

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
KING'S BENCH DIVISION (KBD)
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST

Claim No. KB-2023-004736

Royal Courts of Justice
Strand, London WC2A 2LL

Thursday, 4th December 2025

Before:

MR. JUSTICE NICKLIN

B E T W E E N:

SMART SHIRTS LIMITED

Claimant

-and-

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

Defendant

(STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT)

Transcript of the Stenograph Notes of Marten Walsh Cherer Ltd
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MR. WILLIAM BENNETT K.C. (instructed by Wedlake Bell LLP) appeared for the Claimant
MR. JOHN FARRELL (Solicitor, Kennedys Law LLP) appeared for the Defendant

PROCEEDINGS

MR. BENNETT:

1. My Lord, I appear on behalf of the Claimant. My friend Mr. John Farrell appears on behalf of the Defendant. The Claimant in this claim for libel, Smart Shirts Limited, part of the Sunrise Group, is a major textile and garment manufacturer based in Hong Kong. It produces and sells clothing garments in this jurisdiction to major brands/retailers located in the United Kingdom. The Defendant, Sheffield Hallam University, is an academic institution and Higher Education Corporation. On or about 23 November 2023 Sheffield Hallam University emailed persons including Smart Shirts Limited's customers ("the Email"). The court has found that the Email made the following allegation:

"There are grounds to investigate whether Smart Shirts Limited knew or should have known that it was sourcing raw materials or supplies that were the product of forced labour from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

2. On 6 December, Sheffield Hallam University published a document titled 'Tailoring Responsibility: Tracing [Apparel] supply chains from the Uyghur Region to Europe' ("the Report"). The court has found that the Report made the following allegation:

"Smart Shirts Limited was a key part in a supply chain of materials and that there were grounds to investigate whether it knew or should have known that those materials were the product of forced labour from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

3. Sheffield Hallam University accepts these allegations were untrue.
4. Smart Shirts Limited is pleased to report that Sheffield Hallam University accepts this to be the case and has agreed to make this public statement in order to make this clear. Sheffield Hallam University has also agreed to pay Smart Shirts Limited's legal costs.

MR. FARRELL:

5. My Lord, on behalf of the Defendant, I accept all that my learned friend William Bennett K.C has said. Sheffield Hallam University regrets that the allegations were made. In fact, it never intended to suggest that Smart Shirts Limited uses materials produced by forced labour from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region or by forced labour of any sort. It did not find any evidence that such allegations are true and they should not have been included in the Report. The Report has been withdrawn from publication. Sheffield Hallam University is using reasonable endeavours to assist Smart Shirts Limited in removing the Report from publication via internet sites not controlled by it or to have it published alongside a copy of the Statement in Open Court. It has undertaken not to repeat the allegations in issue.

MR. BENNETT:

6. Accordingly, Smart Shirts Limited is willing to let the matter rest.

JUDGE NICKLIN:

7. Thank you very much, both of you.
