

National Union of Journalists (NUJ)—written evidence (FOJ0038)

NUJ response to the Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into the Future of Journalism

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

Introduction

When the committee launched its report in February, its questions were posed in a pre-Covid-19 era. It followed the government's response to the recommendations of the Cairncross review into the sustainability of quality journalism. The government watered down a report which the union already believed represented a missed opportunity to remedy many of the systemic challenges facing the news industry. Against this background, the economic shockwaves of the Covid-19 crisis have damaged the sector badly and the very real risk is that many media outlets will go to the wall and the damage will be irreparable. At a time when the public needs access to information, impartial news and trusted editorial content more than ever before – we are witnessing an insatiable appetite for trusted reporting and increased engagement across all platforms as journalists seek to reflect the impact Covid-19 is having on the communities they serve.

The problem is that the industry has underlying health problems. As the 2019 Cairncross review reported, the number of fulltime frontline journalists working in the UK had fallen from 23,000 in 2007 to 17,000. In that period, newspaper annual advertising spend dropped by 69 per cent (£3.2 billion) and annual circulation revenue declined by 23 per cent (£500 million). The job losses and loss of advertising is now much worse. David Bradley, chairman of the seemingly successful American Atlantic Media, said, Covid-19 has "effectively nuked" his print and online publications and no-one is sure if or when they will return. Despite having a billionaire, Laurene Powell Jobs, as its majority owner, Atlantic has laid off 17 percent of its head count, cut pay for executives and put a freeze on salaries. The very same is happening in the UK. An NUJ survey of more than 1,200 members (carried out from 24 April-10 May) found that 45 per cent said their employer had furloughed editorial staff, with half (52 per cent) not having their pay topped up by their employer, 42 per cent had their pay cut and 84 per cent fearing the crisis would lead to redundancies at their workplace.

The NUJ has published a *News Recovery Plan for the UK and Ireland, From Health Crisis to Good News*, setting out a bold set of measures and interventions to support and protect jobs and quality journalism to sustain the press and media through the Covid-19 crisis and reinvigorate the industry into a reimagined future.

How have digital technologies changed the consumption of journalism?

1. The NUJ and its members are platform neutral – whatever means of disseminating quality, trustworthy news and information to citizens is to be welcomed. However, the way in which many publishers have responded to the technological changes has been to see it as an opportunity for cutting costs – sacrificing resources, lowering headcount, relying on cheap or free content, reducing specialist editorial roles, cutting freelance spend and slashing investment in photography. Investment in staff, including in training, whether that is digital skills or in other professional training, is scant. Quality journalistic content has been a much lower priority than the interests of stakeholders, the

requirements of investors and the pursuit of profits. When the going was good the publishers creamed off profits of 20-30 per cent, rather than investing in the future. The NUJ's view is that quality relevant content has to be a core part of any business model that is to be successful – cutting corners and quality, and diminishing relevance inevitably leads to falls in engagement.

2. The technology has been a huge boon for journalism. Words and images can be sent across the globe from almost anywhere in seconds. Digital platforms did away with the costs of print and the distribution costs of lorries rumbling through the night delivering to retail outlets. Social media spawned a completely new sphere of journalism, with journalists and publications creating huge new fan bases and readers. A Communications and Digital Committee session can now be Tweeted far and wide as it happens. But it also turned out to be the wrecking ball of the traditional business model. The printed publications started to lose classified advertising to the internet. And while they moved journalism into digital, the advertising did not follow; particularly hitting local newspapers. Since then Facebook, Google and the other tech giants have taken the newspapers' content without paying for it and thanked them by hoovering up all the advertising. In hindsight newspapers were too slow to put up paywalls, giving away their journalism for free and producing digital issues with annoying and intrusive adverts.
3. The drop in revenues led to year-on-year cuts across the board in the newspaper and magazine industry. A further consequence of this squeeze on the market has been an even further diminution of media plurality. A 2019 report by the Media Reform Coalition found that three companies (News UK, Daily Mail Group and Reach) dominated 83 per cent of the national newspaper market (up from 71 per cent in 2015). When online readers were included, just five companies (News UK, Daily Mail Group, Reach, Guardian and Telegraph) dominated nearly 80 per cent of the market. For the local press, just five companies (Gannett, Johnston Press [whose titles were later bought by JPIMedia], Trinity Mirror, Tindle and Archant) accounted for 80 per cent of titles; JPIMedia is now looking for a buyer. Two companies had 46 per cent of all commercial local analogue radio stations and two-thirds of all commercial digital stations.
4. Since the Covid-19 crisis, titles have been closed or moved to digital-only and pagination is down. This has all happened as the thirst for news has rocketed and digital traffic increased from between 20 and 50 per cent. With newsstands and shops such as WHSmith shut, sales of physical newspapers have plummeted. Then, newspapers found coronavirus stories were being blocked on digital platforms, because of algorithms relating to where stories and adverts are placed. Research firm Enders Analysis forecast that advertising revenue could fall by almost a third and estimated that 5,000 journalists and dozens of publishers were at risk. While digital audience figures are at an all-time high for many news organisations, there are fewer journalists to produce the news and the increased "hits" are not translating into increased revenue.
5. This month (May) Midland News Association, publisher of the Wolverhampton Express and Star, put 90 jobs at risk of redundancy including 14 in editorial. At the end of April, the trade magazine Press Gazette reported that the Guardian's reader revenues had grown to record rates with recurring payments up by almost a quarter on the previous year. However the Guardian furloughed 100 of its (non-editorial) staff and the company postponed pay rises for all UK staff and reduced pay for the management team – including Katharine Viner, the editor-in-chief – by 20 per cent for the next six months. Despite the increase in readers, the company expected a decline in revenue of £20million over the following six months. The Financial Times – which has more than a million

paying subscribers – revealed that 80 senior managers would be taking a 10 per cent pay cut. It has temporarily halved its pension contributions, matching staff payments into retirement plans rather than its usual practice of double-matching. The Daily Telegraph has made non-editorial employees take 20 per cent pay cuts and work four-day weeks. The Independent has furloughed staff and said all employees earning more than £37,500 would have their pay cut by 20 per cent. Almost every major news publisher in the UK has now imposed substantial cost reductions.

6. Most concerning has been the recent news that BuzzFeed is closing its UK and Australian offices, Vice has cut 55 jobs in the US and 100 elsewhere and Quartz is cutting 80 jobs and closing its London office. These online start-up upstarts were supposed to be the future of digital journalism. They were the zeitgeist – capturing the new age in journalism, but more importantly the holy grail of younger readers. Vice and BuzzFeed may have started capturing young eyeballs with its irreverent and silly listicles, but they both began to produce award-winning journalism. Their stories had huge digital “hits” but the company could not get enough advertising to get into profit; BuzzFeed started asking for voluntary contributions from readers two years ago. Nancy Dubuc, chief executive of Vice Media Group, has called on industry leaders to stand together against tech giants, saying their “squeeze” on news publishers “is becoming a chokehold”.
7. Central to the NUJ’s *News Recovery Plan* is an urgent windfall tax on the tech giants whose platforms have sucked up editorial content without making any contribution to its production. According to analysis by Techwatch, earlier this year, the top five tech companies generated over £8.1billion from UK customers in 2018, but collectively only paid around £237million in taxes – an effective tax rate of just 2.9 per cent, meaning around £1.3billion in tax was avoided. Achieving this would be straightforward – the UK committed to introduce a 2 per cent Digital Services Tax from April 2020 on the revenues of large businesses providing internet search engines, social media platforms and online marketplaces to UK users. Given the current crisis, that tax should be tripled to 6 per cent and the proceeds used to fund a News Recovery Plan and ensure the tech giants play a significant role in the preservation of a sector that is vital to our democracy.
8. Following the windfall “Covid-19 tax” there would need to be an ongoing contribution from the tech giants to the UK news industry as part of the Digital Service Tax. While Google and Facebook do fund journalism projects, the sums involved are in real terms miniscule. The NUJ is interested in an Australian initiative to force the tech giants to compensate news media companies for using their content, in line with the 2019 report by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. The report contains 23 recommendations, spanning competition law, consumer protection, media regulation and privacy law, reflecting issues arising from the growth of digital platforms. [<https://www.accc.gov.au/publications/digital-platforms-inquiry-final-report>]. The original report had called for a voluntary code for Google and Facebook, but the government is considering moving to a mandatory code.

**Why is the journalism profession not more representative of the population?
How could this be addressed?**

9. The committee’s backgrounder to the inquiry sets out some of the diversity statistics of the industry: 11 per cent of journalists are from working-class backgrounds and only six per cent are not white; white university graduates from middle-class backgrounds dominate national news desks; 65 per cent of

journalists are employed in London and the south east, compared with 29 per cent of employees across the whole economy. The recent New York Times *2019 Diversity and Inclusion Report* provides a useful case study.

[<https://www.nytc.com/company/diversity-and-inclusion/2019-diversity-and-inclusion-report/>] It noted that women now represented 51 percent of the staff and 49 percent of its leadership; people of colour represented 32 percent of the staff and twenty-one percent of its leadership. The company said it still had “gaps in representation at the leadership level, particularly of people of colour”, and it needed to continue to ensure that “new hires are a diverse group”. How did it do it? The report mentions its fellowship schemes for black and minority ethnic (BAME) students, training on unconscious bias and the introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms, but the success is down to a systemic approach to changing the culture within and throughout the organisation. The report said: “Senior executives held regular discussions on progress and challenges across the company and shared examples of successful inclusion practices. The second area of focus was communication, to ensure employees know what was going on and for them to have a chance to voice their opinions.” It introduced new hiring policies, relying on diverse panels, and providing tools and guidance to remove bias from job descriptions and candidate evaluations. It conducted pay reviews every two years to ensure fairness. Its 2019 analysis found no evidence of pay discrimination, said the report.

10. The NUJ has been in discussions with the DCMS and Ofcom concerning diversity in the industry. There is clearly need for more research and improved data. Initiatives such as Project Diamond, to monitor diversity in broadcasting, has been thwarted because the majority of broadcasting organisations refused to supply data on a programme by programme basis. It would be interesting if the committee could quiz executives from the national press on a breakdown of their staff by diversity. The newspapers will point to schemes such as the Daily Mail’s scholarship programme with the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, which provides opportunities for talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They can be helpful. The NUJ’s George Viner Memorial Fund has provided financial help to BAME students, most of whom have gone on to successful careers in journalism. But, walk into any newsroom and it will be predominantly white, predominantly middle class, with men (probably with an Oxford degree) holding the majority of executive roles. Diversity initiatives – without transparent opportunities to progress and develop – are not enough.
11. The New York Times case study identified pay and pay transparency as an important factor. When the BBC was first forced to publish the salaries of those who earned more than £150,000, only one-third of the list were women and only 10 of the 96 were non-white. It soon became apparent that many women, at all levels of the corporation, were being paid less than their male counterparts and the NUJ found itself dealing with more than 200 claims of unequal pay. This January, the NUJ welcomed the finding of the London Central Employment Tribunal, which determined that the presenting work of Samira Ahmed on BBC’s Newswatch programme was equal to that of Jeremy Vine on Points of View. He had been paid more than six times than her for presenting a similar show. The judgment highlighted the lack of transparency and inconsistency in the BBC’s approach to setting pay. Samira Ahmed had successfully challenged the BBC over being paid half the amount of her male predecessor on Front Row, the Radio 4 arts show, and being underpaid in comparison with male colleagues on Radio 3’s Night Waves. What is concerning is that the BBC has one of the better reputations in broadcasting; the situation is certainly much worse in other media organisations. Measures to increase pay transparency would play a role in giving women, BAME and disabled journalists greater confidence in the workforce. Older women – behind and in front of the camera – are severely

underrepresented in broadcasting and the wider industry. Not being paid properly and being passed over for promotion by men is clearly a factor.

12. The mandatory publication of a company's gender pay gap has also shone a light on practices in the industry. A 2018 analysis by the trade magazine Press Gazette showed 91 per cent of UK-based media companies paid men more than women on average, based on the mean hourly rate, and 85 per cent paid men more in mean bonus pay. A 2019 analysis showed that almost a third of UK media companies had seen their gender pay gaps increase (in favour of men) on the year before. The Economist Group remained the UK media company with the highest median gender pay gap, with women on average paid 29.2 per cent less per hour than men. The NUJ believes it was wrong to make publication of the latest gender gap figures voluntary because of the Covid-19 crisis. The shocking disparities had led to some organisations putting in place a plan to reduce the gap; others did not bother. The NUJ believes the auditing regulations should be toughened up to require: companies with 50 staff or more to publish gender pay gaps and make all companies publish their plans to reduce the gap as part of the gender pay audit process; fine companies that fail to address substantial pay gender gaps; penalise companies that do not comply with the Equality Act 2010; and include information on the part-time pay gap and pay gaps by ethnicity and disability.
13. The NUJ supported a recommendation by the Cairncross review, rejected by the government, of a government-funded Journalism Foundation to invest in local news and innovative national public interest journalistic projects, with particular encouragement for new models and start-ups across all platforms. The union called for immediate new investment in the Future News Fund, operated by the innovations foundation NESTA. The establishment of the Arts Council in 1946 was a watershed moment and an acknowledgement of the vital role played by the arts in our society. Today around £800million is spent on funding through the UK's arts councils. A commensurate funding body that invests in this sector – without any involvement in editorial content – could shape the news industry for generations to come. Receipt of this funding would be linked to public-interest journalism with strings attached, including increasing the diversity of the industry by class and ethnicity.
14. One consequence of Covid-19 has been that news organisations should be willing to allow more people to work from home – they now have no excuse for not allowing it, and providing staff with the resources and equipment to do so properly and safely. This could open the door for people with disabilities or part-time workers with childcare responsibilities. News groups should be encouraged to take on journalists working remotely from parts of the UK outside London and the South-east.

What qualifications do professional journalists need? How could public policy better support non-degree routes into journalism? How have digital technologies changed the production of journalism? Do journalists have access to the training necessary to adapt to the digital world?

15. There are no qualifications needed to be a journalist. Many journalists who have joined the industry in the past 20 years may be a graduate or have a post-graduate journalism qualification. Many newspapers will require a National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) or equivalent certificate, but it is possible to get a job in journalism without. Many experts, from scientists to tennis players, will have used their specialist knowledge later in their careers as an entrée into the industry. The committee quotes NCTJ research finding that 87 per cent of journalists had done work experience before going into the

profession, for an average of eight weeks. Only six per cent were paid, while 21 per cent received expenses and 74 per cent were unpaid. The NUJ contributed to the 2012 report by Alan Milburn, the then government's independent reviewer on social mobility and child poverty. The report found that "journalism had shifted to a greater degree of social exclusivity than any other profession". For many young people, if they are not supported by the bank of mum and dad and living with accommodating relatives in London, getting work experience or an internship is virtually impossible. The NUJ provides advice for students and young members to help protect them from exploitation and the union has won back money for members who were not paid when they should have been. But it is difficult for many young, working class people to get a foothold. Effective policing of illegal internships is not happening because of reduced recourses and cuts at HMRC. The union's *News Recovery Plan* calls for training that opens up access to journalism, including apprentices for school-leavers. Ensuring young people find out about journalism and its value to society in schools, would also open their eyes to seeing it as an achievable career for them. The industry currently misses out on diverse talent because it fails to seek it out. There is a need for properly-funded apprenticeships, linked to quality training, and for them not to be another name for cheap labour, as is the case in some of the major local newspaper groups.

16. Digital journalism has transformed the way journalists work – many now find themselves writing the story, inputting it into a template, adding a headline and then promoting the story on Facebook and other social media. They may also have been asked to take a photograph on their phone to go with the story. The turnaround on stories is fast and many of the "traditional" stages of journalism, such as sub-editing and proofing, have gone. The demands on staff are huge. Staff photographers have become a rare breed on local and national titles. Newspapers constantly rely on (unpaid for) readers' photographs or images taken from social media.
17. In any trade, skills develop and change but the digital age has created the need to keep abreast of a huge array of new social platforms which pop up, gathering fleeting popularity before being replaced by another. Newspapers decided that videos were the new thing; now podcasts are the latest trend in the dissemination of news, stories and information. The NUJ provides a huge range of online courses and workshops so that members can upskill – learning how to make podcasts, becoming more effective on social media, learning about Instagram or driving traffic to their websites. Other courses help them to use their skills to find work in new areas, such as PR and communications or as script writers, as work in traditional parts of the industry dries up.

How can public policy improve media literacy, particularly among those who have a low level of digital literacy?

18. The *News Recovery Plan* calls for the rollout of a nationwide media literacy campaign to tackle disinformation and fake news, with stronger regulation that clamps down on tech companies that facilitate the dissemination of fake news and seeks their co-operation in prioritising accurate journalistic content. Many young people learned to use their iPad in the pram, and at an early age become involved in a range of social media platforms. That is why media literacy needs to be embedded into the national curriculum from an early age. The NUJ took part in a media literacy round table chaired by the former DCMS minister Margot James, and held an event for Media Literacy Week in 2019 which brought together a panel of media experts who work on projects promoting the better understanding of the news process, particularly for young people. At the event, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "Boosting our critical capacity

to weed out what's been fact-checked from what has not is the challenge we all face and a skill we need to help our children acquire from the earliest possible age. Trust in journalism underpins all this work – as does having a media which reflects the world it depicts." [<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/media-literacy-conference/>]

19. Technology has changed the way people receive and consume news. Half the people who own voice-activated digital appliances use them for news and information. If they want to know what's news, they ask Alexa or they get information from Facebook, Instagram, Google, iTunes, podcasts, WhatsApp, Snapchat and YouTube. The NUJ supported the Cairncross review recommendation for a News Quality Obligation: online platforms would be under an obligation or "regulatory supervision" requiring them to improve how users understand the origin of a news article and the trustworthiness of its source.
20. The *News Recovery Plan* calls for free vouchers for online or print subscriptions to all 18-and 19-year-olds and tax credits for households with subscriptions to boost engagement and fight back against disinformation.
21. Disseminating news digitally depends on people having the digital skills and the technology to receive it. According to the digital inclusion charity Good Things Foundation, 11.3 million people in the UK do not have the basic digital skills they need to thrive in today's world and 1.9 million households have no access to the internet. Research in the Office for National Statistics paper *Exploring the UK's digital divide* found that in 2018 there were still 5.3 million adults in the UK, or 10 per cent of the adult UK population were described as "internet non-users" as they had never used the internet or not used it in the past three months. The same paper found that across all age groups, disabled adults make up a large proportion of adult internet non-users. [<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide>] Many parts of the UK, particularly rural areas, have patchy or no broadband.

How should journalism be defined and what is its value to society? What is the difference between 'citizen journalism' and other forms of journalism?

22. Journalism underpins democratic societies – when those structures are under strain, it is public interest news that scrutinises decision making, bolsters public health messaging and provides accurate information as a vital counter to potentially deadly disinformation and scaremongering. Aid packages for media are being introduced around the world, however a piecemeal approach will only go so far – the NUJ is calling for a global recalibration of the media industry and renewed commitments to press freedom, spearheaded by the International Federation of Journalists and other international partners.
23. Journalism is a cornerstone of our democracy. Covid-19 has demonstrated just how important credible, trusted news and information is, and journalists will play a vital role in reflecting and shaping the recovery yet to come. We cannot allow this crisis to further undermine an already weakened industry, which has inevitably been hit badly by the lockdown of our communities. Instead, in acknowledging its role as an essential public service, we need to re-imagine our media industry, into one that is revived and restored. For that we need a triage plan of intervention and investment – one that includes actions to stem the immediate damage being wrought, then tackles historic wounds and, prioritises creating a healthy diverse press, focussed squarely on the public good, sustained now and into the future. This investment and support must, of course, be given without any connection to decision-making on editorial content.

24. All citizens should have access to easily-understood reporting of important decisions taken on our behalf – about defence, health, education and social care services, as well as the administration of justice, provision of transport, and economic planning. This should be sufficiently granular that the impact on our families and communities is evident and can be understood without any specialist background. Implicit in this is the responsible and dependable reporting of the work of those who serve us, such as members of the UK and devolved parliaments and administrations, local authority councillors, members of health boards, and police and crime commissioners and other bodies.
25. News should be provided by a combination of public interest broadcasting, commercial news platforms and community media. The spread of provision would allow each form of media to provide a check against the others. The provision itself would be transparent and porous, encouraging all concerned citizens to understand and participate in reporting where they are interested to do so. Media institutions should have the authority and financial stability to be able to report fearlessly on the operation of vested interests and malfeasance.
26. Innovation in news provision should be a matter of national encouragement and funding to create a beneficial mosaic of news services among which invention is intrinsic. Trust in journalism will deepen and public engagement in our democratic structures will increase, with improved ethical standards of reporting rooted in the NUJ's Code of Conduct. [<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/nuj-code-of-conduct/>]. Journalists are not seeking handouts or compensation for the industry – we are looking for investment in our future to transform the media industry, make it fit for our collective purpose and truly serve the public good. We cannot rely on the market to protect and cherish public interest journalism.
27. Journalism covers many forms, from the serious to the frivolous. But whether a journalist is writing about politics or fashion or sport, a professional journalist will abide by the same set of ethics, such as the NUJ code of conduct, and regulation and law. A citizen journalist is usually a one-person operation, often concerned about one subject or a particular locality. Clearly, they need to operate within the law, for example defamation or copyright. They could be hobbyists or lobbyists, but generally do not do paid journalism and therefore would not be eligible to become a member of the NUJ, which is for professional journalists.

What are the main challenges for freelance journalists? How could public policy better support them?

28. A third of the NUJ's members are freelances. The present crisis has shone a light on the precariousness of this sector. Overnight, many saw their work diaries empty. The NUJ survey of members found that a third did not expect their incomes to improve until next year, with 40 per cent saying it could take three to six months, while 16 per cent believe they will not be making their living from journalism after the coronavirus pandemic. It also showed how freelances juggle portfolio careers, with a myriad of employers, employment categories and tax arrangements. That is why many have found themselves not eligible for the Chancellor's financial aid package for the self-employed or able to apply for universal credit. Many had been pushed into working arrangements, not out of choice, which are now making them fall foul of the various criteria set down in the government's aid package for freelances. Over the past 30 years, freelances doing shifts for newspapers, broadcasters, magazines and publishers have been forced by companies often under the direction of HMRC to be taxed at source via the PAYE system. These individuals remain self-employed/freelance for the purposes of employment law with no protection or employment rights such as

sick pay or maternity leave yet are forced to pay tax and National Insurance Contributions at an employee rate. This PAYE income is now considered by HMRC to be 'employee' income and those individuals are not eligible for the SEISS scheme. While in theory this makes such members eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if working for the client company at the cut-off date, the survey revealed that 5.5 per cent of those who responded said the company they worked for had refused to do so. Those who were not working for the client company at the cut-off date, are now not eligible for support either under the CJRS or the SEISS yet have paid their taxes and NICs in exactly the same way as employed colleagues covered by the furlough scheme. The NUJ has long campaigned for reform of the system, so that freelancers are taxed appropriately as self-employed individuals and are able to have access to holiday and sickness pay and basic protection. The union regularly has to fight for members who have been illegally denied holiday pay.

29. The NUJ asks that the government heeds the House of Lords Economic Affairs Finance Bill Sub-Committee's report, *Off-payroll working: treating people fairly*, which concluded that the planned roll-out of IR35 to the private sector was "riddled with problems, unfairness and unintended consequences". Its introduction was delayed by 12 months owing to the coronavirus crisis, but Jesse Norman, financial secretary to the treasury, indicated that the government will proceed as planned with the roll-out in April 2021. The NUJ, together with the Federation of Entertainment Unions, had warned ministers that the introduction of IR35, which is supposed to tackle tax avoidance by "false freelancers", was fraught with problems and will try to persuade the government not to include the reforms in the Finance Bill, now in Parliament. IR35 already operates in the public sector. Again, those who have been found to come within IR35 are taxed at source via the PAYE system. These individuals remain self-employed/freelance for the purposes of employment law with no protection or employment rights yet are forced to pay tax and National Insurance Contributions at an employee rate. This PAYE income now leaves them ineligible for the SEISS scheme. Many witnesses told the peers' committee that the rules have made them "zero-rights employees" with none of the rights of being an employee, or the tax advantages of being self-employed.

The future of journalism

30. The industry find itself in unprecedented times and in deep peril.

The News Recovery Plan sets out a list of short-term measures to sustain the press and media through the Covid-19 crisis and longer-term aims to reinvigorate the industry into a reimagined future. The short-term include:

- A windfall tax of 6 per cent on the tech giants, using the Digital Services Tax, towards funding a News Recovery Plan.
- Tax credits and interest free loans to support journalist jobs, for frontline reporters covering the Covid-19 crisis and recovery.
- No public money for firms making redundancies, cutting pay, giving executive bonuses or blocking trade union organisation.
- Strategic investment in government advertising, including the hyperlocal sector, involving central and local governments and public bodies.
- Further funding by NESTA's Future News Fund of innovative, public interest journalism and a similar scheme in Ireland

- Free vouchers for online or print subscriptions to all 18-and-19-year olds and tax credits for households with subscriptions.

Medium-term measures include:

- Establishment of a government-funded Journalism Foundation – as recommended in the UK’s Cairncross Review – to invest in local news and innovative journalistic projects.
- Confer “asset of community value” status on local newspapers – like community pubs – ensuring that titles are preserved for potential community ownership.
- Tax breaks, rate relief and other financial support for local social enterprises and journalistic cooperatives taking over titles from major regional operators, running them as not-for-profit enterprises.
- Employee representation of 25 per cent on executive boards in receipt of public funding.
- Independent sustainable funding of public service broadcasting that protects its universality and prevents government interference.
- Nationwide media literacy strategy to tackle disinformation and fake news.
- Reform of media ownership rules, with a strengthened public interest test.
- Training that opens up access to journalism, including apprentices for school-leavers.
- Protection for whistleblowers and monitoring the potential impact of surveillance technologies being considered in response to Covid-19 challenge and easing of lockdowns.
- Support for a global framework to protect and promote journalism and improve press freedom.

May 2020