

Text of PCC letter to Mark Lewis

From the Chairman

14 April 2011

Mark Lewis Esq
Taylor Hampton
Solicitors
3rd Floor, 218 Strand
London WC2R 1AT

Thank you for your letter of 11th April. I recognise that you are concerned about the practice of phone hacking. So am I. But I feel you mischaracterise my attitude to it.

In January this year (before the resignation of Andy Coulson, or the latest arrests, or the statement of News International), I set up a Committee to review everything to do with phone hacking. This will include examining the PCC's own performance, and our two reports on the subject. I have gone on the record as questioning whether the PCC had been fully informed by News International in the past. I have asked this Committee to establish the clear position on this. It is evident that News International's latest statement is relevant: they have now publicly acknowledged that their own internal inquiries were not robust. That raises serious questions which need answers.

The Committee has on it a former Chief Constable and a Professor of Law, as well as an editor from outside Fleet Street. I am sure you will agree that they are experts in the necessary fields. On Friday, after News International issued its statement, the Phone Hacking Review Committee issued its own statement (attached). I believe in following due process: I set up the Committee to review material in light of ongoing developments; I want it to do so.

But let me be clear about my position on phone hacking, which has been consistent throughout. It is a deplorable practice, and an unjustifiable intrusion into an individual's privacy. The Commission has always said that it is a breach of the Editors' Code. As I said to the Independent in February this year, it brings shame upon the whole journalistic profession. I condemn all those at the News of the World who have been involved in it.

I see it as one function of the PCC (as it sought to do in 2007 and 2009) to ensure that phone hacking is, and remains, stamped out across the whole industry.

I hope you now understand my unequivocal stance on the subject. As you will recognise, the PCC will not be offering further comment at this stage, while the Committee (and indeed the police) are actively considering this matter.

Baroness Buscombe

ENDS

14 April 2011