

IPSO Annual Statement for 2023/2024  
Argyll Media Ltd

## INTRODUCTION

Argyll Media Ltd produces two print titles, the *Dunoon Observer and Argyllshire Standard* and the *Isle of Bute News*.

The person responsible is Managing Director Peter Laidlaw, who can be contacted by telephone on 01461 202 417.

Editor Gordon Neish can be contacted by telephone on 01369 706854.

Argyll Media Ltd is an independent publisher based in Dunoon, Argyll producing newspapers which cover the geographical area of Argyll and Bute.

General news, sports and features are the mainstay of the titles and the newspapers have a hyperlocal stance and are focused on community life in their local areas.

Editorially, the papers take an independent political stance and ensures all political parties and local representatives are included regularly.

The *Dunoon Observer and Argyllshire Standard* dates from 1971, but the *Isle of Bute News* is only six years old.

A website, [www.argullbute24.co.uk](http://www.argullbute24.co.uk) gives summarised breaking stories and local information.

Content for the print titles and website is created and edited at our Dunoon offices by the newsroom team, comprising the editor, two staff reporters and, until February 2024, a META-sponsored trainee. Freelance workers are also used for pictures and some copy. Readers also submit some content, reports, columns and letters.

## EDITORIAL STANDARDS

The news team is led by Gordon Neish, who has worked for the company since 2002 and has been editor since April 2015.

As such, he is well acquainted with the company's policies, procedures and standards.

All of the editorial team live in the circulation area and are in daily contact with readers, who are encouraged to contact us via social media, the phone and online.

The news team values feedback - both positive and negative - as this helps to reinforce editorial standards.

The team takes its reporting responsibilities seriously, with several levels of proof reading and fact checking in place.

Our aim is to be fair, balanced and accurate in what we publish, to satisfy the demand for local news and to provide an effective local advertising service.

The Editors' Code of Practice is on display in several places in the newsroom and is regularly referred to and consulted- and updated when applicable. It is also the subject of a module taught to the journalists by our trainer, Charles Fletcher.

We also take ongoing professional advice on the latest legal developments impacting on the media.

When contentious stories arise, we seek to verify facts from various sources, including our own legal consultants, and, on occasion, we have used IPSO's own pre-publication guidance service as well for advice.

Overall, in the course of the year we received a low number of complaints relating to our content and most of those were minor factual errors which were dealt with by corrections or clarification statements in the next edition. We believe this low level of complaints can be attributed our high editorial standards and thorough procedures.

With regards, our policies relating to transparency regarding financial relationships or conflicts of interest: as a company it is our policy not to make payments for any news stories or leads to the general public. We do, however, make regular use of freelance journalists, photographers and occasional columnists. In addition, our journalists' employment contracts contain the firm's anti-bribery policy.

#### COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Our policy is to correct factual errors at the earliest opportunity in a bid to maintain trust with our readers.

Individuals also have a right of reply through our letters page.

Minor factual mistakes are usually dealt with by the reporter concerned, who types up the required text and flags it up to a senior member of the editorial staff to ensure it is reviewed and placed appropriately.

More serious complaints go straight to the editor or his deputy for consideration. They are immediately logged and fact checked, then a memo is drawn up for our records. We keep in touch with the complainant with updates on our findings/assessment and if a correction is required then we agree a form of words with them.

Details of how readers can complain is published in every edition in a prominent position on Page 2. The boxed-out article contains our contact details, IPSO's address and the IPSO mark.

Argyll Media Ltd takes complaints about our titles seriously and we are committed to abiding by IPSO rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice.

#### Complaints Policy

1. This policy relates to all complaints made against the Editors' Code of Practice administered by IPSO.
2. Argyll Media Ltd 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 in order 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 Editor's Code, we will let you know.
8. You can see a copy of the Editor's Code here - [web link](#)

9. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, you can contact IPSO here - web

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.

#### FACT CHECKING

Every effort is taken to check disputed or claimed facts before publication. This can involve speaking to experts, consulting reference books or sites and taking legal advice.

Pre-publication advice was sought from IPSO on a story relating to a local election, and IPSO's advice applied.

#### GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Updates from IPSO regarding the Editors' Code are shared with staff at regular Monday editorial conferences, as are relevant law changes and regulatory guidance relating to the news cycle. For example, staff are reminded of electoral law and our policy of political neutrality at the beginning of each election period.

#### RECORD ON COMPLIANCE

In 2023 and early 2024 there were five complaints, three of a minor nature and handled by printing corrections.

The fourth, a complaint about the level of detail in a court report about a convicted sex offender, was referred to IPSO, but no action was taken by IPSO.

The fifth, by a community council which felt its views had been misrepresented, was also referred to IPSO but the complaint was withdrawn after a correction and apology was published.

#### TRAINING PROCESS

The newspaper group has a long association with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and trainees are required to achieve their accreditation/qualifications.

Our trainees learn through a mix of on-the-job experience, in-house training with professional tutors, courses and distance learning.

There is ongoing internal discussion and training updates in law and on legislation which could impact our work.