

Tim says: "As Wetherspoon News readers will know, the BBC, SKY, The Times, The Independent, the Daily Mail, the Daily Mirror and many others issued apologies and/or corrections in respect of media inaccuracies following the first lockdown in 2020.

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 the incorrect versions than the subsequent corrections – yet, even so, correcting something quickly and a commitment to accuracy make a big difference to any publication's credibility.

The same can't be said for American publication Bloomberg Businessweek – which published an article riddled with basic factual errors (see page 61) which it appears reluctant to correct.

UK readers, who know and visit our pubs, will easily see that the offending article is cobblers – but American readers, who do not have this opportunity, may believe that it is telling the truth.

The most surprising behaviour of the mad March days of 2020 relates to two senior MPs, Rachel Reeves and Jo Stevens.

Rachel Reeves concocted a story 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 @RachelReevesMP @CommonsBEIS Wetherspoons have 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 ever 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 alumnae of the Bank of England, and Jo Stevens, a graduate and solicitor, should both reflect on how that mantra applies to them.

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

● The full story is on pages 62–63.

the guardian

Following an announcement by the company, in which it raised some money on the London stock market (a 'share placing'), The Guardian newspaper made some highly inaccurate comments, which it has now agreed to correct.

In an article dated 19 January 2021, The Guardian said that Wetherspoon planned to "buy up smaller pubs on the cheap" and that it planned to buy "pubs driven to financial ruin".

The company issued a press release (see 1 below) which corrected The Guardian's article.

The Guardian issued an apology and correction (see 2 below). The company is grateful to The Guardian for issuing a rapid correction and apology.

1. Wetherspoon's press release:

Released by J D Wetherspoon on 22 January 2021

A Guardian newspaper article (19 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 reversion of pubs of which it 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 headquarters of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the former Marquee Club and the former ballroom of the Great Eastern Hotel.

Wetherspoon chairman Tim Martin said: "The downfall of the master spy Karla in John Le Carré's epic novel was precipitated by creating a fictitious "legend for a girl".

The Guardian should avoid legends and stick to the truth, lest it suffers the same fate as Karla.

2. Correction and apology by The Guardian newspaper, dated 22 January 2021:

"This article was amended on 22 January 2021, Wetherspoon has not stated that it intends to buy up "smaller pubs" as the headline of the earlier version said.

This was an error based on reported plans by the Redcat Pub Company.

Neither did Wetherspoon's recent statement to investors say it planned to buy pubs in general as the article said. Rather the company announced that it is, "considering the acquisition of a number of properties in central London, the freehold reversions of pubs of which it is currently the tenant, and properties adjacent to successful pubs".

We apologise to J D Wetherspoon for these errors. "

THE TIMES

The Times agreed to print a correction (see below), following an article dated 12 November 2020 which made inaccurate comments about the company. The correction appeared in the newspaper on 12 February.

Corrections and clarifications

"On November 12 we reported on comments by Tim Martin, of JD Wetherspoon, and said "Go work at Tesco" was his employee-friendly cry" (Bitter Truth, Nov 12). In fact Mr Martin told employees that supermarkets needed staff in the pandemic. Staff offered that work could take it and that they would be given priority at JD Wetherspoon should they return.

We are happy to make that clear. "

Tim says: "In an interview with leading hospitality magazine The Caterer, dated 19 February 2021, TV chef and restaurant owner Angela Hartnett, who used to work for Gordon Ramsay, criticised Wetherspoon for "destroying" communities. Wetherspoon responded to this rather unusual allegation in the letter below."

THE CATERER (19 February 2021)

Ms Hartnett was asked by the interviewer in the magazine: "Have people realised the importance of restaurants to communities?"

Angela Hartnett answered:

"One thing that has changed since I started working in the industry 30 years ago is that everywhere in London now has its own neighbourhood.

"I live in east London and I don't need to leave my doorstep to get great Japanese, great Indian, great fish and chips.

"Restaurants have become very local; people go to their local restaurant.

"Pubs are equally as important, and I think pubs are going to suffer far more than restaurants after lockdown because pubs generally were on their way down.

"Companies like Wetherspoon have destroyed that community – the lovely pub on the corner – and I think they really will suffer. "

Reply by Wetherspoon to The Caterer (5 March 2021):

Dear Editor

Angela Hartnett (The Caterer, 19 Feb) says that her East London neighbourhood has "great Japanese, great Indian and great fish and chips" and that "companies like Wetherspoon destroyed" that sort of community. However, Ms Hartnett should consider a number of points before criticising Wetherspoon.

Wetherspoon paid £764 million of taxes in 2019, one pound in every thousand collected by the government, a major community contribution.

Wetherspoon employs 37,516 people, 15,032 of whom own shares in the company, and has won many awards for training and staff development.

In the last 15 years, Wetherspoon has awarded bonuses and free shares costing £428 million to staff, a sum equivalent to 55% of our profits after tax.

Wetherspoon has won more awards from English Heritage and CAMRA

for the design and restoration of old and listed buildings than any other company.

Wetherspoon also has more pubs listed in the Good Beer Guide than any other company and has the highest rating of any large pub company on the local authority-run "scores on the doors" scheme, with an average score of 4.96 out of 5.

Around 95% of Wetherspoon pubs are outside the central London area where Angela lives and works.

Many of these areas don't have "great Japanese" on the doorstep and Wetherspoon pubs, as their success indicates, are popular in local communities.

Yours sincerely

Eddie Gershon, spokesman
J D Wetherspoon plc
Watford, Hertfordshire

Forbes

US business magazine Forbes made a large number of mistakes in two articles about Wetherspoon.

Wetherspoon sent the press release, below, as a correction, which was published by the London Stock Exchange:

Wetherspoon's press release: 7 May 2020 JD Wetherspoon plc ("the company")

Correction – Forbes:

Articles published online by the business magazine Forbes, on 27 March and 3 May 2020, made a number of factually incorrect statements regarding the company.

It was alleged that the company told the "workforce that not only would they not be paid, but they can trot off to get a job in a supermarket".

As regards pay, a company video, recorded on Sunday 22 March (transcript below, appendix 1), actually said, "all our endeavours are going to be on trying to make sure that you get your money and that the pubs reopen".

An email, sent out with the video, said: "All hourly paid employees will be paid as normal on Friday 27 March for all hours worked up to, and including, Sunday 22 March 2020."

Staff were paid on that Friday and have been paid on every Friday since.

The statement in Forbes that staff were told they could "trot off to get a job in a supermarket" is misleading.

The video actually said: "If you're offered a job in a supermarket, many of you will want to do that.

"If you think it's a good idea, do it... I promise you, we'll give you first preference if you want to come back."

Furloughed pub and restaurant staff are legally allowed to receive extra income if they work for supermarkets as well.

Forbes also said that the company "announced that... pubs WILL (Wetherspoon capitals) open sometime in June." That is also incorrect.

In a stock exchange announcement on 29 April, Wetherspoon said: "The company's current assumptions are that its pubs will remain closed until late June 2020".

The assumptions related to the modelling of two financial "scenarios", for the benefit of investors, which necessitated an estimated opening date.

The date was only an estimate and the company made clear that it would only open when permitted by the government.

As a result of the press release, Forbes changed the headline of its article and also printed the following at the end of the article:

"Correction: In response to this article, JD Wetherspoon issued the following statement:

Mr Martin did not say his employees should get a job at a supermarket but accepted that if they were offered a job in a supermarket, he would understand if they wanted to take it. He also did not threaten or indeed withhold any employee pay.

Neither Mr Martin or Wetherspoon have refused to pay suppliers. Wetherspoon has paid all supplier invoices due up to the end of March and the majority (83%) of suppliers have been paid in full.

At no point has Wetherspoon or Mr Martin said that it intends to or will open its pubs in June, in breach of lockdown restrictions. No reopening date has been decided – and its pubs and hotels will only reopen when allowed to do so by the Government. "

sky news

Sky News inaccurately reported in its online article of 30 April 2020 that:

“Mr Martin ... angrily [suggested] his 43,000 staff go to work for Tesco” and that he “threaten[ed] to withhold wages until compensation from the government arrived.” It was also incorrectly reported that the company was “targeting a reopening date in June” and that the “the pub chain argued it should stay open during the coronavirus lockdown.”

After Wetherspoon contacted Sky News to correct the inaccurate, misleading statements, it published the following correction on its website:

“**Correction:** This story has been updated to more accurately reflect previous comments by Tim Martin. We have removed our interpretation that Mr Martin “angrily” suggested employees seek jobs at Tesco and that his stated position amounted to a threat to withhold pay.”

MailOnline

In relation to Wetherspoon opening in June, as mentioned in two articles, the Daily Mail online offered to publish the following correction and clarification:

“**Correction:** In articles dated 29 and 30 April 2020, we reported on the pub chain Wetherspoon’s plans to reopen in June. We have been asked to make clear that Wetherspoon does not plan to open its pubs and hotels in June in breach of lockdown restrictions and will only reopen its pubs and hotels when allowed to do so by the Government.”

It also stated that it would include the statement from Wetherspoon’s spokesman Eddie Gershon:

“**Correction:** Wetherspoon spokesman Eddie Gershon said: “Wetherspoon has no hotline to the government as to when pubs might be permitted to reopen and we doubt if the government itself has yet made a decision on this. Like all companies we are trying to make a plan for the future and are guessing that they may be allowed to reopen in late June, around three months after they closed. However, that is just an estimate and may prove to be entirely incorrect. Wetherspoon, like all pub companies, closed its doors when ordered to do so by the government – and will only reopen when it is permitted to do so.”

DAILY Mirror

The Daily Mirror Online (4 May 2020) said:

“Lockdown has taught us all a lesson – but what was it, exactly?” that “The Wetherspoons boss sack[ed] his staff and [told] them to work for Tesco.”

Following Wetherspoon representations, the Daily Mirror removed the above incorrect statement.

In a separate article of 30 April 2020, the Daily Mirror said:

“Wetherspoon’s plans to reopen pubs ‘in or around June’ the paper has removed the following incorrect content of the article, which stated that there has been a “a U-turn on wages” and “Wetherspoons boss tells 40,000 staff ‘to go work at Tesco’ instead.”

Following Wetherspoon’s representations, the Daily Mirror printed the correction below:

“**Correction:** The article originally stated Mr Martin “prompted anger and eventually a U-turn on wages after suggesting staff should ‘go and work in Tesco’”. A video caption also stated Mr Martin “tells 40,000 staff to ‘go to work at Tesco’”. We accept Mr Martin did not tell staff to work in Tesco or use the words “go and work in Tesco”. Instead, he said if staff thought it was a good idea to take a supermarket job, “do it, I can completely understand it.” We are happy to make this clear and apologise for the confusion. JD Wetherspoon also dispute that there was a “U-turn on wages”, because staff wages were paid on March 27 for hours worked up to March 23.

We have clarified the story to make clear there was an argument about furlough pay, not past wages, and that the firm confirmed on March 25 that staff would receive furlough pay from April 3 onwards.”

DAILY STAR

The Daily Star, in an article entitled ‘12 pints of lager and a packet of crisps, please!’, published in its newspaper and online on 30 April 2020, incorrectly stated that:

“JD Wetherspoon announced it will open its doors to drinkers again in a matter of weeks” and “the company said it wants to get back to serving booze “in or around June”. It added that the “suggestion could anger ministers.”

Wetherspoon contacted the Daily Star, which agreed to print the following correction:

“**Correction:** Our article ‘12 pints of lager & a packet of crisps, please!’ reported that JD Wetherspoon was ‘set to reopen in June’ and ‘will open its doors to drinkers again in a matter of weeks’. JD Wetherspoon have asked us to clarify that at no point has Wetherspoon said that it intends to or will open its pubs and hotels in June, and that no reopening date has been decided. We are happy to clarify this.”

Loughborough Echo

The Loughborough Echo incorrectly reported in an article printed on 15 April 2020 that:

“Wetherspoon’s decision not to pay its 43,000 staff during the Coronavirus epidemic reveals a major gap in the government’s pandemic response”, according to Professor Alistair Milne, an “expert in financial economics”.

Wetherspoon contacted the Loughborough Echo to ask it to correct the untrue statement and it printed the following:

“**Correction:** Our article ‘Retrospective insurance could save firms’ 15 April, reported findings of Professor Alistair Milne, of Loughborough University’s school of Business and Economics, which included the statement that ‘Wetherspoons took a decision not to pay its 43,000 staff during the coronavirus crisis’.

We have since been contacted by Tim Martin, chairman of JD Wetherspoon, who has advised that employees were paid as normal on Friday 27 March, and have been paid on every Friday since.’ We are happy to clarify this.”

Bloomberg Businessweek

Bloomberg Businessweek (an American weekly business magazine) wrote an article about Wetherspoon, dated 26 February 2021, which contained many inaccuracies. Wetherspoon’s chairman, Tim Martin, highlighted the inaccuracies in the company’s trading update

“In the immediate aftermath of the first lockdown, in early 2020, a number of inaccurate statements regarding Wetherspoon appeared in the media.

When media organisations were made aware of the inaccuracies, in line with normal journalistic principles, corrections and/or apologies were published by the BBC, SKY, the Times, the Independent, the Sun, the Daily Mail, the Daily Star, the Mirror, Forbes and others.

The corrections and apologies have been published in Wetherspoon News, a magazine for pub customers (see link: <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/~media/files/pdf-documents/events-2021/press-corrections-180321.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, publicly-quoted, pub competitors and at or above the rates of McDonald’s, for example. Since our prices are substantially lower than pub competitors, 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, equivalent to 55% of its profits after tax, in the last 15 years (see table below). Approximately 83% of the awards have been to employees working in pubs. 15,032 employees own shares in the company. Since the share scheme was introduced, Wetherspoon has awarded 20.6 million free shares to employees, approximately 16% 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, reflecting current demand. It is therefore nonsense to claim that Wetherspoon secured “contracts” due to an imaginary, short-term “beer supply 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 legislation is not adhered to. Wetherspoon has never, in its history, lost a licence on these grounds – or on any other grounds, although many companies have.

The Bloomberg article says that Wetherspoon “unlike traditional pubs ... divides its pubs into gridlike seating plans... reducing the frequency of chance interactions”. This claim is completely nonsensical. There is no observable difference between Wetherspoon seating layouts and those of many competitors. Indeed, since Wetherspoon normally converts unlicensed buildings, which vary in size and shape, into pubs, there is a vast difference in the type of seating layouts that are used. Implying some sort of strategy to reduce “chance interactions” is absurd.

I did not vote in the 2014 European elections, won by UKIP, which precipitated a referendum, nor did I ever personally campaign for there to be a referendum on the issue.

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 “lifelong skeptic” of the EU, if they decide to “vote leave” at the age of 60.

The article repeats the myth, since corrected by, for example, the Times, that I said “go work at Tesco”. I never said those words, as reputable news organisations have now acknowledged. In fact, I said, at a time of high anxiety about empty supermarket shelves, with Tesco alone seeking 45,000 extra workers, “if you think it’s a good idea (to work at a supermarket), do it, I can completely understand it. If you’ve worked for us before I promise you, we’ll give you first preference if you want to come back”. Bloomberg appears to be unaware that hospitality workers are entitled to earn a second income from supermarkets, in addition to their furlough payments.

The article says that Wetherspoon “leverage[d] its scale to beat out smaller competitors”. This is misleading. The main historical competitors to Wetherspoon, as is clearly obvious, have been large pub and restaurant companies, and supermarkets. Many smaller pub competitors, trading in close proximity to Wetherspoon, like Loungers, Fuller’s, Young’s and St Austell have grown substantially.

As a final example, the article incorrectly said that Wetherspoon “brought in” workers from Europe and “staff were as likely to be from Warsaw or Sofia as Wiltshire or Suffolk”. In fact, Wetherspoon did not “bring in” anyone - and only 8% of our workforce, invariably excellent employees, have European passports.

The article contains too many other errors to correct, without boring shareholders - including basic errors as to the number of pubs the company has operated at various stages.

Bloomberg is not a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (“IPSO”), the UK’s press regulatory body, which can compel corrections to inaccuracies. However, Bloomberg’s own code (“The Bloomberg Way”) says, “Show, don’t tell: back up statements with facts...”. It also says:

“Be accurate: there is no such thing as being first if the news is wrong”.

“The Bloomberg Way” was written by Bloomberg News Editor-in-Chief emeritus, Matthew Winkler. A possible explanation for the errors is that the UK journalist, who wrote the article, contacted HENRY Winkler, known as

“The Fonz”, by mistake. This may be unlikely, since The Fonz frequently intoned “exactamundo” and “correctamundo” – not a creed that is evident in the article.

The article says that Wetherspoon is “Most-loved, Most-hated”. “Most-hated” is tribal and sectarian, and is untrue. An independent market research survey by CGA BrandTrack of 5,000 consumers in 2018, for example, reported that Wetherspoon is “the preferred brand to eat out at”.

A similar survey in 2019, also by CGA BrandTrack, found that Wetherspoon was the “standout choice for branded drinking occasions”.

The article says that I (Tim Martin) am a “lifelong skeptic of the EU” and that I “began in the 1990s to push for Britain to prune its ties with Brussels, then to sever them entirely”. This is complete cobblers.

My first opposition to EU policy, which was NOT opposition to the EU itself, was when it was proposed that the UK join the euro in around 2000, following the failure of the euro’s predecessor, the exchange rate mechanism, in the early 1990s.”

Tim Martin, 19 March 2021, Wetherspoon’s interim trading statement

JO STEVENS MP • RACHEL REEVES MP

FAKE NEWS: MP URGED 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 MP refer to a meeting which never happened.

"I was never asked to appear in front of Rachel Reeves' committee, as both Ms Stevens and Ms Reeves know.

"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.

"Ms Stevens and Ms Reeves also have a duty to uphold these principles themselves."

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



Rachel Reeves confuses 'furlough' with 'Govt loan' and fibs that Wetherspoon refused to 'lock down'.
(Twitter 24 March 2020)



Rachel Reeves, MP



Jo Stevens, MP

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.

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."

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..."

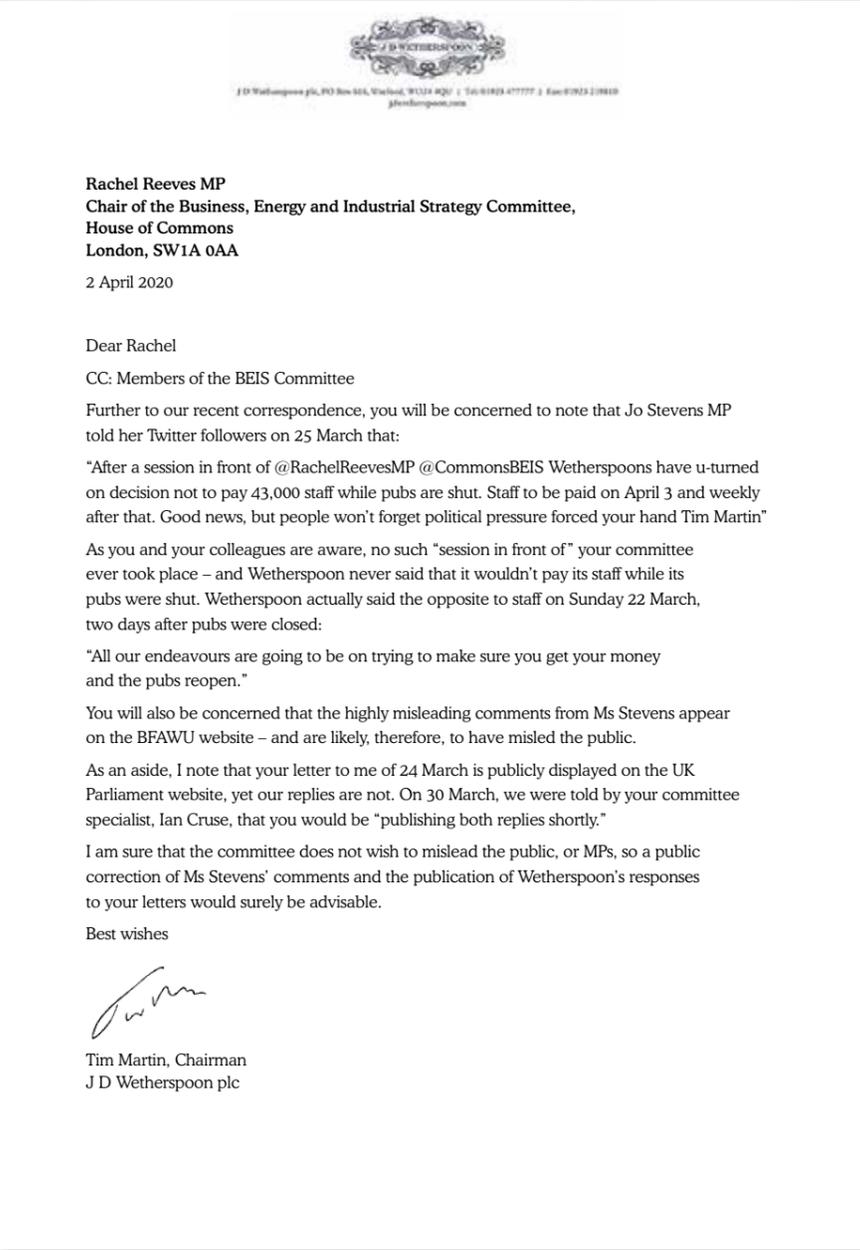
In conclusion, Rachel Reeves MP had written to Wetherspoon, expressing her 'committee's concerns', but without the knowledge of committee members.

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.

Editor's note: The correspondence between Rachel Reeves and Tim Martin is difficult to find on the BEIS section of the UK Parliament website, although a letter of 24 March from Rachel Reeves is more prominent.

Tim Martin's letter of 2 April, exhibited on this page, does not seem to be available at all on the website.

The correspondence between Rachel Reeves and Tim Martin is available on Wetherspoon's website (www.jdwetherspoon.com/RachelReevesMP).



Tim Martin, Chairman
J D Wetherspoon plc