

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Adroddiad Etifeddiaeth / Legacy Report

CWLC LEG12

Ymateb gan Undeb Cenedlaethol y Newyddiadurwyr / Response from National Union of Journalists



Legacy inquiry by the Senedd Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is the voice for journalism and journalists in the UK and Ireland. It was founded in 1907 and has more than 30,000 members and 8,000 freelance members working in broadcasting, newspapers, news agencies, magazines, book publishing, public relations, photography, videography and digital media.

The NUJ welcomes the opportunity to provide a Legacy submission to the inquiry by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee.

In November 2015 when the NUJ published its report *A Media Manifesto for Wales*, it called it a time of crisis for the media in Wales and urged all political parties to commit to uphold the values of quality journalism that enable us to celebrate national, regional and local life and hold the powerful to account. No nation and no functioning democracy can operate without a strong, probing, inquisitorial and diverse press. A Wales where sporting triumph, eisteddfodau crowning or community campaigning goes unheralded is a weaker Wales, and the continuing Covid-19 crisis has also brought to the forefront the crucial role the Welsh media has in communicating vital and life-saving public health information which have differed from nation to nation.

Although Wales has a long and proud journalism tradition, the continuing crisis has hit an industry with underlying health conditions and the outbreak has accelerated the problem that has been 20 years in the making. Welsh newspaper titles had already been hollowed out by cuts to journalist numbers and a lack of investment in journalism before the virus appeared and we saw further redundancies at Reach and Newsquest over the summer. Job cuts are also taking place at ITV Wales and BBC Wales, and as UK government Covid-19 aid schemes run down, our fears are that without urgent action and support, there could be further redundancies and closures. The hyperlocal and online publications which have been pivotal in terms of the dissemination of quality journalistic coverage reaching diverse local and national audiences also struggle financially without access to equal statutory notice funding or Government advertising funding.

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The NUJ has welcomed the work of the Committee and the opportunity to give evidence both orally and in writing on consultations and its recommendations including *News Journalism in Wales* in 2017 and *Read All About It: Inquiry into News Journalism in Wales* in 2018. The Committee has also supported the NUJ's Local News Matters Week.

Most recently, in 2020, the Committee conducted the consultation and heard evidence and effects on the *Impact of the Covid-19 Outbreak on Journalism and Local Media*. The NUJ provided evidence on the impact further redundancies would have within Reach, and Reach's continuing focus on digital content as a business model and the impact this would have on coverage of Welsh content. The session and follow up letter from the Acting Chair of the Committee to Jim Mullen, CEO of Reach, demonstrated the Committee's continuing concern that Reach's approach has had a detrimental impact on the coverage of Welsh life. The NUJ believes that the Committee's intervention with Reach in fact helped to secure the future of the *Western Mail*, as well as put pressure on Reach to replace the position of Editor of the *Daily Post*.

Whilst there is much work to do still in terms of Welsh Government, the NUJ thanks the Committee for its support and reiterates that at this national crisis which has further accelerated the underlying problems facing Welsh media, it remains essential that the Committee continues to play a central role in tackling these problems and in providing support. A strong Wales needs a strong media and the people of Wales require a multiplicity of outlets that are in touch with their lives, localities and needs. We must see no further diminution in the provision of quality journalistic coverage in Wales and the consequent dangers of an escalating democratic deficit.