

Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

On 10 January 2019, News UK submitted an application to vary certain conditions put in place in 1981 by the then Secretary of State for Trade. The changes proposed by News UK would allow The Times and The Sunday Times to share journalistic resources, subject to the agreement of each newspaper's editor.

Having considered News UK's application and representations made following an Invitation to Comment issued by DCMS on 17 January, I announced, in a Written Ministerial Statement dated 11 April, that I was minded to accept News UK's application to vary the 1981 conditions. However, in considering the proposed new undertakings as a whole, I also noted that the existing governance arrangements lacked clarity and certainty over roles and responsibilities. Following discussions between News UK and Officials, News UK submitted revised undertakings which substantially meet my concerns.

On 27 June, as required by legislation, I issued a further consultation notice seeking views on the changes to News UK's revised undertakings. Two responses were received. Neither response raised any issues that would warrant me seeking further modifications to the Undertakings from News UK. Accordingly, I have today formally decided to accept the new Undertakings and have today issued a Notice of Acceptance. A copy of the Notice of Acceptance with the final signed undertakings and the revised articles of association of Times Newspapers Ltd (TNL) and Times Newspapers Holding Ltd (TNHL) will be published on the Government website. My Department will shortly publish in the Issues Note circulated to News UK prior to the discussions with Officials.

The new undertakings creates an explicit requirement for the CMA and the Secretary of State to monitor the effectiveness of the obligations placed on News UK and the TNHL Independent National Directors (INDs). As part of this, I can confirm that in line with the Government's commitments on the handling of media merger cases, that DCMS will publish a non-confidential version of the reports from the TNHL INDs which have to be submitted to DCMS and the CMA annually.