were football fans and that's what a lot of the football fans used to do anyway. They would bring that kinda football thug mentali'y to these marches. We were basically told, "Stay away". An' there were loads an' loads of black people who were terrified of them."

(a) Where is the evidence that NF marchers were ever “tooled up” (i.e. in possession of offensive weapons) at NF activities?

(b) Where is the evidence that “loads and loads” of black people were “terrified” of NF marchers?

(c) Again, the presenter completely failed to challenge this interviewee about his wild accusations.

15. 4:30 The interviewee says, “we’re just gonna let the white man dem fight the white man”.

If a white man were to say the same thing, but substituting “white” for “black”, it would be deemed “racist”. The presenter should not have allowed this comment to remain in the programme.

16. 4:52 The presenter says, “When about five hundred National Front members reached the outskirts of Lewisham...”.

Her estimate of the numbers involved are inaccurate. She failed to research independent accounts of the number of marchers and counter-demonstrators.

17. NF marchers assembled close to the start-off point of the march – not on the outskirts of Lewisham. The presenter should have checked these facts with myself – the person who organised the march – and with contemporary press reports such as that contained in *The Sunday Times* of 14th August 1977 (the day following the Lewisham march) but evidently failed to do so.

18. 5:15 The interviewee says, “You had loads of anti-fascists who were there an' ready to fight. I saw people chucking stuff. I'm sure it was red and blue flares they were chucking at the National Front but it was tangible and the fear from them was palpable you could actually feel it an'....black boys we just laughed.”

The first sentence strongly implies that violence was to be used against the marchers. This is in stark contrast to the tone of the programme that NF marchers themselves were the source of the violence. The presenter failed to press the interviewee to justify this remark. Again, I refer to the interview published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of August 26th 1977 of Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm.

19. 5:39 The interviewee says, “We just thought look these are the people who go around terrorising people cowering and hiding behind the police.” This is a double-lie. The presenter failed to ask the interviewee to substantiate his claim that the NF “are the people who go around terrorising people”, or to obtain and present independent evidence that the marchers were “cowering and hiding behind the police”.



20. 5:45 “We're out to get the Nazis...” This is the cry of a mob ready to use violence against the marchers, yet no comment is made on this aspect by the presenter. Why not?

21. 5:47 An unnamed radio/TV reporter says, “Again the police move in to make snatch arrests. It seems that the police have effectively stopped the counter-demonstration from reaching the National Front marchers.”

This commentary confirms that it was the leftist mob that was trying to confront the marchers and use violence on them, but there is no comment on this from the presenter. Why not?

22. 6:02 The interviewee says, “The police crea’ed a cordon aroun' the National Front that no-one could really get to this (sic).”

Henry thereby confirms that it was the police cordon that prevented the mob from engaging in mass violence against the marchers. Why did not the presenter press Henry on the illegality of what the counter-demonstrators were trying to do?

23. 6:07 The interviewee says, “I saw that National Front people bein’ dragged outta the crowd. I fink that most o’ what I witnessed was when the police actually star’ed to disperse the National Front some of the anarchists started to attack members of the National Front.”

What is this but more confirmation that it was the leftist mob that were initiating all the violence? Yet there was no reaction from the presenter. Why not?

24. 6:20 The presenter says, “There were 4,000 police officers on duty at Lewisham. They escorted the National Front racists out of Lewisham and onto buses and trains out of London. The far right had been prevented from holding their march. But at that point the situation took another violent turn. In the confusion a false rumour spread that the National Front were heading into Lewisham town centre. Some of the black community – not Lez, but a few of his friends – went there to confront them.”

Here, the presenter gives a completely false account of what happened. The police did not escort the marchers (note the word “racists” used by the presenter again, to describe the marchers) “out of Lewisham and onto buses and trains out of London”. Listeners are invited to believe that the marchers were sent packing. Why was this falsehood present in the programme?

In reality, the marchers dispersed at the conclusion of their rally and made their own way home. They had **not** been prevented from holding their march. *The Sunday Times* report of the following day says:

***“There [Cressingham Road] they held a rally unmolested and then dispersed”.***

The presenter’s last sentence in this part of the broadcast confirms that it was the leftist mob that sought confrontation and violence.

The presenter failed to research independent accounts of what happened at the end of the rally held by the NF, instead, accepting without question, a false account, given to her, presumably, by the interviewee. I refer, again, to *The Sunday Times* report, a copy of which is attached.

25. 6:55 The interviewee says, “That’s when some skirmishes kicked off between the black boys and the police, and that’s when they got the riot shields out for the first time in UK mainland history that the police used riot shields against members of the communi’y so I know that these were the fings used in Northern Ireland I believe at the time but they did that in Lewisham an’ I believe that the police were also charging at people with their horses.”

It was more than “some skirmishes”. A skirmish is a “piece of irregular or unpremeditated fighting esp. between small or outlying parties, slight engagement...” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1982). This was a full-scale riot, hence the deployment of riot shields to protect police officers from bricks, bottles, etc, thrown by the rioting mob, and not “against members of the commun’y”, as this interviewee, and the presenter, would have us believe. This was a deliberate attempt to downplay the violence emanating from the leftist mob. The presenter should have obtained independent evidence, such as *The Sunday Times* account referred to at 24 above, of what happened during and after the march.

26. 7:27 The presenter says, “In total, 214 people were arrested that day and over a hundred injured, half of them police officers. For the National Front it was a humiliation, and the battle was now seen as having halted the rise of the far right in Britain.”

The presenter's comments in the second sentence are pure speculation and personal opinion without any supporting evidence, in line with most of the rest of this broadcast. Again, I refer to the report published in *The Sunday Times* on the following day. She failed to research and produce evidence of the effect of the march on

- (a) the policing of demonstrations and marches in Britain,
- (b) the National Front,
- (c) the opponents of the National Front.

27. 7:41 The interviewee says, “The National Front died that day. They fort that more ordinary white people would come out and support them but for me impor'an'ly ordinary people got to see that basically they were a bunch of cowards, and why

would you be afraid of cowards? So the terror that they wielded in places like Lewisham died that day. Their credibility went to zero. They basically vanished.”

This is another unsupported opinion that the presenter (and producer) allowed to go unchallenged. She failed to research and obtain evidence to support or contest the interviewee’s contention. And, as I have recorded in **I (e)** above: “... in parliamentary by-elections (Stechford and Ladywood) shortly before *and after* the ‘Battle’ the National Front polled ahead of the Liberal Party (now the Liberal Democrats). So far from being ‘smashed’ by the ‘Battle of Lewisham’ as the programme-makers suggested, the NF was able to nominate 303 candidates in the 1979 general election.”

28. 8:17 The interviewee says, “It’s kinda bi’er-sweet really for me because on the one hand the over-racist presence vanished but I think it became replaced by something far more insidious, which is what we experience now. In some ways it was easier for us as black youth then we had an identifiable enemy wherever they were dressed up as skinheads or whatever oh you could tell by their looks, you could tell by their attitude but now it’s more covert so I actually think it’s probably a more worrying time.”

This is just a rant that is not worthy of comment. Why did the presenter not press the interviewee to be more specific? In failing to do so she failed the listeners and the BBC itself.

There are twenty eight (28) points of complaint made above about this programme, some of them in the form of questions. In the interests of justice and in order to display the BBC’s impartiality I demand that

(a) this podcast be withdrawn from the BBC’s archives and no longer made available for downloading or listening to;  
and

(b) consideration be given to the preparation of a fresh programme dealing with the same subject but including someone such as myself, who was involved intimately with the subject matter covered, to give the true facts and answer questions from an unbiased presenter.

Dated: Wednesday 28th July 2021.

Signed:

Martin Webster  
32 Kimpton House, Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London

SW15 4ND

**8. Letter rejecting Complaint no. 6947702 (our complaint no. 1):**

(Please see next page)



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STA-BBCAS-1-0821

within 20 working days of this reply.

You'll need to explain why you think there is a potential breach of standards, or if the issue is significant and should still be investigated.

You can write to:

Executive Complaints Unit,  
BBC,  
Broadcast Centre,  
London  
W12 7TQ.

Please include the case reference number we have provided in this reply.

Kind regards,

Ciaran Hanna  
BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

## 9. Auto acknowledgement by email from BBC Complaints Dept:

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)> **Date:** Friday, 22 October 2021 at 11:18 **To:** Martin Webster <> **Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

We are sorry to learn you weren't satisfied with our earlier response and appreciate that you felt strongly enough to contact us again.

Although we aim to reply at this next stage within 20 working days (four weeks), we hope you will understand that sometimes we are unable to respond by then. We will let you know beforehand if we think it may take us longer. For full details of our complaints process please visit: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>.

Please don't reply to this email because it's an automated acknowledgement sent from an account which can't receive replies. If you do need to get in touch, please use our webform instead at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints), quoting your reference number.

Here is the text of your response to our reply:

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YOUR COMPLAINT:

a

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Thank you again for contacting us,

BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).



**10. Complaint No. 2 dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 (re ‘Britain’s Fascist Thread’, Episode 2):**

To:

(1) BBC Complaints Dept, Darlington, County Durham DL3 0UR.

[BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8 / CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3]

and

(2) Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA.

**SUBJECT:**

Detailed complaint brought by **Martin Webster** against the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for and on behalf of himself and the former members of the lapsed political party known as the **National Front** (NF) of which he was National Activities Organiser from 1969 to 1983. This complaint is also referred in identical terms to the Office of Communications (Ofcom) for its consideration as the complainant has no faith in the BBC’s ability to be an impartial judge in respect of a complaint against itself and willing to impose on itself the necessary actions to correct injustices perpetrated by its employees and associated other persons.

This complaint relates to **“Britain’s Fascist Thread”, Episode 2**, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 26th February 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>. This episode deals primarily with a march through Lewisham by members and supporters of the National Front that took place on Saturday, 13th August 1977. The march was opposed by violent counter-demonstrators, leading to the incident becoming known as the “Battle of Lewisham”.

In support of this complaint I am attaching copies of three newspaper articles published shortly after the Lewisham march of 13th August 1977. [**Mr Webster file note:** Attachments all as per ‘Battle of Lewisham’ complaint.]

(a) A report covering the whole march and counter-demonstrations in Lewisham published in *The Sunday Times* the following day, which report was compiled and signed off by five experienced and impartial reporters;

(b) An interview with Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm published in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated 26th August 1977;

(c) A report on the sentencing of four London youths to six years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the NF march published in *The Times* newspaper dated 2nd

October 1980.

It is submitted that both the 30 working days time limit specified in the **BBC Complaints Framework** and the 1,000 word content limit do not apply to this complaint on the grounds that:

- (a) there are no less than forty three (43) complaints embodied in this one complaint, each of which required time to assess and prepare a suitable response, and each of which could, as a separate complaint, use up to 1,000 words, making a total of up to 43,000 words. This complaint contains a little under 11,000 words; and (b) common sense dictates that it would be more convenient for all concerned to have all 43 complaints amalgamated into one complaint.
- (c) in view of the above, this complaint is a wholly exceptional and serious complaint that fully justifies waiving both the 30 working days time limit and the 1,000 words content limit.

## **I General Complaint**

- (a) This programme is in breach of the BBC Charter (2016), paragraph 6 (1) and the BBC Agreement (2016), Schedule 3, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. The only relevant voices heard were those of the presenter, who was openly “anti-fascist” and left wing, and interviewees whose opinions were, without exception, left wing or extreme left wing.
- (b) The subject matter of the programme was the National Front and, more specifically, the march held by the National Front in Lewisham on 13th August 1977. The duties of fairness and impartiality imposed on the BBC by its Charter (paragraph 6(1)) demand that, in such programmes, representatives from the National Front be interviewed and allowed to give their accounts of the events covered, to counterbalance the views of the presenter and interviewees.
- (c) No effort was made by the programme makers to contact myself, being the person who could have not only given the NF’s viewpoint on the numerous allegations levelled at it by the presenter and interviewees but also given further, crucial, information concerning the subject matter of the programme, that would have enlightened listeners and provided them with a fairer, more complete account of what happened. I am still alive, easily contactable, and have been so contacted by BBC TV and radio producers on several occasions in the years after the NF lapsed out of existence (*circa* 1986). The last contact came from a BBC radio producer who included an interview with me in a programme about the National Socialist writer Savitri Devi broadcast about three years ago. Specifically, I was the NF’s National Activities Organiser and Publicity Officer from 1969 to 1983 and, hence, have a had close knowledge of all the circumstances prior to, during and after the event which was the subject of this programme: “The Battle of Lewisham”.

(d) Additionally, I could have been a useful interviewee as I had close knowledge of the situation in S.E. London at the relevant time. I worked for more than a year (1963/1964) at the surgery of the late Dr William J. Mitchell LRCP at 387 Queen's Road, New Cross SE14. Dr Mitchell's GP practice had patients of all races from all parts of New Cross, Deptford and Lewisham. His partner in the practice, Dr McConnachie, was an Anglo-Indian. On several occasions during my period with the surgery I encountered elderly white female patients who had been attacked by young Black males for their handbags. These women had been taken to the local hospital A&E in the first instance, then they resorted to Dr Mitchell for follow-up treatment. I will not forget the sight of elderly women with their faces covered with black and blue bruising. I maintained contact with Dr Mitchell's family for decades thereafter, and thereby maintained my knowledge of goings-on in that part of London. In the 1979 general election Dr Mitchell's son, Robert, stood as the NF candidate for Deptford winning *circa* 1,500 votes. Robert qualified as a medical doctor, became a FRCS, and married before taking up a GP practice in the north of England.

(e) The programme contained numerous factual errors which could have been easily avoided if a reasonable amount of research and fact-checking had been carried out, together with the action mentioned in paragraphs (c) and (d) above.

(f) The tone of the programme implied, contrary to fact, that the National Front was a "fascist" organisation, and that it encouraged and practised violence and intimidation to achieve its objectives. This insinuation is completely false, and could have been easily rebutted had I been interviewed. In fact, the National Front was a political party that contested elections and won serious levels of support, being arguably at that time Britain's third party, not (as implied) a mere street gang. For example, almost 120,000 Londoners voted for the National Front at the GLC elections on 5th May 1977, just three months before the "Battle of Lewisham", and in parliamentary by-elections (Stechford and Ladywood) shortly before and after the "Battle" the National Front polled ahead of the Liberal Party (now the Liberal Democrats). So far from being "smashed" by the "Battle of Lewisham" as the programme-makers suggested, the NF was able to nominate 303 candidates in the 1979 general election. Further, the NF had a comprehensive Constitution which provided for:

- (i) A governing body (the National Directorate) a third of the places on which fell vacant every year and were filled by an annual postal ballot of the entire membership of the party;
- (ii) An Annual General Meeting at which all members were entitled to attend and vote on resolutions concerning the party's policies and Constitution submitted by a sufficient number of members;
- (iii) A constitution for branches requiring annual elections for posts on branch committees.

(g) Numerous interviewees made serious and unsubstantiated allegations against the National Front, its members and supporters, including allegations of violence,

intimidation and other unlawful activities, which were unchallenged by the presenter. Again, my inclusion as an interviewee on the programme would have provided a counterbalance to these left-wing interviewees, as well as further, vital, information that would have given a fairer account to listeners of the events covered. For example, I append a copy of page 4 of *The Times* dated 22nd October 1980 reporting on the sentencing of four London youths to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the National Front march on 13th August 1977. Note that "the prosecution said that they intended to use the petrol bombs on some of the marchers" (i.e. NF members and supporters).

(h) When I heard about the series of programmes, of which this episode is one, being about to be broadcast, I contacted someone who had been involved with a previous interview of myself by the BBC to establish how I might make contact with the producer/s of the programme about which I am complaining. That person contacted the BBC producer and was told that,

***"...the whole series is a historical one and they only spoke to or interviewed academics and used archive. They didn't interview anyone around who was there."***

That statement, noted and sent to me by a BBC journalistic employee — which I have archived — constitutes an amazingly frank admission of bias and journalistic incompetence. It is a lame excuse for excluding the voices of people likely to contradict the opinions of the producer and presenter. Not all the interviewees were academics (e.g. Lord Hain) — and some of them were not even introduced by name or occupation — but all of them were left wing or what is referred to as "the far left". Why "academics" were considered by these BBC programme-makers to be truthful, unbiased, objective, etc., was not explained. Their declared presumption is clearly inane and/or cynical. The producer's statement and the biased way in which the programme was produced constitutes irrefutable evidence of grave breaches of the BBC Charter, as set out in paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

## **II Detailed complaints, all of which breach paragraph 6 (1) of the BBC Charter (2016)**

### **[The web page hosting the programme replay]**

1. The short description on the web page hosting the replay includes the following: "From the formation of the British Fascisti in 1923, through the BUF, the National Front and the BNP, the history of fascism in Britain is, in a sense, an unbroken thread." This is a completely unsubstantiated statement implying that the National Front is a "continuation" of the BUF, when in fact both the Constitution and the Statement of Policy of the National Front differ in many important respects from the way the BUF was run and the policies advocated by it.

2. That description also includes the following: “a lineage of hatreds, pseudo-science, failed leaders and tactics”, referring to, among other bodies, the National Front. Whether the National Front contained or formed part of “a lineage of hatreds [or] pseudo-science” is a matter of opinion. As to “failed leaders and tactics”, these can be found in abundance in the establishment parties of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats, yet no mention was made in the programme of that fact.

Neither of these parts of the description of the programme on the BBC web site was appropriate for an organisation that is required to be impartial in politics.

### **The programme itself**

[Please note that the times given refer to the time elapsed, to the nearest couple of seconds, from the start of the programme.]

3. 0:57 The presenter says, “When the British far-right National Front staged a controversial march through the South London Borough of Lewisham in August 1977 it was part of an ongoing strategy of provocative rallies intended to raise its profile and attract new recruits.”

There are two unsubstantiated insinuations set out here.

(a) “the British far-right National Front”. Only someone who is left wing or extreme left wing would describe the National Front as “far-right”.

(b) “...it was part of an ongoing strategy of provocative rallies”. This is a purely subjective statement made without any supporting evidence. I refer to *The Sunday Times* report of the following day, a copy of which I attach, and in particular that part of the report I have outlined in red, which confirms the real reasons that the NF decided to march in Lewisham at that time.

That part of the report reads:

***“The area was chosen for a march by the National Front to capitalise on a genuine fear in the neighbourhood. Among its slogans were those underlining the fact that a police survey of street crime in South London completed in 1974 showed that 80 per cent of the attackers were black and 85 per cent of the victims were white.*”**

***“There is solid right-wing support in the Clifton Rise area. In a by-election for the local council last year, votes for the National Front and the National Party totalled more than those of the successful Labour candidate.”***

This information was available to the presenter but she failed to make use of it. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.



4. 1:10 The presenter refers to a misquotation from me (“to kick their way into the headlines”). This misquotation was originally taken from an interview that I did in about 1970 with a journalist who worked for the *Illustrated London News* magazine. The interview was conducted one evening at his office in/near Grays Inn Road, WC1. He volunteered to me — for some unexplained reason/s — at the outset of the interview that he was Jewish. In answer to a question from him about the NF’s noisy demonstrations, I said (as closely as I can remember the quote): “...*the Establishment’s mass media don’t want to give us publicity — they want to ignore us to death. So we’ve got to jostle our way into the headlines...*”

I distinctly remember that I used the word “jostle” (and not “kick”) because some years earlier I had staged a one-man demonstration against Jomo Kenyatta, president of Kenya, when he attended a Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ conference in London in 1964. Kenyatta was the convicted leader of the infamous Mau Mau conspiracy. In reporting my demonstration the London *Evening News* headlined their front-page lead story: “*The Jostling of Jomo*” [my underlining]. I have never forgotten that headline because the “jostling” word exactly described my actions on that occasion — and the tone and style of subsequent NF demonstrations.

Nevertheless, when the *Illustrated London News* published the interview with me I was falsely reported to have said the word “kick”. That false quote was subsequently put to me by various press and broadcasting media interviewers. I always refuted it, much as I have done here.

In view of the controversial nature of this “quotation”, the presenter had a duty of care to her listeners to ensure that it was accurate. No attempt was made by her or by any of her colleagues to contact me to confirm whether it was indeed accurate or not. Had anyone done so I would have been able to inform them of the distortion. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

5. 1:22 The presenter says, “...in this series I’ve been tracing the threads of fascism that have woven themselves into the British picture, a lineage of individuals, organisations and ideas that runs from the end of World War One to the present day”.

The presenter here has already discarded any pretence of objectivity – something that is unbecoming for a person describing themselves as a historian, even a “political” one. She speaks as if the existence of “threads of fascism” in Britain has been long established, which it has not. She failed to present evidence of the existence of any such “thread” on which to base her subsequent comments. Just because the left slings the word, “fascism” at anyone who opposes them, it doesn’t mean a “thread of fascism” exists, or ever has existed, in Britain.

6. 2:00 The background chanting of “*Sieg Heil!*” is of left wing activists violently opposing a National Front activity, and not of NF members or supporters. Left wing

counter-demonstrators frequently gave NF marchers ironic Hitler salutes and “*Sieg Heil!*” chants. This was not made clear in the programme, and should have been. It is submitted that the real purpose of inserting this irrelevant clip into the recording is to subliminally condition the listener into accepting that there is something alien and wrong about being loyal to one’s own people. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

7. 2:12 The presenter says, “For others, the real world threat they posed placed them outside the norms of liberal democracy. Like at Cable Street forty years earlier when a march through east London by the British Union of Fascists was physically blocked, they felt that a proper response was confrontation. Looking back at Lewisham shows us how the threads of fascism were woven into popular politics in Britain in the 1970s. But it also shows us something of the consequences as well, for democracy, for free speech, and for those who were on the receiving end of the violence that followed.”

This statement implies that the National Front were opposed to democracy and free speech, and supported violence. This is completely untrue. The National Front was a political party that contested elections. It had a Statement of Policy and a written Constitution which could only be changed by a ‘two-thirds’ majority vote at annual general meetings which all paid-up members were entitled to attend and vote. All its national and local officers were elected by the national/local membership.

It is the left, of which this presenter is obviously a part, that opposes democracy and freedom of speech and assembly, and engages in mass political violence, as it did against the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s and against the National Front on countless occasions in the 1970s and 1980s.

8. 2:49 The presenter says, “In thinking about this programme, about fascism in Britain after World War Two, one question kept coming back to me as a starting point. Who on earth would be a fascist in Britain after the Holocaust?”

Again, the presenter assumes that the National Front and its supporters were “fascists”, but fails to bring any evidence in support. This remark attempts to associate the National Front with what is called “The Holocaust”. Such an association has no foundation in fact. The NF did not involve itself in that “Historical Revisionist” controversy. Individual members were entitled to hold and to express their own opinions on issues not adopted by the party, just so long as they did not attribute those opinions to the party or ventilate those opinions on party platforms.

9. 3:00 Joe Mulhall says, “One of the key ways, of course, that people continue to be fascists after the Second World War is through the emergence of ‘Holocaust Denial’. In truth, their whole world view is built on a notion of anti-semitism, that Jews are all-powerful, that they secretly control the world. And that was fundamental to their

whole politics. And so how can you have an all-powerful community or race like the Jewish people and then simultaneously have the Holocaust? For some people that was just too large a contradiction. And so it was easier for them to believe that the holocaust didn't happen.”

This interviewee doesn't state which people “continued to be fascists after the Second World War”. How many former members of the National Front did Mr Mulhall interview in order to form his conclusions as to why they joined the party?

I say that members of the public joined the National Front because they were patriotic, extremely concerned about the current direction in which Britain was heading and were fed up with the mainstream parties. They did not join it on account of historical issues relating to the Second World War. Had the presenter done the research required for a programme like this then she would not have made this fundamental mistake. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

10. 3:35 The presenter says, “Fascism is a series of ideas centred around the revolutionary ultra-nationalism, racial hierarchy, a recapturing of a mythic past, and of authoritarian leadership. Some things might disappear from view – the uniforms, the straight-arm salute, even the word itself, but enough remains to recognise the threads of fascism.”

This statement is simplistic nonsense. What “mythic past” were “fascists” trying to recapture? What sources does the presenter rely on to support her definition of “fascism”? The word has become, and was used by the presenter, as a term of abuse, a political swear-word. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

11. 4:00 Paul Jackson (left-wing historian and author of forthcoming book, *Pride and Prejudice*) says, “We can see three areas of continuity in inter-war fascism in Britain. The first is the sort of Oswald Mosely tradition where we see the Union Movement emerge by the end of the 1940s and become a vehicle for Mosely to create a new type of fascist politics. It's very European. It's also linked to rekindling Empire. Then we have an anti-semitic conspiracy theory tradition. People like A.K. Chesterton and his League of Empire Loyalists. And then you have that tradition that is very influenced by Hitler's ideas in various ways. So here, er, you know, it's people like John Tyndall, Colin Jordan. And then finally I suppose you just have some broader things that also sit around this culture that again in some ways just help to sustain it. In particular, the Racial Preservation Societies are a very interesting group of the 1960s.”

What are these “broader things that also sit around this culture”? Why didn't the presenter ask him to expand on this? This comment appears to be just a name-



dropping exercise to try to convince the listener that he knows what he's talking about.

12. 5:25 Professor Paul Gilroy, left-wing intellectual, says, "We're indebted to some of the victims of Italian and Nazi fascism for their warning to us that, as fascism reappears in new clothing, in drag, if you like, it doesn't announce itself, it doesn't always come conveniently labelled, and those things were around in my own childhood as, you know, a black kid growing up in London in the late fifties and early sixties, and seventies too, and it's clear that those people were real fascists and that their presence was harder to label as such because they spoke the language of British Nationalism in its populist, violent form."

How is it clear that "...these people were real fascists"? What evidence does Professor Gilroy rely on to support this contention? Exactly what is "...the language of British Nationalism in its populist, violent form"? What recorded acts of violence does he rely on to support this contention? The presenter failed to elicit any of this information from the interviewee.

13. 6:35 The presenter says, (of A.K. Chesterton), "...he was a fascist and a committed anti-semite."

(a) This is a simplistic statement, and misleading. Mr Chesterton (a holder of the Military Cross from WW1) was a leading member of Mosley's British Union of Fascists for a while during the 1930s, but broke with Mosley and the BUF in 1938. He resumed his commission with the King's African Rifles and performed active service during the Second World War. He was not detained — as was Mosley and many of his supporters — under the infamous Defence Regulation 18b which allowed the authorities to detain persons solely on account of their legally-expressed political opinions without any charges being preferred against them or convictions obtained. (Even Winston Churchill described Defence Regulation 18b as being "*...in the highest degree odious...*") Why wasn't all this mentioned in the programme?

(b) What evidence does the presenter rely on to support her accusation that Mr Chesterton was "a committed anti-semite"? Mr. Chesterton was certainly a trenchant critic of International Communism, Zionism and the International Financial system. His researches in those subject areas, published in his magazine *Candour*, certainly prompted him to reveal activities by Jews and Jewry which were not to their credit. The programme might have noted that the last chapter of Chesterton's last published book '*The New Unhappy Lords*' was headed: "*Is the Conspiracy Jewish?*". Note the question mark which headed a carefully nuanced text. Was the BBC presenter seeking to suggest that any and all criticism of Jews and Jewry constitutes "anti-semitism"? Any such suggestion is absurd, incompatible with the British tradition of free speech and not to be expected from a BBC presenter— representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

14. 6:45 A left-wing interviewee says (referring again to A.K. Chesterton), “And his policies of the National Front, racial superiority, the financial conspiracy of Wall Street, the ‘Britain for the British’ cry, all mirror the dead policies of the European dictators.”

Who is the person saying this? No indication is given in the programme. What have “the dead policies of the European dictators” got to do with the political and social problems that National Front members and supporters were concerned about in the 1960s and 1970s? Was this person, or the presenter, not aware that the slogan “*Britain for the British*” was first deployed by the Labour Party — I think by Keir Hardie — in the early part of the 20th century?

15. 8:08 The presenter says, “... infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech” (referring to Enoch Powell’s 20th April 1968 speech), and refers to Powell’s “re-framing of the meaning of World War Two, when he presented it, not as a victory against fascism, or hyper-nationalism, or anti-semitism, but as a defensive war for the nation.”

Didn’t most people in Britain regard the Second World War, at the time, as “a defensive war for the nation”? Isn’t that how the media — not least the BBC! — presented it at the time? Surely the presenter doesn’t believe that the masses believed they were fighting a war “against fascism, or hyper-nationalism, or anti-semitism”? This is left-wing re-writing of history and not serious political discussion.

16. 9:30 An unnamed commentator says, “...For them the idea of nation was indivisible from race and racism. And at its core is a very specific and visceral anti-semitism. But what they attempt to do is to convert racial populists... who are angry about immigration and to try to turn them into fascists.”

Who is this unnamed commentator? What evidence does he have to support what he is saying? Can he give any examples of what he says in his final sentence? The presenter had a duty to press this person for evidence to support his arguments, but failed to do so.

17. 10:05 The presenter says, “... it wasn’t the threat of the ballot box that was most potent for many Lewisham residents ... but the threat on the street.”

This is an insinuation that violence came from the National Front marchers, when all the violence was directed against them from the Left. It also implies that many Lewisham residents regarded the National Front as a “threat on the street”. This is another lie.

I again refer to *The Sunday Times* report of the day following the Lewisham march (copy attached). This refers, in particular, to the fact that the National Front had substantial electoral support in the Clifton Rise area of Lewisham, the street where the National Front marchers were set to assemble before the march.

I also refer to the report contained in *The Times* newspaper dated 2nd October 1980, a copy of which is attached, covering the sentencing of four London youths to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the NF march.

Neither of these reports was referenced by the presenter. If she had been objective and unbiased then these reports would have figured in the programme. She was at all times heavily biased against the National Front and as such should not have been considered by the BBC as a suitable person to present a programme such as this.

18. 10:07 Professor 'Lez' Henry says, "For me, the most important thing is, if we're going to present these things historically and accurately then we have to use the language at the time, because if we don't then we distort the whole moment." The presenter then says, "He describes them as organised and militaristic. It wasn't random. He's careful and [unclear] other words as well. Racist language that many people find offensive, but which, to him is essential to fully convey the violence of the time."

(a) What exactly does Professor Henry mean here? What does "distort the whole moment" really mean? The presenter failed to seek clarification from him on all this.

(b) As to the presenter's comments, what does she mean by "the violence of the time"? This is a repeat of one of the previous lies (item 17 above), i.e. that the violence came from the National Front and not from the left. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

19. 10:46 Professor Henry says, "The staple of the fascist when I was growing up – nigger-huntin', Paki-bashin' an' queer bashin'. How am I gonna have a conversation if I say, oh, we can't use the n-word, we can't use the p-word, we can't use the q-word? So how's it gonna make sense historically? Growin' up in Lewisham, we were actually terrorised. Once myself, my brover and some of our friends, we were playing in the local park when we were surrounded by about eight white boys, but they were much older than us. But what they did was, you know, they started to [...] the monkey chants and started insulting us, you know, callin' us nigger and coon and spade, spear chucker, those kind of fings, an' one of them kicked the hell out of my twin bruvver. They literally held us an' made us watch while one of them kicked the hell out of my twin bruvver. We were eleven or twelve years old and these guys were late teens early twenties. That was not an isolated incident. That was just what used to happen to us as black youth in the London Borough of Lewisham. An' not just in Lewisham. Y'know, across the UK."

- (a) This is just a semi-literate, whinging, illogical diatribe from someone who does no credit to his status as “a professor”.
- (b) Can he provide us with further details of what seems to have been a very serious assault on his brother, such as the date and approximate time, and the exact place?
- (c) Was it reported to the police?
- (d) Were there any independent witnesses?
- (e) How many other such events occurred?
- (f) Where and when did they take place?
- (g) Was it his brother every time, or were others assaulted too?
- (h) Were the assailants white and older every time?
- (i) Were the police notified?
- (j) Did any arrests or prosecutions follow?
- (k) I see from searching online that Professor William Henry is a Professor of Criminology and Sociology at the University of West London, and has produced peer reviewed articles such as, ‘*Marxism as a reggaemational tool to chant down Babylon!*’, ‘*Griots, Rappers & Deejays*’, and ‘*Reggae, Rasta and the role of the Deejay in the Black British Experience*’. He should therefore be more than capable of providing answers to these fundamental questions. Yet the presenter did not ask them.

20. 12:01 An unnamed commentator says, “This is the moment, of course, where they had begun to emphasise the lurid dangerous figure of the young black man, you know, as the primary, predatory object of their, you know, the salvaging of Britain. I mean, you can look actually at the placards they carried on these demonstrations, these, sort of, monstrous figures with dreadlocks with a kind of golliwog face on the front, with the slogan, “*This is your last chance*”. So that image of a kind of predatory, violent, black, youthful male monster in absolute counterpoint with the kind of imagery that Powell had created in the “Rivers of Blood” speech. This is the moment when the National Front pick up all those things and really do try to put fuel in their populist aspirations of that overtly racist kind.”

- (a) Who is this unnamed commentator?
- (b) What was the question asked of him?
- (c) What, exactly, is he trying to say here?
- (d) What does, “in absolute counterpoint with the kind of imagery that Powell had created” mean?
- (e) Why didn’t the programme’s presenter clarify what he was trying to say?
- (f) Without this information, this is just a rant, unworthy of inclusion in what is supposed to be a serious look at a historical social phenomenon.

21. 12:59 Professor Henry says, “Lewisham used to have a market, and, guaranteed, every single Sa’urday you would have members of the National Front selling the *Bulldog* magazine openly. I’d be walking past, and they’d be like, “Oi! Oi! Oi! Nig-nog. You want one of these? Here y’are. Y’know what? I ain’t even gonna charge you for it, son, I ain’t even gonna charge you. Have some of this, mate, and you can learn a bit about yourself.” An’ on the front of the *Bulldog* magazine it has those images,

you know, where you go from a primate to a cave-man, an' then you'd have a picture of an African wiv these overly distort'ed features. Very similar to what the Nazis did in their depictions of the Jewish communi'ies, you know when they distort their images an' make them look sub-human, or less than human. An' they would give them to us. It was normal. It was normalised. It wasn't a big deal."

(a) Again, this is just a rant with no clear purpose. And if "it wasn't a big deal" then why say it and why include it in the programme?

(b) Professor Henry describes how National Front members would sell their *Bulldog* magazine "openly" (how else would he expect them to sell it?). This magazine was only launched in September, 1977 — a month *after* the Lewisham march took place! Yet later in this interview, (at 19:30) he says that the National Front "died" on the day of the Lewisham march. These statements contradict each other, yet the presenter failed to ask him to explain this irregularity. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

22. 14:03 The presenter says, "In the weeks before the march in Lewisham, the National Front advertised it with the slogan, 'Clear the muggers off the streets'. Attempts to have it banned were unsuccessful, and like at Cable Street many years before, protestors sought other means of opposition."

(a) The theme of the march is mentioned here for the first time, but not followed up. The presenter does not appear to be interested in the theme (which is vital, as it explains why the march was at that time and in that place) and it seems she doesn't want the listeners to be either. Listeners are invited to assume that it was just a pretext for causing trouble.

(b) Why didn't the presenter ask if there was a mugging problem in Lewisham at that time that the National Front wished to draw people's attention to? That was the obvious question to ask.

(c) Why didn't she ask who were the majority of the muggers and who were their typical victims?

(d) If there was no mugging problem then why did the presenter not say so?

(e) This part of the programme illustrates how inclusion in the programme of myself, or anyone else who could have given the essential background information that I could have given, would have avoided such a one-sided, distorted account of what happened that day at Lewisham.



(f) Neither the presenter nor the interviewee mentioned an extremely important and highly relevant legal action that had taken place in the High Court for a full week in the period immediately before the Lewisham march.

Lewisham Borough Council had made an application for an Order of Mandamus against the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, David McNee, to force him to use his powers to ban the forthcoming march on the grounds that violence and destruction of property were bound to occur. Mr McNee opposed the application and won his case. He thereby retained his statutory powers to decide whether or not to ban the march, and he chose to let it go ahead.

This was a massive defeat for the forces of the Left who were determined to stop the march from taking place, and it was inflicted by

- (i) a judge of the High Court, who had spent days listening to submissions from both sides of the argument and drawing his own conclusions, and
- (ii) the Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

As a result, the Left formed an umbrella organisation called the “All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism” (ALCARAF) to promote counter-demonstrations against the march at broadly the same time and place as the march itself. It included the Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood, a self-confessed member of the Communist Party at the time, as well as Martin Savitt, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. I refer, again, to the (attached) report published by *The Sunday Times* on the following day.

I also refer to an interview with Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm, published in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated August 26th 1977, in which he says:

**“There is no difficulty in policing a Front demonstration on its own – it’s only when there is opposition that you get violence”.**

This report also gives us the following information from Deputy-Assistant Commissioner Helm:

***“ ‘On the Saturday at Lewisham’, said Mr Helm, ‘the National Front had ‘obeyed directions all along the line. Before August 13 their march was curtailed. On the day they were formed up on a different route and were diverted three times – and there were no problems.***

***“ ‘They were displaying posters which were anti-mugging, which could have incited racial hatred. They were asked not to display them and they didn’t.***

***“ ‘Compare this with the complete refusal by the SWP and the All Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism marches to agree a route with the***

*police and the subsequent dispersal of the ALCARAF people so that they could go to where the Front rally was starting’.”*

I attach to this complaint a copy of that interview, which should be read in its entirety because many of the assertions made by the presenter and interviewee were, in effect, anticipated by him and refuted.

I submit that the reason why the presenter failed to mention this “elephant in the room” event was that it would have undermined her case that the march should have been banned and that the threat of violence came only from the NF. She chose to mislead her audience and future historians rather than publish the truth. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

23. 14:17 Counter-protest organiser (unnamed): “We intend to occupy Clifton Rise.”  
Interviewer: “In what way? When you say occupy, what do you mean?”

Counter-protest organiser: “With the forces that we will be sending for the march.”

Interviewer: “You hope to fill it with them and prevent the National Front from gathering there?”

Counter-protest organiser (unnamed): “That's right.”

This unnamed counter-protest organiser admits openly to participating in an illegal activity, i.e. conspiring with other(s) to use violence or the threat of violence to prevent a group of people from exercising their lawful right to assemble. Yet no comment on this is made by the presenter, who then goes on to talk about “disinformation and racist propaganda”. At the very least, she should have said something about the illegality of this person’s activities. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

24. 14:30 The presenter says, “What’s the best response to disinformation, and racist propaganda? To the threat of racist attacks, to hate speech framed as nationalist renewal, to a march through black neighbourhoods by a fascist organisation?”

(a) Here, there are implied accusations by the presenter against the National Front of “disinformation and racist propaganda”, “hate speech framed as nationalist renewal”, and of carrying out “racist attacks”. Yet no examples of any of this are given. The term, “racist attack” is not defined.

(b) Do not muggings by young black men of elderly white women, frequent in the New Cross area at the time (as recorded in the attached *The Sunday Times* report), count as “racist attacks”?

(c) This is an abuse by the presenter of her position as such. BBC listeners are entitled to be presented with a fair and balanced account of the subject matter of the series, and, specifically, of what happened at Lewisham that day, not to be subjected to the producer's own unsubstantiated opinions. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

25. 14:44 Interviewer (unnamed): “You do presumably have the alternative of letting them get on with it and, er, letting everyone forget all about it?”

Interviewee (unnamed): “It's not an alternative for us, because we say if the National Front are allowed to march then they are allowed to spread the kind of racist propaganda to people in the street, people in their homes, and we are determined to stop that by whatever means we can.”

(a) Yet again we have a contribution from an opponent of the National Front, but no attempt seems to have been made to present a balanced picture by interviewing members or supporters of the National Front.

(b) Why were no attempts made to trace any such people still alive and willing to give an interview?

(c) Why didn't the presenter deal with the implied threat of violence (that she frequently accuses the National Front of) contained in the words, “...we are determined to stop that by whatever means we can...” These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

26. 15:29 Lord Hain (well known for his extreme left-wing views) says, “By 1977 the National Front had been polling really well in elections, and they were on the march, literally on the streets, intimidating the predominantly black citizens but also the Jewish citizens, so there was a sense of real threat, and a whole cross-section of opinion came together, and the feeling was that we had to make a stand.”

(a) The presenter had a duty to question Hain as to when and where the intimidation of black and Jewish people by National Front members or supporters took place, but she failed to do so. She should have asked him questions, such as,

- (i) What form did this intimidation take?
- (ii) Was it reported to the police?
- (iii) If so, did any prosecutions and convictions follow?

(b) The presenter should also have asked Hain



- (i) who elected or appointed him and his fellow-leftists to be the arbiters of what issues people should be allowed or not allowed to march and have rallies about;
- (ii) to expand on his statement that “a whole cross-section of opinion came together”.

In particular,

- (I) who organised the original meeting that must have taken place?
- (II) Which existing organisations were invited?
- (III) Which representatives of those organisations attended?
- (IV) When did this meeting take place?
- (V) Is he talking about ALCARAF (All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism), who held a “peace march” in Lewisham a couple of hours before the National Front march and many of whose supporters afterwards made their way to Clifton Rise, where the National Front had arranged with the police to form up prior to marching, with the intent of causing trouble?

The presenter failed to ask Hain about any of this.

(c) Talking about polling well in elections, the presenter failed to ask Hain if any of the "range of different groups" (see previously at about 15:10) ever promoted candidates in elections, and if so, how well they did. This is a point that would assist listeners in judging for themselves who were the trouble makers at Lewisham and who were not, and who was “beyond the democratic processes“ (see 35 below) and who was not.

(d) Hain speaks as if “making a stand” (i.e. rioting and using violence to try and stop NF marches) was a new strategy decided upon shortly before Lewisham. In fact the far left had been doing this kind of thing for at least 3 years by the time of Lewisham, starting at the “Battle of Red Lion Square” on 15th June 1974, when one left-wing demonstrator (Kevin Gateley) died in a riotous attack on a Police cordon, while the NF march was still about half a mile away, and which prompted a Public Judicial Inquiry led by Lord Justice Scarman (reported in HMSO Cmnd 5919) as to the cause of the rioting. Why didn't the presenter put this well-known fact to Hain? These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

27. 15:59 There were two anecdotes presented, one of which was from Hain, about what these people did at Lewisham on the day. (“We marched around Lewisham for a while, and everyone felt okay about it”). Hain emphasises that he was present at the beginning of the march and “for some period afterwards, but I wasn’t actually present when the Battle of Lewisham took place”. He says, “It was a very important demonstration.” One left-wing interviewee mentioned that there was a suggestion that they go to New Cross to “actually oppose the fascists on the street”.

(a) One of these interviewees, an active opponent of the National Front on that day, “felt okay” about marching around Lewisham that day. Why wasn't it put to him that this was because there was no-one behaving violently towards him and his comrades. According to the presenter's standards, it seems, violence BY the National Front (which was virtually non-existent) was unacceptable, but violence AGAINST the National Front was perfectly acceptable. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

(b) The casual mention that these people were considering going to New Cross to “actually oppose the fascists on the street”, i.e. threaten or engage in violence, is ignored by the presenter. That is not impartiality. Why did the presenter not refer to contemporary news reports of the events, such as that of *The Sunday Times* the following day, 14th August 1977 (a copy of which is attached)?

28. 17:09 An anonymous witness says, “There's a kind of confrontation that's pending, but the first kind of confrontation really is with the police. ... Then there's the moment when the police lead the fascists that they're trying to protect out onto New Cross Road, and my memory of that is that the police forces then charged into the crowd. They came round the corner, the fascists protected by the charge of the police forces, and a lot of the people in front of me were very brave and bold and just, you know, went at them really. People were fighting, hand to hand, and gradually they moved past, and the fighting wound down. They marched off down the road, and, I mean, I didn't chase after them. I think people did, but I didn't. I was still shattered, actually, from what I had witnessed.”

This is another unnamed left-wing witness representative of the National Front's opponents. His account is transparently false. Again, no counter-view is heard. This is the first hint in the programme that the anti-National Front forces were violent towards the police. The people he mentions as fighting hand to hand were the anti-National Front demonstrators who attacked the police. The presenter failed to make this clear.

29. 18:22 An unnamed commentator says, “So the National Front clearly represents a threat to what ordinary people accept as liberal democracy, and also a threat to law and order. But the kind of violence that has terrorised Lewisham has made some people think that the opponents of the National Front are as suspect as the Front itself, and that the impact of the National Front on the public has been emphasised by opposition.”

(a) Who is this person?

(b) How did the National Front represent the threats that he says it did?

(c) Why is it not made clear that the “violence that has terrorised Lewisham” did not come from the National Front, but from

- (i) muggers of elderly white ladies, most of whom were black, and
- (ii) the angry, violent, leftist mob that tried to stop the National Front from marching that day?

(d) Why did the presenter not put it to this person that the National Front contested elections, so how can it be a “threat to what ordinary people accept as liberal democracy”?

30. 18:46 The presenter says, “Scores of people were injured at Lewisham, including more than 50 police officers, and it was on that day that riot gear, including riot shields, were first used by police on the British mainland. We can see from their magazine, *Searchlight*, that the National Front hailed what took place at Lewisham as a triumph. The headline read, ‘Establishment conspirators and red mobs fail to stop the National Front advance’. But interpretations of that success differ.”

(a) The presenter doesn’t make it clear that

- (i) some of the injured included participants in the lawful National Front march,
- (ii) the police officers who were injured were all injured at the hands of the mob that opposed the National Front, and
- (iii) that the reason for the riot gear being used for the first time on the British mainland was exclusively the violence directed against the police by the left-wing counter-demonstrators, and NOT the NF marchers.

(b) The magazine supporting the National Front at the time was called *Spearhead* (which was published privately and independently of the National Front). *Searchlight* was (and still is) a magazine run by the extreme left-wing but pro-Zionist organisation of the same name which specialised in attacking and inciting violence against the National Front, its members, supporters, premises and events. Perhaps this was a Freudian slip, showing us where the presenter obtained most of her material for this programme. The presenter failed to rectify this error before the programme aired.

31. 19:12 An unnamed commentator says, “This is a pivotal moment. This confrontation shows them that they can't just march wherever they like into a black community to intimidate and harass and represent symbolically the violence of their agenda. Lewisham says to them, ‘You're not going to be able to do that’.”

(a) Where is the evidence that the National Front intimidated or harassed anyone during their marches? Where is the evidence for “the violence of their agenda”, and what does it mean? Isn't that just a matter of opinion? Where is the opposing opinion?

(b) What he’s saying is that mob violence succeeded and was justified. Whether or not this is true, why didn’t the presenter question the ethics of such a statement?

These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

32 19:30 Professor Henry says, “That for me is why the National Front died that day. There were so many ordinary white people sayin’, ‘You don’t represent us’, that made those racists realise that they don’t have the support that they believed they had.”

This is yet another unsupported and unchallenged statement. Why was no contrary opinion allowed on this programme? I refer again to *The Sunday Times* report of the following day, in which it says:

**“In a by-election for the local council last year, votes for the National Front and the National Party totalled more than those of the successful Labour candidate.”**

These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

33. 20:06 The presenter says, “The campaigning group, the Anti Nazi League, came together in the month after Lewisham. Along with Rock Against Racism, which had formed the previous year, it harnessed popular culture to underpin its opposition to fascism. But it also treated fascism as an exception. As fundamentally antithetical to liberal democracy. Not something to be accommodated and debated, but, controversially, something to be physically confronted.”

Why does the presenter openly condone physical confrontation of “fascism”, which implies violence, or the threat of violence? How can this be impartial? These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

34. 20:41 Lord Hain says, “There was a very clear strategy adopted, that where the National Front marched, we would be there. And yes, that meant confronting them. On the one hand, it was obvious from the evidence that wherever they mobilised and marched on the streets, they chose areas of maximum sensitivity, then violent attacks followed on those citizens. And the other thing is they used it to recruit. Now the only way you could stop that was not just by holding up a placard, because that didn’t affect them at all. They just sneered. What you had to do was physically stop them.”

(a) Hain talks about “confronting” and “physically stopping”. Isn’t the proper way to handle your political opponents to challenge them to debate, so you can show everyone how wrong they (i.e. your political opponents) are and how right you yourself are? Isn’t this more in line with “liberal democracy”? Why wasn’t this point put to Hain?

(b) Where is the evidence that “violent attacks followed on those citizens” and that such violent attacks, if they ever took place, were carried out by National Front members or sympathisers?

(c) Why does this programme throughout give an implied nod of approval to violence and the threat of violence being used against “fascism”, whilst at the same time making unsubstantiated allegations of violence, harassment and intimidation on the part of the National Front? Hardly impartial.

35. 21:18 An unnamed commentator says, “Fascism and the wider extreme right are fundamentally underpinned by perspectives that are racist and beyond the democratic processes, and if you look at the internal material of the National Front and that’s what it wanted to take Britain beyond as well, so in that sense they’re really quite different things. You need to dig deeper into what these organisations are doing and not just take a superficial perspective of, ‘well, they’re all fighting in the streets, they’re all as bad as each other’.”

(a) Here is yet another unnamed leftist commentator being given unchallenged free rein on this programme.

(b) How is he qualified to say that anything or anyone is “racist and beyond the democratic processes”? Why was it not put to him that the National Front was organised along democratic lines and took part in democratic elections?

(c) What does the latter phrase (“beyond the democratic processes”) mean? That it’s okay to use violence against them because you’ve decided that they are “fascists”? Why didn’t the presenter challenge him on these remarks?

36. 21:42 Hain says, “And there were all sorts of arguments about denial of free speech, but with freedom of speech comes freedom of responsibility, and you cannot have free speech which then results in incitement to violence, to breaking the law, to race hate on a vast scale. And there are historic parallels when in the battle for Cable Street in 1936 when Mosley’s fascists were on the rampage through the Jewish East End communities.”

(a) This comment doesn’t make any sense either. What exactly is “freedom of responsibility”?

(b) Hain was allowed to get carried away on an “anti-racist” rant. How is he qualified to say in which circumstances we can have our freedoms of speech and assembly and in which circumstances we cannot? The presenter failed to question him on this.

(c) Did Mosley’s fascists ever go “on the rampage”? Where is the film evidence of this? Why wasn’t this point dealt with by the presenter/interviewer?

37. 22:44 The presenter says, “In the 1979 General Election the National Front stood more candidates than ever before. They had party political broadcasts on peak time television, as they did through the 1970s and into the 1980s. The National Front was a fascist political party, and they were mainstream, or wanted to be.”

(a) The last sentence is a glaring example of this presenter's lack of impartiality. Whether the National Front was “fascist” or not is a matter of opinion.

(b) How does the presenter align this statement with that of Prof Henry (above) when he says the National Front “died” on the day of the Lewisham march (13th August 1977)? Why didn't she at least comment on this discrepancy?

38. 23:03 An unnamed commentator says, “In the immediate term they couldn't be mainstream because they didn't know how to break through, and once they were being targeted and described as fascists again, that was always a bit of a burden for them, especially when they were, you know, dressing up in Nazi uniforms and crawling around in the woods celebrating Hitler's birthday. You could produce the photographs of that and say, well you see you think they are just patriots but we really can show you that they're in fact Nazis in disguise. And that's a great strategy while it works but after a while, you know, you can't keep flourishing that ace all the time because people are, they get habituated to the idea. There's a bigger struggle involved in how you name these things, how you classify them. I mean one person's neo Nazi is someone else's, you know, glorious patriot. And that's in some ways still a struggle.”

This comment by yet another unnamed left wing commentator is just fantasy. Where is the evidence that the National Front, nationally or locally, ever organised its members to dress up in Nazi uniforms to attend celebrations of Hitler's birthday — in the woods or anywhere else?

Why did the presenter and the producer allow such an obvious tissue of lies to be included, unchallenged, as part of this programme? These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

39. 24:07 The presenter says, “Popular opposition to extremist violence and the Front's Nazi associations ensured that it was wiped out at the 1979 Election, a result that was aided by the incoming Conservative government's adoption of tough language on immigration. [Tape of Margaret Thatcher's famous “...*becoming swamped*...” speech] If Enoch Powell cleared a path for the National Front, Margaret Thatcher blocked it off again by reflecting their nationalist concerns.” There is a kernel of truth in this assertion. Thatcher and the Tories adopted tough language on immigration *before* the election in order to stop an outward flow of their voters turning to the NF, but this tough language was soon betrayed *after* the election.



(a) The National Front was not “wiped out at the 1979 Election” any more than it “died on the day of the Lewisham march”, as alleged by Professor Henry at 19:30. These statements are misleading and mutually contradictory, yet were allowed into the programme unchallenged.

(b) Why does the presenter invite listeners to accept that the violent, extreme left-wing mobs at Lewisham represented “popular opposition to extremist violence”?

(c) These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

40. 24:35 An unnamed commentator says, “So there's different ways you can kind of spin this, aren't there? You can talk about the ways in which a more mainstream party was able to take forward a more extreme political agenda, or there's the sense that ultimately a small upstart party campaigning on these issues wasn't able to get very far in the final analysis, and it shows the strength of democracy, so there's different ways, I think, of thinking about what this tells us.”

Yet another unnamed left-wing commentator, with no counterbalancing viewpoint from the National Front. This statement doesn't say anything concrete at all, so what was the point of including it in the programme?

41. 25:06 The presenter says, “It also tells us again, that, as in the pre-war years, a fascist party was only ever able to get so far. There's an unbroken thread of fascism in Britain, but there's also an unbroken thread of fascist failure. We shouldn't lose sight of that. And the people motivated to confront fascists, at Cable Street, at Lewisham, what part did they play in that failure? The moment of the election in 1979 might also highlight a weakness in the term, ‘fascism’. To say someone or something is ‘fascist’ is to box up a bundle of anti-democratic, racist, anti-social ideas, allowing them to be dismissed as possessed only by those on the extremes. By fascists, and therefore nothing to do with decent society. When the truth is that many of the issues the National Front campaigned on, and the language they used, were actually quite popular with quite a lot of people across the political spectrum receptive to simple solutions to complex problems.”

It's difficult to see what exactly the presenter is trying to say here. It could be argued that if there is a thread between Mosley's British Union of Fascists in the 1930s and the National Front in the 1970s and 1980s, it is that *both* were suppressed ruthlessly by the Establishment, who hated and feared them. The infliction of Defence Regulation 18b against Mosley and his BUF in 1940 (as previously mentioned herein), and the continually more oppressive revisions of the Race Relations Act (amending the Public Order Act) since 1964 are glaring examples of this. Why didn't the presenter allow any opinions other than those of the left — indeed, often the ‘far-left’ — onto this programme? These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

42. 26:08 Professor 'Lez' Henry says, “When people speak about you have a right to assemble, you have a right to free speech, yeah, fine, but where is the balance, where are the alternatives? Where were the alternatives for, you know, the mainstream media, especially through the red-top newspapers, endorsing that idea that blacks are the muggers, they’re the ones who are more likely to go out attackin’ people.”

This is another rant from this professor that, again, has no real meaning. That blacks form a disproportionately high percentage of muggers compared to their total numbers in the population is well documented, so what is this person complaining about? The presenter failed to challenge him on this point.

43. 26:32 The presenter says, “The story of fascism in Britain is also the story of its opposition, the way that ordinary individuals time and time again *en masse* reject it. But there’s more to it than that, and we’re not doing ourselves any favours if we leave it there as a flattering and uncomplicated British story of defeating fascism.”

Again, what, exactly, is the presenter trying to say? She failed to make it clear. The story of any idea is also the story of opposition to that idea. That’s not saying anything new. Any new idea has deranged opposition to deal with in the early days. This final comment from the presenter is as empty as the rest of the programme. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter — representing a corporation whose Charter states that it is required to be impartial.

There are forty-three (43) points of complaint made above about this programme, some of them in the form of questions. In the interests of justice and in order to display the BBC’s impartiality I demand that:

- (a) this episode of the programme be withdrawn from the BBC’s archives and no longer made available for downloading or listening to; and
- (b) consideration be given to the preparation of a fresh programme dealing with the same subject but including someone such as myself, who was involved intimately with the subject matter covered, to give the facts from the National Front’s point of view and to answer questions from an unbiased presenter.

Dated.....28th..... day of .....October..... 2021


Signed.....  
Martin Webster

Martin Webster  
of: 32 Kimpton House, Fontley Way, Roehampton, London SW15 4ND



**11. Email to BBC sent on 28th October 2021 complaining about their lack of response and other matters:**

***From:***

Martin Webster,  
32 Kimpton House, Fontley Way, Roehampton, London SW15 4ND.  
Tel:  
E-mail: 

***To:***

BBC Complaints Dept.,  
Darlington, County Durham, DL3 0UR.

***Copies (if necessary) to:***

The Director-General of the BBC,  
The Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors,  
The Chairman of Ofcom.

**Case No.: CAS-6686338-M7T8X8\***

[\*the latest of numerous Case Nos issued]

Dear Sir or Madam,

I write in response to your e-mail dated Friday 22nd October 2021 at 11:18, which I run out immediately below this.

I am nonplussed by your comment about your “earlier response”. What earlier response? I have not received even a general acknowledgement of receipt, let alone a detailed response, to the complaints I have lodged with you. All I have received was an e-mail of patronising waffle from Terry Hughes, (“BBC Complaints Team”) pretending to explain why I was not contacted by the programme-makers. I run out Mr Hughes’ e-mail immediately below your e-mail (assuming you are different people!).

At the outset of my efforts to try and communicate with the BBC I stated that I was proposing to lodge **three separate** complaints against the following programmes broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and thereafter posted for continuing public access on ‘BBC Sounds’. I stated that those three complaints would be in respect of the following **BBC Radio 4** programmes/‘**BBC Sounds**’ items:

- 1) The ‘*Witness to History*’ programme/podcast entitled “***The Battle of Lewisham*”;**
- 2) **Part 2 of “*Britain’s Fascist Thread*”** programme/podcast;

### 3) Part 3 of “*Britain’s Fascist Thread*” programme/podcast

Thus far I have posted to you via the Post Office ‘Signed-for’ service **the first two** of those complaints, each accompanied by supporting exhibits.

The first complaint, in respect of “*The Battle of Lewisham*”, was posted to you on Wednesday 28th July 2021. Copies of that complaint were posted by the same service and at the same time to the Director-General of the BBC, the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and the Chairman of Ofcom. I have retained the Post Office ‘Proof of Posting’ receipt. I have received no acknowledgement of receipt from anybody at the BBC.

The second complaint, in respect of Part 2 of “*Britain’s Fascist Thread*”, was posted to you on Wednesday 13th October 2021. Copies of that complaint were posted by the same service and at the same time to the Director-General of the BBC, the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and the Chairman of Ofcom. I have retained the Post Office ‘Proof of Posting’ receipt. I have received no acknowledgement of receipt from anybody at the BBC.

The third complaint, in respect of Part 3 of “*Britain’s Fascist Thread*” will be posted to you shortly. Copies will be posted to the Director-General of the BBC, the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and the Chairman of Ofcom.

Each time I have attempted to engage with you (the BBC Complaints department) about the above three programmes, each item of my correspondence has been treated as a separate or different complaint and new Case numbers have been churned out by your computer. I can only conclude that this ‘system’ is designed to create confusion and obfuscation so as to frustrate the complainant.

It seems to me that your system is being employed to try and fuse my three separate complaints into *one* complaint. I cannot accept that as there were *three* distinct programmes. I would appreciate having just **three** Case Numbers — one for each of the programmes itemised above.

It also seems to me that your complaints system is really only a device to allow listeners/viewers to ‘sound off’ — it is clearly not a system to allow a person or persons who have been wronged/defamed/lied-about to obtain justice in the form of corrections and/or other justifiable remedies. Your complaints system only serves to add patronising insult to broadcast injury.

I have tried to send this e-mail via your “Web form” at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints), but this method only offers 2,000 key-strokes! Apart from the grotesque limitation on the number of words which may be submitted, how can complainants possibly send attachment-exhibits via such a system? Evidence in support of complaints is vital.

As your “Web form” has proved not fit for purpose, I will have to print the contents of this e-mail and send it to you (plus the Director-General of the BBC, the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and the Chairman of Ofcom) via the ‘Signed-for’ Post Office service, as before.

*Why* can’t I have an individual BBC official’s name? *Why* can’t I have that person’s work-station e-mail address? *You* have my name, *my* home postal address, *my* e-mail address and *my* phone number.

The imbalance of your approach to licence-fee payers who wish to prefer complaints about the BBC’s output when it defames them is both sinister and outrageous.

Please confirm which case number has been attached to my complaint about the ‘*Witness to History*’ programme/podcast entitled “*The Battle of Lewisham*” and which case number has been attached to my complaint about Part 2 of the “*Britain’s Fascist Thread*” programme/podcast, and let me know when, approximately, I may expect to receive a detailed response to each such complaint.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster.

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Friday, 22 October 2021 at 11:18

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

We are sorry to learn you weren’t satisfied with our earlier response and appreciate that you felt strongly enough to contact us again.

Although we aim to reply at this next stage within 20 working days (four weeks), we hope you will understand that sometimes we are unable to respond by then. We will let you know beforehand if we think it may take us longer.

For full details of our complaints process please visit:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>.

Please don’t reply to this email because it’s an automated acknowledgement sent from an account which can’t receive replies. If you do need to get in touch, please use our webform instead at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](https://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints), quoting your reference number.

Here is the text of your response to our reply:

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YOUR COMPLAINT:

a  
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Thank you again for contacting us,

BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

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**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>  
**Date:** Sunday, 28 February 2021 at 03:28  
**To:** Martin Webster <>  
**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3**

**Reference CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3**

Dear Mr Webster

Thank you for contacting us regarding 'Britain's Fascist Thread' on Radio 4.

We note your unhappiness that you were not invited to contribute to the series.

We were sorry to learn of your disappointment. Deciding which guests to include in any of our programmes is a subjective matter and one which we know not every member of our audience will feel we get right every time.

Nevertheless, we do value your feedback about this. All complaints are sent to senior management and we have included your points in our overnight report.

These reports are among the most widely read sources of feedback in the company and ensures that your concerns have been seen by the right people quickly. This helps inform their decisions about current and future content.

Thank you once again for getting in touch.

Kind regards

Terry Hughes  
BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

**12. Letter from BBC rejecting Mr Webster's complaint no. 2/their no. 6947702**  
(sound familiar? Yes! It's rejecting the complaint they've already rejected exactly four weeks earlier! How's that for confusion?)

(Please see next page)



BBC Audience Services PO Box 1922, Darlington, DL3 0UR Telephone 03700 100 222

0000/01/0000/00000000/3753774  
10542501/004129001/001

Martin Webster  
KIMPTON HOUSE  
FLAT 32, FONTLEY WAY  
LONDON  
SW15 4ND

18 November 2021

Reference CAS-6947702-H1G1R4

Dear Martin Webster,

Thank you for contacting us about Britain's Fascist Thread.



The BBC's published Complaints Framework outlines we will only respond to complaints regarding broadcasts from within the past 30 working days. It also outlines that complaints should be limited to 1,000 words.

As your complaint does not meet these requirements, we cannot offer a reply.

If you remain dissatisfied about our decision you can contact the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit (ECU), explaining why you believe there may have been a potential breach of standards or other potentially significant issue to investigate further. For full details of our complaints process you can visit: [https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC\\_Complaints\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC_Complaints_Framework.pdf)



If you wish to contact the ECU please write to it within 20 working days of receiving this reply. You can email [ecu@bbc.co.uk](mailto:ecu@bbc.co.uk) or write to:

Executive Complaints Unit,  
BBC,  
Broadcast Centre,  
London  
W12 7TQ

Please include the case reference number which you have been given.

Kind regards,

Deborah Dawson

BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

STA-BECAS-1-0821

**13. Mr Webster's email request that the BBC obtain copies of the first two complaints from their Darlington office:**

**From:** Martin Webster <>

**Date:** Thursday, 25 November 2021 at 15:41

**To:** BBC Executive Complaints Unit <[ecu@bbc.co.uk](mailto:ecu@bbc.co.uk)>

**Subject:** **Complaints re three BBC Radio/BBC Sounds programmes**

**[Attachment:** BBC 'Audince Service' letter re Exec Complaints Unit 18-11-21.jpg]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have been given your e-mail address by Deborah Dawson of the BBC Complaints Team/Audience Services (PO Box 1922, Darlington DL3 0UR), in a letter dated 18th November 2021. I attach a copy of that letter, file name: *'BBC 'Audince Service' letter re Exec Complaints Unit 18-11-21.jpg'*.

I have been endeavouring to lodge a formal complaint with the BBC with regard to three programmes broadcast on BBC Radio and then subsequently uploaded to BBC Sounds in a permanent archive available to the general public. Those programmes are:

- 1) ***'The Battle of Lewisham'***, presented by Nacheal Catnott, broadcast on the BBC World Service/podcast released on Friday, 9th October 2020 at 8:50am, 12:50pm and 6:50pm and on Saturday, 10th October at 3:50am and available thereafter for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszmvj>

This complaint was submitted to the Complaints Unit at Darlington at in the form of a printed statement dated 20th July 2021 which was posted on that day via the Post Office 'Signed-for' service. Copies were similarly posted to the BBC Director-General and the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors at BBC Broadcasting House.

- 2) ***'Britain's Fascist Thread'***, Episode 2, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 26th February 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>.

This complaint was submitted to the Complaints Unit at Darlington in the form of a printed statement dated 12th October 2021 which was posted on 13th October 2021 via the 'Signed-for' service. Copies were similarly posted to the BBC Director-General and the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors, at BBC Broadcasting House.

- 3) ***'Britain's Fascist Thread'***, Episode 3, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 5th March 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>.



This complaint is in the final stages of preparation. It was delayed (a) on account of my being ill for a protracted period earlier this year, and (b) because I am 78 years of age and to not have the services of a secretariat. The complaint will be issued shortly as a printed statement and will be posted directly to you (the Executive Complaints Unit, BBC Broadcast Centre, London W12 7TQ.), i.e. not the Complaints Unit at Darlington.

My complaints have been submitted in the form of printed statements and sent via the post because the BBC web site medium for sending e-mails to the Complaints Unit at Darlington only offers a minimal number of key-strokes and does not provide a facility for sending attachments of essential documentary evidence.

My efforts to get my complaints considered and acted upon have been frustrated by the BBC Complaints Unit at Darlington — whether by a deliberate policy or as a result of that department's bureaucratic processes, I do not know. Receipt of my two originating statements of complaint (thus far submitted) were never acknowledged. Follow-up letters of complaint about this were met by *pro forma* letters specifying other, often different, 'Case Numbers'. A recipe for confusion, obfuscation and frustration.

After several months of this, the attached letter from Deborah Dawson of the BBC Complaints Team came as a slight relief.

**The immediate purpose of this e-mail** is to enquire if you can obtain from the BBC Complaints Team at Darlington (or from the offices of either the BBC Director-General or the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors) the copies of the two complaints (plus accompanying exhibited documents) which I have posted to them. The Post Office 'Signed-for' service establishes that all those postings were received. A further printing of all that documentation imposes a burden on my resources.

I conclude by registering with you that I have what the lawyers call "*locus standi*" to lodge these complaints. From 1969 to 1983 I was the National Activities Organiser of the now defunct National Front (a political party) and was responsible for organising and managing the events which the above-specified BBC radio programmes dwell upon at great (and hugely inaccurate and malevolent) length. To make programmes about, for example, what the programme-makers dubbed as "The Battle of Lewisham" in August 1977 without resorting to me is quite outrageous.

At the material times I was frequently contacted by the BBC (and other broadcasting media), asked to participate in studio interviews with the likes of Ludovic Kennedy. The BBC made a documentary about my "One-Man March" in Hyde, Gtr Manchester, in its '*Inside Story*' series.

To make programmes about, for example, "The Battle of Lewisham", without resort to me as a research resource — and *only* to resort to left wing and Marxist opponents of the National Front — is, surely, a clear and obvious breach of the BBC's

obligation to be fair and impartial. It is because of that obvious research bias that the programmes above-specified were littered with a long series of errors of fact which I have itemised in my complaints. Those errors of fact must be corrected. That is the nub of my complaint.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster.

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Martin Webster  
32 Kimpton House, Fontley Way,  
Roehampton, London SW15 4ND

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**14. Confirmation from the BBC by email that they are investigating complaint no. 6686338 and that complaint no. 6947702 is being investigated by “another” department:**

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Wednesday, 1 December 2021 at 15:06

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

**Reference CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

Dear Mr Webster,

We're contacting you to let you know that we're in the process of investigating your complaint about BBC Radio 4's Britain's Fascist Threads.

This is a courtesy email to quell any concerns about delay and that we'll be in touch with you in due course regarding the programme.

We would note, however, that your contact about BBC World Service is being investigated by another department who will also get in touch with you separately, again in due course.

Kind Regards

BBC Complaints Team

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

-  
Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don't reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

**15. Email from the BBC apologising for the delay and inviting a complaint to Ofcom:**

**From:** BBC Complaints <[bbc\\_complaints\\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk)>

**Date:** Tuesday, 21 December 2021 at 10:30

**To:** Martin Webster <>

**Subject: BBC Complaints - Case Number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8**

Your Reference CAS-6686338-M7T8X8

We are contacting you to apologise that we've not been able to reply to your complaint within the time period we aim for. Although we manage this for most complaints, we regret it's not been possible so far because we have been dealing with a higher than normal number of cases.

If you wish to refer this delay and the substance of your complaint to the BBC's regulator Ofcom, you can do so online at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint/bbc-tv-channel-radio-station-bbciplayer> or by post to: Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA. Please include for Ofcom your latest correspondence from and to the BBC and any BBC case reference numbers which you have been given.

Full details of the BBC's complaints process can be found by visiting <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/how-we-handle-your-complaint>, and full details of Ofcom's complaints process are available at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/procedures>.

In the meantime we appreciate your patience and will respond as soon as we can.

Kind regards

BBC Complaints Team  
[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](https://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

NB This is sent from an outgoing account only which is not monitored. You cannot reply to this email address but if necessary please contact us via our webform quoting any case number we provided.

**16. Letter from Jeremy Hayes, BBC Complaints Director, saying that the rejection of complaint no. 6947702 (our first complaint) was justified:**

(Please see next page)



Executive Complaints Unit

Mr Martin Webster,  
Kimpton House,  
Flat 32, Fontley Way,  
London SW15 4LY

**Ref: CAS-6947702**

22 December 2021

Dear Mr Webster

**Britain's Fascist Thread, Radio 4, BBC One, 26 February and 6 March 2021**

Thank you for your letter to the Executive Complaints Unit regarding complaints you have made about some BBC programmes. I am considering your complaints in relation to two episodes of a series, **Britain's Fascist Thread** to which the BBC Complaints Team has informed you it does not intend to respond further. It now falls to the Executive Complaints Unit to decide whether you were given a reasonable response to your original complaint and whether the BBC Complaints Team was correct in deciding that further investigation of your complaint wasn't justified. This is in line with the BBC Complaints Framework and Procedures<sup>1</sup> which sets out the process for handling complaints.

A separate complaint (CAS-6686338) about a feature, **The Battle of Lewisham** is currently being addressed by BBC World Service which broadcast the item. It does not therefore form part of this response.

I have referred to your letter, received by the BBC on 15 October, in which you complain that you were not contacted by the programme makers, that you should have been interviewed for the series and that the programmes in question contained numerous factual errors.

In a letter to you from BBC Audience Services on 21 October it was explained that your complaint could not be considered *"at this late point in time, at this length, in the spirit*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/> and click on the link for BBC Complaints Framework (bottom right)

*of our framework*". This was a reference to the BBC's Complaints Framework, to which you were directed. It requires that you should make your complaint within 30 working days of the date on which the content was broadcast, while adding that exceptionally, the BBC may still consider your complaint, but only if it decides there was a good reason for the delay.

Additionally it specifies that if you make your complaint in writing it should not exceed 1,000 words, although in "*exceptional circumstances*", longer complaints may be entertained. In that case, however, you should "*also identify the reasons why your complaint exceeds 1,000 words and provide a one-page summary of your complaint*".

I note that your complaint exceeds the required length by a considerable amount, extending to 21 pages, of which 16 are typescript totalling over 20,000 words. It does not contain a one-page summary. In a letter dated 12 April, itself more than 30 days after transmission, you stated your intention to supply a formal letter of complaint, based on three areas of concern, "*as soon as possible*" but this was not provided until October, six months later. This letter only concerned the first of the two episodes mentioned in your complaint. You have yet to supply a second formal letter concerning the third episode in the series, broadcast on 6 March. I am therefore excluding this episode from my consideration, and for the reasons set out above it falls outside the scope of the framework.

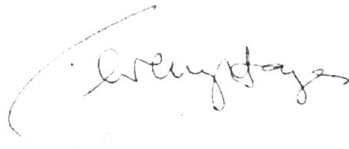
I note that you maintain that you have locus standi in relation to these programmes, by which I understand you to mean that you are yourself a subject in them and therefore in a position to bring a first party complaint. However having listened to the series I am not persuaded that the brief archive clips and reference to you at the opening of the second episode, broadcast on 26 February, are of material importance in the context of the series, which traced "*the threads of fascism that have woven themselves into the British picture from the end of WW1 to the present day*". You maintain that a quote that the National Front aimed "*to kick their way into the headlines*", which was attributed to you, taken from a contemporary interview, was inaccurate, and that you had said "*jostle*" not "*kick*". However it has been referenced on several occasions in memoirs and articles over the years and the presenter and producer were, in my view, entitled to place some reliance on the published sources, despite your denial.

For the reasons given above, I think the response you received from the Complaints team was reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances and the decision not to engage in further correspondence with you was justified.

There is no provision for further appeal against this decision within the BBC but it is open to you to approach the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom for its opinion. You can find details of how to contact Ofcom and the procedures it will apply at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint>.

Ofcom acknowledges all complaints received, but will not normally write back to individual complainants with the outcome of its considerations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Hayes', with a large, sweeping flourish above it.

**Jeremy Hayes**  
Complaints Director



**17. Letter from Mr Webster protesting this rejection:**

**32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London SW15 4ND**

Tuesday 11th January 2022

Your ref: CAS-6947702

Jeremy Hayes Esq.,  
Complaints Director,  
BBC Executive Complaints Unit,  
BBC Broadcast Centre,  
BC2 B4, 201 Wood Lane,  
London W12 7TP.

Dear Mr Hayes,

**Re: *Britain's Fascist Thread*, Radio 4, BBC One, 26 February and 6 March 2021**

I received your letter dated 22 December 2021 on 5 January 2022. I do not accept the findings set out therein. Before I deal with those findings, please send me the name and contact data of the BBC entity which you say is dealing with my complaint (dated 28th July 2021) regarding the BBC World Service programme *The Battle of Lewisham*. I have had no response whatsoever from this body.

You make heavy use of the limitations as to (a) the time within which the BBC accepts complaints from listeners and viewers about its programmes, and (b) the number of words allowed per complaint, that are set out in the BBC's *Complaints Framework*. Such reliance is disingenuous. The rule on word limitation is obviously designed to prevent listeners/viewers filing lengthy complaints about trivial matters.

This complaint (and one other you will soon receive) is about a half-hour programme which contained at least 28 interviews, all of which were with people on the Left of the political spectrum, ranging from the Labour Party, through various stripes of Communist and Marxist, to Anarchist. In addition, the presenter made frequent biased comments including demonstrable lies. All this gave a distorted, defamatory account of an important historical event which I instigated, yet I was not invited to be an interviewee. This itself is a basic breach of the *BBC Charter*, to which I refer below. The BBC has my phone number, e-mail address and postal address. Until about three years ago BBC TV and radio producers and presenters contacted me from time to time to interview me about 'far-Right' issues and personalities in the UK.

It is simply unreasonable to expect my complaint, covering as it does multiple untruths presented to the listening public as fact, to be contained in 1,000 words and to be delivered within 30 days of the broadcast first being made, bearing in mind: (a) very little advance notice of the programme was given; and (b) it is still available to mislead the public via *BBC Sounds*.

The programme had to be listened-to online and then transcribed before work could commence on dissecting and analysing all the lies and fabrications. Then they had to be presented in a logical order and systematically rebutted. Evidence in support, including two substantial newspaper reports — one from the *Sunday Times*, the other from the *Jewish Chronicle*, had to be researched and obtained. My two assistants and I spent many hours in the preparation of this complaint, as can be seen by a cursory look at the complaint itself and its supporting documentation. You have resorted to the time and word limitation rules to stifle this important series of complaints, because you simply have no answer to them.

As to the word limitation on which you seek to rely, would you rather I submit 43 separate complaints in order to try and squeeze each of them into the word-count arbitrarily set out in the rules — each issued separately in its own envelope? Even that would not be adequate to cover the one-sided coverage of the subject matter contained in the programme. Would any reasonable person expect a complaint about a 30-minute programme containing dozens of lies and distortions to be delivered within 30 days, in no more than 1,000 words via the BBC's web site, which offers no facility to send attachments of documentary evidence?

Is it usual for a body corporate, public or private, to (a) reserve to itself the right to limit the length of complaints that are allowed to be submitted to it in relation to the services it provides; and (b) limit the time within which such complaints must be received to just a month? What does that say about the BBC's attitude towards the public? More to the point: would an English judge uphold such limitations? The BBC's complaints system purports to set up the BBC to be the judge in its own cause, able to promulgate its own arbitrary rules. Such a system operated by publicly-funded body is an affront to Natural Justice.

You say the one-page summary required by the rules was not contained in the complaint. This is untrue. A one-and-a-half-page summary of the complaint is set out at the very beginning of it in order to comply with BBC requirements. In view of the immensity of the lies and inaccuracies contained in this programme and the number of sub-complaints (43) contained in this complaint, no reasonable person could raise objection to the extra half-page.

I note that the only sub-complaint that you specifically mention is the comparatively minor one relating to the “*kick our way into the headlines*” misquote. You seek to

justify the presenter and producer by relying on a vague reference to unspecified “memoirs and articles” containing the misquote. (Can you or they cite those sources?) The fact is that the presenter and producer failed in their duty to corroborate such an obviously controversial ‘quotation’. This slovenly attitude should have no place at the BBC.

I also note that you made no reference to those parts of the complaint that are supported by contemporary reports in both the *Sunday Times* and the *Jewish Chronicle*. These in combination, and especially the interview with the Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm, completely demolish — decades in advance — the entire thrust of the misinformation that the BBC broadcast in this programme.

In the light of these facts, you surely drew on your resources of cynicism to assert: “...*the response you received from the Complaints team was reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances and the decision not to engage in further correspondence with you was justified*”.

I refer you to the **BBC Charter**, Clause 5, which, under the heading of “**The BBC’s Mission**”, states that,

*“The Mission of the BBC is to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of **impartial, high-quality** and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain.”*

I also refer you to Clause 56(1) of the *Charter*, which states that,

*“The BBC must strictly and faithfully comply with this Charter and the Framework Agreement in force.”*

What impartial person could fail to agree that the programme I complain about (still available on *BBC Sounds*) is anything but impartial, anything but high-quality, anything but truthfully informative — and that your letter in defence of this programme falls into the same category?

I believe this complaint, together with the other I am shortly to submit to you, plus my complaint which you say is being handled by the BBC World Service, may just be the catalyst needed to end the BBC’s current role as a propagator of left-wing propaganda.

I will now be referring this complaint to Ofcom as the next (but probably not the final) step. I suggest you keep this letter on file as you will undoubtedly be needing it in the future. I will be sending a copy of this to you via your unit’s e-mail address: <ecu@bbc.co.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Webster.  
(Former National Activities Organiser,  
National Front, 1969 to 1983)

**18. Complaint No. 3 dated 14th April 2022 (re “Britain’s Fascist Thread, Episode 3”):**

**To:**

- (1) **BBC Complaints Dept,**  
Darlington, County Durham DL3 0UR.
- (2) **Timothy Douglas Davie CBE,** Director-General, BBC,  
BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.
- (3) **Richard Simon Sharp,** Chairman, BBC Board of Governors,  
BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.
- (4) **Dame Melanie Henrietta Dawes DCB,** Chief Executive, Ofcom,  
Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA.
- (5) **Terence Burns, Baron Burns GCB,** Chairman, Ofcom,  
Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA.

**[BBC Complaints - Case number refs: CAS-6686338-M7T8X8 / CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3]**

**SUBJECT:**

Detailed complaint brought by Martin Webster against the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for and on behalf of himself and the former members of the lapsed political party known as the National Front (NF) of which he was National Activities Organiser from 1969 to 1983. This complaint is also referred in identical terms to the Office of Communications (Ofcom) for its consideration as the complainant has no faith in the BBC’s ability to be an impartial judge in respect of a complaint against itself and willing to impose on itself the necessary actions to correct injustices perpetrated by its employees and associated other persons.

This complaint relates to **“*Britain’s Fascist Thread*”**, Episode 3, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 5th March 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx> .

It is submitted that both the 30 working days time limit specified in the ***BBC Complaints Framework*** and the 1,000 word content limit do not apply to this complaint on the grounds that:

- (a) there are no less than nineteen (19) complaints embodied in this one complaint, each of which required time to assess and prepare a suitable response, and each of

which could, as a separate complaint, use up to 1,000 words, making a total of up to 19,000 words. This complaint contains a little less than 4,500 words;

(b) common sense dictates that it would be more convenient for all concerned to have all 19 complaints amalgamated into one complaint.

(c) in view of the above, this complaint is a wholly exceptional and serious complaint that fully justifies waiving both the 30 working days time limit and the 1,000 words content limit.

## **I General Complaint**

(a) This programme is in breach of the BBC Charter (2016), paragraph 6 (1) and the BBC Agreement (2016), Schedule 3, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. The only relevant voices heard were those of the presenter, who was openly “anti-fascist” and left wing, and interviewees whose opinions were, without exception, left wing or extreme left wing.

(b) The subject matter of the programme included the National Front. The duties of fairness and impartiality imposed on the BBC by its Charter (paragraph 6(1)) demand that, in such programmes, representatives from the National Front be interviewed and allowed to give their accounts of the events covered, to counter-balance the views of those interviewees from the left and extreme left.

(c) No effort was made by the programme makers to contact the person who could have not only given the National Front's viewpoint on the allegations levelled at it by the presenters and interviewees but also enlightened listeners and provided them with a fairer, more complete account of the National Front and what it stood for. That person is myself. I am still alive, easily contactable, and have been so contacted on numerous occasions in the recent past by BBC producers for just such a purpose.

(d) This programme contained numerous factual errors which could have been easily avoided if a reasonable amount of research and fact-checking had been carried out, together with the action mentioned in paragraph (c) above.

(e) The tone of the programme implied, contrary to fact, that the National Front was a “fascist” organisation, and that it encouraged and practised violence and intimidation to achieve its objectives. This insinuation is completely false, and could have been easily rebutted had I been invited onto the programme. In fact, the National Front was a political party that contested elections and won serious levels of support, being arguably at one time Britain's third party, not (as implied) a mere street gang. For example, almost 120,000 Londoners voted for the National Front at the GLC elections on 5th May 1977. In parliamentary by-elections (Stechford and Ladywood), also in 1977, the National Front polled ahead of the Liberal Party (now the Liberal Democrats). The NF was able to nominate 303 candidates in the 1979 general election. Further, the NF had a comprehensive Constitution which provided for:

- a governing body (the National Directorate) a third of the places on which fell vacant every year and were filled by an annual postal ballot of the entire membership of the party;
- an Annual General Meeting at which all members were entitled to attend and vote on resolutions concerning the party's policies and Constitution submitted by a sufficient number of members;
- a constitution for branches requiring annual elections for posts on branch committees.

(f) Numerous interviewees made serious and unsubstantiated allegations against the National Front, its members and supporters, including allegations of violence, intimidation and other unlawful activities, which were unchallenged by the presenter. Again, my inclusion as an interviewee on the programme would have provided a counterbalance to the extreme left-wing interviewees, as well as further, vital, information that would have given a fairer account to listeners of the events covered.

(g) When I heard about the series of programmes, of which this episode is one, being about to be broadcast, I contacted someone who had been involved with a previous interview of myself by the BBC to establish how I might make contact with the producers. That person contacted the BBC and was told that, "the whole series is a historical one and they only spoke to or interviewed academics and used archive. They didn't interview anyone around who was there". This is a lame excuse for excluding the voices of people likely to contradict the opinions of the producer and presenter. Not all the interviewees were academics (e.g. Immam Attar) but all of them were left wing or extreme left wing. This is in breach of the BBC Charter, as mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

## **II Detailed complaints, all of which breach paragraph 6 (1) of the BBC Charter (2016)**

### **The web page hosting the programme replay**

1. The short description on the web page hosting the replay includes the following: "From the formation of the British Fascisti in 1923, through the BUF [British Union of Fascists], the National Front and the BNP [British National Party], the history of fascism in Britain is, in a sense, an unbroken thread." This untrue and completely unsubstantiated statement implies that the National Front (NF) is a "continuation" of the BUF, when in fact both the Constitution and the Statement of Policy of the National Front differ in many important respects from the way the BUF was run and the policies advocated by it. Furthermore, the post-WW2 continuation of the BUF was an organisation known as Union Movement (UM). It was formed by Mosley in

*circa* 1948. It continued after the the NF was formed in 1967 and was succeeded by an informal association known as ‘Friends of Mosley’ (FoM), which still exists.

2. That description also includes the following: “a lineage of hatreds, pseudo-science, failed leaders and tactics”, referring to, among other bodies, the National Front. Whether the National Front contained or formed part of “a lineage of hatreds [or] pseudo-science” is a matter of opinion. As to “failed leaders and tactics”, these can be found in abundance in the establishment parties of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats, yet no mention was made in the programme of that fact.

Neither of these parts of the description of the programme on the BBC web site was appropriate for an organisation that is required to be impartial in politics.

### **The programme itself**

[Please note that the times given refer to the time elapsed, to the nearest couple of seconds, from the start of the programme.]

3. 1:06 Joe Mulhall says, “There’s people still active today that started engaging in fascist politics in the UK in the 1950s and they learned directly from the individuals that ran the movement in the 20s and 30s.”

If there are people “still active today” as described by Mulhall, they should have been traced and interviewed by the presenter for corroboration of Mulhall’s assertion and to provide a counter to the extreme left wing slant of this series of programmes. The presenter failed to do this.

4. 1:17 The presenter says, “Joe Mulhall is a historian and researcher for the anti-extremism charity, ‘Hope Not Hate’, which gives him a close-up view on the threads of continuity in British fascism.”

‘Hope Not Hate’ is a left-wing organisation devoted to promoting multi-racialism and issuing propaganda against all those who reject multi-racialism. How being a researcher for it gives Mulhall “a close-up view on the threads of continuity in British fascism” was not explained by the presenter, and should have been. This person is hardly likely to give an unbiased view of the subject matter.

5. 1:25 Mulhall says, “There’s an organisational lineage that goes British Union of Fascists in the 1930s, you then that kind of moves through to the Union Movement in the post war period with Oswald Moseley still, then out the back of that, you know, you have the National Front, which is very much the heirs to classical fascism, then out of that you have the British National Party, a party that is still around today. So there is an organisational continuity, and then finally I think there is a ideological continuity, the politics of hatred, division, of anti-semitism at its very core, of racism, these individuals pushed that ideology and politics from the 1920s. In some ways it’s



identical to the policies we're seeing from the contemporary fascist movement, from groups, you know, within the so-called alt-right. Their ideology and their outlook on the world is not so different to that of Oswald Moseley in the twenties and thirties."

The National Front's Constitution and policies were markedly different from those of, for example, the British Union of Fascists. Why was not research done to check on this and the point then put to Mulhall?

These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

6. 3:24 The presenter says, "We asked almost every interviewee for their definition of fascism, and that one phrase was used more than any other. 'Palingenetic ultra-nationalism'."

If the presenter wanted to make this point then she should have specifically asked each interviewee and included their replies in the programme, but she failed to do so.

7. 3:36 The presenter says, "It refers to an extreme kind of nationalist politics, premised on a sense of revolutionary renewal."

This is a vague, uncorroborated statement. The presenter should have referred listeners to a confirmatory source, but failed to do so.

8. 8:20 The presenter mentioned the murder of Stephen Lawrence by white youths, but

(a) failed to mention even one young white person murdered, assaulted or sexually traded by Asians or blacks, of which there are plenty. She assumes the leftist stance that "racist" crimes can only be committed by Whites, and never by non-whites (an attitude which is, surely, "racist" / anti-indigenous white-British);

(b) failed to establish even any slight connection between any of his alleged killers and any element of the so-called 'far right'. To the best of my knowledge no such connection has ever been established or even alleged by anyone, though there have been several articles detailing the organised crime connections of one of the alleged killers.

9. 12:58 An interviewee says, "If you wanted to get involved in the National Front you had to join the National Front, get a membership card, you had to go leafletting. People knew you were a fascist, and that had a social cost to it. Now you can sit in your bedroom without a picture on your Twitter and send anti-semitic hate to a Jewish person anywhere in the world and no-one's ever going to find you. So the social cost of getting involved in fascism has gone down and the ease with which you can find content has become much easier. You know, you can go on any major Social

Media platform and increasingly ... smaller bespoke social media platforms and find the most extreme fascist literature at the click of a button.”

(a) The interviewee is bewailing the existence of freedom of speech because some people can use it to send what he would regard as “hate” messages to other people or to make available literature with which he disagrees. The presenter had a duty to put this to him but failed to do so.

(b) The interviewee also states that if you joined the NF, “people knew you were a fascist”. This is a distortion of the facts. Only left wingers regarded such people as “fascists”. Ordinary people, for the most part, accepted them for what they were – patriots who were concerned about the direction in which the country was being taken. The presenter failed to clarify this point for the benefit of listeners. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

10. 13:33 Dave Rich says, “The amount of violent incitement to kill Jews and other minorities that circulates on far right social media channels is completely off the scale. It's out of control.”

(a) The same goes for Rich, who, it seems, doesn't like freedom of speech either. The same comment is made as in point 9 (a) above.

(b) The presenter failed to press Rich for examples of such “violent incitement” that, according to him, circulates on social media, or what he means by “out of control”, bearing in mind that freedom of speech is, by definition, always “out of control”.

11. 14:12 Rich says, “This is a violent anti-semitic threat coming at Jewish communities from extreme right wing actors who idolise Adolf Hitler and Oswald Moseley and other characters from the history of fascism and nazism. One of the biggest changes in the propaganda coming from this part of the far right that really sums up the change is that they don't bother trying to deny the holocaust any more. They just celebrate it and glorify it and wish there could be another one.”

Rich makes a serious allegation, i.e. that Jewish communities are facing the threat of violence levelled against them by unspecified “extreme right wing actors”. The presenter failed to ask him to clarify his accusation or to provide evidence for this, just as she failed when he went on to say that “this part of the far right ... don't bother trying to deny the holocaust any more”. In fact Jewish organisations assert that the holocaust narrative is as hotly contested today as it ever was. The presenter should have picked up this point and put it to Rich, but she failed to do so.

12. 15:12 The presenter says, “If he'd been a young man in the late 1950s, perhaps Renshaw would have found a home with the gangs who beat up black people during the Notting Hill and Nottingham riots. Or perhaps he would have been at home as a

far right skinhead at Lewisham in the 1970s. But in the 2000s he had a different focus.”

(a) The riots mentioned by the presenter were not all about “gangs who beat up black people”, as she no doubt knows. They were about several complex issues. She failed to produce a single example of her allegations.

(b) The presenter also tried to give listeners the impression that the “far right” at Lewisham consisted solely or largely of skinheads. Skinheads in fact constituted a tiny proportion of National Front members and supporters at that or any other time.

(c) The presenter failed to research this, or alternatively deliberately allowed a false picture of typical National Front members and supporters to be presented to listeners. These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

13. 15:30 An interviewee (believed to be Gilroy or Mulhall) says, “In 2014 when he was a student at Manchester Metropolitan University he was an activist in the youth wing of the British National Party, and he did all the kind of stuff a young BNP activist would do. He stood in a local by-election as a BNP candidate, he held meetings or gave speeches or [?] just a general student BNP activist. Five years later, in 2019, he was put in prison for planning to murder a Member of Parliament and a senior police officer. And along the way he had moved from the BNP to National Action, which was an openly neo-nazi, Hitlerite organisation, and Jack Renshaw really personified this journey and this shift in focus for really where the energy really sat on the British far right. Whereas in 2010 the centre of gravity and the energy and most of the focus of the British far right was still on elections, nowadays it has moved completely away from that into street movements and terrorism and violence that far surpasses the kind of racist violence of the past.”

(a) This is a disproportionate focus on one person (Jack Renshaw) with the implication that he is typical of what the programme dubs the “far right” (“exemplar (sic) of one aspect of the more fragmented world of British fascism today”; “really personified this journey and this shift in focus for really where the energy really sat on the British far right”).

(b) The presenter failed to challenge this person on either this or on his accusation that the “British far right...has moved completely away from that [elections] into street movements and terrorism and violence”.

(c) In addition, the insinuation is that the one or two people on the patriotic right of today who have been convicted of violent crime are typical of National Front members and supporters of the 1970s. This is untrue.

(d) The interviewee refers to “racist violence of the past” as if it is a well established fact. Bearing in mind the controversial nature of the subject-matter, he should have specified one or more examples of such “racist violence” but did not. The presenter should have asked him for an example of such but she failed to do so.

14. 16:57 Paul Gilroy says, “I was living in Brighton in the late seventies and Brighton was very much a centre of fascist organising – the printing press that produced a lot of the holocaust denial literature and the racist literature was located in Sussex at that time and there was a family that ran a guest house there that was very implicated in all of this, and I can tell you, when they put their rubbish out, that household who were the principal organisers in the area, their rubbish didn’t go in the back of the rubbish van, it went directly to the anti-fascist community where a number of people who’d worked in British Intelligence in the war and were members of AJEX, that’s the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen, and so on, would go through their rubbish every week and use all that information to fuel local organising against the kind of violence and the threats that they represented, so there were at that time political institutions at local level that conducted those struggles carefully.”

(a) The theft of household refuse is still theft. The presenter should have challenged Mr Gilroy on this, but failed to do so. No evidence is offered in support of the serious allegation that the family mentioned engaged in “violence and threats”. What evidence is there of this?

(b) What does Mr Gilroy mean by “fuel local organising against....” and “conducted those struggles carefully” mean, if not planning and carrying out violence against the family concerned, and its printing press? The presenter failed to press him on this point.

(c) That printing press was subjected to an arson attack in September 1980, for which Manny Carpel, a close associate of Gerry Gable, who edited the magazine *Searchlight* (which the presenter, in Episode 2 mixed up with a magazine published in support of the National Front), was convicted at Lewes Crown Court and jailed for two years. Note that Gable and Carpel were jointly convicted in the 1970s of attempting to steal documents from the home of historian David Irving while posing as gas board engineers. This raid on Irving’s home had been “prompted” by the publication of his hugely successful 1962 book *The Destruction of Dresden*. All this information about Gable’s record of criminality and the terrorist criminality of his closest associate could have easily been obtained by the presenter. Her failure to do so seriously misleads listeners as to the true situation that patriots faced in being targeted by the extreme left in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

15. 19:15 Female voice (foreign): “We’re talking about fascism there has been an increase in the level of organised [?] in terms of [indecipherable]... we’ve seen a lot of interconnectivity in what happens in the online world and the attacks that took place on communities and the street [? difficult to listen to].”

This woman is saying that organised attacks on Muslims has been increasing, but fails to cite any examples, so there is no evidence of such attacks, or, if they have occurred, who may be responsible for them. This contribution to the programme is therefore of no value whatsoever, yet the presenter still decided to include it. Why?

16. 19:49 Imam Attar says, “So sometimes it is organised groups that are behind these attacks, but also, let’s not forget, it is really people who are consuming [?] online. Each person has got their own vulnerabilities and they consume this material day in and day out that is on their screen promoting hate [unclear] that is saying... communities are coming to take over your country, that is talking about the Islamisation of Europe and you see it day in and day out and that is the only thing that you’re consuming then eventually you will take action into your hands and go onto the street and commit something, whether it's abusing a Muslim woman who's walking down the street or maybe in certain instances as we've seen as well and we've had three people who were killed on our streets [unclear] here in the UK.”

(a) This is an absurd claim, i.e. that people who read anti-Muslim material on the internet are liable to go out and kill Muslims. That deserves investigation, yet the presenter simply accepts it without question.

(b) The same applies to the claim that “we’ve had three people who were killed on our streets”. No details or evidence in support are offered, and no-one is interviewed to contest the claim.

(c) Who were the people she says have been killed and what were their names?

(d) Did the police arrest or charge anyone for these murders?

(e) Were there any convictions?

All these basic questions, and more, should have been asked, but were not.

17. 20:31 An interviewee, believed to be Gilroy or Mulhall, says, “There is a clear connection between the discourse and the propaganda that circulates in the broader far right and the violence and the terrorism that a small number of people at the extreme end of the far right direct against minorities and the connection is expressed nowadays in a conspiracy theory called the Great Replacement theory.”

The interviewee failed to give any evidence to support his contention about the “clear connection”, yet the presenter failed to challenge him on this. Any unbiased presenter would have done so.

18. 20:57 The presenter says, “The Great Replacement, an idea coined by the French author, Renaud Camus in 2011, is a white genocide conspiracy theory. It’s an apocalyptic idea that non-white immigration into Europe and North America is being deliberately orchestrated and will make white people into a minority later this century, destroying European civilization. It’s a twist on Nick Griffin’s earlier paranoia, and it’s nothing new. A thread that goes back to the far right thinkers from the 1960s and 1970s who looked at population growth in the developing world and the decline in European birth rates and the global shift towards human rights and decolonisation to the dismantling of the supposed moral authority of white domination, and panicked. The Great Replacement was also the stated motivation behind the killing of 56 Muslims by a fascist in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019. It’s an idea that crosses boundaries, it creeps into mainstream political conversations and also into the manifesto of the terrorist.”

(a) Renaud Camus (1946 -), creator of ‘The Great Replacement Theory’. has been an active socialist for most of his life, and certainly not part of any “unbroken fascist thread”. Yet the presenter dismissed it as an “apocalyptic idea” and a “twist on Nick Griffin’s earlier paranoia”. Discussion between both supporters and opponents of the theory would be required before anyone can form their own conclusions on such a vast topic.

(b) The presenter states that the theory creeps “into the manifesto of the terrorist”, yet fails to cite a single example or state where terrorists publish manifestos (presumably in support of an election campaign).

19. 21:57 From here to the end of this episode there are comments from the presenter and her interviewees that are not worthy of serious investigation or rebuttal, but nonetheless illustrate the one-sided, biased nature of the whole programme and the failure of the presenter to do the research that was essential in order to present a fair and balanced coverage of the subject matter.

These are not the proper standards of a BBC presenter, who is supposed to be impartial.

There are nineteen (19) points of complaint made above about this programme, some of them in the form of questions. In the interests of justice and in order to display the BBC’s impartiality I think it right and fair that

(a) this podcast be withdrawn from the BBC’s archives and no longer made available for downloading or listening to;

and

(b) consideration be given to the preparation of a fresh programme dealing with the same subject but including someone such as myself, who was involved intimately with the National Front as its National Activities Organiser for over fourteen years, to give the true facts and answer questions from an unbiased presenter.

Signed:.....  
Martin Webster

Dated: Thursday 14th April 2022

Martin Webster,  
32 Kimpton House,  
Fontley Way,  
Roehampton,  
London  
SW15 4ND



**19. Letter from Ofcom dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 in response to Mr Webster's complaint no. 3:**

(Please see next page)

10 May 2022

Martin Webster  
32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London  
SW15 4ND

Ofcom Standards Team  
Standards & Audience Protection  
Broadcasting & Online Content Group

[ofcomstandardsteam@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:ofcomstandardsteam@ofcom.org.uk)

Ofcom ref: 01448069

**BY POST ONLY**

Dear Mr Webster,

***Britain's Fascist Thread, BBC Radio 4, 5 March 2021, 11:00***

Thank you for your letter of 14 April 2022 to Dame Melanie Dawes regarding the above programme. Ms Dawes has passed your letter on to the Ofcom Standards Team for a response. We apologise for the slight delay in sending this to you.

The BBC Charter and Agreement<sup>1</sup> stipulates that complaints about the observance of content standards on BBC services must normally in the first instance be resolved by the BBC. We can therefore usually only consider complaints about BBC programmes where the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final decision. This is known as the 'BBC First' process. Our published procedures<sup>2</sup> for handling BBC standards complaints, which also include details about the BBC First process, are available on our website.

The principle of the BBC First regime is that, in all but exceptional cases, the BBC must be provided with the opportunity to respond fully to a complaint before Ofcom considers it, so that the BBC can be given the chance to resolve it before it is submitted to us. In the majority of cases, it would be less efficient for Ofcom to begin an investigation into a complaint while the BBC is still considering the matter and has yet to provide a final

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/charter>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0002/100100/Procedures-for-investigating-breaches-of-content-standards-on-BBC-broadcasting-services-and-BBC-on-demand-programme-services.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0002/100100/Procedures-for-investigating-breaches-of-content-standards-on-BBC-broadcasting-services-and-BBC-on-demand-programme-services.pdf)

response to a complainant. This is because information may become available during the course of the BBC process which informs its own response and any later assessment by Ofcom, and in many instances a large number of cases are in fact resolved through the BBC process.

The final stage within the BBC complaints process is consideration of a complaint by the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit (ECU).

We note that your letter to Melanie Dawes is also addressed to the BBC's complaints department and to various other BBC employees (including its Director-General). If you have received a final response from the ECU directing you to complain to Ofcom, please provide us with a copy of that response and we will assess the complaint about this specific programme. Otherwise, please continue to complete the process with the BBC before contacting us again. The BBC website outlines the BBC's complaints framework and procedures<sup>3</sup>.

We hope this information is helpful. If you would like us to consider a complaint about a specific programme once it has completed the BBC's own process, the quickest way to submit a complaint to Ofcom is via our online webform<sup>4</sup>. This allows us to capture all the information we need to consider such a complaint, including a copy of the ECU response. You can also complain by post to: Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA; or by telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040.

Yours sincerely

Ofcom Standards Team

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC\\_Complaints\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/sites/default/files/2020-06/BBC_Complaints_Framework.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/complaints>

**20. Acknowledgement by Mr Webster of the letter from Ofcom dated 10th May 2022:**

**32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London  
SW15 4ND**

Wednesday 18th May 2022.

Standards Team,  
Office of Communications (Ofcom),  
Riverside House,  
2a Southwark Bridge Road,  
London SE1 9HA.

Dear Ofcom Standards Team,

**Re: Britain's Fascist Thread, BBC Radio 4, 5th March 2021, 11:00**

Thank you very much for the courtesy of your letter dated 10th May 2022. I will reply to the points raised in your letter a.s.a.p. — but certainly within two weeks. Please be a little patient. As a 79-year old without a full-scale secretariat who is struggling both with arthritis and two year's worth of the BBC strategy of obfuscation, refusal to reply to specific points and sprayings-out of 'Case Numbers' galore, I find this process extremely taxing.

What I must ask you to keep in mind is that my issue with the BBC is not just in respect of the complaint detailed in the heading of your and this letter. That complaint is inter-connected with two other complaints which I have also lodged with the corporation with which it has also refused to engage:

- ***'The Battle of Lewisham'***, presented by Nacheal Catnott, broadcast on the BBC World Service/podcast released on Friday, 9th October 2020 at 8:50am, 12:50pm and 6:50pm and on Saturday, 10th October at 3:50am and available thereafter for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszmvj> .

- ***'Britain's Fascist Thread'***, Episode 2, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 26th February 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>

Note that the *'Britain's Fascist Thread'* sequence comprised three episodes, but as the first episode dealt with Sir Oswald Mosley's pre WW2 British Union of Fascists and

post-WW2 Union Movement, with which the National Front (formed in 1967) had no connection, I had no interest or *locus standi* to lodge a complaint in respect of it.

I will revert to you as soon as I can. In the meanwhile, I would be quite happy for this correspondence to be conducted by e-mail if that is convenient for you. Is [ofcomstandardsteam@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:ofcomstandardsteam@ofcom.org.uk) the right e-mail address for you?

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster.  
Former National Activities Organiser  
of the (now defunct) National Front, 1969-1983

**21. Mr Webster's reply to Ofcom's letter dated 10th May 2022:**

**32 Kimpton House  
Fontley Way  
Roehampton  
London  
SW15 4ND**

Thursday 26th May 2022

Standards Team,  
Office of Communications (Ofcom),  
Riverside House,  
2a Southwark Bridge Road,  
London SE1 9HA. [via 'Signed-for' post & email]

Dear Ofcom Standards Team,

**Complaint Nos. CAS-6947702-H1G1R4, CAS-6686338-M7T8X8 and CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3**

I write further to my letter of 18th May. I apologise in advance for the length of this letter. It is, however, necessary to express a full account of my three complaints against the BBC, in order that you can appreciate the enormity of what is involved.

You say in your letter of 10th May that "The BBC must be provided with an opportunity to respond" to each complaint before such complaints are referred to Ofcom. I think you will agree, after having read this letter, that the BBC has had ample time to respond to all three complaints that I have lodged. I set out below the three radio programmes about which I am complaining:

**1. *'The Battle of Lewisham'***, presented by Nacheal Catnott, broadcast on the BBC World Service/podcast released on Friday, 9th October 2020 at 8:50am, 12:50pm and 6:50pm and on Saturday, 10th October at 3:50am and available thereafter for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszmvj>. This programme contained 5 downright lies, 14 cases of lack of impartiality, 8 uncorroborated allegations, and 6 examples of a lack of research.

**2. *'Britain's Fascist Thread'***, Episode 2, presented by Camilla Schofield, and broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 26th February 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>. This programme contained 10 downright lies, 34 cases of lack of impartiality, 11 uncorroborated allegations, and 9 examples of a lack of research.

3. *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*, Episode 3, presented by Camilla Schofield, broadcast on Radio 4 on Friday, 5th March 2021 at 11:00am and available for listening and/or download at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000sbdx>. This programme contained 3 downright lies, 9 cases of lack of impartiality, 11 uncorroborated allegations, and 19 examples of a lack of research.

In the case of each of **the first two** complaints specified above they, together with supporting exhibited documents, were addressed and posted individually via 'Signed-for' post to:

- The BBC Complaints Department at Darlington;
- The Director-General of the BBC at Broadcasting House;
- The Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC at Broadcasting House
- **Ofcom at Riverside House.**

I have retained the receipts of the Post Office 'Proof of Posting' via its 'Signed-for' service in the case of all the above recipients.

I presume that the copies of those first two complaints plus exhibited documents posted to and received by Ofcom have been retained within Ofcom's filing system and that you are able to refer to that material when dealing with this correspondence. You have acknowledged Ofcom's receipt of a copy of my third complaint dated 14th April 2022. via your letter dated 10th May 2022.

#### HOW THE BBC HAS HANDLED MY COMPLAINTS:

On 12th April 2021 I sent an email to the BBC giving notice of my intention to complain about these three programmes/podcasts. This was acknowledged by email from the BBC Complaints Team on 20th April 2021. It was suggested that I follow the guide lines set out in the BBC Complaints Framework, and a link to that document was given.

In this document the BBC purport to give itself the power to impose restrictive rules concerning the way in which complaints must be structured. For example, any complaint has to be made within 30 days of the programme concerned having been first broadcast (though longer is "allowed" in exceptional circumstances and subject to conditions), and the number of words in each complaint is limited to one thousand (1,000) (though longer complaints are accepted "in exceptional circumstances" and subject to conditions).

On 29th April 2021 I sent a letter to the BBC Complaints Team at Darlington informing them that I could not be constrained by the limitations of the web page which complainants are encouraged to use. This web page has the above mentioned word limitation, but additionally has no facility for varying font sizes and types, nor for indented paragraphs and other commonplace aids to readability. Even more



seriously, there is no allowance for attachments. Two of my three complaints have a number of attachments in support. These are essential evidential exhibits.

I also requested, in view of the controversial nature of the subject matter of each programme about which I was proposing to complain, the name/s of the person/s who would be handling my complaints. Apart from two auto-acknowledgements from the BBC Complaints Team and one personal acknowledgement from the Audience Services Department, I have received no reply to that letter. It is evident that at this point the BBC Complaints Team should have made me aware of the (unadvertised) existence of the BBC 'Executive Complaints Unit', but it did not do so.

My first complaint (concerning programme numbered 1 above) was posted on 28th July 2021, my second complaint (concerning programme numbered 2 above) was posted on 28th October 2021 and my third complaint (concerning programme numbered 3 above) was posted on 14th April 2022. I have date-stamped proof of posting for all three complaints.

I received the first definite response to my first complaint on 21st October 2021, almost 3 months after it has been received. This was by way of a letter from Ciaran Hanna of the BBC Complaints Team at Darlington. It gave the complaint the reference CAS-6947702-H1G1R4. He informed me he was rejecting my complaint and would not respond to any further correspondence. He stated that my [first] complaint “falls beyond the terms of our service”, and that, “We do not feel that such a complaint can be considered at this late point in time, at this length, in the spirit of our framework”. No other reason was given for dismissing this complaint.

The next day, 22nd October I received an email from Complaints Team informing me that they intended to reply to my complaint within 20 working days. This was the same complaint (i.e. my first complaint, but this time with a different reference number: CAS-6686338-M7T8X8) as that which they purported to have rejected the previous day! Please remember that at this stage I had lodged only one complaint, which concerned the programme, *'The Battle of Lewisham'*. My second complaint, against Episode 2 of *'Britain's Fascist Thread'*, was posted nearly a week later, on 28th October.

I subsequently received a letter dated 18th November 2021 from the BBC Complaints Team rejecting my complaint that had the reference number CAS-6947702-H1G1R4. I believe this related to my first complaint.

To summarise a complex situation: A different number – CAS-6686338-M7T8X8 – has been allocated to my preliminary notice of intention to complain, and to both programmes numbered 1 and 2 above. Yet another number – CAS-6566992-X3Q7F3 – has been allocated to my complaint about programme number 2 above. I invite you to agree that this is very confusing. I believe the issuing of multiple case numbers (two complaints at this stage but three case numbers) in this gung-ho manner is a



deliberate ploy by the BBC to create confusion exasperation and despair with complainants so that they abandon their quest for justice.

As a further example of this cynicism on the part of the BBC, I have an email dated 1st December 2021 from the BBC Complaints Team confirming that they were investigating my second complaint and that my first complaint (which they told me in their letter of 21st October had been rejected) was being investigated by “another department” (though it does not say which department or give any contact details). I have requested details of this department but none have been forthcoming.

Then, on 21st December, I received another email from the Complaints Team referring to case number CAS-6686338-M7T8X8, apologising for the delay, and suggesting I take my complaints to Ofcom. The next day I received a letter dated 22nd December from the Executive Complaints Unit informing me that the rejection of Complaint number CAS-6947702-H1G1R4 was justified. I believe this relates to my first complaint, concerning the *‘Battle of Lewisham’* broadcast.

With regard to my third complaint, concerning Episode 3 of *‘Britain’s Fascist Thread’*, and which was posted on 14th April 2022, I have not received any acknowledgement at all.

When the BBC Complaints Unit at Darlington notified me in their letter of 18th November that Complaint Number CAS-6947702-H1G1R4 was rejected and advised me to refer it to their Executive Complaints Unit, they failed to return the printed complaint and enclosures they had been sent. It would have been common courtesy to have done so, bearing in mind the length of the complaint and the number of printed pages of evidence in support.

Following receipt of this letter, on 25th November I sent an email to the BBC Executive Complaints Unit requesting that they obtain copies of my original two complaints from their Complaints Team at Darlington and investigate them. I attach a copy of that email.

These complaints are long and take up several pages of printed material, and both of the first two are supported by exhibits in the form of further printed material. To produce fresh copies would strain my limited resources. I am still awaiting a response to this request.

In these circumstances I ask you to accept that I have complied with all requirements and followed the correct procedures reasonably required by Natural Justice with regard to all three complaints. I also ask you to accept that the BBC have on each occasion treated me and these complaints with disdain, hostility and acts of obstruction. Rather than admit that they are wrong and rectify matters by either...

(a) removing the offending material from the BBC web site, where it is currently causing harm by misleading historians, young school children and others,

or, better still:

(b) producing *new replacement programmes* on the same subjects which contain a better and more impartial attention to facts, including interviews with all persons who were prominently involved in and witnesses of the relevant events (i.e. not just spokespersons for the left).

...the BBC is pursuing a policy of ignoring my complaints. When they cannot ignore me any longer they resort to denial and obstruction. This refusal to engage with a complainant is a tyrannous abuse of power.

The BBC has also – in my view, deliberately – sought confuse my attempts to make them respond by issuing more case reference numbers than are required. This is a disgraceful and cynical ploy.

In view of all these facts **I wish to make a further complaint to Ofcom**, this time about the way the BBC has treated me and my complaints, with particular reference to these two aspects:

Firstly, its refusal to take my complaints seriously, let alone investigate them by interviewing those responsible for producing the programmes complained about. Each of my first two complaints has been met initially by complete silence. This has been the fate, so far, of my third complaint.

Secondly, no other organisation that I know of purports to have the power to impose time, word-length and supporting exhibit limitations on people who have cause to complain about them. There is no reason why the BBC should be a special exception to this common-sense approach, founded on English Common Law.

The BBC's treatment of my complaints (to say nothing of the wholly biased content of the programmes specified) suggests to me that the corporation is politically biased, being staffed largely by people who are in varying degrees 'Left Wing' and who are hostile to persons and organisations they deem to be 'Far-Right'. Such institutionalised bias is in breach of its obligation to be fair and impartial in political (and all other) matters, and to treat all listeners, viewers and complainants fairly and with respect.

Please confirm that you will be investigating the matters I have raised in this letter as a formal complaint in itself. It seems pointless in addressing this complaint to the BBC through the normal procedure. Please also confirm also that you will consider all three original complaints that I have lodged with the BBC relating to these programmes, and let me know, approximately, when I may expect to hear from you.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Webster

*Enclosure:*

E-mail from Martin Webster to the BBC Executive Complaints Unit dated 25th November 2021.

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PLEASE NOTE: There has been no response from Ofcom to this final letter and complaint to them dated 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

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## **APPENDIX – EXHIBITS REFERRED TO IN MR WEBSTER’S FIRST TWO COMPLAINTS**

**1. Sunday Times Report of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1977 on the Lewisham march that took place on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> August 1977**

(Please see next page)

# How the battle of Lewisham was fought

THE VIOLENCE in south-east London yesterday had all the hallmarks of a traditional set-piece battle for the control of territory. There was no pretence of tolerance among rival groups, no "accidental" meeting of opposing columns such as took place in Red Lion Square three years ago. This time the battle lines were decided well in advance.

As a Scotland Yard man put it last week: "One lot will be occupying the place the other lot wants to occupy. There you have the matches and the tinderbox."

The problem facing the police was whether to take the easiest way out and ban all marches or allow anyone who wanted to exercise their right to free speech. Metropolitan Police Commissioner David McNee said last night: "I am not concerned with the politics of demonstrations. If extreme opponents of one faction threaten violence to seek a ban, the other side will use the same technique and in the event the democratic process will become eroded."

Under the Public Order Act 1936, the police can recommend through their local authority that the Home Secretary bans a march. On Thursday, Lewisham council failed to persuade the High Court to force McNee to use this power.

Having decided to allow the march, the police faced problems on three different sides. First there was a "peace march" headed by the Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood, and the Lewisham borough mayor Roger Goddard. It was organised by the All Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism (Alcaraf).

They wanted to demonstrate peacefully against the National Front by marching from Ladywell Fields along Lewisham High Street and Lewisham Way to Railway Grove. Although this was perilously close to where the National Front was due to assemble, Alcaraf argued that its march would be over at least 90 minutes before the Front assembled.

● Report by Will Ellsworth-Jones, John Ball, Michael Bilton, Doug Carnegie and Simon Freeman.

No formal police permission is needed for a march through London, but most organisers do consult the police about route details—there are about 500 marches and demonstrations a year. Alcaraf consulted and reached an uneasy compromise: it would march half way to its destination and then when the police wanted them to divert they would end their march and disperse.

Many of the 4000 Alcaraf marchers were not prepared to be disappointed. Despite police attempts to block them, they made their way through the many side streets to Clifton Rise where the Front, the police's second problem, were to assemble.

The area was chosen for a march by the National Front to capitalise on a genuine fear in the neighbourhood. Among its slogans were those underlining the fact that a police survey of street crime in South London completed in 1974 showed that 80 per cent of the attackers were black and 85 per cent of the victims were white.

There is solid right-wing support in the Clifton Rise area. In a by-election for the local council last year, votes for the National Front and the National Party totalled more than those of the successful Labour candidate.

The third problem facing the police was posed by the left-wing Socialist Workers Party which let it be known that its members would gather at Clifton Rise at 1.30 pm. "We are assembling in the area in order to prevent the National Front assembling there," a Socialist Worker said. "We think the decision by the nazis to assemble in the centre of black Denford is provocative, and we have no intention of allowing them to get away with it."

Although the anti-Front faction was clearly led and largely composed of groups committed to the extreme Left, the march did draw support from some locals who resented the Front's increasingly vociferous campaign in their area.

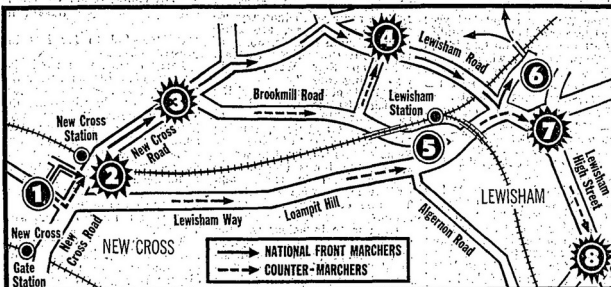
Equal determination was shown by the National Front. "Clifton Rise is part of Britain, and we will march anywhere in Britain," said the Front's organiser for the area, 34-year-old Richard Edmonds. "This march is deliberately provocative. We are standing up for white people."

SO THE POLICE were presented with the task of keeping Left and Right apart on their chosen battleground. The Left was first to arrive, but since the police had sealed off Clifton Rise where left-wingers hoped to assemble, they flooded New Cross Road at the top of Clifton Rise.

The first sign that the police



Policeman injured on forehead, bleeding heavily, is carried away by his colleagues



might have underestimated the left-wing strength came when the police decided to try to clear some of them from New Cross Road. Two small police columns proved inadequate to cope with demonstrators who, apart from feet and fists, were using batons, bottles, tins, and later bricks. Even the first wave of mounted police was forced back by a volley of bottles.

Finally, after about 20 minutes of confusion and severe pressure, the police regained control of the whole of Clifton Rise and the top of New Cross Road. Their tactics then were to hide the National Front in Achilles Street and then send the marchers up Pagnell Street, into New Cross Road and on their way to Lewisham.

The plan almost worked. The left-wingers were milling around at the top of Clifton Rise wondering whether they had been duped by the Front. But eventually they spotted the top of the Front column emerging from Pagnell Street. With the police very weak in New Cross Road the left-wingers were able to swarm down this road to meet the Front.

When they reached the march, a wedge of police tried to hold the two sides apart. But demonstrators simply hurled the ammunition they had collected along the way at the Front and the police protecting them became sitting targets.

It was at this point that the police were under such severe strain that they left the tail end of the Front march unprotected. At one moment Left and Right actually found themselves facing each other. For a few seconds they looked in surprise before starting to hit each other. One older Front supporter tried to shelter under a transparent umbrella as the missiles landed around him. After two minutes the police regrouped to protect the Front stragglers.

Having overcome this first confrontation, the march moved on in comparative peace towards Lewisham. The police managed to stop the demonstrators catching up with the Front and surprised them by taking the Front up Cressingham Road. There they held a rally unmolested and then dispersed.

But again the police may have underestimated the fury of extremists who had seen the Front slip from their clutches.

Labour leaders of Lewisham council said last night that, if the demonstrators had then been told by "someone in authority" that the Front had gone, they might have dispersed peacefully. But it is difficult to see how demonstrators, who had been duped once would have believed anyone in authority.

But whether or not a revelation about the whereabouts of the Front would have helped, the fact was that the demonstrators were milling around Lewisham High Street and being pushed back by weary police. The riot shields came out for the first time in Britain when the target of the frustrated demonstrators became not the Front but the police who had protected them.

It was here that some of the most concentrated battles between police and demonstrators took place. The fact that it was unexpected was shown by Commissioner McNee who said last night: "Violence escalated and turned on police themselves when normal methods of crowd control frustrated the efforts of the counter-demonstrators to prevent the National Front march."

● How the battle erupted in south-east London:

1. National Front marchers assemble in a side-street out of sight of counter-demonstrators led by Socialist Workers.
2. March moves off, counter-demonstrators swoop down New Cross Road and break police cordon. Fierce fighting ensues, missiles rain down on police and marchers.
3. Stragglers on the NF march attacked.
4. About 400 counter-marchers

try to ambush NF. More fighting.

5. Main body of counter-marchers head by quickest route for confrontation in Lewisham High Street.
6. NF march diverted into cul-de-sac for meeting and marchers disperse through passage under railway.
7. Counter-marchers, frustrated at not reaching NF, attack police.
8. Counter-marchers' final onslaught on Lewisham police station.



## 2. An interview with Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Helm published in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated 26th August 1977:

JEWISH CHRONICLE, AUGUST 26 1977

# Police chief defends policy on marches

By JENNI FRAZER

The police were determined to stick rigidly to upholding the law regarding demonstrations and marches, I was informed by Mr David Helm, the Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner in charge of Operations, and a holder of the Queen's Police Medal, in an exclusive interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*.

For the recent Lewisham march, he said, a "very careful check" had been made on the National Front to see whether anything could be construed as incitement to racial hatred. That would have been in direct contravention of Section 5a of the Public Order Act, 1936. But the police had found "no evidence whatsoever" of the possibility of incitement.

Was not the fact that the Front had chosen to march through an area of high immigrant population of itself incitement? No, said Mr Helm. If people chose to march through an area that of itself was not incitement.

What then had caused the violence at Lewisham and subsequently at Ladywood, Birmingham? Mr Helm was certain that it was "sheer frustration" on the part of the Socialist Workers' Party because the police had been able to get the National Front's march through. It was, he felt, the SWP's avowed intent to attack the police.

The SWP had claimed that violence had arisen because they had not been told that the Front had been moved on. "That's not true," said Mr Helm. "Their own members had loud hailer and were saying that the Front had gone. So the next target was the police."

Nevertheless, Mr Helm felt that the men had "contained the violence" at Lewisham. "Of course,



Mr David Helm, Deputy Assistant Commissioner

too many people were injured. But then, if one person is injured that's too many."

The immediate result of Lewisham has been for many people to call for an alteration in the law. I suggested that the "Battle of Cable Street" had led to the passing of the 1936 Public Order Act. Not so, said Mr Helm. "The 1936 Act was a culmination of a lot of troubles around that time. You'll never get an Act brought about by one particular occasion."

Would Mr Helm like to see a change in the law? "At the moment the police only have the power to recommend that a march or procession should be banned. Perhaps the power to ban an assembly should be added—but then you have the problem of deciding what constitutes an assembly."

"If you have an unlawful assembly it is an offence under common law, which must be heard in the Crown Court. We could do with

a summary offence to deal with people who unlawfully assemble."

It is the job of the chief of police in any given area to maintain law and order. Was there a case for suggesting that some chiefs of police would not wish to admit that they could not maintain law and order and therefore would not recommend that a march should be cancelled?

"I don't think any chief of police would feel that way. We're very conscious of our responsibilities—we are responsible for keeping order. But it is important that we are seen not to be political."

The laws governing such demonstrations are so complex it is amazing that any policeman can remember what he should or should not be doing. There is, for example, no power of arrest concerning the display of posters which are considered likely to cause racial hatred. The police can tell the person holding the banner that if he does not remove it he will be reported.

On the Saturday at Lewisham, said Mr Helm, the National Front had "obeyed directions all along the line. Before August 13 their march was curtailed. On the day they were formed up on a different route and were diverted three times—and there were no problems."

"They were displaying posters which were anti-mugging, which could have incited racial hatred. They were asked not to display them and they didn't."

"Compare this with the complete refusal by the SWP and the All Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism marches to agree a route with the police and the subsequent dispersal of the ALCARAF people so that they could go to where the Front rally was starting."

Mr Helm was not surprised at



Violence at Lewisham during the National Front march

the violence but was surprised at the nature of it. "It's the first time that ammonia has been used. Though you might have thought there would be more violence against the Front, I think a lot of it was frustration and that the police were attacked because we were between them and the Front."

"The SWP may see the police as the protectors of the NF but their opinions state clearly that the police are one of their targets."

Each future demonstration will be considered "on its merits. There is no difficulty in policing a Front demonstration on its own—it's only when there is opposition that you get violence."

Demonstrations, added the Deputy Assistant Commissioner, were obviously a waste of manpower. "Policemen should be out preventing crime, not doing this; but it's also our duty to preserve the peace—and that's a duty that's getting more frequent."

3. A report on the sentencing of four London youths to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and being in possession of petrol bombs at the time of their arrest in Lewisham on the day of the NF march published in *The Times* newspaper dated 2nd October 1980:

**THE TIMES WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 22 1980**

## **Four jailed for petrol bomb plot**

Four London youths were jailed for six years at the Inner London Crown Court yesterday after a judge said they had petrol bombs to bring guerrilla warfare to the streets of London.

The Recorder, Judge G. A. MacDonald, said that it was his duty to impose severe sentences to deter others. As they were announced, the four defendants jumped out of the dock, but they were soon recaptured.

Barrington Anthony Myers, aged 18, of Dalyell Road, Brixton; David Robert Gerad, aged 19, of Plumbridge Street, Greenwich; Desmond Michael Morgan, aged 19, of Aldeburgh Street, Greenwich; and Patrick Paul Brown, aged 19, of Onzona Road, Plumstead, were found guilty of conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm. They all pleaded guilty to being in possession of petrol bombs.

Their arrest followed a march by the National Front in Lewisham and the prosecution said that they intended to use the petrol bombs on some of the marchers.

The judge said that "If only one of the devices had been thrown it would have caused panic in the crowd and injuries