



London Real/YouTube

The UK’s media regulator Ofcom has censured local TV channel London Live after it broadcast an 80-minute interview with David Icke, in which the notorious conspiracy theorist made baseless claims about coronavirus.

On April 8, London Live aired London Real: COVID-19 an edited version of an interview Icke did with YouTube channel London Real in March on the coronavirus crisis. During the exchange with presenter Brian Rose, a largely unchallenged Icke set out his wild theory that the pandemic is part of a plot by technocrats to destroy the global economy and impose mass surveillance on society.

The interview prompted 48 complaints and Ofcom launched an urgent investigation into the matter to establish whether London Live broke strict broadcasting standards in the UK. Ofcom today has concluded that London Real: COVID-19 represented a “serious” breach of its Broadcasting Code and is now considering sanctions (up to an including a fine) against the broadcaster, which is owned by Russian billionaire Evgeny Lebedev.

In its assessment, Ofcom said Icke “was allowed to set out his highly controversial and unsubstantiated views on the coronavirus and the public policy response to it in significant detail with very little challenge or context.” It added Icke’s views “had the potential to undermine confidence in the motives of public authorities for introducing restrictions and therefore discourage viewers from following current official rules around social distancing.” In short, Ofcom concluded that this might have caused “significant harm to viewers,” given the virus has killed more than 16,000 people in the UK and the lockdown currently is the most effective weapon for keeping it in check.

London Live accepted Ofcom’s decision but argued that Icke’s “absurd” theories were unlikely to have caused harm to viewers and that he was introduced by Rose as a “professional conspiracy theorist.” It said presenter Rose

also made clear that he believed that coronavirus “occurred naturally” and that a vaccine will be found to combat the virus.



Eamonn Holmes (right).

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In addition to the London Live ruling, Ofcom also said it has issued guidance to ITV and its presenters after *This Morning* host Eamonn Holmes made comments last week about the baseless conspiracy linking 5G with the spread of coronavirus. Holmes, who clarified his remarks in an on-air apology the next day, said he took issue with “mainstream media immediately slapping that [5G theory] down as not true when they don’t know it’s not true.”

“In our view, Eamonn Holmes’ ambiguous comments were ill-judged and risked undermining viewers’ trust in advice from public authorities and scientific evidence. His statements were also highly sensitive in view of the recent attacks on mobile phone masts in the UK, caused by conspiracy theories linking 5G technology and the virus,” Ofcom said.