

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for meeting me on December 1, and thank you to the Senedd staff who also attended - Richard Thomas and Robin Wilkinson.

1) We discussed the report and recommendations of the Welsh government's public interest journalism working group, Of and For Wales. The NUJ is keen for some clarity on whether the Welsh government formally accepts all, some, or none of the recommendations made in that report.

Public interest journalism remains fragile in Wales, with news deserts in areas of the country where local communities do not receive relevant information. We pointed out how high media interest in the Caerphilly by-election led to a very high turnout for a Senedd election. We also pointed out that while the BBC local democracy reporter scheme is very useful in reporting council decisions, committees without a newspaper, such as Port Talbot, do not see these reports.

You said that this was an area the committee might decide to include in its programme of work.

For information, I attach a copy of the NUJ's Senedd 2026 manifesto.

2) We also discussed the funding regime for the magazine sector in Wales and how this is administered by the Books Council of Wales, and we expressed our willingness to give evidence on this.

I gave examples of funding decisions such as the one where £100,000 was taken from Golwg 360 and instead awarded to Newsquest for its abortive attempt to step a rival Welsh language news service - Corgi. NUJ concern was to the potential damage to Golwg, but also the fact that the funding given to Newsquest was not conditional on it being paid back if the project was cancelled within a defined timeframe. In fact, Corgo lasted about four months before Newsquest pulled the plug.

I also mentioned the article I was going to write about the poor conditions and pay of the staff working in the magazine sector, but workers in this area were reluctant to speak, even under anonymity, as they were worried that their magazine might be identified and subsequently lose their funding. Workers in this sector are false freelancers, which means they do not receive holiday and sick pay. Because of the poor levels of pay it also means they have to rely on a well paid partner, or other income streams. This means that very few people without independent financial means can afford to work in the sector.

The issue is that the levels of funding awarded are based on the Neo-liberal approach that the magazine must be able to grow its income and make a return. But the reality of life in Wales is that there is very little chance of this happening. In Ireland the magazine sector is seen as a valued contributor to Irish culture and is funded at a much higher level than Wales, enabling staff to earn a decent wage.

Ironically, after I tried to write a feature article about the poor working conditions in the sector and how public money was responsible for this, there was an organised letter to the Welsh government with many signatures, including Planet magazine, which spoke about the funding regime and the poor conditions of service and pay. Planet subsequently lost its BCW funding in what your committee know from evidence given to it was in contentious circumstances.

3) I also mentioned the statement the NUJ was planning to send to Senedd members about far right attempts to bully the Welsh media into silence. This is attached.

4) Finally, I said the NUJ is organising a major one-day conference on the State of the Media in Wales in the New Year. We have just had confirmation that the conference will be hosted in Cardiff University's School of Journalism in Central Square on February 25. Plaid Cymru leader and former broadcaster Rhun ap Iorwerth has agreed to give a keynote address at the conference and we hope the Media Minister, Jack Sargent, will also be speaking.

We will be issuing invitations to attend and take part in this important discussion about public interest journalism in Wales and would be delighted if you could attend the conference, along with members of your committee and relevant Senedd staff.

I have copied this email to Huda Elmi, who is our national officer for Wales.

Regards,

David Nicholson
Co-chair NUJ Welsh Executive Council