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The Press Association: Response to the Digital Britain Review Interim Report

Introduction

The Press Association welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Interim Report of the Digital Britain Review. We have been impressed by the scope of the Report and by the Government's ambition to develop a comprehensive action plan for the media and communications sectors, securing the UK's place "*at the forefront of innovation, investment and quality*". We fully support the five objectives set out in the Interim Review and, in particular, welcome the commitments to maintaining a dynamic investment climate for UK digital content, applications and services and to ensuring the continuing availability of high-quality content that serves the interests, experiences and needs of all UK citizens, especially impartial news, comment and analysis. We look forward to contributing further during the coming months to develop detailed policy recommendations for securing these objectives.

Overview

As the UK and Ireland's national news agency and leading multimedia news and information provider, the Press Association is well positioned to contribute to the Review. We are playing an increasingly important role in helping UK news providers to adapt to a dynamic digital market, providing a continuous feed of text, pictures, video and data into newsrooms around the country and investing heavily in our capabilities as a multimedia agency. As well as interfacing technically with every national and regional newspaper, broadcast newsroom and most digital news providers in the UK, we are also a leading provider of video content at national and regional level and to major internet service providers and digital media owners.

In our view, the Review is timely. The news market is experiencing a period of dramatic structural change and development, with media owners facing significant commercial pressures and, in many cases, declining or fragmenting audiences. News providers are investing in the development of new multimedia news offerings, but many of these

services are relatively small-scale and their economics are challenging. New forms of provision, such as digital media aggregators and blogs, are evolving rapidly, but these offerings often rely on existing news providers for their news and tend to be complements to, rather than substitutes for, other forms of news provision. At the same time, the commercial sector is facing a severe cyclical downturn, exacerbating the pressures facing news providers, many of whom are restructuring and seeking to realign their cost bases with a more challenging market environment. Investment in newsgathering and journalism is under threat.

These challenges have already been thoroughly and rigorously analysed by Ofcom in its recent work on public service broadcasting and the future of news, as well as in its assessment of the BBC's plans for a local video service. Ofcom has also set out important proposals for the future funding and provision of regional news in *Putting Viewers First* (21st January 2009). The Digital Britain Review needs to build on these analyses and to give serious consideration to Ofcom's proposals for ensuring plurality in the delivery of news media. This plurality has played an important, if not vital, role in sustaining the engagement of citizens in an informed democracy.

However, we are concerned that, while the scope and ambitions of the Interim Report are wide-ranging, the proposed solutions appear to be largely broadcast-led and fail to address the complexity of the news ecology and the provision of news in a broadband world.

The Report states that *"To date, only the BBC has the reach, the strategic and operational capability, and the funding to be a provider of such content at scale across the digital landscape"*. However, as the UK's national news agency, the Press Association has a network of reporters, photographers and video journalists across the country, providing original, impartial, high quality, core news coverage. Press Association reporting underpins the services provided by most major news publishers and broadcasters, as source material across television, radio, print and online platforms and for direct publication particularly in the digital environment and regional press. The BBC, including BBC News Online, is a major user of our content.

We are keen to ensure that the Digital Britain Review team takes account of the important role played by the Press Association and the local and regional press in maintaining the plurality of news voices fundamental to an active and informed democracy. Most

consumer-facing publishers and broadcasters are heavily reliant on local newspapers and the Press Association for core news provision. It is essential to have trusted news gatherers covering matters of public interest, including Parliament, local government, the courts, the police and other public institutions. This function is the bedrock of local democracy.

The Press Association's 140-year tradition of gathering and distributing impartial news and provision of training allows our customers, the UK's leading consumer-facing news providers, including the BBC and ITV, to focus their resources on distinctive journalism, innovation and audience interaction. Public service providers have worked closely with the Press Association for the benefit of the wider news industry in the UK for many years. We feel it is important to maintain and strengthen this relationship, supporting the plurality of news voices fundamental to an active and informed democracy.

We understand the historic and dominant role that broadcasting plays in public service news provision and will continue to play for the foreseeable future. There is, however, a danger in conflating the public service provision of news via broadcast with that offered by broadband. The emphasis on solutions to public service broadcasting appears to be a consequence of the current crisis in television. However, the Digital Britain Review's proposals should encompass issues and opportunities of public service provision of news via all media. This focus on broadcaster-based solutions neglects the vital newsgathering contributions made by both the Press Association and the local news media on which the broadcasters rely and the increasing role of digital news services.

National public service broadcasters have played an important role in delivering news and current affairs with reach and impact and should, as far as possible, continue to do so. The new commercial public service institution could play an important role in supporting the development of a more diverse and competitive multimedia news market in the nations and regions if it is established as a publisher-broadcaster with a requirement to contract out its national, regional and local news by competitive tender or tenders to independently-funded consortia. However, it could also distort the market and have a significant negative impact on future commercial innovation in online local news, sports and information services. Its remit and modus operandi should be clearly and carefully defined, and it should work with rather than against existing news providers including the Press Association. The Government should also ensure that the BBC's partnership activities do not distort the market.

We also believe that the Government should expand the forthcoming review of the merger regime for local and regional media sector to include:

- an analysis of the potential impact of the BBC and ITV's partnership activities on long-term investment in news media; and
- an assessment of the practical steps that central and local government could take to support commercial providers in the localities and regions, by providing tax credits for training and supporting further trials of local and regional commercial multimedia news services

The Press Association – the UK's multimedia national news agency

Founded in 1868, the Press Association is the national news agency of the UK and Ireland and the UK's leading multimedia news and information provider and supplier of business-to-business media services. The organisation was established with the principle of co-operation and partnership at its core. Our shareholders include a diverse selection of media industry participants, including News International, the Daily Mail and General Trust, Trinity Mirror, the Guardian Media Group, United Business Media, The Telegraph Group, Johnston Press, Archant, DC Thomson, Midland News Association and Thomas Crosbie & Co.

Our central position in the market enables us to provide scalable, high-quality, cost-effective news solutions that benefit UK citizens and consumers, as well as news providers. We provide a continuous feed of text, pictures, video and data into newsrooms around the country. As an institution, we share many of the commitments and values of the UK's public service broadcasters, reporting the news fairly, accurately and impartially and striving to innovate in response to the needs and demands of audiences, advertisers and media owners. We also have a well-established and trusted relationship with key institutions and event holders in the UK.

The organisation has invested heavily in its capabilities as a multimedia agency over the past five years, including developing a fast, flexible and cost-effective approach to quality video newsgathering. We have also established a new digital pool with Downing Street, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace and the UK's major political parties to ensure that industry participants and their audiences gain access to national news events in video. This sits outside the current broadcast pool arrangement.

We have a long-established relationship with, and understanding of, the requirements of local and national news providers. Our delivery system links to every daily newspaper, broadcast newsroom and most digital news providers in the UK, consisting of a flexible, high-quality communications network and distribution infrastructure. The content we deliver is used as source material and for direct publication by these media organisations in their own publications and services. The Press Association is also a key supplier to non-media customers, helping commercial, government and not-for-profit organisations to access information and communicate successfully through the media. A selection of the Press Association's clients is shown in Exhibit 1, below.

Exhibit 1: A Selection of the Press Association's Clients



The Press Association also owns the UK's largest journalism training business and has led the way in equipping single-medium journalists with the skills to operate in multimedia businesses. Our focus is increasingly shifting from basic training to higher level digital

skills – we are playing a lead role in providing video training and other new media skills to national and local newspaper journalists, supporting the development of new skills and capabilities in a converging, multimedia news market. Over the past three years, we have trained more than 500 print journalists from regional and national newspaper companies in the UK and Ireland in digital and video skills. All our training is provided at full cost to our clients with no direct support from Government, brokerages such as Train to Gain, or the Learning and Skills Council.

The market context

The market context for local, regional and national news has been thoroughly analysed by Ofcom in *New News, Future News* (26th June 2007) and in the Second Public Service Broadcasting Review, *Preparing for the Digital Future* (25th September 2008). Ofcom has also set out important proposals for the future funding and provision of regional news in *Putting Viewers First* (21st January 2009) and has provided a detailed analysis of the significant commercial challenges facing local and regional news providers in its *Market Impact Assessment of the BBC's Local Video Service* (21st November 2008).

The Press Association is in broad agreement with many of the conclusions set out in these analyses and believes that these analyses paint an accurate portrait of the current market context. Public service broadcasting has made an important contribution to the delivery of news, and there is almost unanimous agreement about the importance of maintaining high quality news outside the BBC.

It is important to recognise that the news media are strongly interconnected, with a diverse mix of local, regional and national news providers, including the Press Association, contributing reporting and coverage at a local level and investing in local newsgathering. Many national media outlets rely upon the contributions made by these providers, with many stories originating locally before being picked up by national media. This is a complex and interdependent ecology in which the Press Association plays a central role.

The news market is experiencing a period of structural change and development, with television, print and radio facing significant commercial pressures and, in many cases, declining or fragmenting audiences. A wide range of news providers, including local and regional newspapers, are investing in the development of cross-platform multimedia news offerings, although many of these remain relatively small-scale and the economics of these services are challenging. At the same time, many traditional print revenue streams,

notably including display and classified advertising, are migrating online, and newspaper owners face intense competition and strong price pressures. New forms of news provision such as digital media aggregators and blogs are evolving rapidly, but many of these rely on existing news providers and, in general, do not themselves invest in local newsgathering or journalism.

At the same time, the market is facing a severe cyclical downturn, exacerbating the commercial pressures facing media providers, many of whom are restructuring and seeking to realign their cost bases with a more challenging market environment. As Ofcom recently noted, "*commercial prospects in these sectors are highly uncertain; a central issue being whether local online news services will be able to generate sufficient advertising revenues. Despite this, there are strong ambitions on the part of commercial providers to develop these areas of their business. Indeed almost every local newspaper now has its own website, although these vary widely in terms of numbers of stories, presentation, and the use of video content*"¹.

The role played by the Press Association removes the need to duplicate newsgathering resources around diary and non-exclusive events. This allows other industry participants to focus on the provision of unique, distinctive journalism, as well as freeing up resources for investment in innovation around digital content and audience engagement. This function has never been more important than in the current strained economic climate but also signals a fundamental change to the way it should be in the future. We would have concerns that, while an arrangement between the BBC and ITV may address the current crisis in broadcasting, it would fail to satisfy longer-term digital requirements and, more worryingly, would suppress the developing market for provision of video news services. The old system of public service broadcasting had many strengths. However, in a fragmented, complex digital media market, a broader mix of institutions and partnerships will need to be involved in gathering and providing local, regional and national news. We believe that the Press Association is perfectly positioned to fulfil a key role in this market.

Responses to the Actions set out in the Interim Report

We have set out our responses and views on the actions set out in the Interim Report below. However, we are keen to see further debate about Ofcom's conclusions and

¹ *Market Impact Assessment of the BBC's Local Video Service* (21st November 2008).

recommendations on the future of news provision, set out in *Putting Viewers First* (21st January 2009), during the course of the Digital Britain Review.

We agree with Ofcom that there needs to be a choice of high quality news alongside the BBC in the devolved nations and English regions. This should include developing proposals for a new approach based on independently funded news consortia, and could require replacement funding, administered either centrally or on a devolved basis. In addition, the Government should also take steps to support local and regional newspapers as they transition to multiplatform multimedia news providers, by subsidising their investments in multimedia training.

Action 10: In the final report we will examine measures needed to address the challenges for digital content in more detail, including opportunities for providing further support to foster UK creative ambition and alternative funding mechanisms to advertising revenues.

We welcome the Government's commitment to examining opportunities for providing further support for the UK's media owners.

The Press Association, along with other commercial news providers, is investing in the development of new services and exploring opportunities to collaborate and work together in partnership to ensure the continuing provision of news services.

The Government can take important steps to support this developing market through the downturn – in particular:

- A new commercial public service institution would play a vital role in helping to ensure the continued provision of high-quality news and current affairs in the nations and regions, across television and online distribution platforms, and – like commercial news providers – help to deliver services with reach and impact, but it is important to ensure that the remit and modus operandi of the new institution is carefully defined. The new institution should be a publisher-broadcaster and should work with, rather than against, existing commercial news providers in the nations and regions. Its national, regional and local news should be contracted out through a competitive tender or tenders to independently-funded consortia.

- The Government should support the efforts of commercial news providers to invest in training and in the development of new skills and capabilities. A wide range of skills and training initiatives is already under way, with the Press Association taking a leading role. Government can help by creating incentives to ensure schemes are coordinated across the nations and regions. Commercial providers, especially in local news markets, need to be supported in their efforts to invest in training, with tax credits and other incentives potentially having an important role to play.
- We wholeheartedly endorse the need for supporting creative ambition. We would also like to draw attention to the equally pressing issue of funding coverage of fundamental issues of public interest, such as the administration of local justice, scrutiny of local decision-making and community engagement. There are growing concerns that these key functions of the news media are being eroded as all news organisations face unprecedented change. We would recommend the setting up of a task force to assess the scale of this problem and propose viable long-term solutions. These could include public funding for central newsgathering from the courts and other institutions. Supplying news organisations with this core reporting would allow them to continue to inform and engage the public as well as focus on delivering plural and creative market solutions.

Action 12: Before the final Digital Britain Report is published, we will explore with both distributors and rights-holders their willingness to fund, through a modest and proportionate contribution, such a new approach to civil enforcement of copyright (within the legal frameworks applying to electronic commerce, copyright, data protection and privacy) to facilitate and co-ordinate an industry response to this challenge. It will be important to ensure that this approach covers the need for innovative legitimate services to meet consumer demand, and education and information activity to educate consumers in fair and appropriate uses of copyrighted material as well as enforcement and prevention work.

The Press Association operates as a gatherer, provider and distributor of local and national UK news, sport and entertainment content, and news content which has a strong UK interest, to media and non-media organisations in the UK and internationally. Our customers include national and local newspapers, broadcasters and media organisations, online portals, and specialist media outlets. We are not, largely, a consumer-facing

business. Rights in our content (in particular text, data, photos, video, and graphics) are generally owned by the Press Association, but we also distribute a significant volume of third party content (particularly images and video) in respect of which we are subject to complex relationships with third party rights owners (for example, those who allow us to distribute data or grant us access to report from sport and entertainment events).

Using a variety of innovative distribution models and technologies, we distribute content both via the newswire, as source material for editing and informational use by other media organisations, and as white label packaged products for direct publication primarily in digital media products.

The Press Association recognises the fundamental tension identified in the Report between enabling a permissive regime to stimulate creativity and innovation, and protecting the interests of rights holders through an effective and enforceable legal and regulatory system. Equally, we agree wholeheartedly that it is fundamental that there must be a digital protection framework in which international businesses can have confidence. Without such a framework, the commercial rationale for investing in creative content and new technologies will be seriously undermined.

The Report, perhaps understandably, focuses on the real and pressing difficulties that exist in the creative industries, in particular the problems faced by the music, film and gaming industries regarding P2P file-sharing and other unlawful use of audio-visual content. The Press Association faces different challenges. As a news organisation originating and distributing news content through commercial arrangements with its media partners, we do not (at the moment at least) suffer from P2P file-sharing. Our challenges arise from the ease with which unauthorised third parties (often commercial entities) can access, aggregate, re-package, re-publish and distribute Press Association-originated content without payment.

While in some circumstances it may be economical for the Press Association to use existing legal and regulatory frameworks to enforce its rights, in many cases it is not. It is difficult, time-consuming and expensive to track all unauthorised uses of Press Association content, and, even where such uses can be identified, enforcement action is often prohibitively expensive, time-consuming and uncertain, notwithstanding the fact that significant revenue may be lost.

In light of these difficulties, the Press Association welcomes the Rights Agency initiative, but stresses the importance of not excluding from that initiative those entities which do not suffer particularly from P2P file sharing and similar activities, but nonetheless make a significant contribution to Digital Britain. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in the conversation regarding the Rights Agency's terms of reference, powers, and funding.

Action 14: To inform whether any change to the merger regime is yet desirable or necessary in relation to the local and regional media sector, the Government will invite the OFT, together with Ofcom and other interested parties, to undertake an exploratory review across the local and regional media sector and make appropriate recommendations.

The Press Association welcomes the Government's commitment to conducting an exploratory review across the local and regional media sector. Local and regional news provision – properly-funded and able to invest in local newsgathering and reporting – are essential to functioning of an informed democracy in the UK and, in our view, are under serious threat in the current market environment.

In this respect, we disagree strongly with the Government's claim, in the Report, that "UK-wide and international news remains relatively well provided for from a range of sources. This contrasts with the position of news at the level of the devolved nations and the English regions where the commercial PSBs are facing challenges". As set out above, it is important to recognise that the news media are strongly interconnected, with a diverse mix of local, regional and national news providers, including the Press Association, contributing reporting and coverage at a local level and national level and investing in newsgathering. Many national media outlets, including the public service broadcasters, rely upon the contributions made by these providers, with many stories originating in the local press before being picked up by national news media. This is a complex, interdependent and increasingly fragile ecology – as commercial news providers come under increasing pressure, newsgathering at all levels is likely to be threatened. There is a real risk of complacency in the face of the significant threats facing the news industry.

We also strongly disagree with the Government's assertion that "ITV plc and the other Channel 3 licensees are currently the key providers, outside the BBC, of news for the nations and regions". There is no doubt that public service broadcasters have and will

continue to play an important role in delivering news and current affairs with reach and impact in the nations and regions. However, it is vital that the Government considers provision “in the round”, taking account of the complex interplays between news services across different platforms in a converging and increasingly interconnected market. Commercial news providers, including the Press Association, are the leading investors in local newsgathering and reporting: the Newspaper Society’s members publish around 1,300 newspaper titles in the regions, and provide upwards of 1,100 websites and associated online services, 750 magazines, 36 radio and two television stations, much of which is powered by Press Association material.

A policy for supporting the local and regional media sector that focuses only on public service broadcasters could damage plurality in local and regional news provision and have a significant negative impact on future commercial innovation in online local news, sports and information services. It is important to ensure that partnerships between public service broadcasters do not distort the market or damage commercial innovation. In particular, the recent proposal between the BBC and ITV must be closely examined:

- Cost-cutting and facilities-sharing between broadcasters are a short-term fix, not a long-term solution to maintaining plurality and supporting investment in high-quality news provision. Partnerships can play an important role in freeing up resources for investments in other areas and in helping news providers to adapt to a more challenging commercial environment. However, a proliferation of similar arrangements, especially involving the BBC, could lead to reduction in diversity, less investment in local newsgathering and reporting, and greater homogeneity across the news market.
- We are also concerned that free content sharing – or “dumping” – by the BBC, using other providers to distribute news, could have damaging implications for commercial news provision. This situation has been analysed by Ofcom in its Market Impact Assessment of the BBC’s Local Video Service (21st November 2008).

It is important that the Government seeks to support provision in the round. We strongly believe that – if properly supported – innovative partnerships and new commercial arrangements can play an important role in supporting plurality and maintaining high-quality news provision in a challenging market environment.

As such, we urge the Government to expand the scope of the proposed review to include an investigation in the practical steps and measures that could be taken to support the development of multimedia newsgathering, journalism and news provision in the nations and regions, with a particular focus on subsidising skills and training and on supporting trials and pilots of news services.

We also welcome Ofcom's proposals that the Government should plan for an alternative model of news for the devolved nations and the English regions. A new commercial public service institution could play an important role in this respect. We believe that, as the UK's national news agency, the Press Association can play a central and active role in the new institution's news provision.

Action 16: In the final Digital Britain Report, we will establish whether a long-term and sustainable second public service organisation providing competition for quality to the BBC can be defined and designed, drawing in part on Channel 4's assets and a re-cast remit. It would be a body with public service at its heart, but one which is able to develop flexible and innovative partnerships with the wider private and public sector. While it makes sense to begin by looking at public sector bodies - Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide - the Government is currently evaluating a range of options and organisational solutions for achieving such an outcome.

The Press Association strongly supports the Government's commitment to ensuring continued plurality in the delivery of public service content in the UK and in the provision of news in the nations and regions. We believe that the maintenance of a dynamic, diverse and competitive market is the best approach to ensuring the delivery of innovative public service content and to maintaining the provision of high-quality news services that meet the needs of local, regional and national audiences.

The Press Association also agrees with the Government that the publicly-owned Channel 4 has been a strength of the British broadcasting system, providing competition to the BBC and playing an important role in nurturing and supporting talent across the independent production sector and wider creative industries. There is a strong case for an institution with a public service remit other than the BBC sustained by a viable commercially-funded business model. This institution could play a vital role in helping to ensure the continued provision of high-quality news and current affairs in the nations and regions, across

television and online distribution platforms, and – like commercial news providers – help to deliver services with reach and impact.

However, in developing its proposals, it is vital that the Government considers provision “in the round”, taking account of the complex interplays between news services across different platforms in a converging and increasingly interconnected market. The introduction of a new commercially-funded public service institution with a broad and poorly defined remit to provide news in the nations and regions could have a significant negative impact on future commercial innovation in online local news, sports and information services, damaging the provision of news services by: local and regional newspapers and their associated web services; local radio stations and their associated web services; local and regional television services and their associated web services; mobile television services; and other services providers. Clearly, the new commercial institution needs to be sustainable during the economic downturn, but it will also be important to maintain a competitive market when the economic cycle turns. In this respect, we refer the DCMS to Ofcom’s conclusions in its *Market Impact Assessment of the BBC’s Local Video Service* (21st November 2008).

Given this situation, the Press Association believes that the remit, organisational structure and governance arrangements for the new institution should take account of three important considerations:

1. **The remit of the new commercial institution as well as the scope of its activities in the news market and elsewhere should be clearly and carefully defined**, with a view to providing commercial providers with the certainties they require to plan their investments in a challenging market environment. The remit of the new institution should prevent, or place severe constraints on, its ability to engage in activities that could distort the market, such as providing “raw news” footage for free. Similarly, although the new institution should have the freedom to develop flexible and innovative partnerships, it is important that this flexibility does not come at the expense of maintaining a competitive market environment.
2. Rather than seeking to duplicate existing infrastructure and resources in a challenging market environment for news, **the new institution should be a publisher-broadcaster and its national, regional and local news should be contracted out through a competitive tender or tenders to independently-funded**

consortia. This could play an important role in supporting the development of multimedia newsrooms in the nations and regions, helping newspaper groups to invest in new forms of newsgathering and journalism, as well as helping to ensure the provision of an alternative source of news to the BBC in the devolved nations and English regions. It is certainly possible that this will require additional funding from government – however, this funding could potentially play an important role in supporting the wider market, as well as helping to build new skills and capabilities.

3. Moreover, the new institution could play an important role in supporting newsgathering and journalism in the regions. It should – as far as possible – be **committed to working with existing news providers in the nations and regions, rather than competing head-on, especially in online.** This could include sharing digital infrastructure, cross-promoting and linking to third-party online services in the regions, and investing collaboratively with third-party media owners to stimulate and supporting innovation across the market.

Given the Press Association’s central role in the news ecology, we can play a key role in the new institution’s news provision.

Action 20: We are inviting the BBC to play a leading role, just as it has in digital broadcast, through: marketing, cross-promotion and provision of content to drive interest in taking up broadband. With other public service organisations, the BBC can drive the development of platforms with open standards available to all content providers and device manufacturers alike.

The Press Association welcomes the Government’s proposals to invite the BBC and other public service organisations to play a leading role in supporting broadband take-up and in driving development of platforms with open standards. The BBC has already demonstrated, through its support for the Freeview platform, that it can play an important role in stimulating the market, especially during the downturn.

However, we are concerned that the BBC’s activities should be carefully defined to avoid the risk of distorting the market. In particular, we are concerned that many of the BBC’s efforts have limited consideration for the potential impact on commercial providers in other sectors. Local, regional and national news providers, online media companies and other news providers supplied by the Press Association are investing in the development of multimedia news services and online video and will increasingly compete with and

complement services provided by broadcasters. Platforms, and technology developed by the BBC, should be made available to the wider news industry, which should be invited to play an active role in their development, and the BBC should take steps to make its research and insights into the development of the market available more broadly across the industry.

The Press Association is ideally placed to work with public service providers to define and develop standards for the news industry in a digital environment. We believe that the Press Association, via our network of newspaper industry and digital media customers, is playing a vital role in supporting broadband take-up and in driving development of platforms with open standards, through cross-promotion, industry-wide collaboration and partnerships. The Government should not rely solely on the public sector in these areas.

Action 21: A Public Service Delivery Plan: we commit to ensure that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens, taking advantage of the widespread uptake of broadband to offer an improved customer experience and encourage the shift to online channels in delivery and service support.

We welcome the Government's plans to develop a Public Service Delivery Plan for public services online. As a part of this plan, we suggest that the Government explore the opportunity to make government data and information available through alternative digital methods to centralised public services using local media networks and exploiting such links with the public.

The Press Association works with the COI's News Distribution Service and currently participates in the dissemination of government information to news providers and non-media organisations across the UK. Therefore we would be well positioned to help the Government's proposals in this area and would welcome the opportunity to participate in a Government taskforce focused on exploring opportunities.

Conclusion

The Press Association would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues in more detail with the Government and to work with the Digital Britain Review team to develop a more detailed blueprint for news provision in the nations and regions. The Digital Britain Review is an important opportunity to provide a much-needed stimulus to the

development of local and regional news offerings and to maintain the provision of high-quality news media across all platforms. In undertaking its more detailed thinking, we hope that the DCMS will take account of Ofcom's recent work on the news media, as well as considering fully the impact of any new institution on the Press Association, the regional newspaper industry and wider news ecology. We would welcome further articulation of support for, and reflection on, the importance of this ecology.

We would be happy to help facilitate meetings between the DCMS and local and national news providers, and to set out clearly how the Press Association could support the development of news services in the digital arena.



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