

HISTORY OF COMPLAINT CAS-7159503-X9H5S0 BETWEEN TIM RICKMAN AND BBC

TR to BBC:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00162z1>

At 11:00 into the sound recording, the BBC's Simon Jack says, "Well, onshore wind, yeah, definitely the cheapest and the quickest to deploy." This is untrue. Onshore wind in the UK is not definitely the cheapest and quickest form of low-carbon electricity generation to deploy.

Please respond in writing to my complaint and correct the untrue statement made in the sound recording.

This complaint has not been sent to any authority outside the BBC. Thank you for your attention.

BBC to TR:

BBC Complaints <bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk>
To: Timothy Rickman <timrick3@yahoo.co.uk>
Reference CAS-7159503-X9H5S0

Dear Timothy Rickman

Thank you for contacting us about Radio 4's 'The World At One' broadcast 7 April.

We note your concerns about the reference to onshore wind.

We appreciate your comments however as stated by the National Grid:

"Cost effective -It's one of the least expensive forms of renewable energy (along with solar PV) and significantly less expensive than offshore wind power. Cheaper infrastructure and costs to run means onshore farms can help lower electricity bills.", "Quicker installation and easier maintenance Onshore wind farms can be constructed in months, at scale, and are relatively cheap and cost-effective to maintain compared with offshore."

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/onshore-vs-offshore-wind-energy>

*The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sources

Therefore Simon Jack was simply reflecting what was outlined by National Grid.

TR to BBC:

Thank you for your first response. The text you have quoted from the National Grid website does not support Simon Jack's statement in the programme. Regarding cost, National Grid's website text is claiming that solar PV and onshore wind are among the least expensive forms of renewable energy. You do not quote National Grid clearly making any claim about speed compared with all the various other forms of generation. Simon Jack, however, claimed that onshore wind is definitely the cheapest and quickest (source of low-carbon electricity, from the context) to deploy. Thus, even if National Grid's quoted claim were true, it would not provide any justification for Simon Jack's statement.

I am therefore not satisfied by your reply, and I am inviting you to respond to me again with any evidence or relevant point you believe may support your case. Please respond again to my complaint. This complaint still has not been sent to any authority outside the BBC.

BBC to TR:

BBC Complaints - Case Number - CAS-7159503-X9H5S0

22 Jun at 12:42

BBC Complaints <bbc_complaints_website@contact.bbc.co.uk>

To: Timothy Rickman <timrick3@yahoo.co.uk>

Reference CAS-7159503-X9H5S0

Dear Mr Rickman,

Thank you for taking the time to contact us again.

We're sorry to learn that you weren't satisfied with our earlier response. We're also sorry about the delay in getting back to you. We know people appreciate a prompt response and unfortunately we've taken longer to reply than usual – please accept our apologies.

We consider we've responded in as much detail as we can at this first stage of the complaints process, and regret we cannot investigate new points raised about it.

This concludes Stage 1 of our complaints process. That means we can't correspond with you further here. If you remain unhappy, you can now contact the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit (ECU). The ECU is Stage 2 of the BBC's complaints process. You'll need to explain why you think there's a potential breach of standards, or if the issue is significant and should still be investigated. Please do so within 20 working days of this reply.

Full details of how we handle complaints are available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/handle-complaint/>.

How to contact the ECU:

We've provided a unique link for you in this email. This will open up further information about how to submit your complaint. You'll be asked for the case reference number we've provided in this reply. Once you've used the link and submitted your complaint, the link will no longer work.

This is your link to contact the ECU if you wish:

[Click Here](#)

Kind regards
BBC Complaints Team

TR to BBC ECU:

Simon Jack of the BBC said, "Well, onshore wind, yeah, definitely the cheapest and the quickest to deploy." From the context, his statement was obviously comparing forms of low-carbon electricity generation within the UK, referring to cost of generation, not price paid or value, then and henceforth.

Prof. Gordon Hughes has studied UK generation, and Fig 8 of his http://windaction.s3.amazonaws.com/attachments/3705/Gordon_Hughes_-_REF_Wind_Economics_webinar.pdf gives £91/MWh as actual breakeven cost for onshore wind. By comparison, the table on p8 of <http://www.350.me.uk/economicsnp.pdf> gives £23/MWh as the basic cost of nuclear electricity (quoting http://www.350.me.uk/cost_generation_report.pdf as source). More recently, Hinkley Point C (HPC) Contract for Difference (CfD) provided a strike price of £92.50/MWh reducing to £89.50/MWh (both 2012 prices) if EDF take a FID on their proposed Sizewell C project, for a 35 year term from the date of commissioning. So, for onshore wind to be cheapest (as Simon Jack indicates) the HPC developer's profit would have to be near zero or negative - something which is not definitely the case. Since Regulated Asset Base (RAB) has been introduced since that CfD agreement, building future identical nuclear plants should cost around half what HPC did. In order not to mislead, Simon Jack would also have needed to mention the huge system integration costs of intermittent renewables (of which <https://www.techinvestornews.com/Green/Latest-Green-Tech-News/ofgem-unveils-20bn-green-grid-investment-plan-for-local-power-networks> is only a small part) and the fact that, for net zero grid purposes, continued UK deployment of intermittent generation serves no useful purpose anyway.

Nor is onshore wind definitely the quickest to deploy (contrary to Simon Jack's assertion) as <http://www.350.me.uk/fastBuildCao.png> and <http://www.350.me.uk/generationIncreaseBP2020.png> indicate.

The BBC broadcast thus was seriously untrue, and it misled listeners in a manner certain to encourage counterproductive action on climate change, with obvious implications for humanity and the continuing destruction of life on Earth. The BBC has still not said anything relevant in order to support or justify what Simon Jack said. This complaint has not yet been sent to any authority outside the BBC.

BBC ECU to TR:

British Broadcasting Corporation Broadcast Centre, BC2 B4, 201 Wood Lane, London, W12 7TP

Telephone: 020 8743 8000



Executive Complaints Unit

Mr T Rickman

Email: timrick3@yahoo.co.uk

Ref: CAS-7159503

29 July 2022

Dear Mr Rickman

The World at One, Radio 4, 7 April 2022

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the Executive Complaints Unit's investigation into your recent complaint about an interview with the BBC's Business Editor, Simon Jack. I have understood you to say Mr Jack made a comment about onshore wind which was inaccurate and so I have considered what was said in light of the BBC's editorial standards for due accuracy. You can see these in full in the BBC's [Editorial Guidelines](#).

I do not believe there are grounds to uphold your complaint but I hope I can explain why I have reached this decision.

The Editorial Guidelines refer to "*due accuracy*" where the term "*due*" means that which is "*adequate and appropriate to the output, taking account of the subject and nature of the content, the likely audience expectation and any signposting that may influence that expectation*". In this case, the subject of the interview was the Government's "[British Energy Security Strategy](#)". Mr Jack explained one of the key proposals was to increase the proportion of electricity generated from clean sources of energy and reduce fossil fuel generation, in particular from natural gas. There was a discussion about the Government's focus on new nuclear power plants but Mr Jack made the point previous plans to develop nuclear sites had been subject to delay: "*In 2010 Greg Clark, who was Business Secretary then, earmarked six sites to develop new nuclear power stations on. In the 12 years since then we have broken ground on one...*". This is the section of the discussion which followed:

Sarah Montague: Ok, the quickest way to get new supply that's cheap and green is solar and onshore wind. What about those?

Simon Jack: Well onshore wind, yeah definitely the cheapest and the quickest to deploy. You could do quite a lot within a year with that, and solar. This is a real debate about this. This government, Kwasi Kwarteng and Boris Johnson, big fans of onshore wind. But this document tacitly admits not every backbench MP wants it in

their background. We are definitely testing the outer limits of Nimby-ism in the teeth of an energy crisis and it still seems to be alive and well.

It was clear from the context of the discussion both Ms Montague and Mr Jack were referring to the relative cost of building new, clean sources of electricity generation and the relative speed with which those sources could be constructed and start generating. They were talking about the deployment of clean energy sources in the context of the Government's strategy to provide a greener, more secure supply of electricity. They were not talking about the levelised cost of electricity generation (the average cost of the lifetime of the plant per MWh of electricity generated).

I therefore do not agree the audience would have been misled. Listeners would have understood the reference to onshore and solar as "*the cheapest and the quickest to deploy*" related to the cost and speed of construction and generation. Mr Jack's summary is supported by sources such as the [National Grid](#) and the [International Energy Agency](#).

There is no further right of appeal against this decision within the BBC's complaints process but if you do wish to take the matter further, it is open to you to ask the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom, to consider your complaint. You can find details of how to contact Ofcom and the procedures it will apply at the following website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint>. You can also write to Ofcom at Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA, or telephone either 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040.

Yours sincerely



Colin Tregear
Complaints Director

TR to OFCOM:

In my complaint to the BBC ECU, I provided evidence to the BBC that their broadcast statement about the cost and speed of onshore wind generation was untrue (on both counts).

On the subject of speed of future generating provision, the ECU has not responded with any relevant point, nor has it attempted to provide any evidence, and it has said nothing to dispute my evidence.

On the subject of cost, the ECU's response does nothing to dispute my empirical, recent, rigorous, UK-specific evidence. Nor has the ECU provided relevant counter-evidence. Instead, the ECU has cited an IEA document which does not relate specifically to the UK and presents information based on flawed LCOE calculations (which the ECU itself has already said is not what Sarah Montague and Simon Jack were referring to). The ECU also cite one non-technical National Grid website which, as I had already pointed out to the BBC, merely says (correctly) that offshore wind is

even more expensive than onshore wind but does not comment on how onshore wind compares with (cheaper) alternative generating sources.

The ECU's point about the BBC's accuracy only needing to be "due accuracy" (rather than accurate accuracy, one supposes) provides no valid excuse for the BBC because "audience expectation" is still for the BBC Radio 4 World at One to tell the truth, not the opposite of the truth.

My complaint was therefore improperly rejected by the BBC ECU, so Ofcom's responsibility is now to return my complaint to the BBC so that it can be handled properly.

ENDS.