

IN THE MATTER OF:

AN INQUIRY UNDER THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005

INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS

CHAired BY THE RT HON LORD JUSTICE LEVESON

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY JOHN GORDON

I, **TIMOTHY JOHN GORDON**, of the South Wales Echo, Media Wales Limited, Six Park Street, Cardiff, CF10 1XR **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I am making this statement in response to a notice dated 9 January 2012 pursuant to section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 (the 'Notice') jointly addressed to me as Editor of the South Wales Echo and a Senior Crime Reporter of the South Wales Echo. The South Wales Echo is published by Media Wales Limited ('**Media Wales**'), a subsidiary of Trinity Mirror plc ('**Trinity Mirror**'). Media Wales also publishes Wales on Sunday and the Western Mail, as well as the titles that make up the Celtic Weekly Newspapers.
2. The Notice sets out 23 questions. I understand that in its email dated 9 January 2012 to Herbert Smith LLP, solicitors for Trinity Mirror, the Inquiry explained that the Notice was jointly addressed as it considered that I would be able to answer some questions, and the senior crime reporter would be able to answer other questions. I have therefore answered questions to the best of my knowledge and belief, with my crime correspondent Abby Alford also producing a statement (I note however that she is currently on maternity leave). I use the Inquiry's numbering in the Notice.
3. Where the contents of this statement are within my own knowledge they are true and where the contents are not within my own knowledge I indicate the source of my belief and believe them to be true.
4. I am not authorised to waive any privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror and nothing in this statement is intended to constitute a waiver of privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror.

1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history

5. I am Tim Gordon. I have been the Editor of the South Wales Echo since November 2010. Before that, I edited Wales on Sunday for eight years. I have worked as a journalist for over 20 years. In that time, as well as being a general reporter, I have been night editor of the Western Mail and worked on the newsdesk at ITV Wales.

Relations between your newspaper and the South Wales Police

2) What have been your impressions, over the years, about the culture of relations between the South Wales Police and the media? Do you consider the relationship to be a successful one? What changes would you like to make to the relationship (if any)?

6. I would describe the relationship as straightforward and professional. However, I understand from talking to some of my reporters who deal with the police that it can be

difficult to get information quickly from the police, who tend to channel most things through their press office. The police tend to be willing to release information when it suits their own agenda, for example to help campaigns, to seek witnesses, to celebrate a recent success; but the police can be terribly slow at releasing information or even confirming information, on incidents that are happening / ongoing. As such, I would characterise the relationship as neither wholly successful, nor unsuccessful. I would prefer it if my reporters were able to gain better access to officers directly involved in cases to ensure that any information gathered by reporters can be checked quickly and for accuracy. I understand from my reporters that on occasion they can speak with those officers who are directly involved in cases about those cases and my reporters feel that this type of access allows for them to fulfil their roles as reporters quickly.

3) Describe the personal contact which you had with the South Wales Police at the various stages of your career. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with the South Wales Police

7. Throughout my career in South Wales I have had very limited levels of contact with the police. My reporters deal with the police. I have had two or three meetings with the police, which I recall, and which are outlined below.
8. As editor, my own personal contact with officers has been limited. I have met the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable of the South Wales Police at a meeting called to discuss press / police relations. The officers in question were new to their roles and South Wales Police had just announced a major drive to cut costs. There had been communication between our editor-in-chief and editor of the Western Mail, Alan Edmunds, and the police press office about the cuts and I believe he invited the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable to visit our offices to meet us and to see how we work. They met with Mr Edmunds, the editor of Wales on Sunday, Alison Gow, our business development editor, Simon Farrington (who has responsibilities for the Celtic weeklies newspaper series), and myself. There was no hospitality at the meeting, which was held at the Media Wales offices, beyond a cup of tea / coffee / glass of water being offered. The meeting took place on March 18th, 2011 at 2.30pm and lasted approximately 40 minutes. We discussed the government cuts and how they might affect policing in South Wales, an upcoming corruption case concerning South Wales Police (the Lynette White case which subsequently collapsed) and how our organisation worked.

9. The above meeting was followed up with an invitation (made by Media Wales) for both the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable and their partners to attend a Welsh Institute of Affairs awards dinner on our table on June 17th, 2011. The Deputy Chief Constable and her partner attended, along with Ms Gow, Mr Farrington, Mr Edmunds and his wife, the private secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales Manon Williams and her partner, and myself and my partner.
10. I have also met the Chief Superintendent of the Cardiff division, Alun Thomas. On his appointment to the role I recall that he popped in to my office to say hello. I cannot remember for sure, but I think he was in our offices at that time because he was being interviewed by our crime correspondent, Ms Alford. I do not have the date in my diary, but I presume that this would have been in about March 2011. He then invited me to the new police station in Cardiff Bay for a tour. On Monday March 7th, 2011 I was given a guided tour of the new police station in Butetown, where I was introduced to a room of police officers who were attending their Monday morning conference. I then invited the Chief Superintendent to attend a news conference at our offices to see how we worked. Whilst at our offices he mentioned an ongoing investigation where the police were seeking witnesses to an assault. I cannot find the date for this in my diary but I assume it would also have been in about March 2011.

4) Without prejudice to the generality of question (3) above, please set out the contact which you have had with appointed press officers of South Wales Police, giving, as best you can remember, the dates and summarising the gist of the communications which you had with them. In each case who initiated the contact and why?

11. I have had limited contact. I met a press officer when meeting the Chief Superintendent of Cardiff in March 2011 at the Butetown station and a press officer accompanied the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable on their visit to our offices to discuss police / press relations on March 18th, 2011. I do not recall her name.

5) Did you ever have the personal mobile phone telephone number or home telephone number of any of the people listed at (a) – (e) above?

12. There is no (a) to (e) above, but I have answered this question considering the people I have mentioned above.
13. I have the Chief Constable's business card which contains a mobile number. He gave me this business card at our meeting in the Media Wales Office on March 18th, 2011. I have

no idea whether this is a personal mobile number or a work mobile. I have the Deputy Chief Constable's and the Cardiff Chief Superintendent's mobile numbers, but I do not know whether these are personal or work mobiles. They also gave me their numbers at the meetings outlined above. I do not to my knowledge have any officers' home telephone numbers.

6) Describe what you were seeking to gain from South Wales Police through your personal contacts with South Wales Police personnel

14. I have been seeking to have a professional working relationship with the officers in question. I believe we were all quite new to our roles at the time so, in the first instance, the meeting on March 18th, 2011 was a courtesy meeting as editor of the city's newspaper. I also wanted to gain a better understanding of how we could work together professionally, to see how we might aid the flow of information. I understand, from reporters, that we were having some issues, now and again, of getting information from press offices quickly, and at weekends, and we wanted to raise these issues to see if anything could be done to improve this situation. Accordingly, we raised and discussed these issues.

7) Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the South Wales Police has been seeking from you in personal dealings with them during your career

15. I believe that the police have simply been trying to gain publicity for cases or campaigns that they have been involved in, to highlight how the police have been doing in their area, or to communicate how cuts might affect their ability to fight crime. For instance, the Chief Superintendent in Cardiff, during our meeting at Butetown police station (see my response to Question 3 above), spoke to me off-the-record about the number of job losses that the police were expecting to make in 2011 following on from Government cuts to police budgets. He tried to explain to me why they were cutting certain roles and how he felt that would affect his force's ability to police his area. He was keen to stress that, while the cuts were unwelcome and would see a lot of very experienced officers pushed out of the force, he still believed that he could manage the situation. This aside, the police would generally deal with my reporters and I do not recall another incident where they spoke to me personally about an issue.

8) To what extent do you accept, and have you accepted, hospitality from South Wales Police?

9) Insofar as you accept, or have accepted, hospitality from the South Wales Police, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you accept, or have accepted?

16. As far as I can recall I have never accepted hospitality from the South Wales Police.

10) To what extent do you, or have you, provided hospitality for the South Wales Police?

11) Insofar as you provide, or have provided hospitality to the South Wales Police, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you provide, or have provided?

17. As mentioned in my response to Question 3 above, Media Wales invited the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable and their partners to an Institute of Welsh Affairs dinner – this was a public event and we had a Media Wales table as media partners to the Welsh Institute of Affairs, which ran the event. The Deputy Chief Constable and her partner attended on our table; they came as guests of Media Wales and were not charged to attend. This is the only time, that I can recall, that I have offered hospitality to any police officer, unless an offer of a cup of tea or coffee or a glass of water while on the visits to our offices (outlined under Question 3 above) is considered as hospitality (in which case, I do not recall if they accepted).

12) Have you ever attended a formal press conference called by the South Wales Police? If so, for what purpose was it called and do you think it was valuable?

18. No, not that I recall.

General Matters

13) Have the police either formally or informally ever given you prior notification about proposed arrests, raids or other action? If so, please elaborate

19. When I attended the morning conference at Butetown police station that I refer to under Question 3 above I obviously heard of ongoing cases and potential arrests at the conference. Afterwards I discussed some of the cases with the press officer and she said she would send details through to our newsdesk on the stories that interested me. I cannot recall those stories now, or if any of them made the paper. I do not otherwise recall ever

being given prior notification, but as mentioned, generally communications with the police are at reporter level.

14) Have you ever been offered "off the record" briefings by the police? If so, please elaborate

20. I do not recall being offered 'off-the-record' briefings by the police.

15) What mechanisms, if any, are in place in your workplace to monitor and record hospitality as between the police on the one hand and you, or your fellow journalists on the other?

21. There are no special mechanisms for monitoring and recording hospitality between the police and journalists. Trinity Mirror editorial policy states that all journalists are required to obtain clearance, in writing, from their editor or designated senior editorial manager before accepting press trips, other significant hospitality or gifts. Editors are required to obtain the same in the same instances from their managing director. Reporting expenses need to be reclaimed through Trinity Mirror's expenses system.

16) What training, guidance, policies and / or practices are in place in your workplace governing contact between you and your fellow journalists on the one hand and the police on the other?

22. We follow the PCC Code, the law and the Trinity Mirror Code of Practice. I have also completed an online training course on the Bribery Act 2010 as, I understand, have all our reporters who are in work at this current time. Those on maternity leave or those absent through long term illness may not yet have completed the course in the Bribery Act 2010. All our journalists are required to read the Trinity Mirror editorial policy and to be fully aware of the PCC Code. Any updates to the code are always circulated to our journalists. Journalists and editors are also required to read and understand the company's expenses policy.

17) What editorial or management oversight, or control, if any, is there over communications between journalists and police at your media outlet?

23. Please see my answer to Question 16. As well as the above, there will be discussions between myself, reporters and newsdesk, generally at conference times (twice a day) where we discuss stories, angles and so on. During this process, if I was concerned about anything, I would expect to ask and to be told where information was coming from.

18) What ethical issues do you consider arise, or need to be held in mind, by a journalist communicating in the course of his or her employment with the police, or anyone serving with, or employed by, a police force?

24. Obviously we follow the PCC Code, the law and the Trinity Mirror Code of Business Conduct. Ethically, I believe we have a duty to report what we find accurately and fairly. That is the cornerstone of our business. We need to be trusted and we need to be fearless in seeking the truth. I feel that it is important that journalists maintain a professional relationship with police officers. By that I mean we should maintain a professional distance. We can of course get to know people but without becoming overly friendly or placing ourselves in a situation where our journalistic integrity could be challenged. Part of our role, in a democratic society, is to be free to ask difficult questions, demand answers and to hold to account people in authority, like the police. We do believe that information, where it does not adversely affect an ongoing police enquiry, should be freely available. We are not in the business of offering favour for information.

19) What payments (if any) are considered to be legitimate financial transactions between persons serving with or employed by a police force and journalists at your media outlet? Please explain.

25. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no such payments are considered to be legitimate.

20) How in practice do you get access to the police?

26. My reporters will gain access by telephone, press conferences, occasional face-to-face meetings / interviews, and at the scenes of crimes. I do not generally deal with the police in my role as editor – please see my response to Question 3 above.

21) Is it necessary for police forces to have a press office, and what is your view as to the utility and role of police press offices?

27. My view is that press offices have value and are needed to co-ordinate briefings across the media sector and they can help to launch campaigns and deal with requests for access. They also allow officers to get on with the job in hand. However, they can be a barrier to information being released and they can be slow to grant access. Provided that the press are not getting in the way of police officers doing their jobs, there should be access to officers.

About HMIC

22) What is your view of the recommendations contained in the HMIC's recent report "Without Fear or Favour" insofar as they concern relations between the media and the police?

28. I have read the report. I am all for integrity, honesty and professionalism. I would be afraid, however, that we could create a situation where officers become even more afraid to talk to journalists. Our business is all about talking to people and discovering things. If we close off avenues and create a code of practice which encourages no discussion, and one which closes down relationships between the press and the police even further, or puts in place a filter (ie press office) through which all enquiries must be made, then I fear the impact it will have on the press' ability to do its job and the concomitant result that this could have on a democratic society.

23) Do you consider that there are further or different steps which could and / or should be taken to ensure that relationships between the police and the media are and remain appropriate? Please explain when answering this question what you consider to be appropriate contact between the police and journalists in a democratic society

29. I believe that the police and the press should be able, and indeed willing, to talk to each other, if only to clarify information and to make sure that when the press writes something it is as accurate as it can be. In the modern world when the internet and social media are flooding the information highways it is crucial that a free press is an area that can be trusted by those seeking accurate, fair and trustworthy information.

DOCUMENTS

30. In the Notice I am asked to provide any documents that are relevant to the matters that I have been asked to deal with in my witness statement. To the best of my knowledge, I do not myself have any documents which may be relevant. I understand that Trinity Mirror has already provided the policies to which I refer above to the Inquiry.

Signed.....

Timothy John Gordon

Dated: February 2012

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Dated. February 2012

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