

From: debbiekennett@aol.com
To: ECUdl@bbc.co.uk
Sent: Thu 17/07/2014 13:42
Subject: RE: Your complaint to the Editorial Complaints Unit

Dear Mr Steel

Many thanks for sending me your provisional response to my complaint. It is disappointing that my main concerns were beyond the scope of the Editorial Complaints Unit but I understand that once this process has been finished I will be able to pursue these issues with the BBC Trust.

I accept that the BBC has to reflect the real world and that it is quite acceptable to mention company names in certain contexts. The prominence given to BritainsDNA in this case is as a result of the programme's editors choosing to invite an unqualified person with commercial interests onto the programme to discuss the subject of Viking DNA rather than selecting someone with expertise in the field. The situation was compounded by the fact that the "research" that was discussed was not published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. I would have thought the programme's researchers should at the very least have made basic checks about the source of the research. If so, then they would have chosen a different guest, and the promotional opportunity would not have arisen.

You will no doubt have seen the latest report from the BBC Trust about the need to avoid presenting a "false balance" on scientific matters:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2014/science_impartiality.html

In the case of the Mark Forrest show there was no balance at all because the programme focused on an alternative view which is not supported by the science, and provided no opportunity for an expert to explain the scientific consensus.

Is there perhaps some way that some of these points could be included in your Response?

It should be noted that the discussion on the programme was not just about genetic ancestry testing but also about Mr Moffat's "research". At the very least it would be helpful for the public record if your response could acknowledge that the "research" discussed on this programme had not been subjected to scientific peer review.

I accept your finding that the complaint has otherwise been resolved, as it has been recognised that there has been a breach of editorial standards.

Kind regards
Debbie Kennett