

Speech: Commonwealth has key role to play in the bright future for Britain: article by Boris Johnson

Do you know what occasion attracted one of the biggest mass gatherings in the history of East Africa? A Bob Marley concert, perhaps? Or a Papal visit? In fact, it was the Queen's arrival in Uganda to open a Commonwealth summit that inspired hundreds of thousands of people to come together in 2007.

As Her Majesty and Prince Philip drove from Entebbe Airport to the capital, Kampala, they were greeted by cheering crowds lining every inch of the 20-mile route. I cannot imagine any head of state except the Queen – or any international organisation except the Commonwealth – stirring such popular enthusiasm.

So I'm delighted to report to readers of the Sunday Express that Her Majesty will be opening another [Commonwealth summit](#) on April 19 and this time the occasion will be here in London.

We are unlikely to rival Uganda when it comes to mass gatherings – something that will be of comfort to the Metropolitan Police – but this event will demonstrate the immense value of the Commonwealth, now and in the future. In some countries, international meetings happen in plate glass conference centres – think sumptuous and functional but, dare I say it, rather bland.

That's not how Britain does these things, certainly not when the occasion is so special. We will hold the summit in Buckingham Palace, Lancaster House and St James's Palace. On the final day, the leaders will travel to Windsor Castle. I hope this will be a uniquely memorable gathering, showing just how much importance Britain attaches to the Commonwealth. And I believe that our faith is amply justified.

As we celebrate Commonwealth Day tomorrow, the Commonwealth's 53 members comprise a third of humanity. Of those 2.4 billion people spread across 6 continents, 60% are under the age of 30. They are joined with us by ties of history and friendship and the English language. They share our values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. And our natural affinity finds its expression through the institution of the Commonwealth.

When you're looking for future opportunities, any good businessperson will tell you to go where the growth is. And for decades, if you untangle the numbers, you will discover some remarkable facts. Since Britain decided to join what became the European Union in 1972, the EU has recorded average annual economic growth of just over 2%. Yet, over the same period, the Commonwealth's economies have expanded twice as fast – by an average of 4.4% every year. Today, the Commonwealth has a combined GDP of \$10.5 trillion, accounting for almost 14% of the global economy.

India alone has an economy of \$2.3 trillion and annual growth of 7% – faster than any EU country. All of this represents a huge opportunity for British business.

The good news is that when we leave the EU, we will regain the power to sign free trade agreements with our Commonwealth friends, allowing the UK to make the most of thriving markets. Brexit will give us the ability to open a new era of friendship with countries across the world.

A key theme of the London summit will be how to boost trade within the Commonwealth. We'll also discuss how to improve security co-operation and take joint action to protect the world's oceans, bearing in mind that the Commonwealth includes island states in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.

And I will ensure that the summit focuses on the terrible injustice that deprives millions of girls of the chance to go to school. At this moment, over 130 million girls across the world are not in the classroom, many of whom – alas – live in Commonwealth countries.

My aim is for all governments to promise to deliver 12 years of quality education and learning for every child. The fact that we will discuss such a wide range of subjects – trade, security, girls' education, protecting the oceans – is yet more proof of the value of the Commonwealth.

This is going to be a great summit and a huge opportunity for a Global Britain.

Statement to Parliament: HS2 Crewe Hub consultation response

I am pleased to inform the House that we have published our [consultation response on taking forward the vision of a Crewe Hub](#).

This response signals how our plans will support that vision and allow for the introduction of an additional HS2 service to Stoke-on-Trent.

To enable this, we will amend our plans for HS2 Phase 2A, from Birmingham to Crewe. This includes 400 metre platforms at Crewe, which allow longer HS2 trains to split and join, opening up opportunities to serve more destinations including Stoke-on-Trent and enabling more people to access high speed, long distance services.

We also intend to ask the franchise operator, West Coast Partnership, to include a high speed service to Stoke-on-Trent in its market development and service plans.

A Crewe Hub could generate significant opportunities – not only for Crewe, but also for the surrounding region. To fully realise that vision will need central and local government to work together and require future decisions to be taken as part of Phase 2B.

We welcome the progress being made by Cheshire East Council and the local enterprise partnership in identifying how they could invest in the scheme to ensure the benefits are fully realised.

The steps we are taking today will ensure Crewe and Stoke-on-Trent can benefit fully from HS2 and builds on the earlier decision to bring the benefits of HS2 to Crewe from 2027, 6 years earlier than originally planned.

HS2 will become the new backbone of our national rail network. It will increase capacity on our busy railways and improve connections between our biggest cities and regions. It will support our [Industrial Strategy](#), generating jobs, skills and economic growth to help build an economy that works for all.

[Speech: Matt Hancock on 'The Future of the Media' at the Oxford Media Convention](#)

We meet at a time of great change. Over the past generation, we have lived through some of the most radical changes since the invention of the printing press.

At the heart of the digital revolution is an unprecedented collapse in the cost of gathering and transmitting information.

And since gathering and transmitting information is at the heart of what you do, it's little wonder the media is probably affected more than anything else.

Not everyone thought that this would be the case. Take the American commentator Clifford Stoll, who wrote in Newsweek magazine in 1995: "Try reading a book on disc. At best, it's an unpleasant chore: the myopic glow of a clunky computer replaces the friendly pages of a book. And you can't tote that laptop to the beach. Yet some predict that we'll soon buy books and newspapers straight over the Internet."

He said "The truth is no CD-ROM can take the place of a competent teacher, no computer network will change the way government works... and no online database will replace your daily newspaper".

Newsweek, of course is now digital only.

But he wasn't the only one who underestimated the transformative effect of technology on our media and on our society.

And last time that the change was this big, the invention of the printing press brought about the fall of the established feudal order, the Thirty Years War, the end of the power of the church, and then ultimately paved the way for the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

And I just hope we can make the path smoother this time round.

The world has changed, and today I want to look to the future.

I only hope my speech will fare a bit better than Clifford Stoll's article.

But Stoll was not all wrong. He went on to say:

"What the Internet hucksters won't tell you is that the Internet is one big ocean of unedited data, without any pretence of completeness. Lacking editors, reviewers or critics, the Internet has become a wasteland of unfiltered data. You don't know what to ignore and what's worth reading."

Sound familiar?

There are a multitude of challenges facing our media today. Falling newspaper circulations, declining advertising revenues, changing consumption and wholesale disinformation.

Trusted, sustainable, high quality media is needed now more than ever.

Yet the established media also face urgent challenges to reflect and represent the citizens they serve.

I want to take a moment to examine these challenges, through three lenses:

Accuracy. Sustainability. And diversity.

And to ask "what is the role of Government in a liberal democracy as we navigate these turbulent times?"

Accuracy

The first area I want to look into is accuracy, where we're seeing real threats to our media; to our society as a whole; is disinformation, also known as 'fake news'.

Now let us not pretend that journalism has always been an error free business.

News is fast paced and mistakes can happen as stories change and new facts emerge. We all know the strapline for over-enthusiastic journalists: not wrong for long.

But there is a difference between a mistake under the pressure of a deadline and deliberate disinformation designed to disrupt.

According to last year's Reuters Institute Digital Survey, only 43 per cent of the UK population felt they could trust the news most of the time.

We know that some of the problem is state-sponsored. Russia, for instance, persistently deploys its state-run media organisations to manipulate democratic institutions.

Some of this disinformation comes from people who simply see a business opportunity.

A recent MIT study showed that falsehoods are 70 per cent more likely to be retweeted than stories verified by fact-checking authorities.

Clicks of course mean money and so there are financial incentives to publish sensational stories, with little regard for their accuracy.

A BuzzFeed report showed that two of the most widely shared fake news stories in the whole of 2016 originated from the same small town in Macedonia, where fake news can be a primary source of income.

Commercial clickbait is in some ways easier to deal with, and the platforms have taken action.

This toxic combination of political and financial motives is not just concerning, but can also be downright dangerous.

We saw a number of widely shared fake news stories after the Manchester terrorist attack, including reports of another attack at Oldham Hospital. This caused panic and alarm and added unnecessarily to the workload of our fantastic emergency services.

We reap massive benefits in this country from our free, open and accessible media. But we must act to deter those who want to take advantage of this to cause harm.

And this ultimately matters to anyone who believes in our way of life in a liberal democracy.

From Cicero to Rousseau, thinkers throughout history have underlined the importance of a successful democratic discourse.

And we should aim for a discourse in which all sides accept objective facts, and then we can dispute what to do about the world we live in. To quote the legendary Guardian editor C.P. Scott "Comment is free but facts are sacred."

And this is why fake news is corrosive. It both allows a discourse in which uncomfortable facts are dismissed as fake news, and allows fake news – in other words lies – to underpin political opinions and decisions, even having been debunked.

Of course fake news has always been around. There's a quote that Mark Twain is said to have said – "a lie gets half the way round the world before the truth gets its shoes on". Although even that quote is disputed, so maybe that's fake news as well...

But this inherent human behaviour is multiplied by technology, and it corrodes our democratic discourse.

It's no good just complaining about it. We must act.

First things first, this impact of technology underlines the need to support some existing institutions.

I firmly believe that for all its faults, if we didn't have the BBC, today we would want to invent it. My God it can be infuriating, and bureaucratic, and desperately in need of more diversity of thought.

But the BBC is our best bulwark against fake news and I celebrate its role in British public life, and I pay tribute to the stewardship of Lord Hall of Aunty.

And I want to see the BBC do yet more around the world. I'm delighted at the World Service expansion. We strongly support its foreign language services, like Persian, Pidgin and Pashto, and we want to see it do more.

Like the civil service, the principle of objectivity is drilled into its culture, and I want public service broadcasters to be more muscular in asserting their judgement and objectivity.

While more reflection is needed domestically on the BBC's institutional and subconscious biases, this objectivity is vital. And let's be clear what objectivity means.

Objectivity means stating this fact is wrong, and that fact is true, and not giving any airtime to total nonsense at all. Where facts can be established, your duty is to tell the truth.

Objective reality exists. Your job is to find it and tell it. Have confidence, broadcasters. Your country needs you!

But our existing institutions are not enough. We must work on technological solutions.

I welcome recent moves by Facebook and Google to use technology to prevent the spread of fake news online, through algorithms that promote trusted news rather than dubious sources.

I applaud solutions, like we've seen from Twitter, to tackle the use of online 'bots' that aim artificially to boost fake news.

Tech companies are starting on their journey to maturity. The adolescents who moved fast and broke things now accept that they have a responsibility to society, a duty of care to curate an online world of trust, not fakery. But

we are in the foothills, and there's a lot of growing up to do.

Part of the solution also lies in education. Our schools and our curriculum have a valuable role to play so students can tell fact from fiction and think critically about the news that they read and watch.

But it is not easy for our children, or indeed for anyone who reads news online. Although we have robust mechanisms to address disinformation in the broadcast and press industries, this is simply not the case online.

Take the example of three different organisations posting a video online.

If a broadcaster published it on their on demand service, the content would be a matter for Ofcom.

If a newspaper posted it, it would be a matter for IPSO.

If an individual published it online, it would be untouched by media regulation.

Now I am passionate in my belief in a free and open Internet. But freedom does not mean the freedom to harm others. Freedom can only exist within a framework.

Digital platforms need to step up and play their part in establishing online rules and working for the benefit of the public that uses them.

We've seen some positive first steps from Google, Facebook and Twitter recently, but even tech companies recognise that more needs to be done.

We are looking at the legal liability that social media companies have for the content shared on their sites. Because it's a fact on the web that online platforms are no longer just passive hosts.

But this is not simply about applying publisher or broadcaster standards of liability to online platforms.

There are those who argue that every word on every platform should be the full legal responsibility of the platform. But then how could anyone ever let me post anything, even though I'm an extremely responsible adult?

This is new ground and we are exploring a range of ideas...

including where we can tighten current rules to tackle illegal content online...

and where platforms should still qualify for 'host' category protections.

We will strike the right balance between addressing issues with content online and allowing the digital economy to flourish.

This is part of the thinking behind our Digital Charter. We will work with publishers, tech companies, civil society and others to establish a new framework...

...that protects users and their rights online, and offers opportunities alongside obligations for businesses and platforms.

Trusted brands will help us to tackle this important issue.

Everyone in this room, whether print, broadcast or online, has a part to play in providing reporting that everyone can trust.

People are increasingly looking for trust in the midst of a sea of uncertainty.

A sustainable, healthy and trusted press is a beacon for our democracy and that it is what we must keep in our sights.

Sustainability

This brings me on to sustainability, the second lens on the future.

The Internet has been an immense force for good, connecting people around the world.

And in so doing, it has turned the established order on its head and raised real questions about the sustainability of high quality journalism.

UK newspaper circulations have halved since 2001. And although digital 'clicks' are rising, the average revenue per digital media user is only 8% of a reader in print.

Local newspapers are particularly under threat, with over 200 closing since 2005. They play a vital role in binding together communities and holding local politicians and authorities to account.

We need to make sure the fourth estate can survive and thrive in the face of rapidly developing technology, and that it's appropriately rewarded for the content it creates.

The role for Government is to work out what's a public policy goal, and what is the natural impact of a disruptive new technology.

And I'm clear about this:

Sustaining high quality journalism is a vital public policy goal. The scrutiny, the accountability, the uncovering of wrongs and the fuelling of debate is mission critical to a healthy democracy.

After all, journalists helped bring Stephen Lawrence's killers to justice and have given their lives reporting from places where many of us would fear to go.

And while I've not always enjoyed every article written about me, that's not what it's there for.

I tremble at the thought of a media regulated by the state in a time of malevolent forces in politics. Get this wrong and I fear for the future of

our liberal democracy. We must get this right.

I want publications to be able to choose their own path, making decisions like how to make the most out of online advertising and whether to use paywalls. After all, it's your copy, it's your IP.

The removal of Google's 'first click free' policy has been a welcome move for the news sector. But I ask the question – if someone is protecting their intellectual property with a paywall, shouldn't that be promoted, not just neutral in the search algorithm?

I've watched the industry grapple with the challenge of how to monetise content online, with different models of paywalls and subscriptions.

Some of these have been successful, and all of them have evolved over time. I've been interested in recent ideas to take this further and develop new subscription models for the industry.

Our job in Government is to provide the framework for a market that works, without state regulation of the press.

We have launched an external review to examine the sustainability of this country's press, to propose solutions to protect the future of high quality journalism.

The review will be led by Dame Frances Cairncross. Frances will bring her experience as a journalist, in business and in academia to bear on the thorny and complex questions at the heart of press sustainability.

Panelists include Peter Wright, a former editor of the Mail on Sunday.

Polly Curtis, Editor in Chief at the Huffington Post.

And Geraldine Allinson, who is chair of the KM Media Group.

The Cairncross review will...

take a clear-eyed view of how the press is faring in this new world...

explore where innovation is working well...

... and explore whether intervention may be required to safeguard the future of our free and independent press.

The review will take evidence, report and publish recommendations within a year. We're confident that we will find solutions that can help both the industry and the Government tackle these issues.

This is not about Government regulating the media, and nor is it about propping up old business models that have stopped being viable.

Rather, it is about making sure that we don't wake up in five years' time to find that high quality journalism has been decimated and our democracy damaged as a result.

It may be that the market will create new, viable business models for high quality journalism, and indeed some of those new models have already started to appear.

Just look at the FT, the Spectator and the Economist. Three publications, all founded in the 19th century, reinventing themselves and attracting new readers at a phenomenal rate.

But high quality news is so important to our democracy that we need these success stories across the board, and to have the right market structures to do so. This is about acting in time, before irreversible damage is done to our news industry.

Our nation has a distinguished history of a fearless and independent press. I made the decision not to reopen the Leveson Inquiry and not to commence Section 40, so we could focus on these big questions of the future.

But I do want to see high standards. I want to see IPSO's low cost arbitration system working, so anyone, of whatever means can get redress. It can't be right that, in some places, a large front page mistake can still get a tiny page 18 correction.

For high standards of ethics and high quality media of all forms is critical to our democracy.

Our broadcasters are also being impacted by these seismic changes. And as Sharon White said last week, young British teenagers recognise the name YouTube more than they do the BBC. That is a striking fact.

So broadcasters also need to be on a sustainable footing. As we leave the EU, and the relevant directives, we are exploring options for mutual recognition.

Our goal is to allow for continued transfrontier broadcasting, which is good for Britain, and good for the rest of the EU too. And I look forward to working with all our broadcasters to make this happen.

Diversity

This brings me to the third lens through which I want to look at the future of our media: diversity.

For our media to thrive, be relevant and trusted in the years to come, it needs to serve all of our communities and all parts of our country.

The future of our media must have diversity at its heart.

Diversity of gender, of race, of sexual orientation. Of social background and of region. Diversity when it comes to attitude, and disability, and personality type.

In the inspiring words of Idris Elba, diversity of thought.

The media has a special responsibility to reflect the nation it serves. There

was a time when an Oxford Media Convention could have doubled up as a university reunion.

Likewise, I could forgive you for being sceptical when you see a white, middle-class man in a suit talking to you about diversity. But this is a moral imperative for everyone.

And I care about it not just because it is right.

I care about it because it's good business sense too: I've never seen a decision that can't be improved by discussion with a diverse group.

And I care because I care about my country. And a media with one set of assumptions based in one postcode in the capital can't possibly reflect, represent or serve the country as a whole.

High quality media is public service, and it's got to serve the public.

We've seen some good progress in recent years.

For the first time, diversity, both on screen and off screen, has been enshrined within the BBC Operating Licence. This diversity will help fulfil the BBC's Charter commitment to distinctiveness.

We are taking action to make sure people with disabilities affecting sight or hearing can have equal access to video on demand platforms.

And we have seen the launch and development of Project Diamond, to capture a range of diversity data directly from TV programmes.

But there is so much more to do. Publishers and broadcasters should be a mirror for their communities, and represent the wide variety of views and perspectives that make this country so great.

The publication of gender pay gap data has shown that transparency can shine a light on inequality and bad practise.

I would call on all broadcasters and publications to publish your data on all diversity characteristics, not just those you are compelled to by law.

Because this isn't going away.

Diversity is about regional representation as well.

Local papers play a crucial role in this and we are working hard to give them the support and sustainability that they need.

And there is also a role for publicly owned broadcasters, who need to do more to share their considerable benefits more widely across the UK.

As the BBC has shown with the successful relocation of 2,500 roles to Salford, public service broadcasters can transform communities and build new creative hubs across the UK. BBC Breakfast and Five Live have had a markedly different tone and feel since their move.

But more than two thirds of UK producers are based in London and the South East, while the vast majority of people live elsewhere.

This limits the spread of jobs, prosperity, and opportunity outside the capital, and limits the representation of local views and interests on TV.

I'm delighted that Channel 4 is creating a new National HQ, outside London, and increasing its out-of-London commissioning to over 50%, stimulating our creative economy across the country.

There's a huge swathe of interest, and I'm sure they will see some fantastic bids from across the UK.

This will lead to a greater reflection, both on and off-screen, of the regional diversity of the country, and will support creative clusters across the UK.

It's what the public want, and I pay tribute to the vision and leadership of Alex Mahon in making it happen.

And I hope that others will look to follow her lead.

Conclusion

So, our media faces challenges like never before.

Each way we turn, long held assumptions are turned on their heads.

But the solutions are within our grasp.

Technology will not slow down; it will get only faster and smarter.

Yet the essential human yearning for truth; for a story; for belonging and understanding, will surpass this technological age and endure.

We face many hurdles. Yet among this turbulence I tell you this:

There is no place on Earth with more of a chance, with more rich depth or more capability.

More able to make this work and shape the future.

The choices we make; the decisions we take as we face foursquare the new challenges and new chances of the age we live in will shape our country and our world for generations to come.

So let us face them together. And let us rise to the task.

Press release: Chair appointed to lead review of press sustainability in the UK

Since 2001 UK newspaper circulation has halved and over 200 local newspapers have closed their doors since 2005. With a rapidly changing media world, news reaches people through many new channels, and existing publications have often had to compete with digital media.

[Terms of reference](#) published today outline how the Cairncross review will investigate the overall state of the market, threats to financial sustainability, the role and impact of digital search engines and social media platforms, how content and data flows are operated and managed and the role of digital advertising.

Speaking at the Oxford Media Convention, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Matt Hancock said:

Although the internet has been an immense force for good, it has torn apart the established order and raised real questions about the sustainability and profitability of traditional journalism.

Dame Frances Cairncross will bring her experience in journalism and academia to tackle these issues with a view to examine the press and protect the future of high quality journalism.

Dame Frances Cairncross said:

Having spent much of my working life as a journalist, and seen how the digital revolution has changed both the fortunes of newspapers and the opportunities for distributing news, I am excited to be undertaking this review.

This is both a challenging and an exciting time for the press, both locally and nationally, and I hope the review will clarify both ways to ensure the future of high quality journalism and the options for public policy.

Dame Frances Cairncross will be supported by a panel of experts which includes experts in the fields of journalism, academia, advertising and technology. The panel will act in an advisory capacity, with the review's final report and recommendations being determined by and issued in the name of the chair. The panel includes: Peter Wright, Matt Rogerson, Ashley Highfield, Geraldine Allinson, Mimi Turner, Douglas McCabe, Stephen Woodford, Akshat Rathi, Polly Curtis, and Azeem Azhar.

As well as identifying challenges, the review will make recommendations on what industry and government action can be taken, with a final report expected later this year.

Note to editors:

Dame Frances Cairncross is a former economic journalist, author and academic administrator. She is currently Chair of the Court of Heriot-Watt University and a Trustee at the Natural History Museum. Dame Frances was Rector of Exeter College, Oxford University; a senior editor on The Economist; and principal economic columnist for the Guardian. In 2014 she was made a Dame of the British Empire for services to education. She is the author of a number of books, including "The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution is Changing our Lives" and "Costing the Earth: The Challenge for Governments, the Opportunities for Business". Dame Frances is married to financial journalist Hamish McRae.

Advisory panel members:

Jo Adetunji

Jo Adetunji is a journalist and Deputy Editor at The Conversation UK, a comment and analysis website that delivers evidence-based, accessible journalism by experts from universities across the UK and Europe. The Conversation aims to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and the public via a newsroom of editors. Jo has worked in more traditional media as a reporter for The Guardian, covering stories from UK knife crime to live blogging the Arab Spring, and has also written for The Independent. She recently contributed to Philanthropic Journalism Funding in the UK, a report commissioned by the European Journalism Centre, and was an interviewer for the latest round of the Journalism Diversity Fund. She holds a degree in the History of Art from The Courtauld Institute of Art in London.

Geraldine Allinson

Geraldine is the Chairman of the KM Media Group, part of Iliffe Media. KM is a Local Multimedia business that serves the people and organisations of Kent through Newspapers, Radio, Online and more recently local TV. The company employs award winning journalists and has highly trusted brands within its stable of products. Through online, print and broadcast KM reaches over 1 million people each week. Geraldine has been with KM Media Group since 1993 and became its Chairman in 2006. Prior to this she worked for Northcliffe Newspapers and the Midland News Association. She is currently a Non-executive Director at the PA Group (parent company of the Press Association), Director of the Radiocentre and a Director of the News Media Association (NMA). Previous industry positions include: President of the Newspaper Society, Chairman of the Independent Publishers Forum and the Weekly Independent Newspaper Association.

Azeem Azhar

Azeem runs Exponential View, a newsletter looking at how our world is

changing in the face of the accelerating pace of technology. This is built on the back of 20 years as an entrepreneur, corporate innovator and journalist. He is currently senior adviser to the Chief Technology & Innovation Officer at Accenture, focusing on frontier technologies. Azeem advises Harvard Business Review, the Huxley Summit and several founders of disruptive technology firms. He lives in London with his wife and three children.

Polly Curtis

Polly Curtis joined HuffPost UK in August 2017 as Editor-in-Chief with 17 years of media industry experience. Immediate prior to joining HuffPost, Polly was director of media for British Red Cross during a time that included the organisation's largest emergency response in decades, as they operationalised after the Manchester bombing, London Bridge and Finsbury Park attacks and at Grenfell. Prior to her position at British Red Cross, Polly was digital editor at The Guardian, where she led digital plans for the Scottish referendum, the EU referendum and the 2015 election as well as the live coverage of some of the biggest breaking stories in recent times. She has a background as a news editor and reporter, having served as the Guardian's deputy national editor, Whitehall correspondent, education editor and health correspondent.

Ashley Highfield

Ashley Highfield is CEO of Johnston Press plc, one of the largest local media groups in the UK, and owner of the i newspaper. He has worked in high levels in companies including Microsoft – where he was UK Managing Director (Consumer & Online) – and the BBC, where as executive board director for New Media & Technology, he was responsible for the development and launch of BBC iPlayer. During his tenure there he oversaw a growth in the BBC's online presence from 3.5m to 17m users. In June 2015 Culture Secretary John Whittingdale named Ashley as one of the advisory board members tasked with working on the renewal of the BBC's Royal Charter, which led to the local democracy reporter initiative. In October 2015 he was appointed Chairman of the News Media Association for a two year period. He has previously served on the boards of William Hill plc and the British Film Institute in non-executive roles.

Douglas McCabe

Douglas is a leading expert in tech and publishing media. He analyses supplier strategies and forecasts consumption, revenue and marketing expenditure. He is a former director of Fish4, the online advertising portal, and was director of sales development and market insights at Waterstones. Douglas holds a degree from Stirling University.

Akshat Rathi

Akshat Rathi has worked for both established publications and new media startups. He is a reporter for Quartz, covering science and energy, and previously worked for The Economist and The Conversation. His work has also been published in The Guardian, The Hindu, and Nature. He holds a doctorate

in chemistry from the University of Oxford.

Matt Rogerson

Matthew Rogerson is the Head of Public Policy at Guardian Media Group (GMG). Matthew joined GMG in 2013 following 5 years at Virgin Media, where he worked on a range of issues, including responses to the Digital Britain report, the Government's Communications Review, and broadband policy. Matthew's work at GMG covers areas such as press freedom, media plurality, digital advertising and brand safety, and the changing nature of digital news. Before working in the private sector, Matthew worked as a parliamentary researcher.

Mimi Turner

Mimi Turner is Founder of brand strategy consultancy Mimi Turner Associates and has more than twenty years experience in print and digital publishing. Mimi has been instrumental in growing some of the UK's biggest digitally disruptive media brands including the Lad Bible, GIVEMESPORT and Vice Media, and has developed a deep understanding of millennial and Gen Z audiences. She is a board advisor to TRUTH, the media agency using blockchain technology to provide transparency in the advertising supply chain, and is an advisor to online video platform Suggestv, which helps publishers build brand context through video. Prior to transforming the Lad Bible, Mimi spent three years working for Richard Desmond as Group Director of Communications of Express Newspapers, Channel 5 and OK Magazine, and was also Sales and Marketing Director of The Health Lottery. Mimi spent over a decade in journalism with the Hollywood Reporter and began her career writing about science and technology for the Sunday Times and the Times.

Stephen Woodford

Stephen was appointed CEO of the Advertising Association in September 2016. Having held management roles in three agencies (Leo Burnett, WCRS/Engine and DDB/adam&eveDDB), Stephen currently chairs youth marketing agency Livity, a social purpose-driven business that seeks to transform young peoples' lives, especially from BAME backgrounds. He was recently Chairman of Lexis PR and a founder and director of U, a challenger to conventional banks. Stephen is a past President of NABS and serves on the board of the History of Advertising Trust. He was IPA President (2003-05) where he led both their first ethnic diversity initiative and transformed its professional qualifications for new industry entrants, which over 15,000 people have now sat and passed.

Peter Wright

Peter Wright has been Editor Emeritus of Associated Newspapers, publishers of the Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, MailOnline and Metro, since 2012. He was Editor of The Mail on Sunday 1998-2012. He is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) Complaints Committee, and the News Media Association Legal, Policy and Regulatory Affairs Committee. He is also a member of the Thomson Reuters Founders Share Company Nominations Committee. Previously he was a commissioner and later director of the Press Complaints

Commission (2008-14) and the Editors' Code of Practice Committee (2004-8). He sat on the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee Review (2014-15).

News story: Defence Secretary reviews tax on Armed Forces in Scotland

The Defence Secretary's intervention follows the decision by the Scottish Government last month to create new income tax bands and increased tax levels, which will see personnel in Scotland worse off than the rest of the UK.

The Defence Secretary has reassured servicemen and women that he would look to mitigate against the negative impact of Scottish taxes. Up to 8,000 service personnel are set to be hit by the tax rise.

On 21 February 2018, the Scottish Parliament ratified their income tax rates and thresholds applying to Scottish taxpayers. As a result those earning more than £26,000 will pay more tax in comparison to their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

Scotland plays a key role in the defence of the UK and its contribution is set to increase. Some, 1,400 submariners will move to HM Naval Base Clyde by 2020, creating the new single home of the entire UK Submarine Service. Army numbers are also increasing with the return of troops from Germany.

An additional 400 personnel will move to RAF Lossiemouth as it adds a fourth Typhoon squadron and prepares to receive the entire UK fleet of nine submarine hunter Poseidon P-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft from the early 2020s.