The apologies and corrections were published in the summer 2020 edition of Wetherspoon News. Unfortunately, a small number of inaccuracies was reported in the early part of this year. Wetherspoon is grateful to The Guardian and The Times for issuing the apology and corrections below.

It’s fair to say that more people seem to read Wetherspoon’s press release, update smaller pubs on the cheap” and that it planned to buy “pubs driven to financial ruin”.

Released by J D Wetherspoon on 22 January 2021

A Guardian newspaper article (31 January), following the announcement of an equity placing by Wetherspoon on the same day, said that “Wetherspoon moves to buy smaller pubs on the cheap amid Covid crisis” and that “it is targeting pubs in central London”.

These statements are completely untrue. Wetherspoon operates pubs which are three or four times larger than average and rarely “targets” existing pubs.

Wetherspoon’s press release on 19 January said that the company is “considering... a number of properties in central London, the freehold reversions of pubs which is the tenant, and properties adjacent to successful pubs.”

All the company’s pubs in central London had other uses before Wetherspoon’s occupation - for example, the headoffice of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the former Marque Club and the former ballroom of the Great Eastern Hotel.

Wetherspoon chairman Tim Martin said “The downfall of the company is “considering... a number of properties in central London, the freehold reversions of pubs which is the tenant, and properties adjacent to successful pubs.”

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Rachel Reeves contacted a correspondent on Twitter which said that Wetherspoon “refused to pay its 40,000 employees until it receives its Govt loan... after first refusing to lock down altogether”. Both statements are complete fiction.

Jo Stevens, in a most brazen lie, said: “After a session in front of 6 Rachel Reeves MPs, The Caterer’s BEIS committee, Wetherspoon has u-turned on decision not to pay 43,000 staff while pubs are shut.”

In fact, Wetherspoon never refused to pay staff, as newspapers have now admitted, and I never appeared in front of Rachel Reeves’ BEIS parliamentary committee.

Pages 4–5 of this magazine, explain, to Boris Johnson and the government, the importance of truth. The elite Rachel Reeves, a graduate of Oxford University and an alumn of the Bank of England, and Jo Stevens, a graduate and solicitor, should both reflect on how that mantra applies to them.

Unbelievable, their fictional Twitter comments remain in place today – more than a year later.

The full story is on pages 62–63.

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In the immediate aftermath of the first lockdown, in early 2020, a number of inaccurate statements regarding Wetherspoon appeared in the press. When media organisations were made aware of the inaccurate information, they immediately corrected the incorrect positions and apologies were published in the BBC, Sky, the Times, the Independent, the Sun, the Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Star, among a number of publications.

The corrections and apologies have been published in Wetherspoon News, a magazine for pub customers (see link: https://www.wetherspoon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/press-corrections-20210128.pdf). However, Bloomberg Businessweek, a weekly magazine, published an article recently, containing many inaccuracies, which, apart from a few points, it has refused to correct. Some of the inaccuracies may seem minor, but they have been used as a “factual” base, which creates an unfavourable impression of Wetherspoon.

For example, the article says that Wetherspoon is “sacrificing worker pay for affordable prices”. However, Wetherspoon pays at or above the rates of its main competitors and at or above the rates of McDonald’s, for example. Since our prices are substantially lower, it is not surprising that, in these times, it is untrue, and illogical, to say that there has been a “sacrifice”, as Bloomberg has asserted.

In addition, Wetherspoon has awarded bonuses and free shares to employees on a historic basis. Consequently, many of these employees paid tax, in the last 15 years (see table below). Approximately 83% of the awards have been employees working in pubs. 13% were employees working in the company. Since the share scheme was introduced, Wetherspoon has awarded 20.6 million shares, approximately 5% of the shares in issue today. Few companies in any industry match this record, which further undermines the Bloomberg allegation of a “sacrifice”.

The article also says that Wetherspoon “took advantage of a beer supply surplus to secure cheap contracts”. This is pure fiction. Wetherspoon beer contracts usually run for five to ten years and beer is brewed in short cycles of a few weeks; therefore, current demand is therefore reasonable to claim that Wetherspoon secured “contracts” due to an imaginary, short-term “beer surplus”.

The article says that Wetherspoon plays “host to drunken students”. “Playing host”, which infers a premeditated strategy, would be unlawful, since pubs have a legal obligation, strictly enforced by the licensing authorities, to prevent drunkenness. Pub liquor licences can be lost if they are not used as a “factual” base, which creates an unfavourable impression of Wetherspoon.

However, Bloomberg Businessweek, a weekly magazine, has been used as a “factual” base, which creates an unfavourable impression of Wetherspoon.

The article repeats the myth, since corrected by, for example, the Times, that the breakfast was only available at “Tesco”.

I only decided to “vote leave”, as did millions of others, following the then Prime Minister’s difficulty in obtaining the “fundamental (EU) reform” he had sought in early 2016. It is obviously ridiculous to describe someone as a “filing skeptic” of the EU, if they decide to “vote leave” at the age of 60.

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FAKE NEWS. MP URGES TO WITHDRAW FICTITIOUS CLAIM

Wetherspoon says an MP invented a story in which its chairman, Tim Martin, appeared before the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee (BEIS), whose chair is Rachel Reeves, now Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (she has since left her position on the BEIS Committee).

As a result of the fictitious meeting in front of Ms Reeves’ committee, the MP alleged that Wetherspoon changed its policy towards paying staff.

Jo Stevens, MP for Cardiff Central, said on Twitter (25 March): “After a session in front of @RachelReevesMP & CommonsBEIS Wetherspoons have u-turned on decision not to pay 43,000 staff while pubs are shut. Staff to be paid on April 3 and weekly after that. Good news, but people won’t forget political pressure forced your hand Tim Martin”

Wetherspoon’s chairman, Tim Martin, said: “These comments by Jo Stevens refer to a meeting which never happened. I was never asked to appear in front of Rachel Reeves’ committee, which was critical of Wetherspoon, had appeared on the BEIS website, but my reply had not. An e-mail was sent with the video, saying: ‘All employees will be paid and the pubs reopen. People won’t forget political pressure forced your hand Tim Martin’.

‘It’s also completely untrue to say that Wetherspoon had decided not to pay 43,000 staff while pubs are shut.

‘In a video recorded on Sunday 22 March, less than two days after the pubs shut, and three days before Ms Stevens’ comments, I said: ‘All our endeavours are going to be on trying to make sure you get your money and the pubs reopen’.

‘An e-mail was sent with the video, saying: ‘All employees will be paid as normal on Friday 27 March for all hours worked up to and including Sunday 22 March’.

‘Mr Martin added: ‘Ms Stevens’ comments also appear on the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers’ Union’s website and so will inevitably mislead the public.

‘During the Leveson Inquiry, MPs made it abundantly clear that journalists have a duty to correct misleading statements.’

Jo Stevens invents a fictitious meeting. (Twitter 25 March 2020)

Jo Stevens MP’s invention of a fictitious appearance in front of Ms Reeves’ BEIS Committee and about other matters.

Tim says: “I wrote to Rachel Reeves MP, chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee (BEIS) on 2 April 2020 and copied all committee members, to complain about Jo Stevens MP’s invention of a fictitious appearance in front of the committee.

“I also complained that a letter sent by Ms Reeves, which was critical of Wetherspoon, had appeared on the BEIS website, but my reply had not.

“I did not receive a reply from Ms Reeves, but received one from another MP, a member of the committee, regarding an earlier letter from Ms Reeves.”

Editor’s note: Tim Martin explains how he wrote to Rachel Reeves MP to complain about Jo Stevens MP’s invention of a fictitious appearance in front of Ms Reeves’ BEIS Committee and about other matters.

The MP said: “the reference (by Rachel Reeves) to the ‘committee’s deep concerns’ does not include me. To my knowledge, the letter was sent without consultation with the committee. Committee meetings had previously been cancelled in line with guidance for entry to the parliamentary estate…”

In conclusion, Rachel Reeves MP had written to Wetherspoon, expressing her ‘committee’s concerns’, but without the knowledge of committee members.

Jo Stevens MP had stated to her followers, tagging or copying in Rachel Reeves, that I (Tim Martin) had appeared in front of the committee, which was untrue; my reply to Rachel Reeves’ accusations was not visible on the BEIS website at the time – and I received no reply from Rachel Reeves to the letter below.

Rachel Reeves MP
Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA
2 April 2020

Dear Rachel

CC: Members of the BEIS Committee

Further to our recent correspondence, you will be concerned to note that Jo Stevens MP told her Twitter followers on 25 March that: ‘After a session in front of @RachelReevesMP & CommonsBEIS Wetherspoons have u-turned on decision not to pay 43,000 staff while pubs are shut. Staff to be paid on April 3 and weekly after that. Good news, but people won’t forget political pressure forced your hand Tim Martin’

As you and your colleagues are aware, no such ‘session in front of your committee ever took place – and Wetherspoon never said that it wouldn’t pay its staff while its pubs were shut. Wetherspoon actually said the opposite to staff on Sunday 22 March, two days after pubs were closed

“All our endeavours are going to be on trying to make sure you get your money and the pubs reopen.”

You will also be concerned that the highly misleading comments from Ms Stevens appear on the BFAWU website – and are likely, therefore, to have misled the public.

As an aside, I note that your letter to me of 24 March is publicly displayed on the UK Parliament website, yet our replies are not. On 30 March, we were told by your committee sponsor, Ian Cran, that you would be “publishing both replies shortly.”

I am sure that the committee does not wish to mislead the public, or MPs, as a public correction of Ms Stevens’ comments and the publication of Wetherspoon’s responses to your letter would surely be advisable.

Best wishes

Tim Martin, Chairman
J D Wetherspoon plc