

PCC upholds accuracy complaint against local paper; censures it for unacceptable delay

The Press Complaints Commission has upheld a complaint against the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice. It has also criticised the newspaper for the "unacceptable" length of time it took to respond to the complaint, which amounted to a further breach of the Code. The adjudication was published by the newspaper on Friday, which flagged up the adjudication by publishing a reference to it on the front-page.

The complaint - which was made by Forest of Dean Council - concerned two articles published in the newspaper. The first reported the comments of a local farmer, who was facing a court order to prohibit odour nuisance from his farm following an application submitted by the Council; the second was an editorial column on the matter. The Council claimed that various aspects of the coverage were factually inaccurate, including the claim (which was stated repeatedly in the editorial) that the Council was seeking to force the permanent closure of the farmer's business.

The Commission ruled that the article contained statements of fact that had been disputed by the complainant and which were not corroborated by the newspaper. The newspaper was unable, the Commission ruled, to provide evidence to support a number of serious claims it had made, and had "failed to demonstrate that it had taken care not to publish inaccurate information, or to offer appropriate remedial action to the complaint". The result was a breach of Clause 1 of the Code. In addition, the fact that it had taken more than 11 weeks for a substantive response to be received from the newspaper (which had only sent its initial response after the Commission had contacted the publisher) was, the Commission said, "unacceptable". This delay raised a clear breach of the preamble to the Editors' Code of Practice, which states that "Editors should co-operate swiftly with the PCC in the resolution of complaints".

Stephen Abell, Director of the PCC, commented: "A key factor in the system of press self-regulation independently overseen by the PCC is full co-operation from the industry. This editorial lapse at the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review is a rare example of bad practice which the Commission regards seriously. It is in the process of taking the matter further and seeking confirmation of the measures the paper has introduced to ensure that there is no repeat of the problem".

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. To read the adjudication on the PCC website, please click [here](#). To read the adjudication on the newspaper website, please click [here](#).
2. For more information, please contact Jonathan Collett on 020 7438 1246 or 07740 896805.

PCC website

We are currently conducting a survey about the views of users of the PCC website (www.pcc.org.uk), in order to better understand the needs of our various audiences. We would be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete an online questionnaire (which will appear as a pop up when first accessing the site).

Your feedback and ideas will help us to improve the website for both you and people using the site in the future. Please go to www.pcc.org.uk to find out more, and to complete the survey. If you have any problems accessing the questionnaire, please contact Tonia Milton on tonia.milton@pcc.org.uk who will be able to help.

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