

Supplementary evidence submitted by the Authors Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS)

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Inquiry: Sustainability of Local Journalism

In our submission to the Committee earlier this year, we referenced research being carried out by the UK Copyright & Creative Economy Centre at the University of Glasgow ('CREATE') into writers' earnings. We have received the final draft of research which includes the following data on journalist's income:

1. In 2022, journalists earned a median income of £25,000, which places them marginally above the typical (median) income for the total population of authors (£23,617). Nonetheless, this represents a drop of income in real terms of 23%, when compared with journalistic earnings in 2016/17 which were £32,377.

2. This downward trend in earnings threatens the sustainability of journalism as a career moving forward. During the evidence session conducted by the DCMS Committee on 17 May 2022, the General Secretary of the NUJ, Michelle Stanistreet, referred to this trend in the context of ongoing discussions aimed at redressing the current financial imbalance between press publishers and online platforms re-using their content,

"The stagnation and retraction of freelance pay is a big issue and I would want to make sure they have a voice and a stake in any of the discussions about any new investment and how it would be spent."¹

3. In considering possible mechanisms to achieve a fairer settlement between news content owners and online platforms, we commend to the Committee the options set out in the joint advice provided to the Government by Ofcom and the CMA² aimed at arriving at fair and reasonable remuneration models.

4. In particular, when it comes to recommendations on how to redress the balance between news media publishers and the online platforms who re-use their content, we urge the Committee to specify that any model introduced must include sufficient mechanisms to enable freelance journalists as well as publishers to receive payments. Such payments would, we believe, have an important role to play in supplementing the dwindling incomes of freelance journalists which, as outlined above, is for many reaching unsustainable levels.

¹ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Oral evidence: Sustainability of local journalism, HC 153 Tuesday 17 May 2022, Q123

² Platforms and content providers, including news publishers Advice to DCMS on the application of a code of conduct, November 2021