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Dermot F. Desmond
Chairman

9th March 2012

**“Celtic fans should stop gloating because without Rangers to *hate* they’d be lost” – Chris Lowry,
Irish Independent 8 March 2012**

Dear Gavin,

I was very disappointed to read the above article in the opinion section of the Irish Independent website yesterday. The high standards of journalism, that the IN&M claim to uphold, were clearly ignored when this article was published.

It is frankly a disgusting piece of journalism that does a disservice to the IN&M Group. This type of gutter press is not what I would have expected from a company in which I have invested a substantial sum of money.

Mr. Lowry’s article is littered with ill-informed stereotypical remarks, which are offensive to Celtic FC, Rangers FC and indeed football fans in general. He has made a broad brushed attack, branding both Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs as organisations whose “*raison d’etre is ...to taunt, abuse and whenever possible physically attack rival fans*” and describing their respective supporters as being “*as loathsome as each other*”. Effectively Mr Lowry is branding both Football Clubs and all their supporters as sectarian thugs and louts. This is a complete falsehood, bordering on bigotry. It is offensive, not just to me as a fan, but to the millions who support these two huge clubs.

Mr Lowry also claimed that Celtic fans are gloating at Rangers FC’s financial situation. To be clear as a director, shareholder and supporter of Celtic FC, I take no personal satisfaction in the current misfortunes of Rangers FC.

Anyone with even a basic knowledge of Celtic FC would know that it adopts a zero tolerance towards racism, prejudice and violence. These are major issues for all of football and one which Celtic FC takes very seriously. For your information, I have attached below Celtic FC’s pro-active strategy to reduce instances of racism and prejudice. It strikes me that Mr Lowry is exactly the type of person Celtic FC had

in mind when it designed this code. It is the ill informed and prejudiced mindset of people like Mr Lowry, that clubs like Celtic FC are trying to root out.

“Celtic Football Club will not tolerate unacceptable conduct at Celtic Park or at away football stadium. Unacceptable conduct is conduct which is violent or disorderly. Violent conduct includes any actual, attempted, or threatened physical violence against any person, or intentional damage to property.

Disorderly conduct includes:

Conduct which stirs up or sustains, or is likely or is designed to stir up or sustain, hatred or ill will against or towards individuals or groups of people because of:

- *Gender, colour, race, nationality(including citizenship) or ethnic or natural origin*
- *Membership, or presumed membership, of a religious group or of a social or cultural group with perceived religious affiliation*
- *Sexual orientation*
- *Transgender identity*
- *Disability*

Using threatening, abusive or insulting words or conduct

Displaying writing or any other thing which is threatening abusive or insulting”.

A detailed description is then set out of unacceptable conduct. It says that any person engaging in unacceptable conduct may be subject to any, or a combination of the following:

- *Removal from the stadium*
- *Suspension from official matches involving Celtic FC*
- *Indefinite ban from attending official matches involving Celtic FC*
- *Report to the police and possible criminal proceedings.*

These are not just words. It is widely acknowledged that Celtic FC has been at the forefront of the campaign to stamp out racism, sectarianism and other forms of prejudice in football. Substantial investment has been made by the club into this campaign and numerous ‘so called’ Celtic fans have been banned from Celtic Park for breaching the rules.

Chris Lowry ignores the tradition of Celtic FC and what it stands for and the passion the fans have for Scottish football when he questions “*the point of Scottish Football*”. I quote from the social mission statement of the Club as follows:

“Celtic Football Club is for people who want to support a football club that strives for excellence in Scotland and in Europe, is proud of its history, supportive of its local community and seeks to support the following aims: “To maximise all opportunities to disassociate the Club from sectarianism and bigotry of any kind. To promote Celtic as a Club for all people, regardless of gender, age, religion, race or ability””

Mr Lowry's article is not based on fact. Therefore, any response from you to the effect that "this is 'fair comment'" simply will not stand up. I am calling on you to retract this opinion piece without delay and to issue an apology to both clubs. In the absence of a suitable apology, I will be recommending that Celtic FC make a formal complaint based on incitement to hatred.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dermot F. Desmond', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dermot F. Desmond