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Stockton pub owner defends 'domestic violence' Facebook post after criticism from MPs

Owner Craig Harker has insisted the post was lighthearted and said MPs should focus on bigger issues

By

[Samuel Jones](#)

- 14:54, 29 JUL 2019



The George owner, Craig Harker (Image: Teesside Live)

Prominent Teesside politicians have slammed a **Stockton** restaurant over a **Facebook** post which asked: "Would you punch your ex in the face for a steak?"

The post from The George Pub & Grill, based on Stockton High Street, has attracted widespread condemnation, with one woman branding it "vile" and two MPs calling for its removal.

Alex Cunningham, MP for Stockton North said on Twitter: "It's completely unacceptable language and the owner should take it down immediately. My office is reporting it to the police."

Dr Paul Williams, MP for Stockton South added: "Thanks for taking this action. It's not the area I represent, so it's right that Alex takes the lead.

"Many Stockton South residents use our High Street and this is completely unacceptable."

Police and crime commissioner, Barry Coppinger posted on **Twitter**: "Not only is a post like this in bad taste, but it risks normalising violence in intimate relationships and violence against women and girls.

"I'm sure the author of this post is aware of the links between the night time economy and serious violence, particularly domestic violence."

The George Pub & Grill in Stockton has been slammed by two Teesside MPs after a post on Facebook (Image: The George Pub & Grill/Facebook)

But owner Craig Harker said the post was lighthearted and aimed at the Facebook page's 92,000 followers.

He told Teesside Live: "I think the MPs need to start concentrating on more important issues, rather than a meme that's on Facebook.

"We know what our target audience is.

"We picked this up from a meme on Facebook: 'Would you punch your ex in the face for a million dollars'.

"The fact that anyone's taken it in the wrong way, they are not our target audience.

"We watch what's on Facebook we aim it at our target audience.

"It turns out there's a lot more positive than negative on there."

The pub was previously rapped by advertising chiefs in 2017 for asking on Facebook: "Would you punch your ex in the face for a parmo?"

The George Pub & Grill in Stockton (Image: Google Maps)

Mr Harker said then that the post was a joke and it attracted hundreds of likes and positive comments - but a complaint was made to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), saying the advert "trivialised and encouraged domestic violence".

The George also hit the headlines in 2017 after obesity campaigners slammed the pub for offering free food to anybody weighing over 25 stone - as long as they publicly weigh themselves.

The venue is famous for its 'Man vs Food'-style challenges, which include an 8,000 calorie kebab parmo.

The eatery had to close in January following a fire, but is set to return on Wednesday, August 7.