Q. About their activities. And that the application also (2.10 pm)2 has photography, event, videos, groups and pages, which 2 3 MR BARR: Our first witness this afternoon is Mr Allan from are ways of connecting one user to another. 4 4 Facebook. There are various other communication channels, 5 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. chat, personal messages, wall posts, pokes or status 6 MR RICHARD BEECROFT ALLAN (affirmed) 6 updates. Is that right? 7 7 A. That is correct. Questions by MR BARR MR BARR: Mr Allan, good afternoon. Could you tell us your Q. There is a development platform, which enables companies 8 8 9 and developers to integrate their own applications and full name, please? 9 A. My full name is Richard Beecroft Allan. 10 services with Facebook, and you tell us that the net 10 11 11 Q. Are the contents of your witness statement true and result of offering these services is that there are 800 12 12 correct to the best of your knowledge and belief? million active users globally, including some 30 million 13 13 A. They are. in the United Kingdom alone, and that number is not just 14 14 Q. You tell us that you are the director of public policy people who have had accounts, but who have returned to 15 for Europe, Middle East and Africa for Facebook? 15 the site in the last 30 days? 16 A. That's correct. 16 A. That's correct. 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Well, what percentage of the 17 Q. You're responsible for the company's involvement on 18 matters of public policy across the region, including 18 population of that -- I was about to say that's one in 19 19 the United Kingdom. Your team works on a broad two, but it's more than one in two, because, of course, 20 portfolio of issues, including privacy, online child 20 you can only get into it when you're 13. 21 safety, freedom of expression, e-commerce regulation and 21 A. It is, sir, yes. For the adult population of 13 plus, 22 public sector uses of social media. 22 it's more than 50 per cent of the UK population. 23 Before joining Facebook in June 2009, you were the 23 MR BARR: Facebook employs 3,000 people worldwide. A lot of 24 24 European government affairs director for Cisco and private and public sector organisations use Facebook 25 you've been an academic visitor at the Oxford Internet 25 services. For example, you tell us Facebook partnered Page 1 Page 3 Institute. 1 1 with the Electoral Commission in the run-up to the last 2 You also between 2008 and 2009 chaired the UK 2 General Election in this country, indeed to encourage 3 Cabinet Office's power of information taskforce, working 3 young people to register to vote, and the monarchy made 4 on improving the use of government data. You were the 4 extensive use of the service during last year's royal 5 Member of Parliament for Sheffield Hallam between 1997 5 wedding celebrations. 6 and 2005, and you were appointed to the House of Lords 6 It's a service which is free to use at the point of 7 in 2010. 7 use, and funding is derived mainly from advertising, but 8 A. That's correct. 8 there is also supplementary revenue from the sale of 9 9 Q. Can I ask you now a little bit about the product Facebook Credits. 10 Facebook. You tell us that in essence the company 10 A. That's correct. 11 develops technologies that facilitate the sharing by 11 Q. Moving now to the corporate structure, Facebook's 12 individuals of their information through what you call 12 international headquarters are in Dublin, and the global 13 13 the social graph, the digital mapping of people's headquarters are in Menlo Park, California. Can you 14 real-world social connections. Anyone over the age of 14 help us with the distinction between international 15 13 can sign up, but you wish to emphasise that Facebook 15 headquarters and global headquarters? 16 does not itself produce the content that is shared via 16 A. Yes, the headquarters operation in Dublin consists of 17 17 the service. around 400 people carrying out a very broad range of 18 18 You tell us a little bit more detail about the functions, including those which are directly related to 19 19 platform. It's made up of core site features and users. Any use of the service outside the US and North 20 applications. Fundamental features include a person's 20 America has a contract with Facebook Ireland for the 21 home page and timeline. There is also a news feed --21 delivery of that service to them. Then Facebook Ireland 22 it's not news in the sense that we may have been using 22 in turn has a number of subsidiary offices around the 23 it, but this is news about a user's friends and what 23 particular union. Of particular relevance here, it has 24 they are posting? 24 an office in the UK, which provides a much more limited 25 25 A. Correct. set of functions, primarily related to marketing and

Page 2

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- 1 sales support.
- 2 Q. Indeed, you explain that in your witness statement, that
- 3 Facebook UK Limited is really a small and supporting
- 4 operation, and that the user is actually contracting
- 5 with Facebook Ireland Limited?
- 6 A. That's correct.
- 7 Q. Having dealt with the product in outline, and the
- 8 corporate structure, can I ask you, as I did with the
- 9 witnesses from Google, a little bit about Facebook's
- approach to privacy in principle, please. Can we start
- with the document at tab 11 of the bundle. It's an
- article published by the Guardian on 11 January 2010, so
- just over two years ago, reporting the words of the
- 14 Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, and he was saying
- that he thought that privacy was no longer a social
- 16 norm. He's quoted as saying -- I'm looking at the third
- 17 paragraph:

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"People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time."

22 Can I ask you: what it is Facebook's approach in

principle to the privacy of information?

24~ A. So Facebook has created a platform whose express purpose  $\,$ 

25 is to allow people to connect with other people, be that Page 5

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- 1 family or friends or organisations of interest to them,
- and then to share information with that group of
- 3 connections. So our core raison d'etre is to give
- 4 people the ability to share personal information with
- 5 others. But crucial to that is the notion that the
- 6 individual controls what information they're sharing and
- 7 who they may share it with, so they control both the
- 8 content and the audience. So for us, privacy is
  - a notion which is very much at the heart of what we're
- trying to do, but very much a notion that's allied with

11 that concept of control.

I guess we would contrast it with a notion of
secrecy, keeping information entirely to yourself and
not sharing it with anyone, where clearly a platform
like ours is of no use to somebody who's not interested
in sharing information with a group of people. So it's
very much about sharing what you wish to share with the
group with whom you wish to share it, and that's
articulated when you use the service by a set of very
clear controls.

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If I go on to the Facebook site, I'm offered the ability to share whether it's a photo or a textual comment or a link to something else and right in front of me is a little icon that says, "Do you want to share this with the whole world? Do you want to share it with

Page 6

all of your friends or do you just want to share it

- 2 perhaps with a subset of them, your family or your
- 3 closest friends?"
- 4 Q. Thank you. Like a lot of very large media companies,
- 5 privacy has been a controversial issue for Facebook, and
  - if I could take you to the last tab in the bundle,
- 7 tab 12, we have an article there dating from February
- 8 2009, which reports the interest of the American
- 9 regulator, the FTC, in changes to Facebook's privacy
- $10 \qquad \hbox{policies, which rather widened the uses which Facebook} \\$
- 11 could put information to.
  - Can you help us, please, with what the outcome of that FTC involvement was?
- 14 A. I'm pleased to be able to tell you that we reached
- a settlement with the FTC in November of last year, with
- a series of undertakings that we agreed to with them to
- ensure that, for example, we have clearly defined
- privacy officers both on the product side and the policy
- side within the company, that we will report regularly
- back to the FTC on what it is that we're doing, and
- 21 that, for example, we will undertake certain forms of
- 22 engagement with our users beyond those which we already
- 23 do and which are very extensive, when we make certain
- forms of changes to the platform.
- 25 So that agreement is there with the FTC, and I think Page 7
- 1 it does -- I mean, the fact that this happened reflects
- 2 the fact that as a platform Facebook is under an
- 3 enormous amount of scrutiny, and that huge user base of
- 4 800 million users means that people are very willing to
- 5 come forward if they have concerns or criticisms about
- 6 the platform, and I would say equally we're willing to
- 7 meet them and to try and find an agreement and
- 8 a settlement.
- 9 Q. In addition to American regulation, of course, Facebook
- 10 Ireland is subject separately to the regulation of the
- 11 Irish authorities, and in particular their data
- 12 protection commissioner. You have in the bundle the
- report of an audit, recent audit, dated 21 December 2011
- into Facebook's activities from a data protection point
- of view. Is that right?
- 16 A. That's correct.
- 17 Q. I won't go into the details of that just at the moment,
- but to continue with the legal theme, it's right, isn't
- it, that Facebook, like Google whom we heard from, tries
- 20 to comply as a matter of policy with the laws of the
- 21 lands where it operates?
- 22 A. That's correct.
- 23 Q. Can I ask about the way in which the agreement between
- the individual user and Facebook Ireland works? As
- I understand it, at the core of the agreement is

1 1 a statement of rights and responsibilities, and this that unlike Google, which only provides you with an 2 2 sets out what it is that the user is promising to do and index -- and I don't intend to belittle the importance 3 3 not to do. This is exhibited to your witness statement, of an index -- you are hosting content and to that 4 4 extent have a responsibility not for the content, and perhaps if we look at page 12, following the 5 pagination at the bottom of the page --5 because you're not putting it on and you haven't got the LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: 54812. Is that what you mean? 6 people to read it all, but you have some measure of 6 7 7 control over it. MR BARR: 54820. LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I see. So 12 on the internal 8 8 A. That's correct, sir, and I would say, and I think it's 9 9 hopefully clear from the evidence we've given, that we numbering? 10 MR BARR: That's right. 10 fully accept that responsibility and have taken the LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes. 11 necessary measures to make sure we can discharge it. 11 12 MR BARR: There's a section of the statement of rights and 12 MR BARR: If we turn back one page from the section we were 13 responsibilities. Paragraph 5, "Protecting other 13 looking at in the exhibit at section 3, we have the 14 people's rights": 14 safety section, which contains many of the prohibitions 15 "We respect other people's rights and expect you to 15 to which you've just referred. 6 is the prohibition on 16 do the same." 16 bullying, intimidating or harassing any user, 7 deals, 17 amongst other things, with pornography, violence or 17 I won't go through all of it, but perhaps I could 18 pick up on number 1: 18 threats, and 10: 19 19 "You will not post content or take any action on "You will not use Facebook to do anything unlawful, 20 Facebook that infringes or violates someone else's 20 misleading, malicious or discriminatory." 21 21 A. Yes. rights or otherwise violates the law. 22 "2. We can remove any content or information you 22 Q. An important feature of Facebook is that you have to use 23 post on Facebook if we believe that it violates this 23 your real identity, don't you? 24 24 statement ... A. That's correct, yes. 25 "8. You will not post anyone's identification 25 Q. In the bundle, we needn't turn it up, is an example from Page 9 Page 11 documents or sensitive financial information on a news report -- from a PCC report of a case in which 1 1 2 2 Facebook." a reporter had used a false identity to create 3 3 a Facebook address. Can I take it from the terms that Does that give you the contractual underpinning to 4 remove illegal material? 4 we've just looked at that that would be a breach of the 5 A. That's precisely the purpose of those clauses, yes. 5 Facebook terms and conditions and, if you'd been aware 6 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Is it just illegal? 6 of it in advance, would have been an account which would 7 A. There is a range of other materials, sir, that's set out 7 have been closed? 8 in our community standards, which is a separate document 8 A. Absolutely. If I can elaborate on that just a little, 9 that covers areas, for example, like nudity and 9 the real identity culture is at the core of what 10 pornography. So nudity and pornography that would 10 Facebook has done. You may be aware that there are 11 otherwise be legal in many jurisdictions will be removed 11 a wide range of services on the Internet that offer 12 from Facebook as a matter of policy because we don't 12 a similar functionality, that people can connect with 13 want that material on the site. So it does go way 13 each other and form into groups. We believe that 14 beyond the illegal into other forms of content that are 14 Facebook has been so successful precisely because it has 15 simply regarded as unsuitable under our terms for the 15 enforced very robustly a policy that says: if you're 16 audience that we have. 16 coming on the platform, you must present yourself as 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: So that might include, for example, 17 yourself, so that when others engage with you, they can 18 bullying? 18 have a reasonable confidence that you are who you say 19 A. Precisely, and there is -- you're right, sir, there are 19 you are. That means that people typically have 100 or 20 specific clauses on bullying and harassment, nudity and 20 200 connections of people they know in the real world, 21 21 pornography, excessive violence, hate speech and other and a much richer engagement, we think, than they would 22 22 forms of content which we would regard as unsuitable for have on many of the other spaces on the Internet where 23 what we have, which is a general audience, 13 plus, 23 you're talking with people operating under pseudonyms, 24 across multiple cultures and jurisdictions. 24 made-up names --25 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Because the problem is, of course, 25 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But how do you know? Page 10 Page 12

A. Most of the verification we get is precisely that social 1 comment on the site. So you read an article, and 2 verification. If you come onto the platform and don't 2 instead of commenting as "Angry of Tunbridge Wells", you 3 3 present yourself under your real identity, you don't now comment as Richard Allan, and they found that people 4 have a meaningful experience. Conversely, if you do 4 commenting in their real identities will engage in 5 present yourself under your real identity, so if, for 5 a better discussion than they would do when they were 6 example, you connected with me, I would be able to see 6 Angry of Tunbridge Wells. 7 that you have an ecosystem of friends and family around 7 Q. Can I ask you now about what mechanisms there are for 8 you, and therefore reasonable confidence you are who you 8 dealing with posts which readers and users find 9 say you are. If you had no friends at all, or simply 9 objectionable? I understand there are various 10 a random set of friends, then I would have a lot less 10 mechanisms, so perhaps we can deal with them one at 11 confidence that you were who you said you were. 11 a time. 12 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Do you have mechanisms available to 12 First of all if we deal with the horizontal 13 you -- I'm not going to ask what they are -- to check up 13 controls, if I can call them that, between users. It's 14 on that sort of thing? 14 right, isn't it, that there are mechanisms for one user 15 A. We have a security team who are constantly looking for 15 to object to the post of another directly and ask them 16 the people trying to get around the system, and indeed, 16 to remove it? 17 in many of perhaps the sort of hard cases we indeed 17 A. That's right. We've created our system called social 18 might be looking at the sort of people who are carrying 18 reporting really for two reasons. One is being very 19 out malicious behaviour will use fake identities quite 19 conscious of this scale that we have where people are 20 deliberately because they feel less accountable for 20 posting phenomenal amounts of content, you're always 21 doing so. 21 looking for the most effective way of resolving 22 So we have systems precisely to try and pick that up 22 a dispute. So having mechanisms where if somebody posts 23 because we don't want those people on our platform, we 23 a photo of me I simply let them know, in most cases that 24 don't want those identities on our platform. Yes, there 24 will resolve the dispute. You don't need to escalate it 25 are some systems in place, and we actually find the 25 either to Facebook or to a regulator or to a court to Page 13 Page 15 1 strongest protection, again, is that community of users. 1 resolve that situation if we make it very simple for 2 We effectively have an 800 million strong Neighbourhood 2 people to do that, fix things between themselves. 3 Watch community of people who will very happily report 3 Q. So this is as simple as "I don't like that, please will 4 to us if they think someone is a fake identity or 4 you take it down"? 5 A. "Please remove it". And the second part of that is behaving strangely. 5 6 MR BARR: Since Facebook took on the policy of real identity 6 people do learn, and if I tell somebody that I don't 7 7 and enforced it rigorously, has there been any like them posting photos of me, hopefully they're going 8 discernible change in the amount of objectionable 8 to stop posting photos of me in future, because they'll 9 9 content that's been posted and had to be removed? have learnt from me. Whereas if an anonymous source 10 A. Just to be clear, real identity has been at the core of 10 simply removed that content, they may never get the 11 what Facebook's done since the beginning, and we firmly 11 message that it's me who's upset about it. 12 believe that that's why, for the typical user of 12 Q. And is there a function for allowing an intermediary to 13 Facebook, they can be using it day in, day out, month 13 get involved in the user-to-user disagreement? 14 in, month out, and never come across objectionable 14 A. Precisely. We've also recognised that in some cases, 15 content. It really is a rare experience that one comes 15 and you might think particularly in those instances of 16 across content that is problematic on the Facebook 16 bullying for a younger person, that it would be helpful 17 17 platform, and that's because most people are feeling to bring in a teacher, a parent or some other trusted 18 accountable. When they do something on Facebook, it's 18 adult and make them aware of the dispute, because you 19 19 literally in front of their friends and family, and need to resolve that dispute between individuals in 20 therefore -- people will overstep the mark, but they're 20 a physical space, you can't just resolve it just online. 21 much less likely to do so. 21 So the social reporting feature also allows you to say 22 22 What we've also found with our partners, that's been "Please send this report to a third party because I want 23 one of the reasons that Facebook has been taken up to 23 to get them engaged in my dispute". 24 such a high degree, so, for example, many newspapers now 24 Q. There is though still an option to go straight to 25 will use Facebook identities for people wanting to 25 Facebook, isn't there, and complain about content?

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- A. Exactly. So there are reporting buttons right across
- 2 the site and this design essentially tries to deal with
- 3 it in a tiered way: resolve it between yourselves if you
- 4 can, perhaps escalate to somebody else if that's
- 5 appropriate. If the dispute is still going on, then
- 6 escalate it to us and we can remove the content or
- 7 remove the user, and of course in very extreme
- 8 circumstances you may wish to escalate it to the public
- 9 authorities in your country because there's something
- 10 that requires their intervention.
- 11 O. Just to be clear, does the user have to start at the
- bottom or can the user go straight to Facebook? 12
- 13 A. They get the choice. They get offered the different 14 options, they can come straight to us if they choose to
- 15 do so.
- 16 Q. When a complaint comes to you, whether it's after
- 17 a failed attempt below or direct to you, what test does
- 18 Facebook apply to the post of a UK user in deciding
- 19 whether or not to take down the content?
- 20 A. The primary test is conformance with the statement of
- 21 rights and responsibilities, and we actually find that
- 22 most of the incidents that are reported to us --
- 23 actually, even including many of those where there may 23
- 24 be an allegation of illegality, they're generally
- 25 resolved because of some other breach of rights and Page 17

- national domain names to create different entities like
- 2 Google does and some other service providers, and
- 3 Facebook, which is a single global community. It's
- 4 designed so that I can speak with my cousin in the
- 5 United States, so it makes no sense to have a UK
- 6 Facebook and an American Facebook. There is one 7
  - Facebook.
- 8 Given that we have that structure, that design goal, 9 to have a single global community, there are sometimes
- 10 exceptional circumstances where we get a report of
- 11 content that is illegal in one jurisdiction and not in
- 12 others, and there are technical means available to
- 13 restrict the access to some of the content on Facebook
- 14 on the basis of the person who is viewing it. It's not
- 15 something we do by preference, and as I say our
- 16 experience is that it's not something that we commonly
- 17 have to do, because most of the breaches are breaches of
- 18 our terms of service that are global breaches and
- 19 therefore actionable globally.
- 20 Q. I was talking earlier about the situation where one user
- 21 is objecting to the material posted by another. Can
- 22 I ask you now about the situation where a non-user,
- a third party learns that objectionable material has
- 24 been posted by a Facebook user. How does such a person
- 25 complain to you about that?

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- responsibilities. Somebody may be using a fake identity 1
- 2 to post the information, there may be nudity or
- 3 pornography involved, there may be forms of hate speech
- 4 that are unacceptable under our terms, therefore the
- 5 situation can be resolved if you like by reference to
- 6 the statement of rights and responsibilities rather than
- 7 requiring a technical legal analysis.
- 8 Q. Sorry, carry on.
- 9 A. I was going to say for cases where it's clear that it's
- 10 about illegality or illegal compliance in the UK
- 11 specifically, then we would apply the test, I think
- 12 similar to many other companies, of saying: if it's not
- 13 in conformance with UK law and it's been posted by
- 14 a user in the UK, then that user has breached our terms 15 of service by making that posting and then we'll take
- 16 the appropriate action.
- 17 Q. You've explained the tools, the weapons in your arsenal,
- 18 if I put it that way. One is to just remove a post. At
- 19 a more serious level, you can prevent a user using the
- 20 system at all. There's a third way, blocking content.
- 21 You are technically able, if needs be, to block certain
- 22 content to certain destinations; is that right?
- 23 A. Yes. I think it's perhaps important to understand the
- 24 distinction between a service like Facebook and I think
- 25 you heard evidence earlier about people using different Page 18

- A. So we offer an extensive help centre on the service, and 1
- 2 the help centre contains material directed to people who
- 3 use the service but also directed towards people who
- 4 don't use the service and they can go there and carry
- 5 out searches on some of the common terms you might think
- 6 of like defamation, invasion of privacy and so on, and
- 7 they will find material that directs them towards
- 8 getting help. Typically they may need to use a web form
- 9 in order to report things, because they can't report it
  - directly themselves.

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- We also find in practice that again because of the
- 12 large number of people now using Facebook, that in
- 13 practice people will simply find somebody else who is
- 14 a user of Facebook and get them to report it for them.
- 15 O. Does that third-party reporting system allow complaints
- 16 of defamation and privacy invasion to be made? 17
- A. So we have a generic reporting term that covers -- which is designed to allow people to give us notice of 18
- 19 potential illegal content and the kinds of things they
- 20 give us notice of are typically a combination of
- 21 intellectual property violations, copyright, trademark,
- 22 et cetera, and issues like defamation and invasion of
- 23 privacy. So there is a form available on the site that
- people can use to report content that they believe is 25 illegal and in order to put us on notice of that illegal
  - Page 20

5 (Pages 17 to 20)

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1 content.

- 2 Q. The Inquiry has heard some evidence about the speed at
- 3 which new media companies are able to deal with
- 4 complaints and complaining that they're not dealt with
- 5 quickly enough. Are you able to help us with how
- 6 quickly Facebook is able to turn around complaints of
- 7 privacy and defamation made by UK users?
- 8 A. Yes. In common with what you'll hear from companies
- 9 generally, we will operate a system where we can't
- 10 entirely control the inputs, because they will be
- 11 responsive to particular pressures at a particular time,
- 12 but we do have some targets and I checked with the legal 12 A. Okay, sorry.
- 13 team who deal with this class of violation, the material
- 14 that comes in as a form of notice, including defamatory
- 15 material, and their expected turnaround time is 24 to 48
- 16 hours. That's what they aim to do.
- 17 Q. We heard from the Google witnesses that they have
- 18 lawyers adjudicating on whether or not material is
- 19 defamatory and making decisions as to whether or not it
- 20 should be taken down. Do you do the same?
- 21 A. We have teams both in Dublin and in our California
- 22 offices who are a combination of lawyers and
- 23 non-lawyers. Our front line staff are known as our user
- 24 operation staff and we train a set of those staff
- 25 particularly in these kinds of violations. So in many Page 21

- 2 Q. For a photograph that has gone around thousands or even
  - millions of users, that means that the subject of the
- 4 intrusion has to make, if it's a million copies of the
- 5 photograph, a million separate requests for it to come
- 6 down. Is that right?

individually.

- 7 A. I think that's correct for the Internet generally, and
  - yes, correct for Facebook.
- LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Lord Allan, could you speak a bit
- 10 more slowly, please, because we're trying to keep
- 11 a track of it.
- MR BARR: Does that mean for all practical purposes that
- 14 there are some viral transmissions of images or texts
- 15 which, once out there, are almost impossible to put back
- into the bottle? 16
- 17 A. I think practically on the Internet, yes. This is --
- 18 I think there is a much broader debate, shall we say, on
- 19 the Internet, of which I think the issues before this
- 20 Inquiry are very much a part of that debate, around how
- 21 one stops content of all sorts that is either grossly
- 22 illegal or, for example, copyright infringement
- 23 material, how one stops that spreading across the
- 24 Internet, and I think this is a common challenge that is
- 25 faced in all of those debates, that there are -- the
  - Page 23

- cases it can be fairly obvious, a trademark or 1
- 2 a copyright violation, for example, can be very
- 3 straightforward. Some forms of defamation can be very
- 4 straightforward, particularly where the case is well
- 5 known. Those staff are trained to identify and deal
- 6 quickly with those cases that are obvious, and then are
- 7 able to escalate through, if you like, the more legally
- 8 trained staff, and even through to outside counsel, if
- 9 necessary, for very specific cases where there's some
- 10 area of contention or doubt.
- 11 Q. Can I ask you now about more complicated cases? Take,
- 12 for example, a photograph which is a gross invasion of
- 13 privacy, which goes viral throughout the Internet, but
- 14 including very many Facebook users. If you received
- 15 a complaint about such a photograph from a UK user, what
- 16 can Facebook do about that?
- 17 A. The system that we operate is a notice and take-down
- 18 system and the notice relates to a specific item of
- 19 content on the site rather than to, if you like,
- 20 a generic piece of content, so again I think similar to
- 21 a response you may have heard elsewhere, we don't have
- 22 in place a system that allows us to say this photo
- 23 should be removed from every place on which it occurs on
- 24 the site, but we could have in place reporting links on
- 25 every photo on the site so people can report them Page 22

- 1 ability to copy digital material instantaneously does
- 2 represent a new set of challenges.
- 3 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Has this debate reached any
- 4
- 5 A. It hasn't, if I say respectfully. I mean it is an
- incredibly fierce debate, particularly around the 6
- 7 copyright area. I'd say that's where it's become most
- 8 advanced, and there are huge debates in many countries
- 9 around the world about how to deal with it there.
- 10 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It's not just of course written
- 11 copyright, it's also -- one knows about music, films,
- 12 the rest of it. Everything.
- 13 A. Precisely. I think that's where perhaps if I can
- suggest there may be some interesting material for your 14
- 15 Inquiry, because they are looking at similar issues,
- 16 like how does one stop a particular film clip being
- 17 copied across the Internet, a photo. Some of the
- 18 technical issues and the philosophical issues about
- 19 what's the responsibility of the person who posted it, 20 what's the responsibility of the intermediary, how do we
- 21 prevent this without adversely impacting freedom of
- 22 expression, I think some of those debates are consistent
- 23 with some of the issues that you're examining.
- 24 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: The other problem is that you may get
- 25 a book or an article, but if one of them -- if they're

- 1 copied in just a slightly different form, you have to
- 2 have some sort of mechanism to identify them, which
- 3 I would have thought quite difficult.
- 4 A. Precisely. That's another area which again has become
- 5 very current in these broader debates around does one
- 6 simply create an incentive for the clever technologist
- 7 to find a technological work-around of a regulatory
- 8 measure designed to prevent something, and all of these
- 9 factors I think are -- in trying to get to the right
- 10 solution for creating good order across the Internet,
- 11 I think all of these factors are relevant.
- 12 MR BARR: Is there any guidance given to users which might 12
- 13 inform them about when they should think twice before
- 14 further disseminating material?
- 15 A. Yes. One of the innovations that we've been working
- 16 on -- and again, to be very clear, we regard our success
- 17 as being dependent on a number of factors. I already
- 18 talked about real identity as one of them. Providing
- 19 a safe and orderly environment in which your daily
- 20 experience is not coming across illegal or offensive
- 21 material in terms of our terms of service is another of
- 22 them. So we're constantly trying to assist the people
- 23 who use our service to understand what the limits are,
- 24 what they can and can't do.

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- 25 One of the innovations that we're working on at the Page 25
  - moment is where we've had to remove a piece of content,
- 2 to post a message, so when that user next logs on, they
- 3 get a message right in front of them that says, "Hey,
- 4 you've reached our terms of service, this is what you
- 5 did, you must click here to acknowledge that you
- 6 breached the terms of service before you can carry on
- 7 using Facebook", so that kind of thing, which we call an
- 8 educational checkpoint, makes people stop and take some
- 9 education, is an example of the kind of innovation that
- 10 we think can provide for a very safe environment and one
- 11 in which hopefully people get better behaved over time
- 12 because they understand the rules better.
- 13 Q. Another problem to bowl at you, and which you touch upon
- 14 in your witness statement, is what happens when you have
- 15 a link in a post which is a link to material which is
- 16 very largely not a problem, but includes some
- 17 objectionable content. What could you do in that
- 18 circumstance?
- 19 A. All the time our starting point -- and again I think the
- 20 starting point for most of our peers -- is that we've
- 21 created a platform on which people should be free to
- 22 speak, as long as they do that within our rules. So if
- 23 they are -- part of their speech is that they're
- 24 interested in linking to a newspaper site, for example
- 25 the New York Times, and discuss material on there, that Page 26

- should be fine. You could imagine the circumstances
- 2 under which somebody has a problem with one particular 3
  - article on the New York Times, and in those
- 4 circumstances, we would regard it as disproportionate to
- 5 remove all links to that publication because of the one 6
- 7 Again, I think there's a very comparable debate
- 8 going on in the copyright space about at what point does
- 9 a site that someone might link to become wholly illegal
- 10 or primarily illegal and therefore subject to some form
- 11 of action, removal, and at what point does that site
- that's otherwise perfectly legitimate that happens to
- 13 have a very small amount of illegal material, to what
- 14 extent should one be reasonably permissive of that site
- 15 having connections?
- 16 Q. Can I ask you now about regulation? What is Facebook's
- 17 view about decisions of domestic regulators? For
- 18 example, in this country, we have the Press Complaints
- 19 Commission. Would you regard a decision of the PCC as
- 20 being conclusive or at least very cogent proof that
- 21 material was objectionable?
- 22 A. I looked at the examples that you kindly sent from the
- 23 PCC, and I think what was interesting to me was that
- 24 they seemed to be rather examining the behaviour of
- 25 newspapers in taking material from Facebook and using Page 27
- 1 it, rather than directed at things that were posted on
- 2 Facebook.
- 3 Q. We'll certainly come to that aspect in a moment. But
- 4 have you come across PCC decisions being used to support
- 5 an application to take material down?
- 6 A. No, not that I'm aware of. The cases we've been aware
- 7 of have rather been of that nature, people taking
- 8 material from Facebook elsewhere rather than putting
- 9 material onto Facebook, and the PCC -- or PCC judgments
- 10 in some way being seen as part of that, of a complaint
- 11 to Facebook. Again, looking at it structurally, I would
- 12 imagine that if the PCC have found against a newspaper
- 13 and they've published a correction, then anyone on
- 14 Facebook who linked to that newspaper would, one would
- 15 hope, see the corrected version rather than the original
- 16 version that was subject to complaint.
- 17 Q. Indeed and one would expect compliance by someone who
- 18 was within the PCC scheme with the judgment. 19
- Can I ask you now about what Facebook's position 20 might be if there were to be, and I stress the "if",
- 21 a future media regulator in this country dealing with
- 22 press complaints, if it were to find content
- 23 objectionable and say so and it was material posted on
- 24 Facebook. Is Facebook likely to be receptive to such
- 25 decisions and prepared to take such material down? Page 28

7 (Pages 25 to 28)

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- 1 A. It's not surprising to say I think any Internet provider
- 2 would want to give this considerable thought, but just
- 3 to start that process off, it does seem to me that
- 4 looking at the PCC judgments in most of those cases that
- 5 citizens typically place different stock on a piece of 6 content on the basis of whether it's posted on a social
- 7
- network like Facebook or printed in a newspaper. 8
  - In other words, people were in some cases very comfortable to have material online on a social network
- 10 service like ours, it wasn't causing them a problem, but
- 11 the moment that it was put into an editorialised
- 12 authoritative source like a newspaper, it became
- 13 significantly problematic for them.
- 14 So I think that if one is moving towards the kind of
- 15 model that you've discussed with ourselves and other
- 16 witnesses, for us it would be important to distinguish
- 17 editorialised published content from what one might call
- 18 chatter on the Internet, and that to make an
- 19 adjudication about editorialised published content would
- 20 in turn feed through to the Internet platforms. If the
- 21 original material were corrected, that in turn would
- 22 feed through to anyone who linked to that original
- 23 material in an editorialised publication.
- 24 If the model is to somehow make judgments about the
- 25 kind of chatter that people do on Internet sites,
  - Page 29

investigating, so you're not ending up simply unable to

- 2 cope with the volume, and if you do decide to proceed,
- 3 then we could offer some expert guidance on how to cope
- 4 with volumes of complaints on the Internet.
- 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But is there a search mechanism or
- 6 Facebook?
- 7 A. There is a search mechanism. It's not the same as the
- 8 Google-type search mechanism because it's generally just
- searching public content. Again, sir, one of the 9
- 10 crucial distinctions between a social network likes ours
- 11 and general searchable Internet content is that very
- 12 large amounts of the content is only published between
- 13 small groups of individuals.
- 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes.
- 15 A. Rather than to the whole world. And therefore are not
- 16 searchable, sorry, I should say, for that reason.
- 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes. And not at the core of the
- 18 issues that concern me, because what you're really
- 19 saying is that Facebook is one giant for children's
  - playground conversation or for other groups' collective
- 21 communal conversations?
- 22 A. I think that's a very very good analogy, yes. A lot of
  - the conversation is the chatter in the pub, if you're an
- 24 adult, or the chatter in the playground if you're
- 25 younger. It happens to be online and digital, but the

## Page 31

- 1 I think my starting point would be to have concerns
- 2 about whether that's workable and whether proportionate
- 3 to the offence that's being caused.
- 4 Q. Not least given the number of users?
- 5 A. Yes, and the amount of content that's simply on the
- 6

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- 7 Q. Can I explore just a step further: if there was to be
- 8 a future regulator to whom a person could apply directly
  - and make a complaint about a Facebook posting and that
- 10 Facebook was expected then to respond to that complaint
- 11 and be the subject of a binding adjudication by the
- 12 body, what would Facebook's response be to such
- 13 a proposal?
- 14 A. So to look at the proposal, but to, I think, issue some
- 15 words of caution, that we are familiar with dealing with
- 16 disputes between people about content at very large
- 17 scale and getting to that point where we feel confident
- 18 about dealing with those complaints has been very
- 19 challenging, and is for any Internet service in terms of
- 20 getting systems that can cope with the amount of
- 21 conversations that are now taking place across the
- 22 Internet.
- 23 If you were setting out to create something similar
- 24 as a regulatory body, then I would offer some words of
- 25 caution about the thresholds you apply before you start
  - Page 30

- 1 way in which people approach those conversations is very
- 2 similar to any other kind of conversation.
- 3 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Could I ask a question which may
- 4 reduce the impact of all this: does it have a shelf
- 5 life? In other words, if you've put some material on
- 6 Facebook, is it there forever?
- 7 A. So it's the individual themselves who decides when to
- 8 put the content on and when to take it off. We're very
- 9 clear, our terms of service again state very clearly you
- 10 own the content on Facebook. We're just undergoing
- 11 a transition at the moment to a different way of
- 12 displaying the content that a user posts to something
- 13 called Timeline. When we've gone through that
- 14 transition, any user will be able to see all the content
- 15 they've ever posted on Facebook and be able with a click 16 to delete it or restrict the audience or change it.
- 17 So we, Facebook, don't put the shelf life on, but we
- 18 give individuals the tools to decide --
- 19 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: The opportunity to decide their own
- shelf life. I've got it. 20
- 21 A. Precisely.
- 22 MR BARR: I said I would return to the question of others
- 23 using or misusing material which has been posted on
- 24 Facebook, and one of the articles that we've put into
- 25 your bundle concerns the survivors of the Dunblane

1 1 don't put it in this way, but I will: "Why are you massacre and how Facebook material which they had posted 2 2 was used in a story about the anniversary of the tragedy hitting me, because however you control me, there are 3 3 at Dunblane. Is there anything that Facebook can do to a whole load of other people out there who are just 4 4 poking their thumbs up at you and there's nothing you prevent that sort of misuse of Facebook-posted material? 5 5 A. The primary way in which we approach this is to offer can do about it"? 6 the user education and tools, so the kind of tools they 6 A. I would make two points on that. 7 7 have are their ability to choose who are on their Firstly, I think, just to put in context the 8 8 friends list, which audience they have for a piece of relationship between the media and social media, that 9 9 content, to block people if people are trying to access actually we are becoming one of the major distribution 10 10 channels for traditional editorialised media content. their data they don't like, they can create a block so 11 that person can never access them. 11 So somebody like the Guardian has now over 5 million 12 So we've given them the toolkit to do that, because 12 people using an application where they bring the 13 of course sometimes people will go around that and get 13 Guardian content into Facebook, and we drive traffic for 14 14 hold of the content. them and help them to share their material across social 15 I'm afraid once they've taken the photo and copied 15 media. 16 it off to somewhere else or taken the content and copied 16 We certainly see it as much more complementary set 17 it elsewhere, then there's nothing at that stage that 17 of things that we offer. They offer great content, we 18 Facebook can do to recover that content. It is an area 18 don't produce content. We offer great distribution. 19 19 where, I guess, as a citizen I can see there is That can be a challenge for them to distribute through 20 potentially a gap now between the individual citizen's 20 their traditional websites. So I think the relationship 21 21 is hopefully less confrontational than -ability perhaps to take action about misuse of their 22 data, where it's been copied digitally from the 22 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: No, I don't think they were saying 23 Internet, but I think it's not something the service 23 it's confrontational. It's used to me as 24 24 a confrontation with me saying, "It's all very well you provider can do once the content is in another 25 environment. 25 having a go at us, but" --Page 33 Page 35 O. Returning to your witness statement, is it right that A. To put that on one side and come then to your comments 1 1 2 2 Facebook works with domestic institutions such as the about what do people say on our environment, as 3 3 I understood it, should that be equalised with what Advertising Standards Agency and the Information 4 Commissioners' Office? 4 people can say in their environment, again to come back 5 5 A. That's correct, yes. to that analogy of the chatter, the conversation in 6 a social space, to us that would be like saying you 6 MR BARR: I think that's all I have for you. Thank you very 7 7 much indeed. should equalise what people are allowed to say in a pub 8 8 A. Thank you. with what people can say in a newspaper. They are just 9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Sorry, one of the great issues that 9 different ways of speaking, and of course people do 10 10 gossip in pubs and spread names and so on in the same the Inquiry is facing is the extent to which what might 11 way that they do online. Without unravelling the 11 be described as the traditional media is being impacted 12 12 by social media and other similar types of publication Internet and shutting down or severely curtailing these 13 13 online, and the concern that information that they are kinds of services, I find it hard myself to see how one 14 14 not permitted to publish can spin around social media can deal with that. LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Because there is no mechanism whereby 15 15 sites in a way that puts them at a commercial 16 disadvantage, but also could prejudice proceedings or 16 you can, even if you wanted to, really control content, 17 whatever. 17 save for individually looking at a particular post and 18 I'm not saying that Facebook were at all involved 18 saying, "That shouldn't be there, it's off"? 19 19 A. Exactly. And the kind of measures that one could take in, for example, identifying the name of somebody who 20 had sought an injunction, and whether that came to 20 to control content, you know, at a deeper network level, 21 21 I think are ones that most people would regard as Facebook, it doesn't really matter, because it could 22 22 equally come through any one of these routes. disproportionate and excessive. 23 23 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: That's the point. Because as soon as Has your industry given any thought to how that 24 position can be regularised or made better, because one 24 you have to insert a human being into the process of 25 making a decision, you have made it extremely labour 25

of the arguments that is presented to me is -- they Page 34

1 intensive and utterly incompatible with trying to 1 Q. -- who receive the email on a weekly basis. And that 2 service the need of 30 million users across the UK. 2 newsletter is also published on the website? 3 A. I can only agree. 3 A. Yes. 4 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes, well, I think I'm trying to 4 Q. And then you have a message board, where registered 5 summarise your evidence rather than make some new 5 users can post and discuss various topics? suggestion. Lord Allan, thank you very much indeed. A. We have a full website where content relevant to us is 6 7 A. Thank you. posted and part of that is a message board or forum. 8 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: We have one witness left. Let's just 8 Q. Okay. Can I ask you firstly about the newsletter 9 have five minutes now before we take the witness. Thank 9 briefly. As for the content of the newsletter, you 10 10 explained to us that this is news about popular culture, 11 (3.02 pm) 11 politics, sports, celebrities, the entertainment 12 (A short break) 12 industry and the media. There are also links to videos, (3.07 pm)13 13 reviews and so on. 14 MS PATRY HOSKINS: Good afternoon, sir. The final witness 14 A. That's right. 15 today is Ms Camilla Wright from Popbitch. Q. There's also a joke at the end? 15 16 MS CAMILLA JANE WRIGHT (affirmed) 16 A. There's always a joke. 17 Questions by MS PATRY HOSKINS 17 Q. And the newsletter is text based. You explain to us 18 MS PATRY HOSKINS: Ms Wright, please state your full name to 18 that you made a conscious decision from the outset not 19 the Inquiry. 19 to have paparazzi-type photographs of celebrities in the 20 A. I'm Camilla Jane Wright. 20 newsletter or on the website; is that right? 21 Q. You should find behind tab 1 of the bundle you have in 21 A. That's right. 22 front of you your witness statement to the Inquiry? 22. Q. As for who the newsletter is aimed at, you explain in 23 A. Yes. 23 paragraph 7 that it's aimed at a time poor subscriber 24 Q. Can you confirm that the contents of that statement are 24 base who nonetheless want to keep up with the world and 25 true to the best of your knowledge and belief? 25 the content is designed to be light-hearted, humorous Page 37 Page 39 A. Yes, they are. and entertaining? 1 1 2 2 Q. I'm going to touch first of all on your career history A. We look at it as a ten-minute entertainment in a working 3 3 before we come on to look at the role of Popbitch. At week. 4 paragraph 5 of your statement, you explain that after 4 Q. You say you now have 350,000 subscribers to the 5 university you gained expertise in business and the 5 newsletter. How did it start out? 6 third sector, and then you started to write for economic 6 A. We started out just basically putting together stories 7 and financial magazines. You then started to write on 7 for friends from the media and entertainment industry. 8 a freelance basis on popular culture issues and then you 8 We would gather together some funny stories, put them 9 9 co-founded Popbitch in the year 2000, and since 2004 you together, email them to friends. We kind of started it 10 10 have been full-time publisher and editor. because the world of entertainment is very exciting, we 11 11 A. Yes. all -- many of us love it, but it's very controlled. 12 Q. You explain that you also write for magazines, tabloids 12 The entertainment industry controls what you write about 13 13 it a lot. It's very PR-driven. Working freelance for and broadsheets on a freelance basis, offering comment 14 14 on the media and on popular culture? magazines, you very much were stopped from writing 15 A. Yes. 15 things that you wanted to write, just interesting 16 Q. Is that correct? 16 things, nothing against the law or anything. 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: "Controlled" is not the word that's 17 A. That's right. 18 been used to describe it in the course of the last few 18 Q. Can I ask now about Popbitch itself, please. You 19 19 explain the role of Popbitch and what it does in months in this Inquiry, so you're providing me with 20 paragraph 6 of your statement, but can I summarise it in 20 a slightly different take on it. 21 this way: it's a website and its content really 21 A. Well, I think so. There's a very, very big PR industry, 22 22 comprises two main elements: a weekly newsletter, which which I think can act as gatekeepers to what is said 23 is sent to those who have subscribed to Popbitch by 23 about celebrities, famous people, and very much they 24 email, and you have around 350,000 subscribers --24 like to tell magazines and newspapers what can be

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A. Yes.

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written. I'm sure -- I think the people from Hello! and

1 OK! last week said to you that 70 to 80 per cent of what 1 and others didn't. You look at the hypocritical gap 2 goes in the magazines is placed there by the agents and 2 between how those in the public eye seek to be portrayed 3 3 the managers and the PRs of celebrities. and how they really act. 4 4 So if you want to write about people, you have to be That leads me neatly on to issues of standards and 5 very careful, in a commercial sense, what's written. If 5 the public interest. I'm going to ask you in a moment 6 you approach somebody whose publicist maybe represents 6 whether you consider the stories that you publish in 7 7 50 others, if you don't write what they like, they don't your newsletter to be or to have a public interest in 8 like you to talk to their other clients. If perhaps you 8 a moment, but first of all it may be instructive to examine an example or two of the types of stories that 9 want to say something about somebody who is the brand 9 10 10 ambassador for a big brand, you have to be careful that you run in the newsletter. 11 they don't pull their advertising. So there are 11 Not in the bundle, but what I've done is printed out 12 12 commercial concerns that the mainstream media face every the latest version of the newsletter. Do you have "For 13 day when writing about this world. And that's maybe 13 Chuck's Sake"? 14 a slightly different perspective from the one you've 14 A. I do. 15 had. 15 MS PATRY HOSKINS: Do you have it? 16 MS PATRY HOSKINS: You were just telling us how you came to 16 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes. One page? 17 set up Popbitch and how it all started. You explained MS PATRY HOSKINS: Yes, I only printed out part of it. Can 17 18 that when you were freelancing you found that the world 18 I check whether you have it? If not, can I pass a copy? 19 of celebrity was very controlled, so how did that lead 19 We'll wait until the technician has it, so she can 20 you on to Popbitch? 20 show it on screen. 21 21 A. Sure. A. It's very cheap to send out emails. It's not expensive 22 to set up a website. You can -- and we started to send 22 O. I just want to examine the sort of format, first of all. 23 out information to friends. People then asked to 23 Right at the top, under the headline with a name, 24 24 subscribe to it, so we set up a very simple mechanism to there's a kind of advertising or promotional feature? 25 do that, and then over time more and more people wanted 25 A. That's right. Page 41 1 to subscribe to it, which adds to your costs, but now we 1 O. Then there are some quotations, and then under the main heading "Popbitch" there is a story about 2 2 have a system that can send out emails to 350,000 people 3 3 Mr Kris Humphries, former husband of Kim Kardashian, do very easily. 4 The content has changed as we've gone along. We've 4 you see that? 5 broadened it to anything that people are interested in 5 A. That's right. 6 in popular culture. On one side is the stories behind 6 Q. I don't know if that's visible on the screen --7 7 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Lower down. the stories, what's going on in the media that covers 8 popular culture. I guess, similar to Street of Shame in 8 9 9 Private Eye, but we look at the celebrity media, and 10 10 also the light-hearted details, jokes about people and 11 11 films in any aspect of popular culture. 12 Q. I was going to ask about paragraph 8 of your statement. 12 13 You explain that the idea was to reference the old-style 13 14 Hollywood magazines which popularised the publication of 14 15 insider information, and that you try to act in the 15 him some more. 16 style of something like a Private Eye for the celebrity 16 You say: 17 17 world. Would that be a comparison you're happy to 18 make --18

MS PATRY HOSKINS: Perfect. This is a story about Kris Humphries who was playing at Madison Square Gardens just before Christmas. He came on court to play, whereupon he was promptly and rather violently booed by the crowd. He was then taken off shortly afterwards and the crowd began chanting, "We want Kris, we want Kris". Why? So that he would come back on and they could boo "If there is a more concise allegory for the role of celebrities in the 21st century we have yet to hear it." Just explain to us just by using the example how you would source a story like that? A. This story came from somebody I know very well who was at the game, who at the time relayed what happened to us. We checked that he was playing there, everything seemed to match. We added the second paragraph because I guess what Popbitch does, it's trying to entertain but Page 44 11 (Pages 41 to 44)

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A. Yes.

Q. -- between you and, say, a publication like Private Eye?

Q. You go on to say that Popbitch doesn't just cover the

areas missed by the popular media, plus the stories

Page 42

stars of popular culture, but looks behind the scenes at

behind the stories and why certain stories got published

A. Parts of it works in a similar way, yes.

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- 1 it's also trying to inform. We were just trying to show
- 2 that by taking an example of a story that was going on
- 3 now that nobody else had perhaps covered, that this is
- 4 what celebrities are almost used for in society.
- 5 They're there for our fun, but also they take -- it can
- 6 get a bit darker, and they're there for people to joke
- 7 at. So that's where the story came from, and that was
- 8 the point of putting it in.
- 9 Q. All right. Can I ask you about one other story on that 10
- 11 A. Sure.
- 12 Q. It's the one almost at the end. There's a final story
- 13 about Joan Collins, but we'll ignore that one for the
- 14 moment. The one just above that says this:
- 15 "In the first draft of the Dr No screenplay, the 16 writers decided that Dr No should be a monkey."
- 17 Why did you publish a story like that?
- 18 A. I think it's an entertaining fact. It's the weird
- 19 little details in popular culture that I think we as
- 20 humans respond to. That came from Cubby Broccoli's
- 21 biography, which has just been published. He was the
- 22 producer of all the James Bond films and that just
- 23 jumped out at me, that of all the things about the first
- 24 Dr No film that would have possibly changed the history
- 25 of all the James Bond films for us is if Dr No had been Page 45
- 1
- 2 Q. I don't think we need to look at any other ... I'm just
- 3 trying to understand the product.
- 4 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: No, I understand.
- 5 O. What I want to now do is understand the process by which
- 6 you decide whether or not a story is going to feature in
- 7 the newsletter. You say in your witness statement at
- 8 paragraph 45 that Popbitch is a commercial product,
- 9 reliant on mainstream advertisers and sponsors, and
- 10 therefore it's important to have good editorial
- 11 standards. Now, why? How does that follow?
- 12
- 13 publication. I think it is good, if you are adding to
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- 16
- 17 breadth of knowledge of the world, is a good thing. And
- 18 if you were asking people to trust you with their brand,
- 19 to -- for them to put their faith in what you're
- 21 have high standards.
- 22
- 24 your brand to the subscribers, somewhere there's a --
- Page 46

- 1 involved with.
- 2 We've never had an advertiser try and tell us what
- 3 to write or to take anything out, so it's gone okay so
- 4

- 5 Q. All right, so that's what you say about good editorial
  - standards. Let me ask you now about the process. I've
- 7 asked you about sources.
- A. Sure. 8
- 9 Q. But at paragraph 11 onwards you say a lot more about the
- 10 way in which material is sourced. If I can summarise it
- 11 in this way, you say that the newsletter is written
- 12 largely by a network of contributors --
- 13 A. It's written in our office by me and a very small team,
- 14 but we largely source our stories from a network of
- 15 contributors that are all around the world.
- 16 Q. You say these are basically a group of about 200 to 250
- 17 trusted sources in this circle?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. That are known to you or your closest team members. So
- 20 is your evidence in that respect simply that a story
- 21 will come in from one of those sources and just because
- 22 of who they are and the fact that you trust them, that
- 23 will be good enough, or are there any other checks?
- 24 A. It will be for some stories, but for some stories that's
- 25 not enough. You would want to get a second source to Page 47

- played by a monkey.

- A. I don't think it is good to be an inaccurate
- the plurality of media voices out there, trying to be
- 15 accurate, trying to tell true stories, perhaps stories
  - that other people aren't doing, just to add to the
- 20 writing, then you owe it to them and to yourselves to
  - We're saying that we have 350,000 subscribers who
- 23 regularly read this, and therefore, if you want to put
- 25 you know, there is a reputable product for you to be

- check the plausibility or gain extra evidence to support 1
- 2
- 3 Q. What would make you go away and check?
- 4 A. Very much depends case by case on a story. If it's from
- 5 somebody who you are absolutely convinced that has
- 6 foolproof knowledge, I would take it. If it's
- 7 a contentious or controversial story, I would want to
- 8 get somebody else to be able to back up what they're
- 9 saying and try and find, if possible, some evidence to
- 10 support what they're both saying.
- 11 Q. You say that if the stories are not originated from one
- 12 of your inner circle of trusted sources, stories can
- 13 come in in a number of other ways. This is paragraph 13
- 14 onwards. Unsolicited email tips and stories, registered
- 15 users of the message board, stories found by staff
- 16 writers or freelance contributors and personal
- 17 experience written in by readers. 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. Those examples seem to be a million miles away from
- 20 trusted sources that you know well, so what process is
- 21 undertaken there when stories come in through that type
- 22 of source?
- 23 A. We've had some amazing stories sent in from anonymous
- 24 sources that turn out to be 100 per cent true. We would
- 25 start off by doing a simple check on the veracity of the Page 48

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1 information we've got. About 50 per cent of things that 2 get sent in you can work out right away aren't true just 3 by a couple of phone calls or a simple Google check. 4 Maybe it's about a pop band in one country and they 5 actually are in another country on that day. So that 6 would be where you would start.

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You would then try and find from somebody that you do know well and somebody who is likely to know at least if this information is plausible whether or not this is true. At the same time, we would engage in an email exchange with the third person, the anonymous user. If they're willing to discuss with you how they got the story, where they got the story, a few more details, you can largely work out whether or not there's truth in it.

From personal experiences, we tend to write them up as "X writes ...". I give it as a personal experience. These tend to be, "I met a celebrity in the bar last night, they were buying a gin and tonic". That kind of level of contentious subject-matter.

- 20 Q. Does that somehow improve things? If you don't say in 21 your newsletter simply "X celebrity was in a bar and 22 this happened", but you say, "Someone has written in and
- 23 said that X celebrity was in a bar on a particular 24 night", does that make any conceivable difference?
- 25 A. I think people writing on the Internet and people Page 49

- A. I think if you start adding a financial inducement to
- 2 somebody for information, they could give you stories
  - that they know they shouldn't or they could hurt their
- 4 jobs or they could even give you embellished information
- 5 in order to get the money, and therefore taking that
- 6 temptation out of people's way, we are hoping that there
- 7 will be fewer of those stories that come to us.
- 8 Q. All right. Do you consider yourself to be bound by the
- 9 laws of the UK? Libel laws --
- 10 A. Yes, publishing in the UK, we are bound by UK media law.
- 11 Q. So presumably you have to ensure that the stories are
- 12 not libellous or defamatory?
- 13 A. That is our intention.
- 14 Q. Let's assume for a moment that you're satisfied that
- a particular story that has come in to you won't fall 15
- 16 foul of libel or defamation laws and you're happy that
- 17 it's accurate, so you've got to that point. I want to
- 18 understand what other considerations you bear in mind
- 19 before deciding whether or not to publish in your
  - newsletter. Do you consider whether it's an invasion of
- 21 that particular person's privacy, for example?
- 22 A. In an era where injunctions have been such
  - a much-talked-about thing, that obviously has to be
- 24 a consideration. I think if I could put it this way,
- 25 Popbitch is an entertainment product, therefore we are Page 51

reading on the Internet, as I think the guy from Facebook touched on earlier, is different, somehow, to reading traditional media. It's how you experience it.

A lot of our facts and stories are the same sort of thing that could be found in a newspaper or magazine, they carry our editorial stamp, but the Internet has evolved so that it's a two-way conversation between reader and writer. I think media theorists call them a network public rather than an audience. Readers expect to be involved in shaping the stories, getting to the bottom of something. So we would put something out there saying, "Somebody told us this", expecting somebody else to actually verify it. "Actually, we have a different experience. Yes, I was in that bar as well, this is what happened."

So a percentage of our stories work in that way. I think that's how blogs work, stories, comments. It's just it gives -- the Internet is just evolving in a slightly different way to traditional media, and I guess our product has evolved as part of the Internet, so if you are reading Popbitch, you understand what you're reading, you understand that readers are sharing their experiences with you and you can share yours back.

Q. You explain later on in your statement that you never pay for tips or stories. Why is that? Page 50

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1 trying to do no more than poke fun at people in the

2 world of celebrity, and therefore we'd add in some extra

3 things -- is the story funny? Is there a bit of

- 4 a punchline? We get a lot of stories in which we don't
- 5 print, which are things like somebody's gone to rehab,
- 6 somebody's ill, somebody has cancer, or it's about their
- 7 children. You could probably publish them, but they're
- 8 not going to make people laugh, so we would look on that
  - maybe as an extra defining process.
- 10 Q. I'll ask you about public interest in a moment. You say
- 11 that, but Popbitch famously was able to say that
- 12 Victoria Beckham was pregnant, correctly say that
- 13 Victoria Beckham was pregnant before any other media
- 14 organisation in the UK was able to confirm that, and
- 15 that's not something which just is published to make
- 16 people laugh. That's an interesting titbit about --
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. -- someone's life. It could also have been said to be
- 19 an invasion of Victoria Beckham's privacy to publish
- 20 that before anyone else knew. In that kind of story,
- 21 would you take into account the fact that the story may
- be an invasion of that person's privacy?
- A. It was a long time ago. As far as I can remember with 23
- 24 this story, people were talking about it quite openly;
- 25 they just hadn't printed it. We printed the story.

1 I would be I think since then much more careful about 1 it stands, or at least as it seems to be looked at. 2 2 making sure that a pregnancy was beyond 12 weeks It's not broad enough. 3 before -- in this case, this was that as well, but 3 Q. Is this paragraph 48 of your statement? 4 I would be very careful about doing that. I don't think 4 A. Paragraph 48. It's not fit for purpose for the culture 5 we've actually touched on that for several years. 5 we're in now. LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It's interesting that as you've been Q. Can we explore that a little? 6 7 giving evidence you've used the words "truth", 7 A. Definitely. These days the power to shape and influence 8 "accurate", you've there used the "12 weeks". All these 8 people's lives doesn't just come from politicians and 9 terms are to be found in the PCC code. 9 policy making. The people who have possibly greater 10 A. Mm-hm. 10 influence over the public come from a much wider pool. 11 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Is that a code that you've 11 I would say nobody who is a public figure has that 12 considered? 12 influence, and some people use it very consciously. You 13 A. I'm aware of the code, yes. I don't know whether --13 see film stars becoming the defining voices of the 14 I don't -- we're not a part of the PCC and we're not 14 Balkans, Darfur. You have people straying into public 15 a newspaper, but I am aware of the code. 15 policy areas, charities are lining up celebrities to 16 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: You don't have to be a newspaper. 16 talk to the public, fashion labels pay famous people to 17 There are lots of magazines that are part of the PCC. 17 wear their clothes, to influence behavioural patterns in 18 I know that Mr Hislop isn't. 18 consumerism. David Beckham was the person chosen to 19 A. No. 19 represent Britain in our Olympic bid. It wasn't 20 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: He's made that very clear and 20 a politician. 21 21 explained why. But you compare yourself to Street of So how people live and behave in the wider sense of 22 Shame for popular culture, but Street of Shame carries 22 the public eye seems to have a very strong effect on the 23 with it sometimes some potentially defamatory material, 23 public. Just by being in the public eye is enough, and 24 and Mr Hislop knew exactly how many libel actions he'd 24 therefore I think that it would be more in the public 25 been the subject of, which, as you've just identified 25 interest to widen what should and shouldn't be known, Page 53 Page 55 and recognised, could hit you in just the same way. 1 1 what shouldn't be talked of, because I think there's A. Sure. 2 2 good reason to see if there's a gap between people's 3 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: You're not protected from that. 3 private life and public life as they have this power A. No, absolutely. 4 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: So I'm just wondering what the 5 Q. I understand the argument that celebrities pervade our 6 problem is that you have with something like the PCC. 6 culture in a much wider sense than they used to, 7 A. Our self-regulation has worked for us, it's possibly 7 I understand that. What I want to understand from what 8 been stronger than the PCC --8 you've just said is to what extent that means that their 9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Self-regulation doesn't quite mean 9 private life should be open to scrutiny by Popbitch or 10 10 that. Self-regulation is the industry, the body, the anyone else. Are you saying that anyone who is a public 11 collective looking at the one. What you're talking 11 figure can have their private life scrutinised or should 12 about is personal regulation, in other words your own 12 have their private life scrutinised in that way simply 13 set of rules. 13 because of the fact that celebrity culture has evolved A. That's right. 14 14 in the way that it has? LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Sorry. A. I think people will chatter about and scrutinise public 15 16 MS PATRY HOSKINS: That's all right. 16 figures as and when they choose to. As we heard 17 Do you consider when you are -- I'm glad I don't 17 earlier, there's the conversation on Facebook every day. 18 have to ask many of my questions, now. 18 If you mean should publishers do this, then it's a very 19 When you're deciding whether or not to publish 19 difficult area, there's going to be a grey area between 20 a story in the newsletter, do you consider whether it's 20 who's put their public life up for scrutiny and 21 in the public interest to publish it, and what does the 21 therefore where there's a gap between how they're 22 22 public interest mean in your view, in the context of the appearing and how they're -- they are in real life 23 information that you are publishing? 23 matters to us. 24 A. I've said in my witness statement I think it's helpful 24 Does that mean that everybody has no privacy? No, 25 to look at the definition of public interest I think as 25 I don't think so, but --Page 54 Page 56

Q. Where do you draw the line? Where does Popbitch draw 1 that was different, we would put them there. If 1 2 somebody was -- did not have that kind of public face, 2 the line? 3 3 A. It's a moving line. It's not -- there is no absolute they were just writing a book, going to work as an 4 4 actor, it would be -- we would have no material and line, I don't think. We draw the line, I would say, we 5 look at who is making themselves influential, and if so, 5 therefore no desire to write about them --6 are they living up to it. I think beyond that it's very 6 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Well, you could, couldn't you? Let's 7 7 take Ms Rowling as an example. She might have difficult to say where a line is, but I think that would 8 8 a disgruntled employee who would be only too pleased to be a good place to start. 9 9 send you some material, but do you think that the mere Q. Are there any celebrities that you simply would not 10 10 fact -- I say "mere" without any disrespect -- that she mention on Popbitch because they are demonstrably 11 11 is an acclaimed author in whom the public are private, they have said publicly that they do not wish 12 12 their private life to be touched upon by the media? interested, not because of the way that she conducts her 13 I am going to give you the example of JK Rowling, who's 13 life but because she's written some extremely successful 14 14 made it absolutely clear both publicly and in the books, that that would mean that you would default to 15 15 publishing such a comment? context of litigation that she just doesn't want her 16 private life to be discussed, put out there in the 16 A. It depends. I mean, if the disgruntled employee had 17 17 a very interesting story, which put different light on public domain. Not necessarily talking about her, you 18 don't have to give me an example about her, but are 18 Ms Rowling, quite possibly. If it was just taking 19 19 pictures of her in the street or something, we wouldn't there celebrities that you simply wouldn't publish 20 stories about because they've said they don't want 20 remotely go there. 21 21 I think just the fact of people in the public eye stories to be published about them? 22 A. I don't know if it's celebrities who have said they 22 and therefore the public being interested in you means 23 23 don't want to be talked about, I don't know if that that you are -- you can't put yourself -- you can't 24 should come into it, but there are a lot of people who 24 choose when you're public and choose when you're 25 25 private. Kate Middleton, she's never really uttered live their lives beyond their talent privately, and Page 57 Page 59 therefore it would be very unlikely that we would either anything about what she buys, where she shops, and yet 1 1 2 2 get any interesting stories about them or get new millions and millions of pounds of the economy are 3 3 apparently dependent on people wanting to resemble stories about them. 4 Q. So the line actually for you is not whether they've said 4 Kate Middleton. There's no -- JK Rowling is an 5 5 they want to be private but actually whether -admirable woman, a single mother who wrote some of the 6 6 A. But their actions, but their actions. most successful books in history. People will want to 7 Q. -- but actually whether your readers would be interested 7 be like her. 8 and whether --8 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: So there isn't a difference between 9 A. And that is by their action. If they don't do things 9 public interest and the interest of the public? There 10 10 which bring them -- somebody can say they want their isn't a difference? 11 A. It depends on the material. What would you want to life to be private, but live it quite publicly. If they 11 12 say they want their life to be private and do so, that 12 write about Ms Rowling? If it's that she's behaved in 13 13 public badly to somebody, that would, I would say, be in would be enough, I guess, we wouldn't look at writing 14 14 about them. the public domain. If she's done something in her 15 Q. Ms Wright, the answer you gave me a moment ago was that 15 private life, which has no bearing on her public life, 16 you would draw the line, really, if there were no 16 that's her private life. 17 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: So -- sorry. stories around or you just didn't get the information or 18 you thought your readers wouldn't be interested in the 18 MS PATRY HOSKINS: I was going to follow that up. I want to 19 19 information, then probably you wouldn't publish the be absolutely fair to you Ms Wright, in the answers 20 stories. 20 you're giving, that it would depend on the material. Am 21 21 A. That's true but that's sort of the same line. As I right in saying that if you were to find out that 22 22 I said, we're looking at people who are culturally Ms Rowling was nine weeks pregnant, you wouldn't publish 23 23 influential, who have put themselves up in this sense that? 24 and therefore it would provide a counter point to their 24 A. No. 25 public face if we had stories about their private life 25 Q. If you were to find out that Ms Rowling -- I don't want Page 58 Page 60

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- 1 to keep using her as an example, but someone like
- 2 Ms Rowling was --
- 3 A. If we found out, say, that she plagiarised her books,
- 4 that would be information I would use. If this was
- 5 something -- if she'd bought a new kitchen, I'm not
- 6 terribly interested.
- 7 Q. What if she'd bought a new kitchen and she was rude to
- 8 the staff in the shop?
- 9 A. If it was in a public place, in the shop, yeah, that's
- 10 public domain.
- Q. I was going to ask you a question about the code. You 11
- 12 say you're aware of it. Does that mean you're aware of
- 13 it in abstract terms or you have a copy that you read
- 14 and reference when you're making decisions?
- 15 A. We have -- we take advice from media lawyers, who have
- 16 at times given us aspects of the code that they think
- 17 would be relevant to us.
- 18 Q. So you don't have it on your desk?
- 19 A. I don't read it every day.
- 20 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Sorry?
- 21 A. I don't read it every day.
- 22 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Have you read it at all?
- 23 A. From cover to cover, no, but I have read the bits where
- 24 we have been told it's relevant to us. A lot of the PCC
- 25 code relates to members of the public and how -- we
  - Page 61

would be very happy to take off posts. 11 Q. I understand. I'm going to ask you now about when

A. There are a group of, I would say, long-term users who

Q. But if someone was to point out to you, say,

It's not moderated as such.

that you can remove it?

would help shape the conversation on the message board.

a defamatory comment, do you have control to the extent

A. Yes. What would happen, if somebody made a complaint,

we would look at it and act upon it right away. In the

witness statement I think I gave examples of when we

- 12 things go wrong. How many complaints do you receive
- 13 from celebrities or those representing them each year,
- 14
- A. Very few. I think we've made, to the best of my memory, 15
- 16 five to six apologies, so that would be like one every
- 17
- 18 Q. Do they usually come from celebrities who are not happy
- 19 with the stories you've written in the newsletter or are
- 20 they complaints about the message board?
- 21 A. Probably more -- I would have to check, but probably
- 22 more on the newsletter than the message board.
- 23 Q. I understand. Can we turn to tab 2, please, in the
- 24 bundle. There's a short report there dated 17 March
- 25 2008, which is headed:

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- never cover that kind of story. So those bits I would 1
- 2 leave out.
- 3 MS PATRY HOSKINS: Is there something about the fact that
- 4 you are essentially a gossip website that means that
- 5 less credence is given by readers to the story that you
- 6 run than, say, if you were a national newspaper?
- 7 A. I probably should ask our readers.
- 8 Q. Do you think they take what you say with a pinch of
- 9
- 10 A. I would say that people look at things on the Internet
- 11 slightly differently. Things are written in
- 12 a tongue-in-cheek manner. You would probably take it
- 13 differently than if it was written in a national
- 14 newspaper.
- 15 Q. Is that because of the way that you are regulated, do
- 16 you think?
- A. I think that's just how -- as I said earlier -- people 17
- 18 use the Internet in a different way.
- 19 Q. I need to touch on the message board very briefly.
- 20 You've told us that registered users can use it to
- 21 discuss whatever they want. Presumably they can post 22
- a message almost instantaneously, and you have limited
- 23 control over what they're going to post. Do you control
- 24 the message board in any way? Do you have moderators or
- 25 anyone else who looks at the postings?

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- 1 "Max Beesley wins apology from Popbitch. Popbitch 2 agrees to its first ever statement in open court."
- 3 I don't want to relate the details of this back
- 4 publicly, but it's clear from this report that following
- 5 a story that you published about Mr Beesley in the
- 6 Popbitch newsletter, he contacted you to point out that
- 7 the story was incorrect. This led to a successful libel
- 8
- action and you paid substantial damages to Mr Beesley 9
- and had to carry an apology to Mr Beesley. Is that an
- 10 accurate summary of what happened?
- A. It is, yes. 11
- 12 Q. Can you tell me what went wrong on that particular
- 13 occasion and whether you have ever had to pay damages
- 14 since then to any other celebrity?
- A. This was a story that appeared to come from two very 15
- 16 good sources and I wrote it in good faith, but I made
- 17 a misjudgment and I have to hold my hands up and say
- 18 that on this occasion this was wrong. But, no, since
- 19 there there hasn't been anything.
- 20 Q. Did you learn anything from that particular experience?
- 21 A. Yeah, you learn not to get things wrong. I think you
- 22 also learn the value of negotiation and mediation with
  - anybody that makes a complaint as speedily as you can.
- 24 Q. Can I ask you about paragraph 30 of your statement,
- 25 please. You say this:

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- 1 "Some newspapers have tried to use Popbitch to post 2 stories that they wouldn't do themselves so that they 3 can quote them as being on the Internet and therefore 4 they can publish as in the public domain. I have tried 5 to avoid Popbitch being used for this purpose." 6 Can I ask you a little bit about that? First of 7 all, "some newspapers", do you mean -- let me find a 8 fair way of putting it. Do you mean tabloid newspapers, 9 broadsheet newspapers or both? 10 A. I mean both. 11 Q. I'm not going to ask you to give me specific examples 12 unless you want to, but what's your understanding of why 13 they come to you and try to persuade you to publish 14 a story, despite the fact that they themselves have 15 chosen not to? Is it to pass on litigation risk? 16 Presumably they have to ask themselves the same 17 questions as you about privacy and public interest. Why 18 do they do this? 19 A. From the stories involved, I'm not sure it would be
- 20 a litigation risk, but perhaps they have commercial 21 considerations in newspapers, the subject matter might 22 be something that their editor would not -- would be 23 worried about. Maybe it's politically difficult for 24 them, and therefore if something is out there on the 25 Internet and said to be in the public domain, they could Page 65

- Q. You do publish information, you accept all of that?
- A. Mm-hm.
- 3 Q. Perhaps I can guess the answer to this, but I want to
- 4 ask whether you think sites like yours ought to be
- 5 regulated other than just by having your own rules and
- 6 procedures in place, but should be regulated in the same
- 7 way as other outlets that publish information, such as
- 8 newspapers, magazines and so on, and if not, why not?
- A. Being an Internet publisher is different. We do publish
- 10 in the UK, but we publish around the world, we have
- 11 servers around the world, and we try and comply with
- 12 local law. And therefore the same regulation for
- 13 magazines and newspapers would probably be -- it may or
- 14 may not be useful for us.
- 15 In the future, whatever the Inquiry proposes I think
- 16 we would look at very carefully to see whether we
  - thought it was something that we thought would be useful
- 18 for us to sign up to.
- 19 Q. Have you heard any of the proposals that have been
  - floated during the course of this Inquiry?
- 21 A. I've been watching some of the Inquiry, but if you
- 22 would --

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- 23 Q. Have you noted anything that concerns you about some of
- 24 the proposals that have been floated?
- 25 A. I've been watching it more for the press information, Page 67

- 1 then quote that and write the story.
- 2 Q. Do I understand your answer to mean that they may not --
- 3 say the story is about a particular politician, they
- 4 don't want to offend that particular politician, or they
- 5 may have a commercial reason for not wanting to offend
- 6 someone, therefore they would ask you to publish it so
- 7 they can say "It wasn't my fault, it was already out
- 8 there"; is that it in a nutshell?
- A. You wouldn't be far wrong.
- 10 Q. How often does this happen?
- 11 A. It hasn't happened often and not for some time. I think
- 12 now there are very easy ways for people to get stories
- 13 on the Internet through social media.
- 14 Q. Right. When you said that you've tried to avoid
- 15 Popbitch being used for these purposes, does that mean
- 16 you generally say no to such requests?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. What if the information is really interesting and you
- 19 did want to publish it? Would you still say no?
- 20 A. That hasn't yet happened.
- 21 Q. Now, the thorny issue of regulation.
- 22 A. Mm-hm.
- 23 Q. Obviously you're not members of the PCC. You do run
- 24 this website as a business, though?
- 25 A. Mm-hm.

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- 1 I think.
- 2 O. I understand.
- 3 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Let me give you an insight into
- 4 questions I've been asking, not conclusions I've
- 5 reached. But before I do, would it be fair to say that
- 6 the underlying ethos of your business is rather
- 7 different from that which you might think from the
- 8 second part of its name? There was an article in the
  - Independent, which quoted you and said:
- 10 "We've been happy to prick the pomposity of some of
- 11 the big stars over the years, but it was always meant to
- 12 be done with love. Other sites are more cynical. If
- 13 you don't love the world of celebrity and pop culture in
- 14 some way, it's very easy to be nasty about it."
- 15 Therefore would it be fair to say that what you're
- 16 doing is very gently to poke a bit of fun at people and
- 17 not to try and make statements or invade them in any
- 18

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- 19 A. That would be our attempt. That's what we're aiming
- 20 for.
- 21 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I understand. And for that reason it
- 22 may be that where you don't necessarily get things
- 23 right, that doesn't mean to say that the person affected
- 24 doesn't have a sense of humour and can live with it,
- 25 which may be the difference. I'm not saying it is,

1	I don't know. But if I just test it with a slightly	1	every week, otherwise we get we had a privacy
2	different story, I rather gather from what you've said,	2	injunction against us in 2009, which was up at the Court
3	but tell me if you agree with me, that the mere fact	3	of Appeal last year, so this does affect us greatly, but
4	that somebody was a Premier League footballer, not	4	I guess what we don't normally the stories we would
5	a particularly famous one, but he played in the Premier	5	normally look at are not the kiss-and-tell kind of
6	League, wouldn't necessarily mean that if you learnt	6	stories, which I think, to at least some degree, is
7	that he was having an affair, you would put it in your	7	where the injunction versus freedom of expression battle
8	article?	8	has been fought so far.
9	A. Yes.	9	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Not just kiss-and-tell.
10	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Because there's nothing funny about	10	A. No.
11	that.	11	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: The trouble about life is it hits you
12	A. "Man has affair" is not necessarily a big story.	12	in so many different ways you can't articulate them all.
13	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes. But some lighter story might	13	A. It's such a grey area, that we don't where that line
14	get in, not because it really did reveal some deep	14	is we're trying to find it as well.
15	hypocrisy but because it just provides a slightly	15	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: That's the point. That's why
16	different reflection, a lighter reflection?	16	I wonder whether you it's not for me to give you
17	A. Yes.	17	advice, but actually to read the code, I appreciate some
18	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Would that be fair? So when you tall	¢18	of it won't touch you, but as a piece, it actually
19	about hypocrisy, we've used that word in a very, very	19	provides a window on how these issues could be solved,
20	clear, pure sense. You're using it in a slightly	20	and that brings me to the issue that Ms Patry Hoskins
21	lighter sense?	21	was asking you about, which is how one brings everybody
22	A. That is largely true, but if the story was "Footballer	22	into a common standard. I'm not sure that there is
23	who had built his whole personal brand on being married	23	a great difference between what you do and what
24	but was having an affair", that would be a story.	24	newspapers do. You liken yourself to Private Eye.
25	"Footballer has affair" wouldn't be a story.	25	Private Eye is printed, you are digital. I'm not so
	Page 69		Page 71
1	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes, but	1	sure I understand that there is really a difference
2	A. For us.	2	between those two. And the question is whether it isn't
3	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: that gets us into the whole issue	3	sensible, and in the public interest you'll forgive
4	which you may have seen reflected in the decision in the	4	me for using that word that there is a common set of
5	case of Rio Ferdinand, which actually was fought out in	5	standards.
6	this building, and the balancing exercise that judges	6	Now, applying it from your perspective, from your
7	have to do to decide whether the Article 8 rights to	7	point of view, might lead to a slightly different result
8	privacy	8	in a case because of the way you are going to tell
9	A. Of course.	9	a story and because of what you're trying to do, but
10	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: which bind you just as much as	10	that doesn't necessarily mean there shouldn't be
11	they bind everybody else	11	a common standard, and if there should be, how one
12	A. We know.	12	brings people in. To some extent you've identified that
13	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: override the Article 10 rights of	13	you'll see what I have to say and then make some
14	freedom of expression. That's the balance.	14	decisions, unless I behave in such a way that you don't
15	A. Yes.	15	have a much of a decision to make
16	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It may be that you coming into this	16	A. Of course.
17	exercise in the way that you've described, jokes among	17	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: depending on whether anybody pays
18	friends, suddenly an explosion of interest in that, so	18	any attention to what I say, and I recognise that I will
19	more readers than some of the broadsheet publications,	19	produce a report which somebody will decide to act upon
20	on the basis of the number of people you're emailing out	20	or not.
21	to, hasn't required you to come up to the hard	21	In the light of all that, I'd like to know whether
		22	you think that that might be helpful, and help you
22	decisions I'm sure you did in relation to the libel		•
23	action, that's a rude awakening that are actually	23	manoeuvre your way, rather than having to reinvent the
23 24	action, that's a rude awakening that are actually forming the basis of the work of the Inquiry?	24	wheel, through these difficult issues where people with
23	action, that's a rude awakening that are actually		

1 get larger and larger, may be more and more prepared to 2

3 So that's the first question. I'll carry on and 4 then you can answer all.

The second would be whether it would be valuable to have somebody, have a body, not just a lawyer, although I don't decry lawyers, perhaps not surprisingly, but somebody with experience in the field of journalism who you can pick up the phone to and ask, "This is a bit of a call, what's your view?" You won't necessarily be bound by that, but just to have that advisory, to be

12 alert when somebody has complained and is concerned 13 about the risk of harassment, so that you know when

14 that's happening, so that you're aware of it, and

15 possibly to have an arbitral system of some sort 16 available to you if somebody wants to make a fuss, which 16

you can resolve without having to go to extremely

expensive lawyers and indulge in the sort of litigation that it's clear, from what you've said, you have

experience of.

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So that's the sort of construct that I'm thinking about. Now, whether it's made to be binding or whether it is in some sense consensual is one of the big issues that -- and you will have read on the website, if you've read any of the evidence or seen it, that editor after

1 regulation and therefore you have your problem of people

2 coming from different areas and publishing to the UK but

3 not being regulatable by them.

4 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But you could be.

5 A. I could be.

LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Unless you went to live in America

7 and did it from there.

8 A. Yes. But it's -- actually I don't think it is even that

on the Internet. The servers could be from America.

10 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: You'd have to be careful about where

11 you're publishing. Who is the publisher.

12 A. Of course. But all -- I guess something to think of is

13 how many Internet publishers are going to think of doing

14 this, and how many are going to take the opportunity of

15 being, I guess, a global -- a potentially global

enterprise and not being part of a regulatory system.

LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes, I understand that, but if 17

18 a journalist published for money in the UK, then it's

19 not entirely obvious why any system which covers

20 journals published in the UK shouldn't cover --

21 A. No, I understand. And it may well prove to be that this

22 is a very useful mechanism for us to join. But, as

23 I said, it would have to be something that we would look

24 at down the line.

25 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Or, California beckons. Page 75

1 editor is very concerned about the principle of

2 self-regulation, and I understand why, although I don't

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3 think it means quite how you used it in your statement.

4 A. No.

5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But the critical thing is that

everybody is involved. There can't be different people

7 shooting off in different directions, because that

8 doesn't lend for balance, or indeed fairness in the 9

public interest.

I'm not trying to sell you something which I haven't yet formulated in my mind, but I am asking you to consider, in the light of all that I've said, what you think about those ideas, because it's obvious that because of your difficulties you've had to think about them, and doubtless for the purposes of giving evidence, which is why that paragraph about public interest appears. So that's the general idea, without committing myself to anything, and without committing you to

anything. 20 A. Everything you say is very interesting and it could well

21 be a very useful thing for us to sign up to. With being 22 an Internet product, it would be just as easy for us to,

23 I guess, be published from America or something like

24 that, and therefore perhaps not me but a lot of people 25

on the Internet might choose to not sign up for Page 74

A. I've heard it's nice this time of year.

MS PATRY HOSKINS: You've covered all my questions, so

3 unless Ms Wright wanted to add anything, those are all

4

LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: No. I think there is a difference,

6 and if the article in the Independent to which I've

7 referred is right, it may be that the nastier stories

8 which may appear in other Internet magazines which have

9 set up since yours will cause more concern, which only

10 serves to underline why the rules have to cover

11 everybody, even if in 99.9 per cent of the cases none of

12 it would touch what you are trying to do for your

13 audience. Does that make sense?

14 A. It makes sense to me. I guess the ongoing issue that we

have with the Internet, and you touched upon with

16 Facebook, is as things -- technology is constantly

17 evolving. Who considers themselves a journalist, who

18 considers themselves a broadcaster, who considers

19 themselves a blogger, the world is changing as these

20 platforms change. How you deal with that, I guess, is

21 vet another challenge.

22 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Yes. But I think that I might see

there's a distinction between Facebook, where one person

24 is communicating with their friends --

A. Or, say, somebody on Twitter amasses tens of thousands Page 76

15

1	of followers.	
2	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Or Twitter, or Twitter and	
3	organisations that are in the business of selling	
4	themselves by reference to news or information. That's	
5	the difference between the pub chatter, to take the	
	analogy that was mentioned before, and that which the	
6 7	state and I don't mean government, I say immediately,	
8		
	but the broad corpus, all of us has an interest in	
9	seeing is conducted on a level playing field. Whether	
10	that's achievable is the very centre of the Inquiry.	
11	Thank you very much indeed.	
12	A. Thank you.	
13	MS PATRY HOSKINS: Thank you. That concludes the evidence	
14	for today, sir.	
15	LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you very much indeed.	
16	(4.09 pm)	
17	(The hearing adjourned until 10 o'clock on 30 January 2012)	
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