

# ECONEWS

*A TechTrends Media Publication*

## Editorial Independence Policy

Separating editorial and commercial decision-making at EcoNews

Version  
**1.0**

Effective Date  
**April 2026**

Approved by  
**Editor-in-Chief**

Review Cycle  
**Annual**

## PREAMBLE

EcoNews is an independent sustainability news platform dedicated to reporting on climate change, clean energy, green finance, environmental conservation, and sustainable development across Kenya and Africa. It is a publication of TechTrends Media.

EcoNews operates in a commercial environment. It generates revenue through branded content, sponsorships, events, partnerships, and grants. At the same time, it is committed to journalism that is accurate, fair, independent, and in the public interest.

These two realities - commercial sustainability and editorial integrity - must coexist. They can. But only if the boundaries between them are clearly drawn, consistently respected, and understood by every member of the EcoNews and TechTrends Media team.

*This policy exists to draw those boundaries. It is not a bureaucratic formality. It is the foundation on which EcoNews's credibility - and therefore its long-term value - rests.*

## CORE PRINCIPLES

### 1. Founding Principles

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All editorial decisions at EcoNews are governed by the following principles, which take precedence over all commercial considerations:

#### 1.1 Independence

Editorial decisions - what to cover, how to cover it, what conclusions to draw, and what to publish - are made solely by the editorial team. No advertiser, sponsor, partner, grant funder, investor, or commercial client has the right to influence, direct, review, or veto editorial content.

#### 1.2 Accuracy

EcoNews publishes only what it believes to be true, based on the best available evidence. Every factual claim is subject to verification. Errors, when identified, are corrected promptly and transparently.

#### 1.3 Fairness

EcoNews gives all subjects of its reporting a fair opportunity to respond to allegations, criticism, or factual claims about them before publication. Fairness does not mean neutrality on questions of fact, it means treating all parties with equal rigour.

## 1.4 Transparency

EcoNews is transparent with its audience about its funding sources, commercial relationships, and any potential conflicts of interest that may be relevant to a story. Where a conflict exists, it is disclosed. Where it cannot be managed, the story is reassigned or not published.

## 1.5 Public Interest

EcoNews's journalism exists to serve its audience and the broader public - not its commercial partners. Stories are assigned and published because they matter to readers, not because they serve the interests of funders or advertisers.

### STRUCTURAL SEPARATION

## 2. The Editorial–Commercial Firewall

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The single most important structural protection for editorial independence is a clear separation between the people who make editorial decisions and the people who manage commercial relationships. At EcoNews, this separation is absolute.

### 2.1 Who Does What

#### Editorial Team - Decides

- What stories to pursue and publish
- Which sources to interview and quote
- What headlines, angles, and framing to use
- Whether to investigate a sponsor, advertiser, or funder
- When to correct, update, or retract a story
- Who writes, edits, and approves content

#### Commercial Team - Decides

- Which advertisers and sponsors to approach
- Pricing and terms of commercial packages
- Layout and placement of paid advertisements
- Partnership and grant terms (commercial only)
- Revenue targets and commercial strategy
- Invoicing and financial management

### 2.2 The Firewall in Practice

- Commercial staff may not attend editorial planning meetings
- Editorial staff may not make commercial commitments to advertisers or sponsors on behalf of EcoNews
- No commercial team member may communicate directly with the editorial team about the content of a specific story - all such communications go through the Editor-in-Chief
- The Editor-in-Chief is the sole point of contact between the editorial and commercial functions

- In the event of a dispute between editorial and commercial priorities, the Editor-in-Chief's decision is final

## ADVERTISING & SPONSORED CONTENT

### 3. Advertising and Sponsored Content

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EcoNews accepts advertising and produces sponsored content. These are legitimate revenue activities. They must, however, be managed in a way that is transparent to readers and does not compromise editorial decision-making.

#### 3.1 Display Advertising

- Advertisements are placed by the commercial team and do not involve the editorial team
- The placement of an advertisement does not guarantee positive - or any - editorial coverage of the advertiser
- EcoNews will not accept advertising from organisations whose products or activities it considers fundamentally incompatible with its editorial mission (e.g. fossil fuel companies making misleading environmental claims)
- Advertisers have no right to request the removal or alteration of editorial content

#### 3.2 Sponsored Content and Branded Articles

Sponsored content is content that is commissioned and paid for by a commercial partner. EcoNews produces sponsored content but applies the following rules without exception:

- **All sponsored content must be clearly and prominently labelled** - using the label "Sponsored" or "Paid Partnership" - in a way that is immediately visible to any reader.
- **Sponsored content must not make false or misleading factual claims.** EcoNews applies basic fact-checking standards to sponsored content before publication.
- **Sponsors may brief, review, and provide feedback on sponsored content** before publication. They may not, however, require EcoNews to publish claims it has determined to be inaccurate.
- **Sponsored content is never presented in a format designed to be confused with independent editorial content.** Visual design, typography, and layout must clearly distinguish sponsored from editorial material.
- **EcoNews does not guarantee that independent editorial coverage will accompany or follow sponsored content**

A company can pay for a sponsored article. It cannot pay for a favourable news story.

### 3.3 What Advertisers and Sponsors Cannot Do

**PROHIBITED - These actions are never permitted under any circumstances**

- Request changes to, or removal of, independent editorial content
- Request that EcoNews not cover a story about them or their sector
- Require editorial content to accompany their advertising or sponsorship
- Request that a specific journalist be assigned to or removed from a story
- Review editorial content before publication (sponsored content only excepted)
- Require EcoNews to take a particular editorial position on any issue
- Threaten to withdraw advertising in response to editorial coverage

## GRANT FUNDING

### 4. Grant Funding and Institutional Partners

EcoNews actively pursues grant funding from international journalism funders, development organisations, and foundations. Grants are among the most editorially compatible forms of revenue - but they must be managed with the same rigour as commercial relationships.

#### 4.1 Acceptable Grant Terms

EcoNews will only accept grant funding where the funder agrees, in writing, to the following conditions:

1. EcoNews retains full editorial control over all content produced with grant support
2. The funder has no right to review, approve, alter, or suppress editorial content before or after publication
3. The funder's support does not obligate EcoNews to produce positive coverage of the funder, its work, or its partners
4. EcoNews may report critically on the funder, its programmes, or its sector, if the journalism warrants it
5. Funding sources are disclosed to readers in accordance with EcoNews's transparency policy (see Section 6)

#### 4.2 Grants EcoNews Will Not Accept

EcoNews will not accept grant funding from:

- Any government with a direct regulatory or licensing interest in EcoNews's operations

- Any organisation that is the subject of active or foreseeable EcoNews investigation
- Any funder that attaches conditions incompatible with the terms in Section 4.1
- Any funder whose stated mission conflicts with EcoNews's editorial values (e.g. organisations engaged in greenwashing or environmental harm)

### **4.3 Editorial Projects Funded by Grants**

When EcoNews accepts a grant to produce a specific editorial project - a series, an investigation, a podcast run - the following apply:

- The editorial team determines the specific stories, sources, angles, and conclusions
- The funder is briefed on the project's general scope and topic, not its specific editorial findings
- If a grant-funded investigation produces findings that reflect poorly on the funder or its partners, EcoNews publishes the findings regardless
- The grant agreement includes language confirming the funder's acceptance of these terms before any payment is made

## 5. Events and Forums

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EcoNews and TechTrends Media convene sustainability events including the GreenShift Forum. These events are commercial products - they have sponsors and paying delegates. The editorial team may participate in these events as speakers, moderators, and journalists. The following rules apply:

- Event sponsors do not have editorial control over the content, speakers, or agenda of EcoNews-produced events
- Sponsors may be acknowledged from the stage and in event materials, but may not use their sponsorship to control the content of panels or discussions
- EcoNews journalists reporting on topics covered at EcoNews events apply the same editorial standards as they would to any other event
- EcoNews does not publish promotional coverage of event sponsors as a condition of their sponsorship
- If an event sponsor is the subject of critical editorial coverage, that coverage is published regardless of its potential impact on the commercial relationship

## 6. Transparency and Disclosure

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EcoNews is committed to being transparent with its audience about its funding sources and commercial relationships. This transparency is not just ethical, it is what allows readers to assess the independence of EcoNews's journalism for themselves.

### 6.1 What EcoNews Discloses

- All sponsored and branded content is labelled clearly at the top of the piece
- All grant-funded editorial projects include a disclosure note identifying the funder and confirming that the funder had no editorial control
- EcoNews publishes a general statement of its funding model on its About/Editorial Policy page, updated annually
- Individual journalists disclose personal conflicts of interest to the Editor-in-Chief before accepting an assignment

### 6.2 Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when a journalist's personal, financial, or professional relationships could - or could appear to - influence their editorial judgement. At EcoNews:

- Journalists may not write about organisations in which they have a financial interest

- Journalists may not write about organisations with which they have a close personal relationship without disclosing this to the Editor-in-Chief
- Journalists may not accept gifts, hospitality, or payment from organisations they are covering or may cover
- Journalists may not undertake paid work for organisations they are covering or may cover - including PR, communications, or consultancy work - without explicit approval from the Editor-in-Chief
- Where a conflict cannot be managed, the journalist is reassigned and the conflict is noted internally

### 6.3 The Standard Disclosure Note for Grant-Funded Work

This [article / series / podcast episode] was produced with support from [Funder Name]. EcoNews retained full editorial independence throughout. The funder had no involvement in the selection of topics, sources, or editorial findings, and no right of review before publication.

## CORRECTIONS & COMPLAINTS

## 7. Corrections and Complaints

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### 7.1 Corrections

EcoNews corrects errors promptly and transparently. When a factual error is identified - whether by a reader, a subject of reporting, or a member of the team - the following process applies:

6. The error is reported to the Editor-in-Chief
7. The Editor-in-Chief reviews and confirms the error
8. The correction is made to the published piece as quickly as possible
9. A correction note is appended to the piece, clearly identifying what was changed and when
10. Significant corrections are also noted on EcoNews's social media channels

Corrections are never made silently. Readers who read the original version deserve to know what changed.

### 7.2 Editorial Complaints

Any person or organisation that believes EcoNews has breached its editorial standards may submit a complaint to the Editor-in-Chief at [editorial@techtrendsmedia.co.ke](mailto:editorial@techtrendsmedia.co.ke). EcoNews commits to:

- Acknowledging the complaint within five business days
- Reviewing the complaint against this policy and the relevant editorial standards

- Providing a written response within 20 business days
- Taking corrective action where the complaint is upheld

Commercial grievances - including complaints about advertising, sponsorship, or billing - are handled by the commercial team and are not subject to this editorial complaints process.

*EcoNews will not treat a commercial complaint as a reason to alter editorial content. If a sponsor disputes editorial coverage, the matter is addressed through the complaints process above - not through the commercial relationship.*

## STAFF OBLIGATIONS

### 8. Obligations of All Staff

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This policy applies to every person involved in producing content for EcoNews - full-time staff, freelancers, contributors, podcast guests providing editorial input, and any third party producing content under the EcoNews banner.

#### 8.1 Editorial Staff

- Read, understand, and abide by this policy
- Disclose to the Editor-in-Chief any personal conflict of interest before accepting an assignment
- Refuse any commercial pressure - however it is communicated - to alter, soften, or suppress editorial content
- Report any attempt by a commercial party to influence editorial decisions to the Editor-in-Chief immediately
- Never accept payment, gifts, or hospitality from a source or subject of coverage

#### 8.2 Commercial Staff

- Read, understand, and abide by this policy
- Never communicate to advertisers, sponsors, or partners that commercial investment will result in favourable editorial coverage
- Never communicate to the editorial team requests from commercial parties regarding specific stories or coverage
- Refer all commercial partner complaints about editorial content to the Editor-in-Chief
- Include this policy - or a summary of it - in all commercial proposal and partnership documents

### 8.3 Freelancers and Contributors

All freelancers and contributors producing content for EcoNews are required to confirm, before their first commission, that they have read and will comply with this policy. The standard freelance commission brief includes the following statement:

EcoNews operates under an Editorial Independence Policy. All contributors are bound by its terms. Any attempt by a commercial party to influence your work on behalf of EcoNews should be reported immediately to the Editor-in-Chief.

#### POLICY REVIEW

## 9. Policy Review and Amendments

This policy is a living document. It is reviewed annually by the Editor-in-Chief, or following any significant change in EcoNews's funding model, ownership structure, or commercial partnerships.

Amendments to this policy require the approval of both the Editor-in-Chief and the Publisher / CEO of TechTrends Media. Any amendment that weakens the protections in this policy requires written justification and must not compromise the core principles in Section 1.

Previous versions of this policy are retained and available on request. The current version is published on the EcoNews website and provided to all grant funders and commercial partners on request.

#### ADOPTION & AUTHORISATION

This policy has been reviewed, adopted, and approved by the undersigned on behalf of EcoNews and TechTrends Media. It takes effect on the date of signing and supersedes all previous editorial policy documents.

Pie Kamau  30/04/2026

Editor-in-Chief — Signature & Date

Nixon Kanali  30/04/2026

Publisher / CEO — Signature & Date

Questions about this policy should be directed to:

**Editor-in-Chief, EcoNews**

[editorial@techtrendsmedia.co.ke](mailto:editorial@techtrendsmedia.co.ke) | [econews.co.ke](http://econews.co.ke)