

DNG Media (Annandale Observer Ltd)

IPSO Annual Statement 1st January to 31st December 2016

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About DnG Media

DnG MEDIA is the largest independent publisher in Dumfries and Galloway with four weekly newspapers, a website and a range of specialist publications.

The print titles are the Annandale Observer, Annandale Herald, Moffat News, all paid for, and the Dumfries Courier, which is distributed free through a mix of home delivery and pick-up points, while, in addition, is sold with a cover price at retail outlets.

Editorially the newspapers take an independent political stance and are very much community focussed on the local areas covered by each title. General regional news, sport and features are normally included across most or all platforms.

In print, DnG Media covers a large geographical area taking in most of the eastern half of Dumfries and Galloway, including the largest town of Dumfries with a population of around 38,000 and Annan, where our offices are located, the third biggest with a population of almost 9,000.

The circulation area also includes part of north Cumbria over the border in England and Liddesdale across the regional boundary in Scottish Borders.

All the newspapers have their origin in the 19th century, have a large readership and are very much a point of reference in the communities they serve.

Our news website, DnG24, specialises in breaking news with pictures, some later covered in greater detail in the newspapers. It also features sport, features, road and weather information.

The website includes content from across all Dumfries and Galloway, population 151,000, including Stranraer, in the far west, the second biggest town with a population of more than 10,000.

Both print and online content is edited at our base in Annan by a team comprising the editor, news editor and chief reporter.

Copy and pictures are produced by staff journalists and a staff photographer, established freelance correspondents and agencies together with specialist and community contributors. Lively letters pages are a useful forum for local issues.

In terms of DnG Media's membership of IPSO, the publisher's responsible person is Stephen Glaister, Group Accountant, Annandale Observer Limited (DnG Media).

Our editorial standards

ALL OUR editorial team live and work in our circulation area and are in daily contact with readers. That ongoing feedback not only keeps us in touch with the communities but means we get a swift response to content after publication. We value that feedback, positive or negative, as an additional means of maintaining editorial standards.

We have high readership levels for our print titles, an expanding online audience and take the responsibility which comes with that trust seriously.

Our aim is to be fair and balanced in what we publish, being unashamedly parochial at times, but satisfying the demand for local news, sport, information and providing an effective local advertising service.

DnG Media has traditionally used the Editors' Code of Practice as a benchmark for our news coverage and takes ongoing professional advice on the latest legal developments impacting on journalism. On contentious stories we seek to verify facts from more than one source and have used the pre-publication guidance service provided by IPSO as well as from our own legal advisers. There were several occasions during the year when we sought a view from IPSO on subjects which could potentially have touched on the the Editors' Code of Conduct. They included a suicide, a military funeral, a dispute over public use of a path over privately-owned land and a case where where one family member challenged another's account in a report about a late relative's end-of-life care experience. We received fewer complaints in 2016 than the previous year relating to our content. The majority of that small number were minor factual errors which were dealt with by way of a correction at the first opportunity. When DnG Media contacted IPSO in advance of publication we followed their advice, thus ensuring reports and pictures reflected the code guidelines.

Complaints handling process

WE HAVE a long-established policy of correcting factual errors at the earliest opportunity. In doing so this helps maintain the trust between our newspapers and our readers.

Minor factual errors are normally dealt with by the reporter concerned and may have been drawn to their attention by face to face contact, through a phone call, website message or by email, the address of which is displayed on by-lines. The reporter would then submit the correction to the newsdesk, where it would be reviewed as part of the normal editing process.

More serious complaints also come in through the same avenues and are immediately logged. They are normally dealt with by the editor or in his absence by the news-editor or chief reporter.

The writer and sources of any disputed content are checked, an assessment made and memo completed for our records. We update the complainant at the earliest opportunity and if a correction is required agree a form of words.

A summary of our complaints policy and contact details for IPSO appear in all our newspapers.

In addition, details of our complaints procedure and the opportunity available to make a complaint to IPSO is displayed on our news website, DnG24, as below:

DnG Media takes complaints about the editorial content seriously. We are committed to abiding by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice that IPSO enforces.

Complaints Policy

- 1) This policy relates to all complaints made against the editors' code of practice administered by IPSO.
- 2) DnG Media aims to handle all complaints as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 3) All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 4) If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue we may make one response to all.
- 5) We may request further information from you, for us to investigate your complaint.
- 6) We will seek to resolve the complaint once all the details have been established to your satisfaction within 28 days where appropriate. If we fail to resolve this to your satisfaction then you may refer the matter to IPSO.
- 7) If we feel that we cannot take your complaint forward because we do not believe it has raised a complaint against the Editors' Code we will let you know.
- 8) You can see a copy of the Editors' Code here (web link).
- 9) If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint you can contact IPSO here.
- 10) If at any stage we do not hear back from you within a 28-day period, we will consider your complaint to be resolved.

Training process

OUR EDITORIAL team comprises senior journalists with lengthy and varied experience and several trainees.

The newspaper group has had a long association with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and trainees learn through a mix of on-the-job experience, college courses and distance learning towards gaining relevant NCTJ qualifications.

There is ongoing internal discussion and training on developments in law and legislation, which could potentially impact on our journalism.

Copies of the latest Editors' Code of Practice are circulated around our editorial staff and are also on display in the newsroom. Any updates are highlighted to members of the reporting, photographic and editorial production team.

Record of compliance

DURING 2016 DnG Media logged ten complaints.

Most were resolved satisfactorily through discussion and explanation and the remainder were factual inaccuracies which were corrected at an early opportunity.

There were no complaints relating to our newspapers or website submitted to IPSO for independent adjudication.

Signed *Stephen Glaister*

17/05/2017

Stephen Glaister - IPSO Responsible Person