



Thursday, 10th November 2022

Recent arrests of working media by Police

Over the last few weeks various Police Forces have seen fit to arrest professional press photographers and other working members of the media who are covering protests on and around the M25 motorway. Whether this is a change in their interpretation of their job role or a deliberate attempt to stop journalists reporting the news isn't all together clear but, as an organisation with over four hundred press photographers as members, we find ourselves having to write to you to ask if you can help us to understand what is happening.

Two press photographers and a documentary film maker were arrested whilst covering protests by the campaigning group Just Stop Oil on Monday 7th November. All of them made it abundantly clear that they were holders of the UK Press Card and that they were not breaking any laws whilst undertaking their work. All of them were handcuffed and arrested despite there being an accepted method of verifying their status as working news gatherers.

Tom Bowles and Ben Cawthra, both members of The BPPA along with BECTU member Rich Felgate were handcuffed and taken to police stations from two separate locations by Hertfordshire Police on Monday 7th November. Peter Macdiarmid, another member of The BPPA, was arrested, handcuffed and removed from a different location to a police station by Surrey Police in September.

It looks likely that no further action will be taken against any of them but that still leaves the concern that this new tactic where police forces ignore the UK Press Card (a system recognised by the National Police Chiefs Council) has somehow become acceptable.

The British Press Photographers' Association would be more than happy to discuss these events with anyone who can effect a change in tactics and anyone who agrees that blindly arresting members of the media who are committing no offence is damaging for democracy.

We look forward to your reply.

Kind regards

Paul Ellis
Chair, The British Press Photographers' Association