

CUMBERLAND & WESTMORLAND HERALD IPSO ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Cumberland & Westmorland Herald, established in 1860, has just completed its first full year as part of Barrnon Media.

It went into administration during early 2020 and is now part of a small but growing media business – that includes The Keswick Reminder newspaper and Cumbria Crack – the county’s biggest news website.

The CWH newspaper is an independent weekly broadsheet covering a large area of East Cumbria, including the towns of Penrith, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen, Keswick and Alston. It covers 75 parishes in Eden (population 53k) and 5 in Keswick (population 4.8k), Despite being plagued with declining sales, declining advertising revenue and increased costs, the business is now blooming. It’s recorded a healthy profit in year 1.

The history

The newspaper has been published under a number of different titles including: Penrith Herald, Appleby & Kirkby Stephen Herald, and Mid Cumberland & North Westmorland Herald. Since 1925 it has been published under its present title, Cumberland & Westmorland Herald.

The paper is gained national exposure when it revealed in 2015 that the then Cumbria police and crime commissioner had undertaken chauffeur-driven journeys at the time of cuts in the police service, with three people subsequently being arrested in connection with leaking the information.

2020

This was a landmark year. Administration. New owners. Growth. And a global pandemic that resulted in two national lockdowns and words we’d not heard of before like ‘furlough’. It also led to many achievements.

- It celebrated a major milestone, with a special publication for its 160th anniversary.
- It went through major paper and website re-designs
- It produced the best Christmas supplement in its history – a glossy supported by advertisers and our sales team
- It continued to find news, when not much was around in a CV19 year.
- It launched a campaign to save from closure one of Britain’s oldest agricultural colleges (Newton Rigg) – which is still ongoing.

- It increased its in-house delivery to Alston and put newspapers in the shops earlier in the day – so giving potential buyers more chance to purchase.
- It invested in staff and technology; putting in a new tech platform, which led to two redundancies and meant all page lay-out and ads are now outsourced.

Consultant (MD) John Holliday said: “Our mission is to create a sense of connection and belonging in the North Lake District community that is hard to come by in some other way.

“As local news publishers shrink – or go away all together -- here we are trying to find a sustainable model for local news, which we think has tremendous value for local democracy.

“Weirdly, I believe cv19 has helped. Helped bring communities closer together. Helped focus on families and the important things in life.

“We have a vision to be the best small-cap media business in Britain. To win newspaper of the year awards. To serve our community and be the voice of the community.”

The financial year proved successful. 84% of total revenue comes from CWH. By increasing the price of the paper on day 1 by 50%, the business reduced its reliance on advertising revenue and the majority of revenue now comes from readers.

A number of long-standing advertising clients have also returned.

“Newspaper sales continue to decline overall on the CWH. The goal for 2021 is to grow audience on all platforms with a content first strategy (as opposed a platform first strategy). We remain confident our ‘local names, local places and local faces’ tagline will resonate with local readers – and we envisage huge growth online,” added Holliday.

Today

The newspaper still offers its Eden community local news coverage, which includes a high number of reports and pictures, as well as extensive classified and ROP advertising, accounting for the strength of the newspaper and its loyal popularity. This is supported by a new ‘fit-for-purpose’ online offering.

The publishing company has three main departments, editorial, advertising and distribution. The editor remains Emily Atherton -- the first woman and only the 8th editor in the Herald’s history when appointed in September 2019.

The Cumberland & Westmorland Herald is printed by Newsquest, in Glasgow.

The circulation figure, in the process of being certified by BPP, stands at c9,200 copies sold

on average. This includes c500 copies mailed out to subscribers each week.

Editorial standards

The Herald still adheres to the Editors' Code of Practice, which, like most newspaper publishers in Britain, it considers to be a sound statement of ethical behaviour for journalists. It strives to ensure that its articles are fair and accurate, and that readers have a right of reply if there is something they do not agree with.

As it is an established newspaper that is viewed as a matter of record, its journalists are well aware of how vital accurate reporting is in maintaining the public's trust.

The newspaper has not yet sought guidance from IPSO on the publication of one of its articles, but would do so if it was considered to potentially be in breach of the code of practice.

Complaints handling process

Editorial complaints are accepted in the first instance by letter, telephone or e-mail. Depending on the extent of the complaint, for instance a minor correction or clarification, it can be firstly handled by an experienced journalist or the news editor/deputy editor before being passed on to the editor. Any complaints that have legal implications are immediately lodged with the editor – and the MD is made aware.

A record, either in e-mail format or hard copy, is kept of all complaints received and what action, if any, has been taken.

We accept that complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible and hope this can be achieved in direct negotiation with the complainant, and an apology published where appropriate. Any complaints that have legal implications are dealt with in conjunction with legal advisers from the News Media Association and, if needed, lawyers are engaged.

A column for corrections and clarifications appears, as and when required, on Page 7. Also on Page 7 in every edition is a statement that the Herald abides by the IPSO code of practice. It also informs readers that if they want to make representations about articles they should write in the first instance to the editor and that, if not satisfied, they can contact IPSO, whose postal address, e-mail address, telephone number and website details are provided.

Training process

The newspaper has historically run, on a refresher basis, training for its journalists in legal matters and responsibilities, but none of late. There is a plan for training in 2021 as it is

now considered appropriate. Journalists are issued with a copy of the code of practice. There are ongoing internal discussions on developments in law and legislation which impacts on journalism. The Company has a long association with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ).

Record on compliance

To my knowledge, from 1st January, 2020, to 31st December, 2020, there were no complaints against the publisher which have been ruled on by IPSO's Complaints Committee, and no incidents in relation to which the publisher accepted that it had breached the editors' code, or which otherwise raised significant concerns about compliance with the editors' code.

During the period there were a small number of complaints which were resolved satisfactorily via dialogue and explanation and the remainder were factual inaccuracies which were corrected at the earliest available opportunity.

Signed

John Holliday
IPSO responsible person

Date 20th April 2021.