

Dear Kim Brudenell,

Thank you very much for your letter of 8 August.

Please find pasted below my witness statement. I hope it is useful and please do not hesitate to come back to me on any point.

Yours sincerely

Peter Osborne

1. I am Peter Osborne, Chief Political Commentator of the Daily Telegraph since September 2010. I am not an employee of the Telegraph, but I am contracted to write a weekly political column, as well as a number of articles. I have been a journalist for more than 25 years, and got my first break as a financial reporter on the Financial Weekly and afterwards (1986) the Evening Standard. In 1992 I was moved to the political desk of the Evening Standard. Subsequently I worked for the Daily and Sunday Express from 1996, moved to the Spectator as Political Editor in 2001, and then the Daily Mail in 2006, before taking up my current role late last year.
2. As a contracted columnist, corporate governance is not a direct concern of mine. However, the Telegraph is a paper with a high reputation for good writing, scrupulous reporting and accurate journalism. I do my best not to damage that reputation.
3. I assume the person ultimately responsible for corporate governance issues as they affect Telegraph Media Group would be the chief executive, in consultation with the Board.
4. I feel extremely confident that the Telegraph is a reputable, ethical and soundly managed organisation.
5. Not so far as I am aware.
6. The responsibility for checking information lies with me, and me alone. That said, the comment desk, to which I report and file my copy, carefully check all information contained in my articles which can be ascertained from publicly available sources. Occasionally my work will, however, contain information (about the private views of cabinet ministers, advice that may have been given by officials etc) where the source is confidential and I have to ask them to take my word that what I have written is true. The comment desk, as well as questioning my more erratic judgments, has on a number of occasions saved me from embarrassing factual errors.
7. As a columnist I have no knowledge at all of the sources that make up any of the stories in the Telegraph, except for the rare cases where I have brought in a story myself. It can happen, in the course of researching my column, that I encounter a first class story. If I do so, I might pass it on to the news desk, telling them what I feel able to about my source, the context in which the information was provided, and letting them know how reliable I believe the information to be. I would always expect the reporter concerned, using his or her own contacts, to substantiate such a story independently.
8. Like all trades or professions, newspaper reporting has a particular set of rules and procedures which it is important to master and understand. Prose ought to be plain and readable. Facts must be accurate. Quotes should not be invented. All sides of the story must be fairly presented. Columnists concentrate by contrast on interpretation. Nevertheless the requirement for accuracy stands and I believe another set of rules apply to columnists: for instance when writing a polemical article one should not misrepresent one's opponent's case before demolishing it. There is also a bigger point: should journalism as an activity aim at doing good? Perhaps it should, but generalised mission statements or objectives can cause confusion and sometimes go

horribly wrong. For instance an Editor might feel that the overwhelming justice of his case justifies falsehood, unfairness and illegality. So it is often wisest to stick to less ambitious but more realistic and attainable rules concerning accuracy, integrity and clarity.

9. I have never encountered any financial or commercial pressure of any kind. I have an unusual amount of freedom to craft my columns as I wish, whatever the editorial line or any interests the proprietors (who I have not spoken to or met since joining the Telegraph) may or may not have. Indeed I have not the slightest idea what the proprietors' interests are, supposing they have any interest besides owning a great newspaper.
10. None.
11. I had no knowledge of any such payments and would be very surprised if any such payments took place.
12. None.
13. N/A
14. N/A
15. N/A
16. N/A
17. I make payments to a small number of occasional researchers, who I regularly instruct in the course of preparation of an article. These researchers gather information from already published sources and conduct analysis. I also find it useful to use researchers as a sounding board as I set about preparing my column, and to give me their judgment once I have written my articles.
18. I never participate in news conference or editorial decisions. As far as my column is concerned, I feel that information concerning the private interests of individuals (ie their family life) should only be referred to if there is a public interest justification. There is often a very nice line to draw, and each case is different.
19. I have not done so. I do not know about the Telegraph.