

4 July 2024

James Giles  
Chief of Staff to George Galloway

Dear Mr Giles,

## Final Decision Letter to Your Complaint Regarding Our Coverage

I hope this letter finds you well. We have reviewed your formal complaint dated 14 June 2024, concerning the conduct of Matt Daniel and the coverage by Politics UK regarding our interview with Mr George Galloway on 12 June 2024. We appreciate your detailed feedback and the opportunity to address your concerns within the stipulated 21-day period, as per IMPRESS guidelines.

Based on the transcript (attached alongside this letter), our response addresses several key points regarding the interview's context, the accuracy of the data presented, and adherence to journalistic standards.

### 1. Matt Daniel's Interview with Mr Galloway

**Your complaint:** You stated that during Mr Daniel's interview with Mr Galloway, Mr Galloway explicitly mentioned that no constituency polls had been conducted. Despite this, Mr Daniel read out statistics from the UK Polling Report, showing Labour at nearly 62% and Mr Galloway at less than 1%. You highlighted that Politics UK subsequently wrote "EXCL: George Galloway hangs up on us after we put polling data to him that he is projected to lose his seat."

You argued that this constitutes a breach of Paragraph 1 of the code, which states "Publishers must take reasonable steps to ensure accuracy." You said this alleged breach is particularly concerning given that the statistics were presented after Mr Galloway said that no constituency polling had been done.

**Our response:** Mr Daniel referenced available projections during the interview, transparently indicating these as projections rather than constituency-specific polls. In political reporting, the term "polls" can broadly encompass various forms of data, including projections and estimates. Mr Daniel made it clear that the seat in question was volatile and that the data he had were projections from credible sources. This approach aligns with common journalistic practices when specific data points are unavailable.

Mr Daniel's repeated clarifications during the interview aimed to distinguish between presenting projections and eliciting Mr Galloway's opinion on these figures. The intention was not to misrepresent but to engage in a discussion based on the available data. Following the call disconnect, Mr Daniel reiterated the volatile nature of the seat and the inherent difficulties in making accurate projections. This commentary aligns with journalistic standards of presenting the uncertainty and context behind political forecasts.

**Your complaint:** You pointed out that Matt Daniel doubled down on this statement on June 12, writing "alongside the poll presented in the podcast..." and listing another national projection based on no constituency-specific poll. You believe that this further breaches the code which mandates that "Whilst free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts." You noted that Electoral Calculus, another 'projection', predicts Mr Galloway will win the seat, demonstrating the cherry-picking of projections to distort and be partisan.

**Our response:** Again, in response to the allegations of breaching the IMPRESS code, it is crucial to emphasise that projections, while different from actual polls, are valid data points used widely in political analysis and reporting. Mr Daniel sourced these projections from credible sources and clearly indicated their nature during the interview. The reporting aimed to be balanced by presenting the only data available and seeking Mr Galloway's perspective, without any intention to

distort facts.

**Your complaint:** Lastly, you claimed that Mr Daniel broke Paragraph 5 of the IMPRESS code by not identifying himself as a journalist nor providing the name of his publication when making contact with Mr Galloway.

**Our response:** Regarding this point, the interview was pre-arranged with Mr Galloway's team, and Mr Galloway himself messaged Mr Daniel to confirm the number. Because it was a pre-recorded interview, a proper introduction was intended and did indeed start. However, we acknowledge that there might have been a lapse in the formal introduction during the recording, and for this, Mr Daniel already issued an apology to Mr Galloway during the interview.

## 2. Subsequent Politics UK posts after the interview

**Your complaint:** You stated that Politics UK resorted to increasingly obsessive tweets about Mr Galloway, which make no effort to distinguish between statements of fact and opinion, breaching an IMPRESS code. You cited specific tweets, including one stating "A furious George Galloway whines that he is not on the ITV debate" without any source. You argued that it is impossible to infer Mr Galloway's emotion from the tweet he released at the time, and that the term 'whine' is evidence of clear prejudice against Mr Galloway. You also mentioned another tweet, posted some 40 minutes later, reading: "NEW: George Galloway, who is 5'6" (1.68m), has called Angela Rayner, also 1.68m, a 'short plank'." You suggested that the close timing of these tweets verges on obsessive behaviour.

You requested that this be considered a Subject Access Request (SAR) for Mr Galloway, asking for all personal data held by us which mentions or is about Mr Galloway to be released to him under UK GDPR.

You further noted that Mr Daniel followed these tweets up late at night with his own opinion, which you believe reinforces the view of biased reporting.

**Our response:** Our editorial team strives to cover political figures comprehensively. We aim to maintain a balance between reporting factual information and providing commentary. While the term "whines" was used to reflect a perceived tone, we acknowledge that it may have been subjective and could be interpreted as prejudicial. We will ensure that future language is more neutral to avoid any appearance of bias.

The tweet in question was intended to reflect the reaction to Mr Galloway's exclusion from the ITV debate. However, we recognise that terms like "whines" can be seen as pejorative and we will review our editorial guidelines to ensure that our reporting remains impartial and based on verifiable facts, and to ensure our strong approval process spots this in future.

However, the proximity of the tweets was not intended to appear obsessive. We aim to provide quick updates on ongoing political events and commentary, and we thought Mr Galloway's complaint that he was not on the ITV Debate was worth reporting. However, we understand your concern and will take it into consideration to ensure that our reporting does not appear excessive or biased.

Mr Daniel's social media posts are his personal expressions and do not represent the views of Politics UK, as is stated in his X profile. While we encourage our journalists to maintain professional standards, we also respect their freedom of speech. However, as a courtesy, Mr Daniel has removed all references to Mr Galloway.

After careful consideration of your Subject Access Request (SAR) request on behalf of Mr Galloway, we regret to inform you that we are unable to fulfil your request at this time. The decision is based on the following grounds:

- **Disproportionate effort:** As a student-run company operating primarily on WhatsApp, retrieving and compiling any personal data related to you from our WhatsApp communications would require a disproportionate effort. The Data Protection Act 2018 recognises that organisations may refuse requests that are manifestly unfounded or excessive in nature.
- **No personal data held:** Please be informed that News Hub Group Ltd holds no personal data on Mr Galloway, other than a phone number which is held by Mr Daniel, who conducted the interview with Mr Galloway with such number. This constitutes the extent of any personal data within our possession.
- **Data security and integrity:** Retrieving data from WhatsApp, including archived or deleted messages, poses risks to the security and integrity of our data. Protecting the confidentiality and integrity of personal data is of utmost importance to us, and we must ensure compliance

with the Data Protection Act 2018 requirements regarding data security.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us at [admin@newshubgroup.com](mailto:admin@newshubgroup.com).

Furthermore, please be advised of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you believe that our decision to refuse your Subject Access Request request infringes upon Mr Galloway's data protection rights.

### 3. Conclusion

First and foremost, we wish to reiterate our unwavering commitment to journalistic integrity and impartiality. Throughout our reporting, bias has never influenced our editorial decisions and this remained the case during our interview with Mr Galloway. We assure you that our practices are guided by principles of accuracy and transparency, and we have always upheld these standards rigorously.

You claimed that we broke the following IMPRESS codes:

- **Accuracy (Clause 1.1):** Publishers must take reasonable steps to ensure accuracy
- **Accuracy (Clause 1.2):** Publishers must distinguish clearly between statements of fact and opinion.
- **Accuracy (Clause 1.3)** While free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts
- **Harassment (Clause 5.2b)** Identify themselves as journalists and provide the name of their publication when making contact

It is our view that we broke neither of the codes you claim:

- **Accuracy (Clause 1.1)**
  - During the interview, Matt Daniel presented projections from credible sources, clearly indicating that these were not specific constituency polls but general projections. This approach adheres to common journalistic practices and ensures transparency about the nature of the data. The aim was to provide context and engage in a discussion based on available data, not to mislead or present inaccurate information. Therefore, reasonable steps were taken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.
- **Accuracy (Clause 1.2)**
  - Throughout the interview and subsequent reporting, clear distinctions were made between factual data and opinion. Matt Daniel explicitly presented the projections as estimates and sought Mr Galloway's opinion on these figures. Additionally, when discussing reactions and potential implications, we made it clear that these were interpretative and not definitive statements of fact. This practice aligns with the requirement to distinguish between fact and opinion, ensuring clarity for our audience.
- **Accuracy (Clause 1.3)**
  - The projections cited were sourced from reputable organisations and were accurately represented as such during the interview. We did not misrepresent or distort these facts but provided them as part of a broader discussion on the electoral context. Furthermore, our reporting included Mr Galloway's responses and statements that the data was "fake" without alteration, meaning Mr Galloway's view of the data was there for all to see. Therefore, we maintained the integrity of the information without any distortion.
- **Harassment (Clause 5.2b)**
  - The requirement under Clause 5.2b specifically pertains to the initial contact made during approach phase. It mandates that journalists identify themselves and their publication at the earliest opportunity when approaching interviewees, sources, and other relevant individuals. In this case, Mr Daniel reached out to Mr Galloway's team to arrange the interview, and Mr Galloway himself confirmed the number with Mr Daniel. This pre-arrangement inherently included identification of Mr Daniel as a journalist from Politics UK. Furthermore, although there might have been a lapse in reiterating this identification during the recording, Mr Daniel acknowledged this and apologised during the interview. This sequence of events satisfies the requirement to identify oneself when making initial contact, ensuring transparency and adherence to the IMPRESS code.

Regarding the specific resolution requests made:

- We regret to inform you that we cannot comply with the request to delete the video or issue an apology. Our decision is based on our assessment that the complaint does not present sufficient grounds for such actions. Importantly, Mr Galloway's statement regarding constituency polls was included in the interview without alteration, demonstrating our commitment to presenting information in its entirety and without bias.
- It is crucial to clarify that the interview also addressed important topics such as Mr Galloway's candidacy in Rochdale. The interview was intended to continue with additional questions before Mr Galloway chose to conclude the interview. This sequence of events underscores that there was no bias or intent to distort facts in our approach to reporting, but to give media coverage to the Workers' Party to ensure our coverage is fair to all parties.
- Deleting the video or issuing an apology under these circumstances would be viewed as compromising our journalistic principles, which we cannot condone.

Please rest assured that we are diligently adhering to the Civil Procedure Rules in England and Wales regarding the preservation of documentation related to this matter.

Since our inception, Politics UK and News Hub Group have been committed to upholding the highest standards of journalistic integrity, including fairness, accuracy, and transparency, in all our reporting. Noting the lack of media attention paid to Mr Galloway and the Workers Party so far in the campaign, we welcomed the opportunity to provide him with a platform on the UK's largest political X account. We would be more than happy to welcome Mr Galloway back for another interview, potentially with a different member of our team.

We sincerely hope this response addresses your concerns. Should you require further clarification or wish to discuss this matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact our CEO at [baileynashgardner@newshubgroup.com](mailto:baileynashgardner@newshubgroup.com) or refer the matter to IMPRESS.

Yours sincerely,

