



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tony Hall  
Director-General of BBC  
Broadcasting House, Peel Wing  
Portland Place  
London  
W1A 1AA

**9 April 2020**

Dear Tony,

### **IEA on Good Morning Scotland**

I am writing to lodge a formal complaint regarding Good Morning Scotland.

On 9 April 2020, Good Morning Scotland hosted Chris Snowden from the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) to discuss minimum unit pricing on alcohol, following a report that his organisation had published which claims the policy is ineffective. As you will be aware, including from previous correspondence with myself, the Institute of Economic Affairs is extremely secretive about its funders and there are well publicised allegations that the IEA allows corporate donors to influence and shape its output. Such dodgy “think tanks” are used by industry to launder their views, creating a false perception of independent evaluation of policies which these industries have a self-interest in.

Specifically relevant to this package, it is known that in the past the IEA has received funding from the alcohol industry, [as set out by the BMJ here](#). No mention was made of this, either by the BBC directly or through the presenter posing it as a question to the IEA representative.

In a letter to me on 10 July 2019, you confirmed that the BBC had updated its guidance to clarify its position on the identification of think tanks and their funding. That guidance states that appropriate information about a think tank’s affiliation, funding, and particular viewpoints should be made available to the audience as it cannot be assumed that such contributors are unbiased. Despite this guidance, the Good Morning Scotland segment with the IEA did not contain any information on their

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funding and the presenter did not ask the IEA at any point if the report had received funding from the alcohol industry.

Further to this, throughout the morning bulletins BBC presenters used some form of the phrase 'researchers have revealed that' minimum unit pricing for alcohol is apparently ineffective. Given the above information about the IEA's funding and the fact that their report is not peer-reviewed, I believe these headline announcements are lacking in vital information to the point of being deeply misleading.

I would appreciate if you could investigate why the BBC guidelines were not followed in this instance and set out what measures have been, or plan to be, put in place to ensure that guidelines are followed.

Given the current public health crisis and the vital role the BBC is playing as a public broadcaster, I am assuming that your office will be understaffed and overstretched at present. As such, I have also lodged this through the formal BBC complaints process.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ross Greer', with a long, sweeping underline.

Ross Greer MSP

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