

LGF (S20) 25

Bil Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru)

Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan: Liz Davies, Golygydd Rhanbarthol, Tindle Newspapers Wales and the Borders (Dwyrain)

Response from: Liz Davies, Regional Editor, Tindle Newspapers Wales and the Borders (East)



TINDLE NEWSPAPERS (WALES & BORDERS) LTD

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While everyone in the newspaper industry fully acknowledges the growing importance of our online platforms, many of our readers still firmly rely on the printed product which arrives on their mats and in their local newsagents each week.

In many cases, these are the most vulnerable in our society - the elderly, those facing economic hardships and those living in isolated rural communities which still struggle with reliable internet access.

The newspapers which make up the Eastern division of Tindle Wales and the Borders serve many of those towns, villages and hamlets and remain a key source of information for their residents, something which should underpin any consultation on the future of publishing public notices in the local press.

For many people a road closure, a variation of speed limit, the cost of an hour in a car park or how much council tax will cost in the next year is not just a matter of interest but a vital piece of information and as such should be openly and easily accessible.

The public notices which appear in our papers each week affect every aspect of our readers' lives and knowing that they come from a trustworthy and reliable source adds to their importance.

In a time when it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and 'fake news' our readers can be confident that if something appears in the pages of the Abergavenny Chronicle, the Brecon and Radnor Express or The Monmouthshire Beacon, it is trustworthy and can be relied upon to be accurate.

The newspaper industry is currently faced with perhaps unprecedented challenges and the income from public notices enables our papers to not only continue to serve their communities, but to invest in local journalism employing young reporters who will go on to ensure that the tradition of impartial, accurate and fair reporting remains our overarching ethos.

That is why it is so important to abandon Clause 20 of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill which would remove this statutory requirement for councils to publish public notices the local press, a move which risks disenfranchising a tranche of society which ill deserves it.

To embody this ruling in law could have hugely detrimental consequences for the local newspaper industry, local communities and local democracy and I strongly urge that it be taken off the table. To fail to do so would inevitably result in the loss of invaluable local newspapers and a weakening of the transparency of the democratic process across Wales

Liz Davies
Regional Editor
Tindle Wales and the Borders (East)