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To: [trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk](mailto:trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk)  
Sent: Fri 26/09/2014 5:38  
Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-2661021-0QVP81

Dear Sirs

I am writing with regards to my recent complaint about an interview with Mr Alistair Moffat of BritainsDNA which was broadcast on the Mark Forrest show on BBC Local Radio on 6th March 2014. My complaint was subsequently escalated to the Editorial Complaints Unit. I received a final response from Mr Fraser Steel of the ECU in an e-mail dated 29th August. I have not been able to write earlier as I have been tied up preparing for and attending a conference in Canada followed by a holiday in Canada, but I believe that this e-mail is still being sent within the 20 working days limit.

Although the ECU dealt with some of the points I raised to my satisfaction, there were additional issues which fell outside their remit. I would, therefore, like to request that the BBC Trust now considers these points. You can find full details of these outstanding issues in my e-mail to the ECU dated 24th April 2014.

I would, in particular, like the BBC Trust to investigate why Mr Alistair Moffat was selected to be interviewed by the BBC on the subject of Viking DNA on the Mark Forrest programme. As you will appreciate, population genetics is a highly specialised scientific discipline. Mr Moffat does not have a scientific background, has no specialist expertise on the subject, and his outlandish claims have already been the subject of a prior complaint which was previously upheld by the BBC:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/comp-reports/ecu/today9july2012radio4>

Mr Paul Moseley advised in his e-mail to me dated 18th April that the BBC approached Mr Moffat to talk on the subject of Viking DNA because "A member of the team heard an interview with him on BBC Radio York last year. They felt that he was an engaging speaker on the subject of DNA and noted that he might be an interesting guest for the programme." In order for the BBC to provide accurate coverage on scientific matters it seems to me that it is very important that guests are chosen because of their expertise on the subject and not simply because they are considered to be "engaging" speakers. I appreciate that the production team were unaware of the previously upheld complaint against Mr Moffat, but I was disappointed that there seems to have been no attempt to find a suitably qualified speaker on the subject. It is also disappointing that Mr Moffat was given free rein to promote his pseudoscientific views without any other qualified scientists being given the right of reply.

Mr Richard Hutt advised me in his e-mail dated 1st May 2014 that "it isn't open to me to look at the circumstances which led to Mr Moffat being booked to appear, or the question of whether others might have been booked instead. Generally speaking, the choice of guests is a matter of editorial discretion and does not fall within the remit of the ECU. In practice that means I can consider whether what was said during the broadcast met the BBC's editorial standards but not whether the programme ought to have invited him to participate." I hope that the selection of speakers on scientific subjects does fall within the remit of the BBC Trust and that you will be able to investigate the matter on my behalf.

The other issue which I would like the BBC Trust to investigate is how Mr Moffat has been granted a disproportionate amount of coverage on the BBC in the past few years to promote his genetic ancestry company. In every case the BBC have failed to give qualified experts the right to respond and present the prevailing scientific viewpoint. This has resulted in some highly inaccurate and misleading coverage of genetic ancestry testing. You can find details of the extensive coverage granted by the BBC to Mr Moffat on this page on University College London's website:

[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/mace-lab/genetic-ancestry/guff\\_pages/attack](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/mace-lab/genetic-ancestry/guff_pages/attack)

Mr Hussain advised me in his e-mail dated 18th April that "the BBC should show due impartiality over time". I would therefore like the Trust to investigate why the BBC's coverage of genetic ancestry testing has been so unbalanced and why one company has been singled out for so much attention. Mr Moffat was previously the Director of Scottish TV, and appears to have many contacts in high places in the media. To outside observers it very much seems that Mr Moffat is using his contacts to his advantage to promote his company on the BBC.

In addition, it would appear that on a number of occasions BBC presenters were provided with free DNA tests from Mr Moffat's company and they subsequently discussed their results on air. This would appear to be in breach of clause 14.4.9 of the BBC's guidelines on Product Prominence.

Mr Hutt commented to me in his e-mail dated 1st May 2014: "You have also raised the issue of Mr Moffat's appearances across the BBC over a number of years. Again, this falls outside our remit – we are limited to considering specific items broadcast or published by the BBC and are not able to investigate claims of editorial breaches over time and across output." I hope that this issue will also fall within the remit of the BBC Trust and that you will be able to investigate the matter on my behalf.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Debbie Kennett  
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University College London