

Jim Mullen
Chief Executive Officer
Reach plc

cc. Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism
Welsh Government

Dyddiad | Date: 10 August 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Reorganisation at Reach plc and the impact on journalism in Wales**

Dear Jim,

We are grateful to Alan Edmunds, Chief Operating Officer at Reach plc and Paul Rowland, Editor-in-Chief of Media Wales for appearing before the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee on 5 August.

As you know, the Committee is deeply concerned about the proposed redundancies at Reach plc and the decision to merge Media Wales with the English midlands division for 'logistical and financial' reasons to produce more common content that can be used across Reach's platform and the impact this will have of the plurality and quality of journalism in Wales.

Given that Wales has fewer media outlets than other areas of the UK to lose in the first place, we are concerned that a reduction in the number of journalists operating in Wales will result in the dilution of Welsh content, making it even more difficult for the people of Wales to access accurate and relevant news and information.

We are also concerned that Reach's business model is focused on digital content and the impact this will have on the coverage of Welsh issues. The global shift from physical to digital news consumption has clearly revolutionised the sector. Members of the Senedd have long been concerned that Reach's cost-cutting, consolidating approach to adapting to the new world of news consumption has had a detrimental impact on the coverage of Welsh life. The most recent set of proposals seem to accelerate this trend. Following the evidence session with Alan and Paul, Members were not reassured that the people of Wales will not see a reduction in Welsh content, in quality and volume, as a result of these proposals.

We appreciate that the pandemic has brought enormous challenges to a sector that was already struggling. However we would urge you to reconsider how you respond to those challenges. The pandemic has



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accelerated change for a number of businesses but we believe that long-term business decisions should be made when we are in a post-COVID situation, rather than being made in the midst of crisis. There is a risk that making permanent and major decisions now could have a more severe impact than would be the case if such decisions were made later down the line when we have a clearer understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the business.

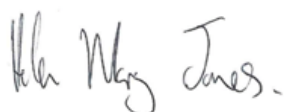
We are concerned that the proposals being put forward are not in the interests of Wales and Welsh democracy. As we heard from Martin Shipton and Pamela Morton from the National Union of Journalists on 5 August, 'Welsh democracy is served by having a thriving media sector' and the 'constant chipping away at journalists and the number of journalists employed is very debilitating and is not good for Welsh democracy.'

The Committee urges you to consider merging all the Reach business in Wales, instead of merging Media Wales with an English division of Reach which could have a devastating impact on news coverage from Wales about Wales. Creating an all Wales division would ensure that the production and editorial control of Welsh titles remains in Wales. In your response to this letter, we would be grateful if you could provide us with details of what consideration, if any, you have given to this proposal and set out what you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal.

Members were also very concerned to hear that there have been no discussions with the Welsh Government about your proposals. In May 2018, the Committee published a [report into news journalism](#), which concluded that the decline of commercial news journalism 'is a profound public policy issue, which policy makers at all levels, not least the Welsh Government, need to address as a priority issue'. Following the current proposals from Reach, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism told the Senedd on [15 July](#) 'I also commit to ask for a meeting with the management of Reach'. I am therefore copying this letter to the Deputy Minister.

As this is an urgent issue with potentially severe consequences for journalism in Wales, I would be grateful if you could respond as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Mary Jones MS

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

