

For the attention of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee.



12 December 2023

Dear Member of the Senedd/Member of Parliament/Council Leader,

The Welsh Executive Council of the National Union of Journalists is writing to every MS, Welsh MP and Welsh council leader to draw their attention to serious concerns we have about the latest developments at Reach plc, the largest newspaper publisher in Wales.

Reach, as you know, publishes the *WalesOnline* and *North Wales Live* news websites, the *Western Mail*, the *Daily Post*, the *South Wales Evening Post*, the *South Wales Echo*, and *Wales on Sunday* as well as weekly papers in the south Wales Valleys and in north Wales.

In January this year, Reach announced plans to cut jobs resulting in the loss of over 80 jobs across its workforce.

Barely two weeks after the conclusion of that redundancy process, in March, Reach announced plans to cut a further 192 editorial roles from the workforce – including 6 roles at *WalesOnLine*. At *North Wales Live* they cut 4 out of 9 Reporters and 2 out of 3 Content Editors.

You will have seen the announcement made on 8 November that Reach is seeking job losses of 450 across its workforce with 320 editorial roles.

Proposed job losses at *North Wales Live* are cuts in Reporters from 7 to 4 including 1 sports reporter plus 1 Content Editor.

This latest round of cuts will take the editorial content operation down from 21 staff at the beginning of the year to just 8 members of staff and it will no longer be viable to produce a comprehensive news service, 7 days a week for the region, which will seriously impact the content in the *Daily Post* and *North Wales Live*.

At *WalesOnline*, 4 roles have been cut and existing vacancies have been closed.

We are deeply concerned that redundancies and job losses over the last year have left staffing cut to the bone and further cuts will threaten both the quality and quantity of news coverage in Wales and Welsh democracy.

It is vital for Wales as a devolved nation to have a healthy and vibrant diverse media covering all the issues affecting Wales. It is also important for all politicians of all parties to be able to have their views represented and questioned by a healthy, democratic media. London based media without reporters in Wales do not cover Wales in depth or on any regular basis.

An increasing proportion of the content of Reach titles is already produced centrally. In many instances, such generic feature material relating to education and health matters,

for example, does not take account of devolution and is therefore unsuitable for publication in Wales.

With less Welsh specific content, there is a danger that Reach journalists will lose their well-deserved and recognised reputation as a strong, authoritative, and reliable voice in reporting Wales. Reach's "customer value strategy" necessitates its journalists reliably informing people about the community they live in. The more the workforce is eroded, the harder it is to serve the country and communities.

While we appreciate economic pressures and the effects of Facebook algorithms, Reach's only clear response seems to be to cut and cut staff.

On a human level, the effect of more cuts and constant job uncertainty is having a devastating impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. Reach journalists take their jobs seriously and believe in the quality of their work but by creating such job uncertainty, Reach risks losing journalists at all levels as they feel forced to look elsewhere for work. Our members feel they are constantly being asked to take on greater workloads as jobs are shed, with no clear and transparent plan as to how the company plans to address the challenges it faces.

The NUJ Reach Group Chapel passed a motion of no confidence in Reach's chief executive and senior management team and has called on independent directors and shareholders in an open letter to use their influence to seek a radical rethinking of the current approach of the board which we believe is endangering the economic health of the company and the livelihood of workers.

The NUJ was also a leading member of the Public Interest Journalism Working Group who produced the [report](#) "Of and for Wales: towards a sustainable future for public interest journalism" and while we wait for a formal response from the Welsh Government the industry in Wales continues to decline.

In the circumstances, we ask you to make urgent representations to the Chair of the Reach board, Nick Prettejohn, who can be contacted at Reach plc, nicholas.prettejohn@trinitymirror.com/reachplc.com One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP.

Thank you.

Welsh Executive Council
National Union of Journalists