

# Press release: Tackling the threat to high-quality journalism in the UK

- Independent panel calls for evidence on issues affecting press around the country
- Total press industry revenues declined by more than half over the last ten years
- The number of full-time journalists has fallen by over 25% since 2007
- A quarter of all regional and local newspapers have closed in the past decade

An independent review into the sustainability of high-quality UK journalism has issued a [call for evidence](#) as new research highlights the continuing decline of the press market.

The research shows significant changes to technology and consumer behaviour are posing problems for high-quality journalism – both in the UK and globally.

Circulation and print advertising revenues have dropped by more than half over the last decade, from nearly £7 billion to just over £3 billion. Over the same time, the number of frontline print journalists has dropped by over 25% – from around 23,000 in 2007 to 17,000 in 2017.

These findings are highlighted in [a report commissioned for the review](#), which was established by the Prime Minister earlier this year and is chaired by Dame Frances Cairncross.

Dame Frances Cairncross, Chair of the Review, said:

This review is not about preserving the status quo. We need to explore ways in which we can ensure that consumers in 10 years time have access to high-quality journalism which meets their needs, is delivered in the way they want, and supports democratic engagement.

This call for evidence enables all those with an interest to contribute their knowledge and views so we can build the evidence and make impactful recommendations to move forward.

Matt Hancock, DCMS Secretary of State, said:

Our fearless and independent press plays a vital role in informing citizens and is one of the foundations on which our democracy is built.

At a time of dramatic technological changes and with our institutions under threat from disinformation, we need this clear-

eyed view of how high-quality journalism can continue to be effectively produced, distributed and consumed.

Local and regional newspapers have been particularly affected by revenue challenges due to the movement of local and classified advertising online. The research indicates that over 300 local and regional titles have closed since 2007 – raising the prospect of communities being left without local news provision.

The Cairncross review is investigating the overall state of the news media market, particularly the press industry, including threats to financial sustainability, the role and impact of digital search engines and social media platforms, the operation of the digital advertising supply chain, and how content and data flows are operated and managed.

The review panel, made up of experts from the fields of journalism, academia, advertising and technology, is seeking a greater understanding of the apparent decline by gathering evidence and views from both consumers and across the UK's diverse news media industry.

It is inviting any interested organisation or individual to submit written evidence to inform its final report, which is due to be published in early 2019.

The call for evidence will close on Friday 7 September 2018.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- In January 2018, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned a piece of academic research to look specifically at the changing state of the press market, to examine new business models being deployed by news publishers, and to provide essential market insights and capture trends in media provision, distribution, and consumption. Following an open competition, Mediatique were awarded the contract for the research.
- In addition to providing an all-in-one review of available public data – on newspaper readership, online engagement, revenues and profitability – Mediatique makes three original contributions to an understanding of the sector:
  - A robust estimate of the trends in circulation revenues, which are not tracked by any data provider; Mediatique estimates that, despite sharp rises in cover prices in recent years, offsetting some of the impact of declines in circulation, this revenue segment has reduced to £1.7bn in 2017, compared to £2.2bn in 2007
  - An updated estimate of the number of 'front line journalists' working as print journalists in the UK, which Mediatique puts at 17,000 today, compared to 23,000 10 years ago
  - A calculation of the contributions to editorial journalism of key providers in broadcasting, online and newspapers: despite severe

revenue challenges, and lower profitability, the newspaper industry contributes 50% of total editorial journalism in the UK – more than online and broadcast news combined; in 2017, this amounted to an investment of £925m

- Other findings from the Mediatique report include:
  - As of February 2018, there were 1,043 local and regional titles, as well as ten daily and nine Sunday UK-wide national newspapers.
  - Altogether, a total of 73.5m newspapers circulate in an average week – 31.4m are local or regional and the remaining 42.1m are national.
  - Total press advertising expenditure (excluding digital) has declined across the national and regional/local press by 70% in the last ten years – from £4.6bn in 2007 to an estimated £1.4bn in 2017.
  - The average daily circulation of national newspapers (weekday) fell from 11.2m in 2007 to 6.1m in 2017. Younger people in particular are much less likely to get their news from printed newspapers; the proportion of people aged 16-24 who read printed newspapers is lower than the rest of the population (14%). At the same time, people in the same age group are more likely to get their news from the internet – 63% compared with 48% among the overall population.
- The Reuters Institute Digital News Report (June 2018) is the latest research into the state of the digital news landscape:
  - The use of Facebook as a source of news was down on last year as people prefer to discuss news through more private social media. Although accessing news through a ‘side door’ (i.e. not direct from news site) is still at 65%.
  - More people reported being prepared to pay for news (i.e. subscriptions/donations/membership), with a direct correlation being found between those aware of the value of high quality journalism (and the problems it is facing) and the willingness to subscribe.
  - Greater awareness of the problem of ‘fake news’; most people see this as a problem that publishers should solve, rather than seeing it as requiring Government action.
  - Research shows that eight of the 10 most shared UK websites on social media over the year to July 2017 were news sites, and that almost 50% of all engagements with UK websites on social media featured content sourced from UK news publishers. \*For the purposes of the review, the press industry is defined as members of press self-regulators (i.e. IPSO/IMPRESS) or news publishers who have their own internal standards code and means of readers making complaints.
- The call for evidence represents just one part of the review’s evidence gathering, and complements a series of regional visits currently underway. Visits to Glasgow and Cardiff have already been conducted, with further trips planned to ensure the review takes into account the diverse makeup of the UK’s press industry.
- During these visits, the Chair and Panel will engage with journalists, publishers, academics, advertisers and many others who have a stake in the provision of high-quality journalism.