

FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

**HELD AT THE FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL, 14 SWAN COURT,
FORDER WAY, CYGNET PARK, HAMPTON, PETERBOROUGH PE7 8GX**

INQUIRY RE:

MR PATRICK JOHN PEACOCK DIPWCF

1. THE CHARGE

1.1 *“That, being registered under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (as amended) (the Act), you:*

1. *On or around 16 April 2025, sent via social media to Ms A, a client or former client, a message or messages which were abusive and/or intimidating and/or offensive and/or unprofessional;*

And that, in relation to the facts alleged above, whether individually or in any combination, you are guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.”

1.2 Ms Nicole Curtis appeared on behalf of the Council. The Respondent appeared and represented himself.

ADMISSIONS

1.3 The Respondent admitted the factual charge, confirming that he had sent the messages and that they were abusive, offensive, intimidating and unprofessional. The Committee, having heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor, therefore found Charge 1 proved on the basis of his admission and having regard to the screenshots of the social media messages themselves, which had been provided to it.

HEARING PARTS OF THE CASE IN PRIVATE

1.4 During the course of the Respondent’s evidence, he made reference to personal and sensitive matters regarding his private life and the Committee considered whether it should hear those parts of his evidence in private. Ms Curtis did not object to that course.

1.5 Having heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor, the Committee was satisfied that it should hear those parts of the Respondent’s evidence relating to his private life, in private. The Committee was satisfied that this was justified under Rule 11 in order to protect the Respondent’s private life.

BACKGROUND UNDERLYING THE CHARGE

1.6 On 16 April 2025, the Farriers Registration Council (the Council) received a complaint from Ms A, regarding text messages which had been sent to her by the Respondent over the course of one evening and the following morning.

- 1.7 Ms A sent screenshots of the messages sent by the Respondent, which were as follows:

Message one:

"...I will speak to every farrier in the area and say you owe me. There wont be many that will do your work im afraid. And il speak to the yard owner saying that your happy to do a flit and not pay bills!

*I will make a mockery of you and your family!! You take the f*****g p**s and unfortunately in the showing world your name is "s**t" everyone told me to be careful but i find the best in ev 1!! So actually you have f*****d it!!"*

Message Two (apparently sent at 01:41)

*"You will as a family name now never walk in a ring again!! You f*****g idiot!! Every 1 will laugh at you, f**k the money , just to know that you think you can go through life like that is laughable!! Il be on to your husband, your a f*****g waste of space no morals and a waste of society! I hate people like you, i tried to help !! But you were that f*****g dull you couldn't even see it !! I dont wish bad luck on people , but i hope the f**k your unfortunate daughter you have no time for gets the f**k out of your grips cos shes 100% better off (actually il take her on as last time when your moaning like f**k " you cant have your crisps yet" f**k off let her have them! Be proud enough to even have the standards to make her a jam sandwich!! Stop trying to keep up with the Jones's! Shes a lovely girl , asking me questions all the way through shoeing her pony !! Put some f*****g effort in you useless t**t!! Dont tell her to shut up!! Shes a kid !! She needs attention! I would not put a gold fish with you! No wonder most your horses are scared, your an absolute shit!! Hope you live a nice life, oh and il adopt your daughter cos she deserves something even your partner got no f*****g b***s!?"*

Message Three (apparently sent at 07:31)

"Just forgot about you owed me when you moved yards? No msg to say il meet you pat or can I transfer it? Just an overdraft of every 1s account aren't I? I even offered to do it cheaper for you !! To help! But you have done this ! Im really upset by it all now, full set , pair of fronts and a trim it was , why do people think they can go through life not paying? Its a luxury having horses its not a necessity? If you cant afford it dont ask someone to do the work, if i asked you to look after our horses and then didnt pay you for 6 months you would be knocking my door ? Yea because you would want the money! Its how life works."

- 1.8 On receipt of the complaint, the Council asked the Respondent for any comments. He replied on 6 May 2025, admitting that he had sent the messages and that he was embarrassed for his actions.

2. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON SERIOUS MISCONDUCT IN A PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

- 2.1 Ms Curtis, on behalf of the Council, submitted that the conduct amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect. She drew the Committee's attention to the Farrier, Approved Training Farrier & Apprentice Code of Professional Conduct (the Code) and the guidance contained within it as to what may constitute "serious misconduct in a professional respect."

“The circumstances in which serious misconduct in a professional respect may be considered to have occurred are so varied that it is impossible to catalogue or to even envisage them all. Generally speaking, a minor breach of this Code of Professional Conduct might well not amount to serious professional misconduct. Repeated minor breaches in aggregate could well do so. However, a single, serious breach might also lead to such a finding.”

2.2 Ms Curtis submitted that the Respondent’s actions breached a number of sections of the Code, such as those regarding interactions with the general public and those specifically dealing with farriers’ use of social media:

“Farriers and the General Public ...

- b. Farriers must be courteous and professional in communications with members of the public, including when communicating online.*
- c. Farriers must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute.”*

“70. It is recognised that social media may form part of everyday life for some. Such media can be valuable communication tools and enhance a farrier’s personal and professional life. However, the use of social media is not without risk and farriers should be mindful of the consequences that may arise from its misuse.

71. Farriers have a responsibility to behave professionally and responsibly when offline and online, whether as themselves or in a virtual capacity (e.g. as an avatar or under an alias). Farriers may put their registration at risk if they demonstrate inappropriate behaviour when using social media including any form of abuse, bullying, coercion, discrimination, exploitation or harassment, intimidation or offensive language. This list is not exhaustive. The standards expected of farriers in the real world are no different to the standards they should apply online, and farriers must always uphold the reputation of the farriery profession. Farriers should remember that social media activity outside of work may still reflect on the public perception of the profession. Similarly, posts or comments made on a shared on-line space may have an adverse impact on the reputation of the profession even if the number of participants in that space is limited/not open to the general public.

72. When using social media farriers should:

- a. remember that the Code of Professional Conduct must be followed at all times, even under the anonymity of social media*

...

- c. be respectful and protect the privacy of others*

...

73. When using social media farriers should avoid making, posting or facilitating, such as reposting or forwarding, statements, images or videos that:

- a. may cause undue distress...*
- b. are offensive, false, inaccurate, misleading or unjustified....*

- c. *abuse, bully, victimise, harass, threaten or intimidate or make derogatory comments about clients, colleagues, other equine professionals, staff or others...*”
- 2.3 The Respondent accepted that his conduct amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect. He apologised for having sent them; informed the Committee that he was extremely embarrassed by them and that he understood that his actions had brought disrespect on the profession.
- 2.4 The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor who referred to the principles to be applied when considering serious misconduct in a professional respect.
- 2.5 In the Committee’s judgement, the Respondent’s actions had breached the professional standards to be expected of a farrier, as set out in the Code and identified by Ms Curtis. It considered that the content of the messages contained explicit swearing and their tone was aggressive such that the recipient would find them intimidating.
- 2.6 Although the Committee did not consider that the Respondent’s conduct related to equine welfare, it was satisfied that it would prejudice the reputation of the profession and bring it into disrepute. It considered that fellow farriers would consider such manner of communication with clients to be deplorable and totally unacceptable.
- 2.7 The Committee was satisfied that the Respondent’s conduct was a serious departure from the standards expected, such that it amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect.

3. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AS TO SANCTION

- 3.1 Ms Curtis confirmed that the Respondent was first registered as a farrier on 10 March 2008. She also confirmed that he had no previous findings against him from the Disciplinary Committee and therefore was of good character.
- 3.2 The Respondent gave oral evidence to the Committee. In addition, he provided two references from clients attesting to his usual high standards and professionalism.
- 3.3 The Legal Assessor advised the Committee of the Indicative Sanctions Guidance (the Guidance) and of the need for proportionality when considering sanction. She advised that the purpose of any sanction was not to punish a farrier, but to arrive at a proportionate outcome to the case, having regard to the Committee’s responsibility to maintain proper standards of conduct for Registered Farriers.
- 3.4 The Committee considered whether there were any aggravating factors in this case, as identified in the Guidance. The Committee identified recklessness as an aggravating factor, in that the Respondent had been impulsive in sending messages of such a tone, without pausing to reflect on the potential consequences on the recipient or on the reputation of the farriery profession.
- 3.5 The Committee considered the context in which the Respondent’s misconduct occurred. He told the Committee that he had allowed himself to become frustrated at the persistent non-payment of fees by the client and that he nevertheless continued to shoe the client’s ponies, concerned about animal welfare and hoping that he would ultimately be paid. The Respondent acknowledged that this in no way excused the content and tone of his messages. Whilst the Committee did not consider that this mitigated the seriousness of the sending of such messages, it was relevant in providing context as to why he may have acted out of character.

- 3.6 The Committee then considered the mitigating factors. It considered that the following were evident in this case:
- a. In the Committee's judgement, the misconduct could properly be viewed as a single and isolated incident. Although there had been three messages, they had been sent to a single client over the course of one night and the following morning;
 - b. The Respondent had a previously unblemished career of some 18 years as a farrier. He had provided two positive testimonials from clients demonstrating to the Committee that his actions had been out of character;
 - c. The Respondent had been open and frank in his admissions to the Committee. At the outset he had admitted the facts and that they amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect;
 - d. The Respondent had subsequently taken steps to reduce the risk of repetition. He now switched his telephone off at night and he had adopted a new system of accounting through "Xero" software, which automatically sent out weekly reminders for payment to clients;
 - e. The Committee considered that the Respondent had been sincere in his evidence and that his remorse and embarrassment regarding his actions was genuine;
 - f. The Committee considered that the Respondent had demonstrated in his evidence that his insight was genuine and profound;
 - g. The Committee considered that the Respondent had demonstrated a commitment to equine welfare, in that he continued to shoe horses, while waiting for late payments;
 - h. The Committee considered from all the mitigation that the risk of repetition was very low.

3.7 The Committee considered each sanction in ascending order.

3.8 The Committee noted that it had identified a very low risk of repetition, given the Respondent's insight and steps to prevent recurrence and that there were no concerns regarding equine welfare. Nevertheless, the Committee did not lose sight of the nature and tone of the language used in the texts themselves, which had been unprofessional, abusive, offensive and intimidating. Given the detrimental impact the Respondent's misconduct would have on the reputation of the profession and the damage to public confidence, the Committee was of the view that a sanction was required in order to mark its seriousness.

3.9 The Committee did not consider any purpose would be served by postponing sanction, given a very low risk of repetition had been identified and there were no issues with his professional skills.

3.10 The Committee next considered whether the case, and in particular the public interest considerations of maintaining confidence in the profession and upholding expected professional standards, could be addressed by way of a reprimand and/or warning. The Committee had regard to the specific Guidance in respect of when a reprimand and/or warning may be appropriate as follows:

A reprimand and/or or warning may be appropriate, where:

- *the misconduct is at the lower end of the spectrum seriousness and;*

- *there is no future risk to animals or the public, and;*
 - *there is evidence of insight.*
- 3.11 The Committee was satisfied that the misconduct, whilst serious, was nevertheless at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness, given that it was a single and isolated incident. The Committee also considered that there are no animal welfare or public protection issues in this case, and the Respondent had demonstrated genuine and profound insight.
- 3.12 The Committee was satisfied that a reprimand would send the appropriate message to the farriery profession that such language and manner of communication was wholly unacceptable, whatever the frustrations being experienced by a farrier. The reprimand would admonish the past behaviour of the Respondent and mark its seriousness. The Committee did not consider that a warning as to future conduct was required, given the low risk of repetition it had identified.
- 3.13 In order to satisfy itself that a reprimand was proportionate and sufficient to address the public interest aspect in this case, the Committee went on to consider suspension. It noted the Guidance which states that:
- Suspension may be appropriate, where the misconduct is sufficiently serious as to warrant more than a reprimand, but not sufficiently serious to justify removal from the Register.*
- 3.14 In the particular circumstances of this case, the Committee considered that suspension would be disproportionate and unduly punitive. Given the genuine and profound insight and steps taken to avoid repetition, leading the Committee to conclude that there was a low risk of repetition, it was satisfied that the single and isolated misconduct did not warrant more than a reprimand. The Committee was satisfied that public confidence in the profession and the declaring of proper standards would be addressed by way of a reprimand.
- 3.15 Accordingly, the Committee determined to impose a reprimand.

Disciplinary Committee

18 March 2026