

Our Ref: RGC/RH/CHR002-1
Your Ref:
Email: richard.cramer@frontrowlegal.com

Strictly Private & Confidential

FAO: Mr Laurence Moffitt

Sent by email only: laurencemoffitt@gmail.com

STRICTLY NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Date: 22 July 2013

Dear Sir

Mr Garth Christie, Mr Neil Christie, Hazel Products and Hazel Products (UK) Ltd: Claim for defamation

We act for Mr Garth Christie, Mr Neil Christie, Hazel Products and Hazel Products (UK) Ltd c/o Armley Road, Leeds, LS12 2EG ('our clients').

This letter is a formal notification of a claim within the meaning of the Defamation Pre-Action Protocol ('the Protocol'). We enclose at Annex 1 of this letter a copy of the Protocol.

Practice Direction on Pre-Action Conduct

- 1.1. In addition, this letter is being sent to you in accordance with the Practice Direction on Pre-Action Conduct (the PDPAC) contained in the CPR and a copy of the PDPAC is attached to this letter at Annex 2.
- 1.2. In particular, we refer you to paragraph 4 of the PDPAC concerning the court's powers to impose sanctions for failing to comply with its provisions. Ignoring this letter may lead to our clients commencing proceedings against you and may increase your liability for costs.
- 1.3. If you believe that this letter is in any way not compliant with the PDPAC then please let us know immediately.

IMPORTANT

- 1.4. Please note that any failure to follow the steps as set out by the PDPAC or ignoring this letter could potentially increase your liability for legal costs.
- 1.5. Please note that this letter contains important and time sensitive information. You should read the contents of this letter and take the action required of you by the stated deadlines.
- 1.6. Given the seriousness of this matter you are advised to take independent legal advice.
- 1.7. Please note that this letter is not for publication to anyone other than your legal advisor(s). Publishing this letter or copying it to anyone else is a breach of this firm's copyright for which you may be liable. Should you have any questions as to whom this letter may be copied, then please contact us.

2. OUR CLIENTS BACKGROUND AND REPUTATION

- 2.1. Garth and Neil Christie are father and son and are active members of Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC). In particular, Garth Christie is viewed as an 'elder' of PBCC in the UK.
- 2.2. They are involved in various successful business endeavours including Hazel Products and Hazel Products (UK) Ltd based in Leeds. It is widely recognised that due to their Christian beliefs, their business activities are conducted in an honest, upright and ethical way. Hazel Products was established in 1979 and has enjoyed growth and success, and provides employment for many staff members.

3. THE DEFAMATORY PUBLICATION AND MEANING

- 3.1. It has been brought to our clients' attention that you have been tweeting various defamatory comments about our clients on Twitter, the online social networking and microblogging service. We note that you identify yourself on Twitter as 'Laurie Moffitt @laurencemoffitt' with a photograph of yourself. There is therefore no doubt in our clients' mind that the offending tweets have been posted by you. It is clear from your Twitter page (<https://twitter.com/laurencemoffitt>) that it is a public account viewable to anyone with internet access, you have tweeted 652 times since 11 November 2012 and are currently following 385 members and have 80 followers. It is suffice to say you are an avid tweeter.
- 3.2. We have set out below examples (but not limited to) extracts of the defamatory tweets pertaining our clients, copies of which are enclosed at Annex 3 to this letter:

Tweet 1

"Garth Christie [our emphasis] of Hazel products Leeds [our emphasis] and Bruce Hazel of Trimline group London continue [our emphasis] to abuse [our emphasis] church members #PBCC [our emphasis]"

Tweeted at 11:04am - 7 July 2013

The reference to 'Garth Christie' is clearly that of our client.

The reference to 'Hazel products Leeds' is clearly that of our client.

The reference to '#PBCC' is clearly that of Plymouth Brethren Christian Church.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'continue' is to persist in an activity or process.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'abuse' is to use wrongly or improperly physically or mentally.

The clear innuendo of the above is that our clients persistently take advantage or exploit members of the church. The allegation is wholly untrue.

Tweet 2

"Bruce Hales & Garth Christie [our emphasis] work on youngsters [our emphasis] till they crack-its abusive [our emphasis] and moreover evil [our emphasis] #notchristian #pbcc"

Tweeted on 16 July 2013

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'youngsters' is a child or young person.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'abusive' is extremely offensive and insulting.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'evil' is profoundly immoral and malevolent.

The clear innuendo of the above is that our clients treat young people as slave labour that they do not comply with wage or employment laws. Again, the allegation is wholly untrue and unfounded.

Tweet 3

"Look at the way Hales & Christie [our emphasis] exclusive brethren [our emphasis] treat [our emphasis] gays[our emphasis] #shocking #PBCC <http://www.gaynz.com/blogs/quesera/?m=201209>"

Tweeted at 4:55 on 20 July 2013

The reference to 'Christie' is clearly that of our clients.

The reference to 'exclusive brethren' is clearly reference to a subset of the Christian evangelical movement generally described as the Plymouth Brethren.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'treat' is to behave towards or deal with in a certain way.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'gays' is reference to a homosexual.

The clear innuendo of the above is that it associates our clients with a publication of an unfounded article of a member of the church who left the church due to his sexuality and the treatment he allegedly received from the church during that time. The allegations against Mr Christie are wholly untrue.

Tweet 4

"Hales Exclusive brethren litigation [our emphasis] sanctioned in UK by Christie & Hazel a joke [our emphasis] & futile [our emphasis] #bringiton"

Tweeted at 4:58am on 20 July 2013

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'litigation' is reference to a legal proceeding in a court.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'joke' is to cause amusement or laughter.

The ordinary and natural meaning of 'futile' is pointless.

The clear innuendo of the above is that our client had given approval to commence court proceedings against you. At the time of when this tweet was posted, our client had not taken any legal action against you and therefore at the time, the content of the tweet was incorrect. Our clients now understand that the legal action you refer to was in respect of a pre-action protocol letter of claim sent to you on behalf of Bruce Hazel and not our clients. Furthermore, in the context of legal action it clearly shows that you have no regard to the matters being complained of by others.

Tweet 5

*"Exclusive brethren elders continue to **abuse** [our emphasis] **former members** [our emphasis] #Bruce Hazel #Garth Christie [our emphasis] <http://wikipeebia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Letter-to-Laurence-Moffitt.pdf>"*

Tweeted at 12:52 on 20 July 2013

The reference to 'former members' is clearly reference to former members of the PBCC.

The clear innuendo of the above is that our client, Mr Garth Christie, persistently takes advantage of former members of the PBCC. You then provide a link to a copy of the pre-action protocol letter of claim made against you by Mr Bruce Hazel which has no reference to our client and which was strictly marked 'not for publication'.

The overall content of the tweets described above are defamatory and are designed to discredit our clients. For the avoidance of doubt, the allegations made are all untrue and unfounded.

4. DAMAGE

- 4.1. The meaning of the tweets referred to above is highly defamatory of our clients and have caused significant harm to their personal and professional reputation. The tweets referred to in this letter are only samples of what appears to be a concerted campaign by you to cause significant damage. Our clients are continuing their investigation as to other potential defamatory comments made by you on Twitter and other social media platforms. It is suffice to say our clients are gravely concerned by the messages implied by your offending tweets which are completely opposite to the ethics and values that they actually stand for.
- 4.2. It is noted from your Twitter page that amongst the 80 members that are following you include some senior government personnel such as Andrew Selous MP, Paul Flynn MP, Baroness Berridge, Richard Stay Councillor all of whom would have seen the offending tweets. Our clients are extremely concerned therefore as to the reputational damage that has been done to their business interests and as to the consequent financial harm that has been, and will be, suffered on-going.
- 4.3. Mr Garth Christie and Mr Neil Christie are also personally distressed as to the damage that has been done to their own reputations as individuals. Once again the allegations implied by the tweets are completely at odds with their conduct and character and must immediately be brought to a halt to avoid further damage occurring.

5. ACTION REQUIRED

- 5.1. In view of the above, if proceedings are to be avoided, our clients require the following:
 - 5.1.1. An undertaking to remove and delete all defamatory tweets (including the ones stated above) from Twitter and indeed any other form of media forthwith;
 - 5.1.2. An undertaking that you will not repeat such behaviour on any form of media;
 - 5.1.3. An undertaking confirming that you will not under the guise of any post/tweet name repeat the same and/or make similar allegations on any form of media;
 - 5.1.4. A written apology to be posted on your Twitter page acknowledging that there is no truth whatsoever in the allegations made in any of the offending tweets;

5.1.5. Payment of legal fees which are currently £1,500.00 plus VAT (Total £1,800.00).

5.2. Our clients reserve their rights in relation to a claim for damages to compensate for damage and distress caused together with interest and costs. An acknowledgement to this letter together with the appropriate undertakings to remove and delete the tweets from your Twitter page and from all forums together with written apology should be provided no later than 4pm on Wednesday 24 July 2013. Your full response should be provided no later than 7 days after the date of this letter, namely by 12 noon on Monday 29 July 2013.

5.3. Payment of £1,800 should be remitted to the following account no later than 12 noon on 29 July 2013:

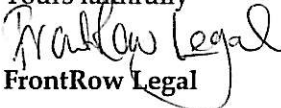
The Co Operative, Bank Sort Code 08-90-72, Account Number 68233877, FrontRow Legal.
Please quote reference: RGC/CHR002-1.

5.4. Our clients reserve all their rights, including the right to commence proceedings against you (without further reference to you should that prove necessary) for libel and to seek an order for damages plus interest and costs.

5.5. We strongly advise you to refer this matter to solicitors with expertise and experience in the law of libel. We draw to your attention that this letter is not for publication and the contents are to remain confidential. For the avoidance of doubt 'publication' includes any form of media including Facebook.

5.6. As set out above, ignoring this letter may lead to our clients starting proceedings against you and may increase your liability for costs.

We look forward to hearing from you by the stated deadlines.

Yours faithfully

FrontRow Legal

Encl: Annex 1 - Defamation Pre-Action Protocol

Annex 2 - Practice Direction on Pre-Action Conduct

Annex 3 - Extracts of tweets