

**Wakeham reminds the press: Prince William is not public property  
PCC Chairman fires a shot across the bows of the paparazzi**

In a speech in London tonight, Lord Wakeham – Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission – reminded the press about its commitment to respect the privacy of all children. Speaking at the annual Charter Dinner of the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, the PCC Chairman said that the press had moved ‘light years from the contentious days of ten years ago’ when some newspapers notoriously flouted basic rules of ethical journalism. It was now time to move on, he said, and to deepen the successful self regulatory system that had been put in place.

Lord Wakeham said this would require the industry not just to demonstrate strict adherence to its own Code of Practice, but also a ‘maturity and responsibility in applying it.’ At the same time, the Commission itself would be looking at improving still further the ways in which it served the public. The PCC Chairman praised the press for its responsibility in reporting the ‘mind-numbing events at Dunblane’. And he noted that there were other stories ‘-less tragic, more salacious – that have never hit the pages of the newspapers because of the same maturity’ that characterised press reporting of Dunblane.

‘Press self regulation must be judged by what doesn’t appear as much by what does... That we can co-operate, draw from our case law, and work together in interpreting the Code before some stories are published is the hallmark of maturity. It is the silent part of our work. But it is real nonetheless’. But Lord Wakeham issued one word of warning to the industry in the wake of his speech last August about newspaper coverage of Prince William’s time at Eton.

‘In the eight months or so since the Prince started there, I have been satisfied that my words about his privacy – and the privacy of every other child – were taken genuinely to heart. The industry has behaved maturely and responsibly. But just recently there have been one or two instances where reporting – in terms of the publication of photographs taken of Prince William during his time at school – has begun to stray into grey areas around the dividing line between the freedom of the press and its duty to respect the privacy of a child’.

‘The Code of Practice is unambiguous: children should not be approached or photographed at school without the permission of the school authorities. For children at boarding school these provisions will apply around the clock’.

Lord Wakeham cited a particular example last weekend where a photograph of the Prince on playing fields at Eton had been published and some recent editions of four national newspapers, tabloid and broadsheet, which had included pictures of Prince William during school rowing lessons. Such seemingly innocuous pictures could be the result of days of intrusiveness by photographers around Eton.

Against that background, Lord Wakeham repeated his warning that ‘breaches of the Code in relation to Prince William and any other child will be viewed most gravely by me and the Commission.’ Lord Wakeham said that he would, if necessary, look into the mechanics of how Buckingham Palace and the press were co-operating over legitimate coverage of landmarks in the life of a future King. ‘It was always accepted’, Lord Wakeham said, ‘that the Palace would arrange access for the media to report moments of key interest during Prince William’s time at school – and it is important that this accord is effective and remains in place.’

More generally, the PCC Chairman said that a way had to be found of placing greater responsibility on the shoulders of the 'so-called paparazzi to ensure that they do not breach the Code.'

'I hope that the press will continue to think increasingly carefully before purchasing photographs which serve no legitimate purpose from some freelance photographers whose very presence may occasionally constitute harassment under the Code of Practice. Without proper permission such behaviour can rarely be justified with regard to children – certainly not while they are at school. The Code sets out the responsibility of editors to satisfy themselves that material accepted from freelance photographers is obtained in accordance with the Code. This is an area to which the Commission will be turning its attention in coming months.'

Lord Wakeham concluded that 'so much has been achieved – of which the press and the PCC can be particularly proud. I hope the ship will not be spoilt for a ha'peth of tar.'

**ENDS**

2 May 1996