

Submission to the Cairncross Review

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Reporter**

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Introduction

Originally from Canada, I moved to the UK to study journalism at Cardiff University in 2001, obtaining a post-grad diploma and then moving to Scotland for my first newspaper job.

I worked for the Barrhead News, then the Greenock Telegraph, then went freelance selling to dozens of papers and also doing reporting shifts at The Scotsman and The Glaswegian. I later became editor of The Glaswegian until its print edition ended and it became digital only and was ultimately shut down. I am currently chief reporter of the Clydebank Post.

In my career my titles have included: reporter, senior reporter, court reporter, sub-editor, news editor, editor, chief reporter. I have written on countless topics and areas of expertise with a particular interest in stories ignored or marginalised, such as immigration tribunals and courts in the UK, US and Canada.

Since 2012, I have also run an independent news website, Tomorrow.is, founded on 11 core ethical principles where stories must be justified against those news values. That website is not signed up to IPSO, nor Impress, and I am against state regulation for my work there.

This is a personal statement only and may not be representative of the beliefs of any current or former employer.

Preamble

I make this submission as a reporter because we are the workers on the ground largely ignored through government inquiries and commissions, televised debates on regulation or ethics, or Twitter arguments between politicians and columnists. We are the ones most often cut by rounds of redundancies, blamed for falling circulations, and directly confronted by members of the public online or in person.

If there is to be any discussion of the future of "high-quality journalism", you must consult those who do it day in and day out, not merely their employers, campaigners for enforced regulation, celebrities seeking revenge or over-paid columnists.

Newspaper owners – never held responsible for their cuts of staff and resources, and always rewarded with bonuses for those cuts – have long put the blame for sales declines on reporters themselves, that we need to work harder and for less.

And as a society, we have absolved the public (media consumers) for the responsibilities to learn, engage, listen or read. Changes in technology meant we have focused on clicks as "engagement" and quantity rather than quality.

If my local paper covers a successful art exhibit opening, or a 100th birthday, or a gala day, etc, I believe that that journalism matters. The public definitely expect us to turn up to such local events. They also contact news organisations at all hours asking what's going on down their street. But, they have stopped paying the cover price of their local paper to fund coverage of the events or answers to their questions. And so local journalism will disappear someday.

The ultimate job of reporters, as observers, is to allow people to see their own value and the value of others. That reflection back should better the world and is a fundamental role in the civic realm. The fact journalists are murdered and jailed in some corners of the world, threatened as "enemies of the people" in others, and derided by so many politicians from left to right, is an indication of the wider importance of the profession.

One comment I must make on the Mediatique report commissioned for the DCIM is an inaccuracy with regards to Scotland. It states on page 64 there were five papers closed between 2012 and 2017, but no papers launched and closed. In 2013, Trinity Mirror launched Aberdeen Now and Edinburgh Now, free weekly papers. Both had different

degrees of advertising income and use of existing staff of the Daily Record or freelance workers. Both were shut down within months. The Glaswegian was renamed Glasgow Now and shut down in October 2014, which I must presume is one of the five titles in figure 59 of the report, but it is unclear. While the decline in papers for Scotland is only 3.8 per cent of total provision, the report does not indicate the reduction in staff or circulation for Scotland as a region or nation. I believe this is an omission by the Mediatique report authors.

A further note on the report: since publication, the Sunday Herald in Scotland has ceased publication (September 2) and the Herald and National newspapers have been given Sunday editions by Newsquest (September 9).

A note on the "advisory panel": I see no current local weekly or daily print reporters, no current photographers, no current sub-editors on this panel. That is an omission.

Further, Ashley Highfield has no business being rewarded with a position on any professional media body or government-funded inquiry or review.

Mr Highfield should apologise every day, publicly, for what he did to destroy journalism in Scotland and elsewhere, particularly for The Scotsman. Putting him on a panel to determine "quality" in journalism is akin to inviting a butcher to a welfare meeting of cows.

Money grants power over journalism but in no way determines the definition of quality. That nobody on the panel of "experts" is currently a working print reporter says everything you need to know about the decline of journalism over the past 10-15 years.

Those reporting are ignored and pushed out - and the civic realm suffers.

"High-quality journalism" - a definition

It is deeply problematic the review offers no definition of "high-quality journalism". Many members of the public, even more so the politicised ones, will claim the term should mean investigative or objective journalism - summarised often as facts, not opinions.

But readers are clicking comment, and deriding anything they disagree with.

The public's internet traffic reflects they are instead clicking on celebrity gossip and opinions/commentary.¹ This is certainly their right, but complicates a definition of quality.

Publishers, as is their right as private companies, define quality according to revenue or industry-run awards.

Meanwhile, governments should not define or determine what is quality when it comes to journalistic or creative output.

Any report that is factual should be deemed to meet journalistic quality standards. A 50-word story summarising a police report, a local gala day picture spread, a council committee report - all contribute to a public record of our communities and all have value. But those are the coveted corners of news suffering most. They are the parts ignored by inquiries such as Leveson, debates on journalism on Newsnight or reviews such as yours.

And while basic, functional local journalism struggles to survive, opportunities to innovate are almost non-existent beyond the biggest and best funded news offices such as the BBC or national papers.

News costs. The industry has been happy to pay contributors for opinion even as they cut reporters. This might suit public appetite, but also damages civic society. Facts should matter. But if you only want to hear opinions that match your own, or enrage you, then today's media market definitely suits you and is far removed from quality reporting.

Sometimes the best reporting is for stories that never see the light of day - we investigate and find nothing there. Quality journalism can't merely be defined by the output, by metrics of readership or sales. It must be measured by the *act* of journalism, by the *craft* of reporting, and by ethical *practice*.

Please look at our work for evidence of quality, and look at the people behind it too.

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/news-kim-kardashian-kanye-west-benghazi/372906/>

Cairncross Review Questions and Submitted Answers

1) The review's objective is to establish how far and by what means we can secure a sustainable future for high-quality journalism, particularly for news. Looking ahead to 2028, how will we know if we have been successful, in relation to:

- a) publishers**
- b) consumers**

REPLY

The premise of this question, as is usual for a government-run and publisher-dominated inquiry, ignores the role of reporters and other news media staff. Publishers only measure journalism through profits.

a) Existing publishers will know your review has been successful if shareholders have increased profits. That's it. Publishers who are rewarded with positions on government inquiries or the honours system will also consider this review a success.

b) Consumers are largely unaware of the current state of the industry and, on social media, some accounts cheer any suffering of reporters or news organisations. For that to change would require a wholesale change to media education at every level of school and an increase in societal awareness and engagement unseen since the two world wars of the last century.

c) Reporters and staff of news organisations: We have been decimated by sometimes multiple rounds of redundancies each year for several years on end.

Success for a reporter means:

- being allowed to leave an office to report on a story
- to be given the time to check its accuracy thoroughly
- to be supported by professional photographers
- to be edited by sub-editors
- to have online and social media staff promoting and marketing the content to the public
- to earn above the minimum wage when post-graduate education is required for employment
- to not see publishers rewarded by shareholders or politicians for making staff redundant
- and for consumers seeing their communities have improved because reporters are holding power to account, seeing justice is done, celebrating and probing all aspects of civil life.

d) Politicians will know your review has been successful based on the number of them who are forced to resign from office for wrongdoing, for mismanagement of public funds, for lying to the press and public, etc. If you want "high-quality journalism", then you must expect it will expose *you*, whether you are a dame, prime minister, publisher, editor or even reporter.

2) Do you consider that the future of high-quality journalism in the UK is at risk - at national, regional and/or local levels?

a) What are the main sources of evidence that support your view?

b) What are the main sources of evidence which support an alternative perspective?

REPLY

Journalism is at risk at every level but most significantly at local, followed by regional and then national. UK-wide papers are best able to absorb sales declines by their high starting points for sales. By comparison, local papers have nowhere to go but closure.

The Clydebank Post is one of six local weekly newspapers (five paid titles, one free) formerly based at an office in Clydebank. Since October 2017, there have been 15 departures across 15 posts, some more than once in a single post in that time. That is an unprecedented and crippling turnover. (I should note that in the three weeks of writing this submission, the total departures went from 13 to 15.)

I am passionate about journalism and the only way many of these papers have continued to be filled is because of the dedication of countless colleagues to ensure our communities are served.

a) Your Mediatique report already highlights the number of news outlets closed and jobs lost and I don't propose to go over that ground. Instead, I wish to highlight barriers faced which often do not get attention.

i) Giving away free stuff: Though the proverbial genie can't be put back in the lamp, it is worth noting we are not helping ourselves.

Giving away the entire content of the newspaper within days means readers know they don't have to physically buy a copy in shops. The Clydebank Post, for example, is required to post eight or nine items to social media platforms each day, or four on each of Saturday and Sunday. Though you can schedule stories to appear on the website at particular times, to share them on Facebook, it needs to be a live link. With only two reporters, that either means we go online on days off simply to schedule to Facebook, or we dump three days worth of content online on a Friday, a large chunk of the print product.

Further, a good story worthy of a local front page will now be taken within hours for use on a daily sister paper. An even better story will be picked up by a news agency, in partnership agreement, and potentially be national within a day. All that dents or detracts from the value of the original local print product and the prime source of revenue (cover sales or circulation to demand better ad prices). Closer links between papers and the requirement to regularly fire content through social media to consumers is a conscious choice that is working against the long-term survival of local news.

A related example is when local groups or individuals take a photo of their article in the paper and share it on social media. That is their right and a promotion of our product. But it may mean a reader no longer needs to buy a copy themselves. We cannot afford to lose even one reader anymore.

ii) Valuing comment over fact: The clearest example of this is when The Scotsman could offer £400 to experts for 300-400 words of analysis as a tie-piece to a main page lead. Simultaneously, freelancers would get £200 for 1,000-word features for specialist pages. While the comment would be expected within a few hours for the next day, the feature could take days of work and be specialist to fields such as law, medicine and science, or education.

Though this was a few years ago before budgets disappeared almost completely, it belies the value national and regional papers attach to comment versus reporting. Comment invariably gets more online traffic and is prioritised.

Newspapers such as The National are dominated by comment, as are most online-only media outlets. While The Conversation will have expert analysis, it remains very different from day-to-day reporting at a local level. Its success is not to be derided, but can't be taken as an example of traditional journalism thriving in a new environment. Nor should this assessment be viewed as traditional journalism refusing to adapt. Your review, by its very core question, implies you still want what would be defined as traditional journalism.

iii) Education: There is almost no "scholastic journalism", as it is defined in the US, available in the UK. A cursory search online will flag up some limited and award-winning pupil publications, but they are more likely at independent schools with resources. It is not encouraged at a national level and local authority encouragement of pupil journalism is also limited.

iv) Public relations: Though it is not reflected in your Mediatique report, most working reporters will know where former colleagues have gone after leaving journalism: to PR.

That has positives and negatives. Former reporters know what their colleagues are looking for and can, sometimes, deliver content that is packaged so perfectly as a news story there is little to rewrite it. Given print pages and social media slots must be filled, more PR content must be used locally just to meet targets and get a paper out.

But 99 per cent of the time, PR officials are unnamed in quotes, unaccountable to the public and far more in control of what the public reads than they would ever realise.

At the corporate services committee meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council on November 29, 2017, the "media protocol" was changed. It states:

"Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Centres should seek approval from the Head Teacher and Corporate Communications prior to contacting the media with a good news release."²

Though there was no change in practice initially, within months, a new norm was established for local newspapers. In practice, we can send a photographer to a school event, but not call the school if we want to know what happened. For words, we have to go to the council press officers and request descriptions of what it was about, etc. If we were to attend, we could quote pupils, but if we quoted a teacher, we would have to submit the quotes for prior approval, something abhorrent to journalism. If pupils want to submit 300 words on what they're learning in history, the press office must "have sight" of it first.

As I told the communications office when the policy change was first enacted, this is an attack on a commercial business, given how fundamental schools reports are to local journalism.

No such policy practice is used in neighbouring Glasgow City Council.

These policies are chosen not by private corporations but are funded by taxpayers.

A projected £343,016 was to be spent this year, for example, in West Dunbartonshire Council on "communications and marketing".³ A estimated £212,847 of that would be spent on basic pay for staff and £16,000 on "community engagement". The £343,016 total is equivalent of at least 21 junior reporters paid just above minimum wage (£16,000).

The difference, of course, is that £343,016 pays for fewer and better paid staff, but is covered entirely by public finances. Reporters are paid by private or corporate entities, with a portion of the income overall from consumer choice (cover prices), and through taxpayers via government advertising.

In terms of public money on communications for Scotland as a whole, you would have Scottish Government, local government, arms length organisations (ALEOs), police/fire/ambulance services, military, judicial, colleges and universities and tax breaks for charities and corporations - all of which would have information systems or information personnel paid for by the public purse.

So while taxpayers are only paying for journalism, officially and directly, through the licence fee, they are subsidising a vast system of controlled information and propaganda

² Corporate Services Committee of West Dunbartonshire Council, November 29, 2017, pages 211-222, <http://wdccmis.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/cm5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/8024/Committee/530/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

³ Budget projections to West Dunbartonshire Council, March 5, 2018, <http://wdccmis.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/cm5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/8051/Committee/543/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

to a far greater level.

Given the opposition from some quarters to any taxpayer money going to, for example, the Daily Mail or the Sun, governments would need to cease buying advertising or sponsoring campaigns or public notices within papers to meet that purist hurdle. The legal requirement for public notices, such as for roads works, would need a legislative change to ensure defunding of newspapers. The effect, of course, would be felt far more directly by local newspapers.

In November 2017, before the same meeting deciding new rules for media relations,⁴ a press release was sent out promoting great investment in libraries. That was taxpayer funded. A privately-funded reporter looked at the committee report in detail and calculated the cuts to opening hours of libraries, making for a very different story [press release and article are copied at the end of this submission]. This is the role of local journalism and without it, taxpayers will be funding, only, dictated narratives of what politicians or civil servants wish to be seen.

There are those who argue journalism must be run as a business, focusing on monetisation - understandable from private enterprise.

But the problem is the public expects news as a service, particularly debunking or challenging publicly-funded information systems (of government, etc), and then refusing to pay for that service. They unwittingly pay for an information system they expect to be challenged for free. That is the great quagmire of local reporting.

b) Though there are some websites creating content, I have never seen one covering Dumbarton Sheriff Court, for example, nor West Dunbartonshire Council committee meetings, nor community council meetings, nor meeting regularly with local police, nor speaking at or attending local schools.

They produce content, frequently commentary and/or reaction to national news or manufactured outrage. But they are not doing journalism. News, through salaries for what is a skilled profession, is too costly for most websites to support.

The BBC's local democracy reporting programme has allowed dedicated reporters to ensure local councils get covered. And yet they have not managed to fill many of posts because there aren't enough reporters able to do the job. These posts are generally better paid than local newspaper posts and uses taxpayer money to subsidise the reporting of papers cutting resources and staff for a decade or more.

It is an example of how public money is used but problematic in terms of which publishers and which locations benefit, and is limited in scope. One point is those reporters are required to file two stories a day. A local newspaper reporter is required to file at least two lead stories, two downpages and five briefs. Which is the correct approach? More content for someone working more hours and for less money from a private company? Or taxpayers paying for limited content on politics only - *and* alongside those private company reporters reporting on everything for less?

Perhaps the greatest question out of the BBC experiment is how to find sufficient reporters to make such an idea viable? There are clearly not enough now, nor a depth of young reporters waiting in the wings for their chances. I no longer recommend people become reporters in the UK because there are no jobs and there is no future.

The only way to change that is with deep structural changes to education and accountability in particular. I shall lay these out in detail in question six.

⁴ Corporate Services Committee of West Dunbartonshire Council, November 29, 2017, pages 201-210, <http://wdccmis.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/cm5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/8024/Committee/530/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

3) What can the review learn from successful business models in other sectors or other countries, including those which work at scale? We are particularly interested in any organisational or business models which might promote or advance the future of high-quality journalism at the local and regional levels:

a) Where new and viable business models are emerging for high-quality journalism, what does this tell us about changing consumer behaviour and preferences?

b) Are different approaches needed for different parts of the market (e.g national and local; general and special interest news)?

c) To what extent do new and emerging business models such as online-only, hyperlocals and cooperative models work or mitigate issues felt by traditional players?

d) What alternative income streams (other than advertising) are most likely to sustain high-quality journalism in the digital age? Are there barriers to their effective exploitation and if so, how could these be addressed?

REPLY

a) The Ferret and The Conversation are likely the only potentially experimental examples relevant in Scotland. One is funded as a co-operative through donations, the other through advertising and other revenue.

These are both worthy examples but I don't believe they can be replicated to ensure local reporting survives.

b) There can be no uniform model. National media has a completely different drive and is largely influenced by editorial values. Local media is focused instead on reporting everything that's going on with little or no commentary or editorial bias. Special interest news also has better opportunities to tap into select communities and convince them of value and therefore, the benefit of support.

c) These models are worthy but, as I have stated, are largely ignoring local authority meetings, breaking news (except through aggregation) or local courts.

d) Events, but these require making news organisations the physical destination for the community. Because we have largely ceded that ground so as to retreat to anonymous office corners, we can't host events and can't expect the public to bring us their stories.

4) What has been the impact of the operation of the digital advertising market on the sustainability of high-quality journalism in the UK?

a) Can digital advertising revenues support high-quality journalism in the future, as print advertising has done in the past?

b) How does the digital advertising market affect the ability of news publishers to monetise content?

c) Does the digital advertising market influence what news people see and if so, in what ways?

d) What changes might be made to the operation of the digital advertising market to help support and sustain high-quality journalism?

REPLY

a) No. The volume of clicks required to charge advertisers a rate comparable to print is astronomical and forces publishers to focus more on clickbait than quality content.

Particularly in local settings, corporate expectations of continue growth are impossible to meet given limited population pools. Similarly, increasing use of adblockers or Tor software and GDPR means revenue can't increase much more for smaller publishers.

b) Digital advertising works against us by forcing stories online before consumers might see the print product in shops. It led Trinity Mirror to ditch all local news websites and identity in the name of unified regional sites to pool clicks, but ultimately at the expense of local journalism.

In discussions with colleagues, we estimate we spend approximately 20-25 per cent of our work time each week putting content online which, when offered for free, directly hurts our print circulation and ultimate survival as a paper and industry. As well as giving content away for free, we're limiting quality reporting because of the time demands of giving that content away.

c) It forces us into either clickable headlines or content. There will also be more stories about "Wags" or TV shows because they guarantee clicks. Local council reports do not.

d) End online advertising for the websites of local weekly newspapers. Take away the ads and the news no longer requires to be driven only by clicks.

5) Many consumers access news through digital search engines, social media platforms and other digital content aggregation platforms. What changes might be made to the operation of the online platforms and/or the relationship between the platforms and news publishers, which would help to sustain high-quality journalism?

a) Do the news publishers receive a fair proportion of revenues for their content when it is accessed through digital platforms? If not, what would be a fair proportion or solution and how could it best be achieved?

b) When their content is reached through digital platforms, do the news publishers receive fair and proportionate relevant data from the platforms. If not, what changes should be made and how could they best be achieved?

REPLY

a) No. Online projects such as archive.is allow consumers to read articles without clicking on the news websites themselves. This is particularly used to deny clicks to those websites with whom consumers disagree politically, such as Scottish independence supporters.

b) No. It would be impossible for digital platforms to share their proprietary algorithms with external companies, and so news organisations can never hope to fully understand how their content is shown to consumers. It is a massive loss of power of distribution, between print and online, and has only somewhat been clawed back by specific news apps or email newsletters, found more in North America. The goal of publishers must be to move away from Facebook and Twitter as dominant forms of distribution where we have no control.

6) High-quality journalism plays a critical role in our democratic system, in particular through holding power to account, and its independence must be safeguarded. In light of this, what do you consider to be the most effective and efficient policy levers to deliver a sustainable future for high quality journalism?

a) Where, if at all, should any intervention be targeted and why (for example, at the local level, or at specific types of journalism)?

b) What do you think are or should be the respective responsibilities of industry, individuals and government, in addressing the issues we have identified?

c) If there is a case for subsidising high-quality journalism, where should any funding support come from? What form should it take? How or where should it be targeted?

REPLY

Broadly, governments should keep their hands off journalism. I would be opposed to any regulation by the state, and were that a trade-off for supporting journalism financially, I would rather see journalism die in the UK until such time as attitudes change.

However, governments can influence some key aspects to enable a healthier journalism environment.

a) Intervention should only be at a local level. I advocate nothing for daily papers at a regional or national level when local journalism is most under threat and is disappearing most swiftly.

i) Education: If the government considers any financial levers, they should include a specific mandate for reporting staff to regularly deliver training and instruction at every grade level of school. This must be immune from standardised testing and instead focus on the vocation of producing and understanding journalism.

Consider the approach in West Dunbartonshire Council between the education authority, its pupils and the press. It is the polar opposite of projects such as New Voices in the US, which defines itself as:

“New Voices is a student-powered grassroots movement to give young people the legally protected right to gather information and share ideas about issues of public concern. We work with advocates in law, education, journalism and civics to make schools and colleges more welcoming places for student voices. New Voices is a project of the Student Press Law Center (www.splc.org), a nonprofit advocate for the rights of student journalists.”⁵

In turn, the SPLC advocates having a “professional, candid relationship with administrators”.

In one of their recommendations for the start of the new term, they state:

“They don’t always like what journalists report, but the best administrators champion the role of journalism in our democracy. Student editors should take the initiative to meet with key administrators at the start of the academic year.”⁶

On transparency, the organisation states:

“Dysfunctional student privacy laws are routinely abused to conceal unflattering information the public needs to know. Well-trained student journalists are kicking open the doors that wrongdoers prefer to keep shut.”⁷

Even more damning is the position on civic education:

“Student journalism is ‘participatory civics.’ When students start attending government meetings and court hearings, and asking how those agencies work, they learn how a bill really becomes a law. Citizenship education must teach students how to consume and create media, so they can make their voices heard on issues of social and political concern. And the law must protect their right to address those issues free from school retaliation. Censorship teaches students that it is a citizen’s job to make the government look good, and that criticizing the government is an act of disloyalty. It is ‘civic mis-education.’”⁸

While Scotland is led at every governmental level by political forces aspiring to independence, its education in practice does not aspire to the mechanisms for an engaged citizenry. To do so would require injecting journalism programmes to every level of school.

Edinbarnet Primary, for example, has a project called “Edinbarnet Editors”. Their club includes pupils from each grade of primary one through to primary seven. Together they write a monthly column and submit photos, which the Clydebank Post prints. Though this

⁵ <https://newvoicesus.com/>

⁶ <http://www.splc.org/article/2018/09/back-to-school-school-administrators>

⁷ <http://www.splc.org/page/school-transparency>

⁸ <http://www.splc.org/page/civic-education>

column must now be previewed by the press office before publication in the paper, such a journalism scheme would be a good starting point for all schools, all grade levels.

Glasgow City Council started a "Determined to Report" project in 2013 when pupils wanted work experience in the media. They have since had workshops with working reporters in the areas of politics, features, music and sport. Many pupils have gained places at university through their work experience with the programme.

"Partners" of the programme include News UK, The List, Clyde College and Bauer Media. There is an option of a 12-week session at SCQF 6 Media: Feature Writing at Rangers Study Centre in partnership with Clyde College. Pupils have also gained experience at Glasgow 2014 and the 2018 European Championships.

It should be noted that though Bauer Media runs a Media Academy going into schools, the training focuses on marketing, advertising and media production as opposed to journalism. It is non-threatening to education or local government systems.⁹

The aspiration should be to the US level. Perhaps local papers would no longer survive, but student journalism could do our former jobs of holding power to account, ensuring justice is seen to be done, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the complacent.

ii) Accountability: I would never advocate money from government without a system of accountability. As such, there should also be the introduction of citizens' juries.

As I outlined in a section of my own website,¹⁰ a jury made up of 15 randomly selected members of the public drawn from electoral roles should be presented with evidence of journalistic practices and goals by a news organisation every six months. They will test the ethics, practice, future goals and funding priorities.

This system will ensure news organisations, whether in print or online, are maintaining a high-quality broadly, while they remain free to sign up to other regulatory bodies such as IPSO or Impress, or no bodies at all.

Simultaneously, any publicly funded public relations office should be held accountable by being banned from providing anonymous spokesman/spokeswoman/spokesperson quotes. Journalism requires protecting sources and individuals at risk of serious harm, not taxpayer-funded press officers.

iii) Presence: Funding can be provided to deliver office space in the communities we report on. Too many local papers are nowhere near their communities. Why should a community value local journalism if the local journalism won't set foot there? These spaces need to be public, accessible, safe, inviting and local.

b) Responsibilities

i) Industry: our industry has to be held accountable for the destruction of journalism wrought in the past decade. I am loath to suggest any legislative or financial pressures should be used by government to change the behaviour of private companies.

ii) Individuals: Reporters are already delivering high-quality journalism every day. For them to do so into the future requires citizens to read, listen or watch the reporting being produced. They must choose to understand journalism and support it.

iii) Government: The state has no business imposing potentially restricting measures on a free press. However, they can create an environment to allow alternatives to attempt, to fail, to succeed, in creating something new.

For example, if government money was made available outwith my suggestions above, it would have to be independently administered to prevent any government officials learning of potential investigations which might inhibit those investigations or put journalistic

⁹ <http://enterprisingschools.scot/portfolio-item/bonhill-primary-school/> and <http://www.baueracademy.co.uk/courses/>

¹⁰ <https://tomorrow.is/about-tomorrow/citizens-juries/>

sources at any risk of harm or exposure.

c) Subsidies

Zero money should go to national or regional newspapers. They feed off the work of local and regional reporters sufficiently to benefit from any new funding mechanism without getting any money directly.

There should also be zero money toward any columnists, commentators or news aggregators. Organisations can have those, but they should not benefit from cash injections.

Money should go to local weekly papers only, to fund their education outreach, their journalism, and their presence in communities.

The source should be drawn, in part, from the communications and public relations budgets already funded by taxpayers. If the public purse is to be used for packaging and marketing information to citizens, then it should also suppose the questioning and investigating of that information.

Money can also be drawn from a modest content tax on Google and Facebook, benefit hugely from the content of reporters, while having a disproportionately large role as gatekeepers of whether the public accesses the content and publishers receive the statistics to justify advertising rates.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Education:

If the government considers any financial levers, they should include a specific mandate for reporting staff to regularly deliver training and instruction at every grade level of school. This must be immune from standardised testing and instead focus on the vocation of producing and understanding journalism.

Accountability:

Any government funding should include the introduction of citizens' juries for journalistic accountability. Existing funding to communications offices and press officers must include an end to anonymity for those giving statements to the press and public.

Presence:

Funding can be provided to deliver office space in the communities we report on. These spaces need to be public, accessible, safe, inviting and local.

CONCLUSION

Government inquiries, reviews and commissions into journalism are not new. The Leveson Inquiry was as massive as its recognition of the digital world was almost non-existent. It was 10 years late and its conclusions pointless in a world that is moving on from print.

If the Cairncross Review is to be worth more than the cost of expenses for panel members, for the cost of printing final reports, for the space it will take gathering dust on shelves, then it must do something new: it must listen to reporters, to subs, to photographers. It must listen to those who are still working and those who have left the profession, not the publishers who have driven them from it.

I cannot guarantee the survival of my local paper, nor those I have worked for in my career. But I can assure you the majority of the journalism of those papers was high-quality. And its producers will remember that.

MEDIA RELEASE

Issue date: 18/11/2017

Councillors to consider new library opening hours, a major investment plan and instrument hire charges

Councillors are set to consider a proposal to fund a major investment in West Dunbartonshire's libraries by adapting the opening hours to meet current demand.

The proposals are part of a transformation report aimed at addressing the fact that employee costs in West Dunbartonshire's library service are the second-highest in Scotland per head of population, and £11,652 above the average.

One of the main reasons for this is the number of libraries in West Dunbartonshire and the fact these many libraries are often open at inefficient times of the day when demand from local residents is low.

A consequence of spending money staffing libraries at these quieter times is that there are limited funds available to spend on improving the service such as more books, better computer equipment and more attractive libraries. This means the service can't respond to the expectations of local residents, 76% of whom agreed more money should be invested in the buildings and service in a recent survey.

To resolve this officers are proposing to protect all eight public libraries by introducing a new opening hours timetable that would deliver 237 hours of service across the branches every week. This would match opening hours to the highest visitor times of the day and move away from early morning and late evenings when evidence and feedback shows demand is significantly reduced. The new timetable would fully accommodate valued existing services such as Bookbug, employability sessions and Code Club.

These changes would also free up savings which could be invested back into the service with an unprecedented £421k proposed in 2018/19 for improved children's areas, better display areas, more welcoming help desks, and movable shelving enabling flexible use of space for activities and events.

The Council has also made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of more than £400k to invest in transforming the inside of Clydebank Library into a state-of-the-art venue for local people. Councillors will be asked to support this application by pledging to invest an additional £118k to the project if the bid is successful.

In addition, to help protect frontline Library and Cultural services as much as possible Councillors will also consider introducing means tested charges to the Council's music tuition service. Currently most

Councils in Scotland charge for music tuition or instrument hire with fees ranging from £83 to £300 with an average of £205.

Under the proposals to Committee pupils studying for SQA exams and those in receipt of free school meals would continue to receive free hire. Those out with would be charged a £85 per year for hire, service and repair, making it the second lowest charge in Scotland.

Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead for Communications, Culture and Communities, said: "These proposals would protect all eight branch libraries in West Dunbartonshire and match opening hours to when our residents use the service the most. It would also bring our running costs in line with the rest of Scotland, and create the opportunity for much-needed investment in our libraries to make them even more attractive places to visit.

"Supporting our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund could help transform Clydebanks Library into a truly fantastic venue in West Dunbartonshire.

"Introducing modest annual fees for the hire and maintenance of music instruments, some of which can cost as much as £900, will allow us to protect frontline services in libraries and culture in West Dunbartonshire as much as possible. "

The proposals will be presented to the Council's Corporate Services committee on November 29 for a decision.

- ends -

Note to editors

1. Contact Amanda Graham, West Dunbartonshire Council, on tel: 01389 737527 or email: amanda.graham@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
2. West Dunbartonshire Council serves 89,810 residents and a lively business community in an area stretching from the banks of Loch Lomond to the shores of the Clyde. The region is one of great diversity and natural beauty, just half an hour from the heart of Glasgow, and includes the towns of Clydebanks, Dumbarton and Alexandria. It has a rich past, shaped by its world-famous shipyards, and boasts many attractions, ranging from the rugged beauty of Dumbarton Rock to historic whisky warehouses. The Council has big ambitions to deliver first class services, grow the local economy, revitalise the region's town centres and waterfront, and provide a modern education service for future generations.

Libraries set for cuts

Plans to slash opening hours in overhaul of services

By **TRISTAN STEWART ROBERTSON**

CLYDEBANK'S three smallest libraries are to see their opening hours cut in half with dramatic changes to services.

Faifley, Parkhall and Duntocher libraries will take the brunt of cuts for West Dunbartonshire as the council pledged to keep all eight of their libraries open and bring new services.

In a report to councillors on the corporate services committee next week, it hears how employee costs in West Dunbartonshire's library service are the second-highest in Scotland per head of population, and £11,652 above the average.

One of the main reasons for this is the number of libraries in West Dunbartonshire and the fact these many libraries are often open at inefficient times of the day when demand from local residents is low, the council claim.

There is significant overlap in the one-mile catchment areas of Clydebank's five libraries and all will have their hours affected in some way.

Late closings of 8pm will end and 7pm will be the new latest hours, while early openings will shift from 9.30am to 10am. Clydebank and Dalmuir libraries will see their total hours drop from 40 hours a week to 39.5.

But Faifley will be most affected, dropping from 37.5 hours a week currently to just 15 hours. Parkhall will see hours cut from 29.5 to 17, and Duntocher will drop from 25 hours to 17.

The current opening hours of the libraries are not detailed in the report to councillors, only the new proposed timetable.

Council bosses said a consequence of spending money staffing libraries at these quieter times is that there are limited funds available to spend on improving the service such as more

books, better computer equipment and more attractive libraries.

This means the service can't respond to the expectations of local residents, 76 per cent of whom agreed more money should be invested in the buildings and service in a recent survey.

They said the new timetable would fully accommodate valued existing services such as Bookbug, employability sessions and Code Club.

These changes would also free up savings which could be invested back into the service with an unprecedented £421,000 proposed in 2018/19 for improved children's areas, better display areas, more welcoming help desks, and movable shelving enabling flexible use of space for activities and events.

In addition, councillors will also consider introducing means tested charges to the council's music tuition service.

Currently most councils in

Scotland charge for music tuition or instrument hire with fees ranging from £83 to £300 with an average of £205.

Under the proposals to commit-tee, pupils studying for SQA exams and those in receipt of free school meals would continue to receive free hire. Those outwith, would be charged a £85 per year for hire, service and repair.

Malcolm Bennie, strategic lead for communications, culture and communities, said: "These proposals would protect all eight branch libraries in West Dunbartonshire and match opening hours to when our residents use the service the most.

"It would also bring our running costs in line with the rest of Scotland, and create the opportunity for much-needed investment in our libraries to make them even more attractive places to visit."

The proposals will be considered on November 29.

Bridges tour

■ **TICKETS** go on sale Friday for Bankie comedian Kevin Bridges' new tour next year.

The comic will be performing six dates at the SSE Hydro in October 2018 with his tour, titled Brand New.

Kevin broke records with his 2015 tour with 500,000 tickets sold across 145 dates, including 16 nights at the Hydro.

He said: "I'm delighted to announce that I will be back on the road in 2018. It's been three years since my last tour - three tough years of watching the world fall apart.

"Thus, I've decided, I need to get out of the house more and lend a hand in saving it. With amusing anecdotes and witty observations I'm sure I can save the world or at least provide a decent enough night out. We'll see. I'll catch you there folks. Yalady!"

Earlier this year, Kevin was chosen to perform for former US President Barack Obama during The Hunter Foundation's charity dinner in Edinburgh.

Tickets go on sale online, from 10am on November 24.

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