

Members' Business Debate - Thursday 29 November 2012

MSP Briefing 2012

Introduction

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland. The Trust has a long-standing interest in the relationship between the media, civil society and democracy, and has a history of advocating the need for news media to be of a high standard to improve community wellbeing.

We welcome the Members Debate on a media panel for Scotland. The quality of our national debate and discourse is directly related to the quality of our news media services. Across the UK, local newspapers have traditionally been a powerful tool, impacting local policy and facilitating social change. As a key component of our democracy, local journalism is at its most effective when it upholds standards, leads campaigns on community issues, and holds the powerful to account.

Fundamental issues facing journalism in the UK

The phone hacking crisis and the subsequent Leveson Inquiry have placed the debates about media standards and the future of news media in the UK firmly in the public and political spotlight. However, it is important that the many issues concerning the future of journalism on all platforms are not simply reduced to the debate on a regulatory system for the printed press. There are fundamental issues facing journalism in the UK:

- there is a lack of trust in the ethical and editorial standards held by some news

media organisations in the UK. Our research found that there was low trust in the press, particularly for the tabloids. The broadsheets performed better on trust but still only a small majority of the public expected them to behave ethically.

- the business models of traditional news media have proved increasingly vulnerable in recent years due to the growth of internet content and advertising. With increasing commercial pressures and significant competition to the current business model, many local newspapers across the UK have ceased trading. For those that remain, the resources available to support high quality journalism based on original news gathering are greatly reduced.
- there is limited public debate about the editorial decision-making process and the transparency and accountability of our journalism.
- serious news consumers are getting more news from more sources online, while people without broadband connections are excluded from most of these options.

Supporting excellence and innovation in the news media industry

We believe that there must be a systematic attempt to address some of these fundamental issues to safeguard the future of quality journalism in the UK. There are a number of

reforms that could be made to the news media industry in order to 'raise the ceiling' and support excellence and innovation in the industry:

- development of new funding and ownership models. Effective, ethical local journalism is jeopardised by the many challenges facing the local news industry. With the local provision of news diluted, and the need for providers to report news in more financially sustainable ways, we need new solutions for delivering news that will benefit both our democracy and encourage a vibrant local press. To ensure the survival of local news, with its democratic function intact, alternative funding and business structures to support the supply of high quality news must be explored.
- a renewed emphasis in journalism education and training on ethics, including a clear understanding and commitment to upholding the public interest.
- engagement by civil society organisations in the public debate around media standards and regulation, and more serious discussion of editorial decisions and challenges. Our research on the public's views on regulation found that 63% of those surveyed believe that the general public should play a role in setting the guidelines on the public interest.
- extending and completing the availability and take-up of high-speed broadband to enable universal access to a wide range of digital news services and participatory media. Our [research](#) on the supply of superfast broadband in rural areas found that rural communities themselves will need to play a central role in bridging the gap between the broadband deployment plans of government and the market and the current lack of provision - but will need to be better supported, empowered and inspired to take this action.

Carnegie UK Trust competition to address the democratic deficit in local news reporting

To address the democratic deficit in local news reporting, the Carnegie UK Trust is launching a 'Neighbourhood News' project in January 2013. The Trust is seeking applications from local commercial media and civil society organisations across the UK and Ireland to become a 'Carnegie Partner' and develop innovative ways of producing local news. In return for funding support, organisations will be required to participate in an external evaluation of their new local news project – so that their experiences and learning can be shared with policymakers, practitioners and funders. The Trust's aim is to explore how to support more accessible, pluralistic and diverse local news for citizens and communities.

About our work on news media

[Making Good Society](#)

[Regulation of the Press – Nine Key Questions for Civil Society](#)

[Better Journalism in the Digital Age](#)

[Carnegie Plan for Better Journalism](#)

[Submission to the Leveson Inquiry - proposals on how the UK press may be regulated in the future](#)

[Media, Regulation and Democracy](#)

[Voicing the Public Interest: Listening to the public on press regulation](#)

[Neighbourhood News](#)

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913 and we are delighted to be celebrating our centenary in 2013. Please see our website for further information on our centenary plans.

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