

Annexe I to Chris Atkins' Supplementary Statement to Leveson Inquiry
Transcript of secretly filmed meeting between Chris Atkins and Sunday Mirror Journalist
Nick Owens, 26th March 2009.

[Some irrelevant opening remarks]

1. C Do you want some coffee
2. N Yeah actually. Had a big one last night
3. C Yeah ok
4. N So, did you speak to your friend again? How's she?
5. C Yeah.
6. N It is a Lady?
7. C Yeah
8. N Is she very nervous about the whole thing?
9. C Extremely
10. N How long she worked there?
11. C shit sorry just thrown that all over the place. Sorry about that
12. N No worries
13. C About 6-7 years
N Ok
14. C At that place.
15. N and is the place she's working at that she's gonna be giving us the ...
16. C Yes
17. N Rather than other places
18. C We can but ask, but, as you can imagine, discretion is off the scale at these places it's like a military operation
19. N Really? How many people work there?
C I don't want to give you any information right now that's going to allow you to identify her. Under 10
20. N It's helpful to know. It helps me to get it clear in my head for identification purposes.
21. C There are several other people within the organisation that know
N because contrary to what people... I know you dealt with newspapers before... we are very keen to make sure people aren't identified. Especially when they are keen not to be. I've got lots of people who give me information and it's helpful to know the background, to know how many people are there. Do you want me to give you a confidentiality now?
22. C I'll have a look at it, to be honest with you...
23. N It's a piece of paper at the end of the day
24. C Exactly for me it's all about trusting someone and believing and that sort of stuff.
25. N That's the key... I'll show you the standard thing we use. It's either that or a contract we use. It just protects you guys in terms of... before we publish anything. Then we can get working on it to be honest. So we can get an idea of how much money it's going to be worth. Which I know is important.
26. C It's why we're here.
27. N [REDACTED]
C [REDACTED]
N [REDACTED]
C [REDACTED]
N [REDACTED]
C [REDACTED]
N [REDACTED]

34. C

35. N

36. C

37. N

38. C

39. N Annoyingly I may not have a confidentiality agreement. I can get one faxed over.

40. C Or I can give you an email or something like that.

41. N That might be best.

42. C If it's a standard thing.

43. N I think the best thing is for you to give me some information about what you have got-and we can see on the basis of that. I'll let you have a confidentiality agreement. I'll go back to them and see what we can do with the information and how much it's worth. I'm normally able to give you quite a good idea because I work on the newsdesk as well. And I have the eye and the ear of the news editor and editor as well. Which is quite handy.

44. C Yes-yeah. I've been reading, I googled you on the train so I've been reading some of your...

45. N Someone did that to me yesterday. I went to a meeting with them and I found an old article that I'd done about Boddingtons, somewhere I was having a pint of Boddingtons and a Havana cigar. At some awards ceremony.

46. C I didn't see that one

47. N Freaked me out a little bit. Your whole life is on the internet now isn't it?

48. C Yeah. For us it's more, you know, I and her would rather take a bit less money and take a bit longer and have the confidentiality and trust so rock solid. Because for me --you know what I do- I am a salesman-its now-you know- a problem for me if someone said 'oh it was him that sold that story'- I would not want that to happen. I don't want that to happen, it's not going to happen. That wouldn't fuck me up with my job-but for her it's her whole life-you know what I mean. N I understand that. I cover a lot of health stories, and I work with a lot of health professionals. I understand that. You know I work with people in that area as well.

49. C Really?

50. N Yeah I do. So, I understand that issue.

C I suppose the thing is-let's just say that X has had a gastric band -or has h Y had a boob job and we-lets just say that's the information that we give you- then what is the next stage ? In terms of how do you see that evolving a story?

N Lets give you an example right. You take Fern Britain. She's on the front of the papers, she had a gastric band- that was a big story- not only because if was Fern Britain had a gastric band and everyone was amazed by her weight loss but it was a big story because she had said in public many times that she had got a huge keep fit regime, and all that shit, turned out to be wrong.... there's a public interest in reporting that story-what there probably isn't a public interest in doing is just reporting that someone had a gastric band operation, unless they are a massively big name then you might make a decision

51. The other example I always use is rehab. Get a lot of tips about celebrities in rehab- but you can't just go off and put that say-Sharon Osborne is in the Priory because it is

a massive invasion of privacy-so we have to be careful; like is she has been quoted as saying that she never needed rehab or something then maybe you can.

52. C Right right right

N The key is when we know who we are dealing with we can make a judgement on whether we can move forward with it as a story.

C Right right right

N That is why it is quite important to get an idea of who we are looking at- we have celebrities obviously at the top of the list

53. C People you like to write about-people who sell

N Yeah-same thing. They are going to be at the top of the list and we are interested in and if they are the kind of guys who you have access to... can get information on, then there's a chance- it is always up to the editor-put it in front of the editor, and say "look we've been given this bit of information about this person- it's going to cost this amount of money if we want to run the story, what do you reckon." she will make the call-she will make the decision

C Yeah yeah

54. N Sometimes is almost goes without saying that we will run the story. If we were rewinding 6 months, if you sitting here saying you know that Fern Britain has had a gastric band, great story. And you can put that one on and she will have to admit it-the other option is that you might come to me and say that Fern Britain is in the process of having a gastric band operation. How do you know that, well she arrives at the clinic at this time every week for a treatment-her consultation and if you are there at such and such time down the road you will see her- great-

C What happens though if a story gets written about X-and X throws a wobbler?

N What sort of problem for you-say if they sue?

C Yes-or something

N Well the thing is...

C Well they say to you-how did you know?

N Well obviously we don't tell them. All sources newspapers use are protected massively. We wouldn't be able to exist if we revealed to anyone where our stories have come from

C Yes.... But what I am saying is that because of the nature of this, could there be a situation where you are forced to say- well it was this guy

N Well it would never be the paper-it would be me and they would have to make me go to court and tell them who told me and that would never happen- I would not do it.

C Yes

N It would just never happen

C Yes OK

N Yes what happens is --say- if celebrity X sued us --then obviously you can't sue unless it is ~~obviously~~-untrue- that is the first point-they can probably try and sue for invasion of privacy- or try and take us to the PCC which is a different issue entirely

C Right right right

N If someone has had that operation- and it is true-correct and you go to them- the problem you can have-you always have- you can come to me and say Fern Britain has had a gastric band and we go to Fern Britain and she says "no I haven't" and her agents says "no she hasn't" we are in a difficult spot then-because it is a flat denial- and it can happen-often they lie- but then you are faced with the situation whereby we might say to you guys- look we are not going to use this information-but can you give us anything else other than just your word is there a document somewhere- a piece of paper- is there an email-something that would prove she had it.

C Cause I was sort of...OK

55. N We might get into that realm-you got to remember that agents and that don't always roll over-when you phone them up with stories-good agents as well...think right, ok...they don't panic-they think- right they come to me-how do they know-they are thinking about it-obviously, it's natural. You've got to remember that. They are going to wanna know-as a couple or as a team how we found out-we have to be aware of that

C Yes-yeah

56. N The key is that they will never find out from us- we will never tell them-but they will think naturally-they will wonder how we knew-but all that said -if we are talking about a big big celeb-there are so many hundreds of people surrounding them-there's their own team, there's people with TV shows they are working on-maybe people they are working on with books-there are so many leaks it is untrue-often as well some of the best stories we get are just from people who just hear things. They are out and about saying "I saw such and such having a drink, and she said this" and that's often how we get information.

57. C What you're in Soho House or something...?

58. N They could be sitting over there or something having a glass of wine and she says to her mate "actually I've just had a hand". It happens - believe me- it happens a lot. People phone up-they are on a train or something-that often how it happens

59. C careless talk costs lives.

60. N If I am honest -it's almost as if they'll almost think it's not someone from inside the clinic- I think that is the last place they'll think- although they might think it at some point -- so that's another process that whereby if you do work on stuff- it is just worth remembering we may well come back to you and say we need a bit more- and then it becomes a bit more risk

C Yes- cos obviously in some cases- I was just thinking this through -you know-in terms of our work- we're going to come to you and say X Y and Z- what would you need to substantiate it? I mean I could just be anyone... sorry.

N Yeah you could be exactly. Substantiate it... I guess. Difficult isn't it, I have never had any cosmetic surgery-but I suspect there is a record in the clinic of that surgery taking place. It is not like the NHS obviously where you phone up and they tell you about an operation that's happened on such a date, as it's private. What we would not want to do is to contact the clinic at all-as if we contact the clinic it also suggests we also know where it happened and that might be quite worrying for you guys

61. C Yeah yeah

N So we would not be able to contact the clinic-but what we would do-if we were to get a denial from the agent, then we would come back to you and say is there any more information that you can give us, and if you can, say you could give us some kind of confirmation that that treatment was taking place- your friend will probably know more about this sort of thing than us.

C She works in the admin section-

N So there is going to be a document.

C Yeah

N And we could then go back and say look we are entirely confident that she did or he did have this treatment and we are running the story on Sunday and then, see, because we... this is like a... it's not a game, but it's a process we deal with all the time. The agent will then know we are in territory now and we have got to face up to this and we can't.

C It may be she/he has not told...

62. N Yes-you usually get their acceptance on the second call.

C Really?

N Y-yes- it is rare-usually if you go to an agent on the first call and say look 'accept this'... but that said-the problem for them is that they play a risk-if that agent knows first of all that it is right-and they try and lie-then they will get really pilloried

by us in the second edition. You "when we first called her she said..." that is what happened with Fern Britain

C Did you guys break that?

N The screws broke it. They broke that story in the News of the World. "when we first contacted Fern she denied it" and then they went back. it would be interesting. I know the journalist that done that story, it would be interesting to know the process- I assume that it's similar to what we might have to do

C Yeah yeah-interesting to know how they found out

N Yea-she is big. She is a person, just look at her, she's on This Morning and that

63. C it's really coincidental you were talking about it.

64. N That's how it works

65. C In terms of, with my contact, thing is, if I'm going to go to her, and we do this, is she's a bit nervous nelly basically, about this, and it's really weird because I've kind of gone on about this, half joking half serious, every time I see her.

66. N She'll do it, you know...

67. C We get drunk, whatever, you can make a few grand, just at the stroke of a pen. So now I think she's, she's worried about losing her job, or she hasn't been promoted, or there's some problem she said. And she's gone 'right, ok I'm interested'. The thing is if I was to go to her and get her to say yes to... I've got to go back and relay all this and everything... and say yes yes we're going to do it, it's almost like I'd want to do everything at once, in a sense, so we got the price agreed and you said 'de de de de' and it's all agreed, what I'd probably want to avoid is having to go back. I don't know, but my gut feeling is I'd want to avoid saying 'they've called up the agent, it's now, dum dum dum, can you now go and get', it's almost that I just wanna do it, and get it and then it's done, and that's it, and it's almost like the ship's sailed it's gone

68. N Don't want to go round in circles

69. C Exactly, I don't want her to have second thoughts, and persuade her again, and if you want a tight deadline, if you know what I mean, if she's got to get access to records and stuff like that, I just want her to be able to do it and then take her time and then that's done rather than saying 'right tomorrow, you've got to go in, and they've called the agent... and, if you see what I mean?'

70. N I do, yeah. The slight problem is- we obviously can't predict what is going to happen when the call goes in. When you are dealing with a good story-involving a lot of money- them up there will want... they will want a communication in confidence between us throughout the week. They will want another call on the Friday. But, the way round it is to say to your friend-look this is how it works-look she won't know how it works

C No, she hasn't a clue that's why she has come to me

N Exactly so, hey look. It is not just a case of you saying that this person has had X surgery- there could be a situation whereby we'll need... perhaps you have to produce something-have you got anything available now. Do it in one? that is the way round it- and if she says 'Well I am happy to tell you who has had the surgery but I will never under any circumstances produce any documents-then fine just let me know,

C Then that is the game we play

N And we might get to the position--unfortunately- where they deny it and we can't run it

C Yes you can't run it

N But that will be only because-you know- then again it will be disappointing for us-because we won't get the story-but at least she'll be happy with the way we...

but she might change her mind- I would have that conversation with her, say to her: 'Look this is how it works-sometimes they are going to need a little bit more as agents are not going to roll over-so maybe we can get this done in one- if you can get a document-if you if you have got in mind a personal or persons you think are the most interesting - just ask her what she can get hold of-if she can't get hold of anything- or if she is not happy to- then fair enough

C Yes- I think I kind of started that ball rolling any way to be honest with you- I kind of assumed you would say this so-and as you said it is best to kind of get it done in one-then you don't want to be kind of caught between a rock and a hard place. OK. Some of its blokes, and some of its quite old and some of its quite funny

N Blokes in the sense of...?

71. C Oh yes male celebrities as well-so chins and things- this is the thing a) I am crap with celebs and b) I don't know anything about what this stuff actually is. I meant I have just scrawled down a few notes- I- what I think- just to make it absolutely clear give you some names-the procedures- in some cases it is a consultation as in will be happening-

N Yes

C And in some cases it will be stuff done. And you are going to come back to me with a potentially, or you can give me an idea now, rough approximate-the kind of figures- per celeb,

N Yes - what I mean- as I said to you on the phone-what would be a disaster- would be for us- I am happy for you to give me to give me everything in one- but what would be a disaster would be if we attempted to run before our story properly breaks- it would point a finger, it would just be so obvious.

72. C Yes someone would be reading the paper and go 'client, client, client'

N It would be a disaster. So what I would say to you would be just to go for two or three of the best-and we would do two or three and then have a gap- a big gaplike I reckon-but if you got consultations then that kind of takes care of itself as you say, "right"-we will try and do that story when they comes in...

73. C That would be interesting then- can you run it as a consultation or would you want to wait until they had done it

N If you get a picture of Fern Britain coming out of your mate's clinic you end up written sort of speculative stuff- saying "what is Fern having done?" And that is quite weak really- that is what I think personally, this is why...

C Yes

N People will go she's a celeb, she might be going to have a look at ... she might be having Botox, might be having anything-what you need is, in my opinion, you need a big celebrity who is having something big done- I don't know whether you have got any gastric bands on your list- but that would be best- they are the best stories

C Yes there is a really surprising one as well

74. N Oh is it?

75. C Yes. So it is just a question of getting money- and what you are going to want basically

76. N That's it- we need, obviously, names-when it happened-possibly where it happened-for us- just for our own... so we can assure ourselves that we are dealing with all the information and stuff-which won't be disclosed- and any documents that your source can get- and then money wise I mean- it is difficult-I was having lunch with someone yesterday about a story- and they had a very unrealistic idea of how much we pay-always interests me how much people think we pay for stories- because often it is not as massively high as people think it is- yet we still pay a lot of money- good money- for good stories- we don't pay good money for average stories now because- maybe ten years ago you could have got good-a bit more money for an average page lead- but nowadays what newspapers do- is they have smaller budgets every week- but they're using more... they have less pages-that's for sure- so we are

using more stories from around the country and focusing our money on the big stories- on two or three where the best stuff is. So the good stories get more money whereas average stories almost get pushed away- and you're just dealing with three or four big ones. Less pages- look at this week- you know Apprentice, hopefully is going to be the splash, it's all linked to viewing figures on as TV is so big. Next Sunday you have got Jade's funeral... If you are looking at a big story to do in the next few two weeks -- you want to avoid next week as Jade will be the first 10 pages are going to be on the funeral- so if the information is good we could look at doing something this weekend...

77. C I'm going to need to sit down with her, take her out, get her drunk. You know, there's a whole process with her to get her round to this, I can't see her saying 'yeah', and in terms of getting what you need and... I'd just like to take this slowly as I said. Take it slowly. I don't even mind getting less money, just in terms of getting this absolutely nailed.

78. N Let's forget it for this week. Let's look at...

79. C It may be that, one of them's a consultation, that they're not having anything done for a month or something, so you might say well let's just wait for a month until that's done, and I think that might be the case with the band. I think that is the case.

80. N That's fine, if it'll work better if we can wait then, I'm fine with that. There won't be the situation where I go up and say 'oh, I met this guy, and he told me this' because then there'll be a pressure to run it if it's good, so that won't happen, don't worry about that. It's just basically, as far as they're concerned, I met up with someone, we're just, let's see how things go, which is basically the case anyway. So don't feel rushed by it.

81. C Thing is that, you can call and yell and say 'yeah, we've got to do it now', but she is... the more I press her, the more she's going to go back into her shell.

82. N I can chat to her as well if you want, but that might not be a good idea.

83. C No, no.

84. N Sounds a bit of a character to me, how old is she?

85. C Er, how old is she? She is... oh no, I'm not going to give you that information, she doesn't want me to tell you anything about her for now. She's an ex. So yeah.

86. N You're obviously friends.

87. C Yeah, yeah. I first mentioned this when she got the job. I'm just trying to work out when it was... it must be about six years ago, when she first went into plastic surgery I was like 'kerching', so I've been building on this for like seven years work for me, to say, 'you should really...', so.

88. N Got to admire your...

C. (Conversation about historic dealing with press)

89.

90. N

91. C

93. To be honest with you at one point I even thought of going into doing it myself.

94. N What journalism?

95. C Yeah, I just... turned up in property...

96. N How's it going, the property market?

97. C We're kind of ok, because we do trade in bonds, so it's just, we just trade, we buy and sell, we don't own... and so we're just kind of an intermediary and we just take a commission, so actually there's been, it's actually been really busy in the last month, so it's
98. N Where's your base then, Edinburgh?
99. C No, I'm sort of, I have no office, I sort of, I sell, I sell, I just go wherever they send me, I just go and meet rich men and persuade them to part with money, basically
100. N So it's not your firm?
101. C No, no it's a collective, it's a partnership, so I am, I am now partner, Yeah, it's going to be, last year was particularly bad, but it's suddenly just picking up again.
102. C So is the credit crunch hitting you lot bad or?
- N Yes, advertising yeah... we are struggling- there is less advertising in the newspaper- which means we have less pages- which means there is less readers because they pick it up and think it is a comic, rather than a newspaper, that's a problem
- N Have you been at The People for a while?
- N No the Sunday Mirror
- C Why did I think you were the People?
- N Fuck knows. No that is a paper that's on its knees-three years next month. My role is kind of news and investigations and on the desk so you are in the right place really to be talking to me- rather than our celeb and show biz reporters, who could be a disaster- we are doing OK we've got a bit of money to spend- we are doing all right. All newspapers are struggling a bit- but advantage is that people aren't stopping buying a newspaper as part of their weekly shopping. It doesn't have that kind of impact on their budget-they don't say "I'll stop getting a paper"
103. C Yes the Sunday's cost...
104. N You might get one less Sunday paper
105. C It's something like £2 for the Independent or something
- N Yes the heavy broadsheets-people will still buy two or three of them a week- but not now
- C There is fuck all in them now- it's just...
- N Yes people will buy the News of The World now for a quid and get a pretty good package. Always been the problem. We have got quite a loyal readership, and obviously we are not attached to the Daily Mirror as closely as people would think- we are a completely separate operation- so we do retain most of the Daily Mirror readers' they don't ditch us on a Sunday- so we do OK.
106. [Interlude while NO goes to the toilet]
107. N So what do you want to give me this information then? We can both get on with the rest of our days,; So you can get back... do you mind if I take a couple of notes? I've got quite a good memory but not that good. Don't worry you are not being recorded
- C Ha ha
- N So where is your meeting today?
- C In the city
- N Oh really?
- C What's the DLR like these days ?
- N Great-where have you got to go to?
- C Near Liverpool Street. Goes to Bank doesn't it?

- N. Yes- much better to use that-traffic terrible-better than taking a cab. What are we looking at then?
- C Well- one of Girls Aloud.
- N One of?
- C One of-boob job consultation.
108. N Oh really- OK- that's good.
- C Um, Mr Hugh Grant-had a bit of a face tuck- that's happened a while ago
- N Face tuck?
- C Yeah
- N That's OK
- C Rhys Evans- tummy
- N Oh really- Rhys? Tummy tuck
- C Yyeah, again don't know how long that was
- N He's not going back for more?
- C I don't know- I don't know
- N OK
- C I don't even know what this is - but Guy Ritchie - apparently- chemical peel
- N Yeah- he's got spots hasn't he? So, maybe...
109. C Yeah- those are done. Apparently- I laughed when I heard this- Trudy Styler- they turned her down
110. N Trudy?
- C They said they were not touching it... you've had too much.
111. N That's funny.
112. C Yyeah-they would not touch her
- N I'm not sure we could run that story as it would be too obvious where it had come from.
- C Yeah Yeah
- N I dunno- I don't think so
- C I just thought that was quite amusing, and the... consultation...pretty sure it is a consultation or initial meeting- not sure whether they call initial meetings consultations - this is the one which is literally quite recent is Gemma Arterton... a gastric
- N That's surprising isn't it?
- C I was: "fucking hell"
- N Do you know when she's going in?
113. C No. That was literally when I called her and said 'anything on the gastrics?', and she went 'actually yes-there is a consultation or a meeting- the thing is with the consultations - if it is any of these people- they don't do any of the consultations on site- they go to them- that part of their-. That's why no one sees them going in and out- so this stuff costs a fucking fortune- so they will happily get a cab to their flat or hotel or whatever
- N So just running through.. Trudy Styler we can forget. Guy Ritchie, probably forget... Rhys is quite funny- but dunno- Hugh- need to check- real potential-~~very very good story~~. Girls aloud is potential... very very good story. Depends who it is. If it's Cheryl then it is massive- with Cheryl you can expect a big pay, that makes it less dodgy for your source. It's almost worth the wait, till she had it done... Have they had it done or it is just a consultation?
114. C No - consultation.
115. N Are we talking about Cheryl
- C No
- N Not a problem-
116. C Nicola
117. N Nicola- that is still a good story. That is the best one. Nicola. And Gemma-the other three are like maybes, but definitely not Trudy so. You'd be looking at Gemma. Gemma is dodgy- as she has not had it done- so we would almost

have to wait- they are both consultations so we would have to wait. That makes sense.

C I think Nicola is pretty certain to do it.

N I think Rhys is funny- cos, you know Rhys Ifhans wanting a tummy tuck is a very funny story-but then again- is it justified in the public interest? That's the problem- we could get away with Gemma Arterton-that's massive-good story that... because as you see she does not need one. You have got to ask yourself why? Why is she bothering? That age as well. So that's all great

C What sort of figure, this would never be... but so I've got a ball park-

118. N Think you are looking to get over three grand minimum-that is a start. How it works is right, page lead in the paper is a grand-but the further it gets to the front of the paper- the more it is. Get a spread-well you won't get a spread out of this as it's one fact. That is the problem-unless you get some kind of... Fern made a spread cos of the issues surrounding her. This one is "Nicola's got a boob job" it is a one fact story... there's no getting around it. As a journalist you write that story up, there's almost a point where you put a full stop and you've finished the story. Then you have to write round it.

119. C Just rehash old stuff

N Yeah you have to. Unless they say something really interesting like "I'm doing this as I've always been really unhappy about my figure" and all that then like you get a really good story. You're looking at a page. But, the further you get to the front of the book, it's good. You see there's two people to pay-that is the problem-that is not a problem for you, but it is a problem for them.

120. C Just see as-yeah-yeah- you've got a budget-to be honest you'll pay me anyway and I have got to pay her-she does not want anything going into her bank.

N So but we start at that point and then-I'll probably say to them "Look, the minimum we need to pay on this is about three" -as long as you are happy with that?

C That's per story?

N Yes per story. Definitely. I don't think we'd get... The Rhys thing, I like that story a lot. A lot actually, but I wonder whether it is worth it if you do too many-do you know what I mean?

C Hummm

N Hugh is good as well, but I would need to find out what he's had done. And what he's spoken about before. So that is about the ball park figure on the stories. We're thinking that if it works we might get down the road, in a year or so, you might get Gordon Ramsay come in. We might get a big splash

C Why is that?

N well it is massive his business... story about a chef having a gastric band and putting weight,

121. C His a chef isn't he, so yeah.

122. N And these celebrities-you know they have got money. And Hugh... Obviously the people coming through these her doors are fucking AA list- what I was slightly concerned about to be honest. I was worried that you might come here and talk to me about someone from Steps or something

123. C They might have but I...

124. N We are talking about, kind of celebrities we rarely get stories about- because they are so well protected. But you are in a really good situation- personally to have that sort of story and that is why I am keen to keep talking. I think that at the moment is that your view on it is to get it done-and think yeah I have done it, but as time goes on- if we can make it work,

C Yes if it can pay for my holidays once a year do you know

N Depends what you get- you need to go away and speak to your friend and say we have met up and you both have a think about things

C In terms of what..

N You need to find out when the consultations are,

C When the consultations are --when it is going to happen-and crucially would that be with some proof or without some proof?

125. N If it's a boob job then that goes without saying- if you say to me that she has had a boob job in May- and we know about it and then we put pictures on her very early on- and we would be the first paper to fucking run that story- do the before and after pictures. Because what you do with boob job stories is "has she or hasn't she had a boob job?" And we know she has, which means I can write it quite strong. With Gemma Arterton it is slightly more tricky 'cos it's a consultation for a gastric band and obviously it goes without saying you can't see it. Cos then we do have to go to her- with her we might need some documents, we need to know when it happened- with the others -- Hugh's had it done already- so I need to work out if he has ever said anything and work out how we can run.

C Yeah

N What did you say he had done again? Was it his (Face)?

C Yeah- it was a face

N Rhys is just funny. He is absolutely crazy- about two or three months ago I was out working in Soho, on something else and I was literally walking along and I saw him, he'd just split up with Sienna, and a friend in a place called Parafina- Taps Bar in Soho

C Yeah

N He hasn't spoken about Sienna since the split, so I go in

126. N Brilliant if you ever get the chance-will take you there for a drink one night- and he's in there at about three in the afternoon fucking ~~poosing~~ ~~down~~ ~~hammered on the~~ sherry

C Sherry?

N Yeah- he hasn't spoken about Sienna since the split- so I go in and talk to him and at the end I said like I'm a journalist- he was really good about that as he is notoriously aggressive

C Yeah seeing like he has decked paps and...

N Yeah horrible-but he was quite good and we run a story the next day. The quote was, he kept saying: "I am bullet proof" Rhys saying "I am fucking bulletproof, nothing's gonna bring me down" He nearly fell over at that point. Yes he is good fun but the fact that he knows that he is probably Britain's biggest lager lout

C Yes boozier

N Having a tummy tuck to get rid of his beer belly isn't it? It's a fucking good story that-but out of all of them you could do Rhys- if you wanted to do one you could probably do Rhys Sunday, but we're not gonna do that. But looking at it, Rhys you could probably get away with because it's so funny. The other two you have got to wait-Gemma and Nicola you have got to wait-

C Yes but which ones would she need to

N I don't think we would need anything more on Nicola because it would be there- in plain view for all to see

C But what if... we don't want to be in a situation where they deny it- and they come back to us and say I need something tomorrow, or it's dead, do you know what I mean?

N Yes the thing is-with that she'll need-in my opinion is that with an operation like that- it is quite a big operation-they will normally need a couple of weeks off- so it will come when there's a gap in their thing - we'll be able to work it out- no one has seen them for a few weeks- where has she been? I think we will be fine on that- I mean I think we will be all right- and obviously if it looks like she has got bigger tits we can easily say she has had a boob job and we will be all right. Gemma Arterton we'll need if possible some documentation. The thing to say to your friend is "what can you get?" Because the more the better really. If she can't get anything then fine.

C She is an administrative nurse, that's the thing, so she probably can

N If she can, yeah get a document on everything. But if she can't then what I

am saying to you is that with Nicola than it would be less of a problem than it would be with Gemma as you can see the results of the operation. With Gemma you can't. With Rhys you-if you want to do Rhys, ask her to get something on Rhys. That would be good. With Hugh I worry about- because I don't know- the thing is if Hugh Grant has cosmetic surgery in his face right, people are going to go [shrugs] really aren't they? He's got loads of money- he is getting old whatever. If we were in his position, we might do the same. I'd just want to check the files. He does loads of interviews, but he's notoriously difficult to interview. People are always saying to him 'you look so young' and all this shit, which he does, but if he's ever turned round and said 'oh, it's all me, I've never ever...' then you've got your story, we'd need to check that. Cos obviously I don't know. I can't remember him ever saying anything like that. I mean he'd be stupid to... [inaudible]... Trudy is just undoable... I'm going to have a read back on Hugh over the next couple of days. So we need to wait on Gemma. Rhys we can do whenever, you don't want to leave it too long because... things change, if we'd have sat down, to be honest, last year on Rhys, then it'd have been a big story, a splash, we went through a phase when the editor was mad keen...

127. C He was in the papers every fucking day wasn't he?

128. N Yeah he was on the front looking really glum on a Sunday for us and it sold. And if we'd have had that story at the time he split with Sienna, cos he might have done it at the time, he went through a fucking crisis, he might have looked at himself...

129. C Thought 'oh no'...

N 'I need to get something done about this'. I don't know how quickly you can get it done, but... but he's had a nummy tuck, that's funny.

130. N— That's what we do... We get. Just to be clear I'll drop all this on an e-mail to you if you want, - we get dates for Nicola and Gemma and try and get documents on as much as we can- but we make it clear to her that she only does what she is comfortable with-cos it is more important than... yes you might make a minimum three- bit more if it goes nearer the front. But if that is not the sort of money you risk your job for...

C Yes if this goes it is not just a case of "oh fuck it I'll get another job" - for her it is "my entire career"

N Yes career is over-that's important and we don't take that kind of thing lightly and I don't think it is worth it for the sake of a page of a story in a newspaper. And I say that genuinely and if you ever do deal with other newspapers then just a word of caution, beware... I don't expect you in the rest of your life if you get stories you'll always deal with us- but it would be great if you did. You must always be careful.

131. C

[REDACTED]

I want one person to know my name, my face and that's it, and I'm a sort of barrier of separation from her.

132. N Absolutely.

133. C And I want to make a few quid.

134. N So, shall we leave it there. Why don't you drop me an email, busy day today.

135. C Yeah, I'll drop something through. If you could just, confidentiality agreement and...

136. N Yeah, I'll email it to you, and show you what it looks like and stuff, and take it from there. Any time you're back in London and want to meet up,

Tuesdays and Wednesdays are best for me. I can always meet you round about this time, as long as I'm in the country. I am often sometimes abroad. You can always just ring, my phone's always on.

137. C I don't sleep often, so...

138. N Really? You bad at sleeping?

139. C Sp. I'm just, work hard play hard, so I just work 'til two, get up at six, bang bang bang bang. Or I'm fucking on it, d'you know what I mean?

140. N So d'you stay in hotels a lot then?

141. C Hotels, friends, I've got some good mates so I just bounce around, stay in hotels or y'know find a girl... to shack up somewhere.

142. N Sounds like a good laugh to me. I've just had a new baby, so that is the end of...

143. C Oh, really? Boy or girl?

N A little girl [redacted] so... that's all going quite well. So I stayed out late last night for the first time since she was born. Staggered in, wake her up, did not go down well with my girlfriend.

144. N Well it has got to be done. You know I am really really excited about This- you clearly know what you are doing.

C Yes it was just when she gave me the list.

N Yes some great names- some really fucking great names. And the key for you and her is that if we can get it to work then we have got some really good stories for a long time...if you want to.

C Yes I could see this thing being one every six weeks --six months every year- something like that-and more people are going to come thought the doors and you can also tell us who you want us to look out for

N Yes that is a good point- for you-for the celebs- think around telly- TV East enders- Coronation street- the big ones the big programmes- obviously people like film stars, goes without saying- Ramsey is huge- I'll just give you the top five celebs Becks- he is not going to go there- Ramsey-Lewis Hamilton- Liniker is big- and just TV

C And what would the payoff be if they got one of those?

N Just used them as an example

C What would you pay for them

N 10-15 which is a lot of money for a good story.

C Cos it is the same with her- it is almost like -- I don't want to go back and say this is ten people and there is a grand each- this means say 10 panics for her. I want fewer people and bigger money and fewer stories-that's how I sort of figured it would work best for you and safest for us.

N Obviously news editors and editors are notoriously difficult to read and I might go back up there and they might say- you know what we have got a problem at the moment with Rhys squeezing us, on which we have meeting which we don't know about so we can't do it. So there is always that potential we have got to make people aware of. I can sit here and say 'this is great this is great' and N one times out of ten it is OK. Sometimes something's happens up there and you go-dunno- so that is just a word of caution- so when you speak to her...

C Yes nothing pays till you print-that is rule one

N I am glad that you said that as a lot of people think that we pay as soon as they tell us and it is not in our interest to screw people over on [redacted] that's probably why you got treated well. But we don't have as many people coming to us as other newspapers, so when we get it- we are grateful. I suspect you come to us via the internet. The reason for that is that we spend a fortune on our internet situation whereby we get high up on Google, which costs a lot of money...

C So when people pick up the phone they get on to you-

N Yes to get to the top of Google is a very difficult thing. One of my mates-

good mates-set up a company separate from the paper- where he sells stories-but it costs him tens of thousands of pounds to get to the top of Google-, Which is now where he is-

C So you type in 'sell stories' into Google

N Yes so his company is on top. You have done the right thing if you were to phone him and he phones me or another paper and sell us the story then he makes money

C Yes he takes his cut

N yes there are advantages to that he deals with us all the time-you don't have to go through this whole process of this.

C but I don't want anyone else to know. I don't want anyone to know until everyone knows, d'you know what I mean?

N OK, You don't need it to be awkward for you, so.

145 C So if you can also, with your thing, my name, just for now.

C will just take her out to dinner, get her a bit drunk and just go through it.

N Let me settle up,

C No honestly,

END

Subsequently Nick Owens made several phone calls to my mobile phone, leaving messages explaining they were very keen on running the stories.