

Nick Robinson: BBC has no duty to 'broadly balance' Brexit reports as referendum is over

 [telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/03/nick-robinson-bbc-has-no-duty-broadly-balancebrexit-reports/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/03/nick-robinson-bbc-has-no-duty-broadly-balancebrexit-reports/)

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The BBC no longer has a duty to provide balanced coverage of Brexit, according to Nick Robinson, presenter of the Today programme.

Those who accuse the corporation of bias “find it hard to accept that on the BBC they will often hear people they disagree with saying things they don’t like”, Robinson said.

That group includes more than 70 MPs who wrote to Lord Hall, the BBC director-general, [complaining about the “pessimistic” tone](#) of Brexit coverage.

Lord Hall replied to the MPs insisting that “we go to great lengths to ensure that we balance our coverage and address all issues from a wide range of perspectives”.

However, writing a column in [Radio Times](#) - which begins: “Welcome to another week of moaning about the BBC” - Robinson said he was tired of Leavers and Remainers monitoring the corporation’s output with “stopwatches and calculators”.

“Enough! Leave it out. Remain calm,” he said. “The referendum is over. The duty we broadcasters had to ‘broadly balance’ the views of the two sides is at an end. Why? Because there are no longer two sides, two campaigns, two rival sets of spokespeople reading out those focus-grouped slogans.

“The BBC’s job is not to look over its shoulder wondering whether a report, interview or discussion will provoke letters of complaint or a tide of tweets from Remainers or Leavers - who, like fighters who emerge after months of hiding in a bush, seem not to accept that the war is over.

“Our job, instead, is to keep our eyes firmly fixed on the audience as a whole... people who would not dream of defining themselves by how they voted in the referendum.”

Robinson said that “if company A announces that it will invest more in the UK and create more jobs, it’s not our duty to search for a company that says it will invest less, just to balance the news”.

“We must, of course, ensure that we display no bias. The bias I worry about most is the bias against understanding,” he added.

Robinson also claimed that [prominent voices for the Leave campaign - Boris Johnson, Liam Fox and Michael Gove](#) - have been invited to appear on the Today programme over the past nine months but all have declined.

In their letter to Lord Hall last months, MPs expressed fears that “by misrepresenting our country either as xenophobic or regretful of the Leave vote, the BBC will undermine our efforts to carve out a new, global role for this country.”