

Cover sheet for response to an Ofcom consultation

BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: **Broadcast Code Review consultation**

To (Ofcom contact):

Name of respondent: **Darrell and Cheryl Wood**

Representing (self or organisation/s): **Ourselves**

Address (if not received by email):

CONFIDENTIALITY

Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Nothing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Name/contact details/job title | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Whole response | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Part of the response | <input type="checkbox"/> | If there is no separate annex, which parts? | |

If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation not to be published, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

DECLARATION

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom seeks to publish responses on receipt. If your response is non-confidential (in whole or in part), and you would prefer us to publish your response only once the consultation has ended, please tick here.

Name **Darrell and Cheryl Wood**

Signed (if hard copy)

Submission - Broadcast Code Review consultation

We take the liberty of submitting the following in respect of the **Broadcast Code Review consultation**.

For several years now we have noticed what we perceive as a detectable decline in the standards of good taste and decency on the part of the BBC. We refer specifically to the nature of live-on-air language used by presenters, contributors, correspondents, etc., and particularly on the BBC's self-proclaimed "flagship programme" broadcast of its 'premier radio station' (Radio 4), namely the "Today" programme.

We have been in communication with the BBC on two broad issues (1) the use of blasphemous/profane/irreverent language such as "**For God's sake**", "**Oh my God**", "**for Christ's sake**", "**Good Lord**", "**God knows**", "**Oh Lord**", etc.; and (2) the use of terms such as "**stuffed**", "**pissed off**", "**cock-up**", "**hell of a ...**" etc.

May we deal with these two issues separately:

AS REGARDS (1) ABOVE MAY WE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

After an exchange of 97 letters the BBC eventually confirmed that it considered the use of the terms "**For God's sake**", "**Oh my God**", "**for Christ's sake**", "**Good Lord**", "**God knows**", "**Oh Lord**", etc. **"ACCEPTABLE"** [Note: (i) the full schedule of questionable language which the BBC considered as "acceptable" together with (ii) the copy of the letter from the BBC confirming that such language is "acceptable" are attached as Annexures 1 and 2 respectively. Please also note again that the language in issue is broadcast at prime-time, live-on-air, on a "flagship programme"]

Comment:

Surely utterances like “For God’s sake”, “God forbid”, “Good Lord”, “For Christ’s sake”, “Oh my God” , “God help us”, etc. have no place in the live-on-air vocabulary of broadcast personnel employed by a Public Broadcaster, countless of whose listeners/viewers find such blasphemous/irreverent language profoundly offensive. Issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. are dealt with meticulously, yet the sensitivities of the faith community (not just Christians, but Jews and Muslims) seem so peremptorily brushed aside. **And the sad thing is that such exclamations are totally needless.** There is no way that such language can be deemed to enhance listener-satisfaction.

AS REGARDS (2) ABOVE MAY WE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

More recently we were moved to complain about the use of terms such as **“stuffed”, “cock-up”, “hell of a ...”** etc. (also on the “Today” programme). We attach a copy of the email thread with the BBC (Annexure 3) in which they indicate that they have no objection to the use of such unscripted live-on-air language.

Comment:

If swear words in general, and the “F-word” in particular are forbidden on air (although they might be common parlance among broadcast staff off-air), why can’t profanities such as the abovementioned **“stuffed”, “cock-up”, “hell of a ...”** etc. (which similarly might be common parlance among broadcast staff off-air) likewise be regulated and stamped out?

In conclusion: If blasphemous/irreverent/profane language was outlawed, would the BBC get letters complaining that such language was NOT being used, and that it should be?? So why not rid the airwaves of this offensive practice, particularly on “flagship” programmes broadcast on a ‘premier’ radio station? *[We’re not talking about post-watershed programmes or what happens on other BBC radio stations - we do not partake of those as a matter of personal choice. Of course it would be nice if the same live-on-air language restraints were in force on all BBC services, and the question of course is ‘why shouldn’t they?’]*

Isn't it the case that this is just rank indiscipline on the part of the culprits (or could it even be intentional??!!), and/or also indifferent editorship and management?

So perhaps a 'nudge' from Ofcom might not be an inappropriate means of getting the BBC to clean up its act. We would earnestly hope so, and that the BBC will resume its public broadcaster role as the 'upholder of good taste and decency'.

Yours faithfully.

Darrell & Cheryl Wood

Darrell Wood

B.Com. (Hons); B.A.(Hons.); B.Ed.

Cheryl Wood

B.A.; H.D.E.; D.S.E.(Media Centre Science)