

FAO: James Harding  
Director, BBC News and Current Affairs  
BBC Broadcasting House  
Portland Place  
London  
W1A 1AA

10 August 2017

Dear Mr Harding,

**RE: Chris Packham's animal rights campaigning**

It is almost one year since the BBC Trust recommended that Chris Packham's campaigning work be formally assessed to ensure it does not undermine BBC impartiality, and we wish to ask you to consider whether this is being done effectively, if at all.

In September 2016, the BBC Trust produced a report entitled "*Finding of the Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust; Article by Chris Packham, BBC Wildlife Magazine, September 2015; Finding of 23 September 2016*".

In this report the BBC Trust made the following statement:

"Trustees acknowledged that Mr Packham campaigned on a wide range of wildlife issues and supported a number of charities in this field. They emphasised the importance of the approach taken by both the BBC and Mr Packham to managing any potential conflicts of interest in order to enable the BBC to continue to make use of his acknowledged expertise as a biologist and conservationist and his skill as a presenter whilst not implying that the BBC endorsed his personal views on charities and causes. **It will be important for both the BBC and Mr Packham to assess regularly and formally his freelance and campaigning work to ensure that it does not undermine the impartiality and independence of his work for the BBC** which audiences clearly value highly."<sup>1</sup>

This statement was made on the basis of a remark Mr Packham had made in an article for BBC Wildlife Magazine, in which he had referred to game shooters as "the nasty brigade". It is noted in the course of the BBC Trust's report that BBC Wildlife Magazine's new editor would not have allowed that phrase to be published.

Almost one year later, please consider the following:

- On the 12<sup>th</sup> August Chris Packham is leading a protest march to Downing Street campaigning to end the Government's badger cull, legal hunting and driven grouse shooting.
- In promoting this protest, Mr Packham has given a quote to the Badger Trust in which he calls game shooters "psychopaths". Note in particular, the escalation in language from "the nasty brigade" to language that is altogether more abusive and offensive.<sup>2</sup>
- In the past few weeks Mr Packham has used his platform as a BBC wildlife presenter to:

<sup>1</sup>[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc\\_bulletins/2016/bbc\\_wildlife\\_magazine.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2016/bbc_wildlife_magazine.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.badger.org.uk/single-post/2017/08/07/Thousands-to-descend-on-Downing-Street>

- Harass businesses to dissociate themselves from grouse shooting. To date he has used Twitter to publicly contact 37 businesses, encouraging his 195.4 thousand followers to do the same. It is undeniable that these followers have been amassed due to his work for the BBC.
- Publicly lobby Bradford Council to end the grouse shooting on Ilkley Moor, a grouse moor that has won a Purdey Award for conservation excellence and has hosted walks for ramblers to show off its conservation successes. Mr Packham's lobbying of Bradford Council was reported in seven different media outlets, including BBC regional news, due to the prominence he is given by his work for the BBC.

You must be aware that, following the debate in the House of Commons on 31<sup>st</sup> October last year, grouse shooting is a politically controversial topic. Indeed whenever grouse shooting has been addressed in recent weeks on BBC programming (see Sir Ian Botham on BBC Radio 5 Live Breakfast on the 31<sup>st</sup> July and David Cobham on BBC Radio 4 Today programme on the 9<sup>th</sup> August) this controversy has been acknowledged. If the BBC wishes to be seen as impartial in this controversy it is simply unsustainable to keep giving Mr Packham an unchallenged platform as a "naturalist" on programmes such as Springwatch, Autumnwatch and Winterwatch if he is to so closely align himself with the most aggressive elements of the anti-shooting campaign.

We would therefore ask that if you wish to continue commissioning Mr Packham to front the BBC's flagship wildlife programming, you undertake the formal assessment of his campaign activity that was recommended by the BBC Trust. In doing so we would further ask that you consider whether it is viable for Mr Packham to both lead a protest march, lobby local councils, harass businesses and abuse legal game shooters; and at the same time be the face of BBC wildlife programming. It is certainly the position of the Countryside Alliance, and a great many of your rural viewers, that Mr Packham can do one or the other, but not both if the BBC is to maintain its appearance of impartiality in these debates. We hope that if you wish to continue commissioning Mr Packham you will ask him not lead his march on the 12<sup>th</sup> August.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.P.C.' followed by a stylized flourish.

Tim Bonner  
**Chief Executive**