



Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6188 website www.parliament.uk/cms

Tim Davie
Director General
BBC

By email

19 September 2023

Dear Tim,

I am writing concerning the serious allegations regarding Russell Brand, which raise significant questions not only about the culture of the industry in the past but whether that culture still prevails today.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee has taken a keen interest in scrutinising the behaviour of the media, and particularly Public Service Broadcasters, regarding their duty of care towards staff and contributors. It is not enough for any organisation to have appropriate safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures in place: we need to know that these are adhered to. Staff must be assured of the safety of their working environment and have confidence that their employers will address any concerns they raise.

As you told us when you last appeared before the Committee on 13th June, the Corporation has needed to learn from past mistakes and any complacency is misplaced. I welcome the internal investigations that the BBC is undertaking but I would be grateful if you could set out the timescale by which you anticipate these investigations will be complete and ask that you keep the Committee updated on progress. It would also be helpful if you can provide details on how people with information relevant to the investigations can contribute should they wish to provide any new information or raise concerns.

Please could you also assure us that, while respecting any potential police investigations, all information that can be disclosed publicly will be so. Finally, we would urge you to encourage people to report incidents to the police.

I am also writing to Channel 4 regarding these allegations and we urge both the BBC and Channel 4 to do everything possible not only to ensure that employees, contributors and suppliers feel safe at work, but also create an environment whereby people can speak out when procedures are breached.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee



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Alex Mahon
Chief Executive, Channel 4

By email

19 September 2023

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your letter of 18 September 2023 in relation to the serious allegations regarding Russell Brand. These allegations raise significant questions not only about the culture of the industry in the past but whether that culture still prevails today.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee has taken a keen interest in scrutinising the behaviour of the media, and particularly Public Service Broadcasters, regarding their duty of care towards staff and contributors. It is not enough for any organisation to have appropriate safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures in place: we need to know that these are adhered to. Staff must be assured of the safety of their working environment and confidence that their employers will address any concerns they raise.

In this light, thank you for providing me with further detail of how Channel 4 has responded to the allegations concerning Russell Brand. We note that your investigations, and those of the production company Banijay UK, are still ongoing. The Committee will be coming back to this issue in the autumn and so I would be grateful if you could set out the timescale by which you anticipate both Channel 4's and Banijay UK's investigations will be complete and ask that you keep the Committee updated on progress. It would also be helpful if you can provide details on how people with information relevant to the investigations can contribute should they wish to provide any new information or raise concerns.

Please could you also assure us that, while respecting any potential police investigations, all information that can be disclosed publicly will be so. Finally, we would urge you to encourage people to report incidents to the police.

I am also writing to the BBC regarding these allegations and we urge both Channel 4 and the Corporation to do everything possible to not only ensure that employees, contributors and suppliers feel safe at work, but also create an environment whereby people can speak out when procedures are breached.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee



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Angelos Frangopoulos
Chief Executive Officer
GB News

By email

19 September 2023

Dear Angelos,

As you will be aware, the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee has been looking at issues of behaviour in the media following a number of accusations against individuals and concerns about institutional culture.

In July this year we wrote to the editor of The Sun regarding serious accusations made against Dan Wootton. The newspaper responded by setting out its ongoing investigation into his alleged behaviour. The following month DMG Media, as the publisher of MailOnline, announced Mr Wootton has been suspended as a columnist while its own investigations are ongoing. Since then, we are aware that Mr Wootton continues to broadcast on GB News, and indeed discussed the accusations against him during a broadcast on the channel on 19 July 2023.

It is vital that viewers have faith in the media especially in the case of news brands, where truthfulness and accuracy are key. It is also vital that those working in and with the media can be confident that they are working in a safe environment. We would, therefore, be grateful if you could set out to us what, if any, investigations or processes have been undertaken since the recent complaints about Mr Wootton were publically raised, and details of the policies and procedures available to staff at GB News in the event they seek to raise issues about the conduct of individuals or the culture at the organisation.

We are also aware that, during the weekend of 16/17 September, GB News presenters opted to use their social media platforms to defend Russell Brand against accusations of rape and sexual assault. While GB News is not responsible for this content, it is concerning that Beverley Turner, who described Mr Brand as "a hero" and invited him to appear on her show, subsequently fronted GB News's coverage of the allegations regarding Mr Brand on the morning of 18 September.

During that broadcast, Ms Turner announced that "if he'd offered to come on this morning, we'd've had him, let's be honest". While Ms Turner was challenged on her comments at length by her co-presenter, Andrew Pierce, we remain concerned that having a presenter so clearly supporting an individual who is the subject of intense media coverage, including seeking their appearance on the show, undermines any perception of due impartiality in the broadcasting.

We would be grateful if you could set out your discussions with GB News presenters on their responsibilities on due impartiality and professionalism when seeking to front coverage of news events, and any actions you intend to take in response to these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee



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Chris Pavlovski
Chief Executive Officer
Rumble

By email

20 September 2023

Dear Chris,

I am writing concerning the serious allegations regarding Russell Brand, in the context of his being a content provider on Rumble with more than 1.4 million followers.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee is raising questions with the broadcasters and production companies who previously employed Mr Brand to examine both the culture of the industry in the past and whether that culture still prevails today.

However, we are also looking at his use of social media, including on Rumble where he issued his pre-emptive response to the accusations made against him by The Sunday Times and Channel 4's Dispatches. While we recognise that Rumble is not the creator of the content published by Mr Brand, we are concerned that he may be able to profit from his content on the platform.

We would be grateful if you could confirm whether Mr Brand is able to monetise his content, including his videos relating to the serious accusations against him. If so, we would like to know whether Rumble intends to join YouTube in suspending Mr Brand's ability to earn money on the platform.

We would also like to know what Rumble is doing to ensure that creators are not able to use the platform to undermine the welfare of victims of inappropriate and potentially illegal behaviour.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Today we received an extremely disturbing letter from a committee chair in the UK Parliament.

While Rumble obviously deplores sexual assault, rape, and all serious crimes, and believes that both alleged victims and the accused are entitled to a full and serious investigation, it is vital to note that recent allegations against Russell Brand have nothing to do with content on Rumble's platform.

Just yesterday, YouTube announced that, based solely on these media accusations, it was barring Mr. Brand from monetizing his video content. Rumble stands for very different values. We have devoted ourselves to the vital cause of defending a free internet – meaning an internet where no one arbitrarily dictates which ideas can or cannot be heard, or which citizens may or may not be entitled to a platform.

We regard it as deeply inappropriate and dangerous that the UK Parliament would attempt to control who is allowed to speak on our platform or to earn a living from doing so. Singling out an individual and demanding his ban is even more disturbing given the absence of any connection between the allegations and his content on Rumble. We don't agree with the behavior of many Rumble creators, but we refuse to penalize them for actions that have nothing to do with our platform.

Although it may be politically and socially easier for Rumble to join a cancel culture mob, doing so would be a violation of our company's values and mission. We emphatically reject the UK Parliament's demands.



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Dr Theo Bertram
Director of Government Relations, Europe
TikTok

By email

19 September 2023

Dear Theo,

I am writing concerning the serious allegations regarding Russell Brand, in the context as a user of TikTok with more than 2.2 million followers on the platform.

The Culture, Media and Sport is raising questions with the broadcasters who previously employed Mr Brand or production companies who employed him, to examine both the culture of the industry in the past and whether that culture still prevails today.

Although Mr Brand no longer appears on television, he now has a follower base on social media, including on TikTok where this weekend he republished his pre-emptive response to the accusations made against him by The Sunday Times and Channel 4's Dispatches. While we recognise that TikTok is not the creator of the content published by Mr Brand, and his content may be within the Community Guidelines set out by the platform, we are concerned that he may be able to profit from his content on the platform.

We would be grateful if you could confirm whether Mr Brand is able to monetise his TikTok posts, including his videos relating to the serious accusations against him, and what the platform is doing to ensure that creators are not able to use the platform to undermine the welfare of victims of inappropriate and potentially illegal behaviour.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee