Google

Google submission to Welsh Assembly inquiry into News Journalism in Wales

High quality journalism is important to Google

Our founding mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally available and accessible. The values of access to news and information and freedom of expression are absolutely fundamental to us. And sustainable, high quality journalism is fundamental to the knowledge ecosystem that drives us as a company. We believe it is more important than ever to support organisations who are committed to original, fact-based reporting.

We care deeply about the future of journalism and the rich and sustainable knowledge ecosystem that goes with high quality journalism. We know the past decade has presented significant challenges and opportunities for the creation and distribution of high quality journalism. Business models are changing, news consumption is becoming increasingly fragmented, and the spread of misinformation has been rising as trust in media has declined.

By confronting these realities in partnership with news publishers, we believe that there is a bright future for journalism.

Google is committed to helping news publishers succeed and our products and services help publishers in a number of ways:

- Google News provides users with convenient links to news content from more than 80,000 news publishers globally;
- Google's advertising platforms enable news publishers and other website hosts to earn revenue from ads that are displayed on their sites - more than two thirds of display ad revenues are shared with host partners;
- We support publishers through initiatives that tackle key issues like helping publishers make the most of mobile pages;
- Research we commissioned from Deloitte in April 2016 estimated the value of each click sent to news publishers between 3.5p and 7p (an estimate we know to be conservative), and that overall referral traffic to major publishers in France, Spain, Germany and the UK was worth more than £650m.

We're also confronting misrepresentative content online. Our mission is to make information widely available and easily accessible. But the quality of that information is just as vital, making a diverse, high quality news ecosystem of the utmost importance to Google.

Our **Digital News Initiative** (DNI) is a collaboration between Google and European news publishers that aims to support high-quality journalism and encourage a more sustainable news ecosystem through technology and innovation. As part of this effort, DNI has committed €150 million to support innovation in digital news across the EU. To date, DNI has provided €73.5 million in funding to 359 projects over the course of three rounds of funding, with €7.1 million of this being in the UK. These projects cover a broad range of technological challenges for newsrooms, from personalised news apps to VR for news, and news organisations of all sizes. Separately, the DNI has worked closely with publishers to develop products like Advanced Mobile Pages (AMP) and YouTube Player for Publishers.

Our goals when working with publishers are fivefold:

- ***Champion quality content.*** News partners should be supported in their efforts to create accurate original content. We strive to ensure that this content is recognised across our platforms, that users can readily discover it, and that news partners benefit from creating it.
- ***Support financial sustainability.*** We will continue to help news partners maximise advertising revenue and support new business models like subscriptions and consumer payments. Long-term financial success also means providing news partners with cutting-edge tools and capabilities to help them better understand and connect with their users, improve their products, and power their underlying technological infrastructure.
- ***Strengthen the open web and news partners' brands.*** The rise of social media, chat apps, and other 'walled gardens' present a new set of challenges for news organisations. We are committed to preserving an open digital ecosystem where content creators can engage with and monetize users on their own terms. We continue to design products and platforms committed to openness and equity among users and content creators across the news ecosystem.
- ***Embrace innovation in new channels.*** As user behaviors evolve in response to new technological developments, news organisations must adapt how and where they tell stories, and how they make money doing so. We're committed to helping partners respond to changing news consumption habits by experimenting with new formats, like virtual reality, and old formats, like audio.

- ***Partner actively and openly with the global news industry.*** In everything we do -- from training journalists on new digital tools to protecting news organisations from deliberate denial of service (DDOS) attacks -- we recognise that the best outcomes come from engaging directly with news partners. It's this commitment to collaboration that gives us confidence that, together, we can preserve a healthy ecosystem for quality journalism.

Our products help high quality journalism reach as wide an audience as possible

Google News

In support of our mission, Google's tools and technology help people find the information they are looking for, including news content. News content can appear in Google Search results in response to a user's query, and Google News provides access to news sources around the world.

Google News is an aggregator of news content from more than 80,000 sources around the world. In order to be considered for inclusion on Google News, outlets must fulfill a number of publicly available criteria[1], which have been adjusted over time to maintain the quality of these sources. These criteria include:

- Sites included in Google News must not misrepresent, misstate, or conceal information about their owner or their primary purpose
- Sites should primarily offer timely reporting or analysis on recent events
- Sites should be accountable, with author biographies and clearly accessible contact information
- Sites should have limited use of distracting ads, with advertising and promotional material not exceeding content

Google News was developed after the September 11th attacks expressly to give people more access to timely information and news. An engineer called Krishna Bharat decided to build it after he discovered that a Google Search for "World Trade Center" offered no results about the attacks. Today Google News connects readers with more than 80,000 news publishers, large and small, around the world.

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[1] The full list of criteria for inclusion in Google News are publicly available on Google News' help center: https://support.google.com/news/publisher/answer/40787

Google News aims to provide consumers access to a broad range of media outlets and information. We do not review or reject outlets based on their political or editorial perspective.

Google News and Google Search help drive traffic to publishers' sites

Google Search and Google News drive billions of clicks a month to publishers' sites for free. Both services are intended to get people off *our* site and onto the publisher's — representing an opportunity for publishers to make money from that audience. The vast majority choose to be included in Google News and Search because it creates real value. Research we commissioned from Deloitte in April 2016 estimated the value of each click sent to news publishers between 3.5p and 7p (an estimate we know to be conservative), and that overall referral traffic to major publishers in France, Spain, Germany and the UK was worth more than £650m. It also showed that the internet provided further opportunities to increase site clicks and grow revenues.[2]

Our recently launched changes to the Google Feed on mobile that will allow consumers to follow topics and news stories of interest. In the interest of promoting diverse opinions, the tool will suggest news stories from a range of perspectives. Part of the focus on this will be ensuring that people have access to a diverse range of sources, including local content. We will also be promoting fact-check through the feed.

Accelerated Mobile Pages

Our engineers worked closely with publishers to tackle their frustration that it was proving difficult to create news sites that were mobile optimised and provided the speed that users wanted to see. AMP is an open source project, which has enabled publishers to create mobile optimised content, which loads instantly, enabling publishers to help make the most of the opportunities of mobile.

The median time it takes to load an AMP page from Google Search is less than half a second. There's also evidence that AMP is encouraging users to spend more time on news websites. A DoubleClick study of the impact of AMP found that over 80 per cent of publishers surveyed reported higher viewability rates and over 90 per cent saw higher engagement with greater click through rates.[3]

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[2] Deloitte, The impact of web traffic on revenues of traditional newspaper publishers, https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/the-impact-of-web-traffic-on-revenues.html

[3] AMP, A year in review, https://amphtml.wordpress.com/2016/10/07/amp-a-year-in-review/

YouTube Player for Publishers

Inspired by conversations with newsrooms across Europe, we developed the YouTube Player for Publishers, a new solution to provide a video hosting, streaming and ads management platform for publishers - powered by YouTube. Here's how it works:

- Better connecting audiences with news videos: The YouTube Player is available across 1000's of devices, globally, optimised for the best possible user experience
- Increasing control and maximising revenue: The new player gives publishers the option to control ad formats and ad load on their videos as well as giving priority sales rights across videos embedded in their own sites and applications.
- Reducing complexity, enhancing control The Player helps publishers simplify video infrastructure and reduce cost. Over time, we'll work to help publishers respond in an evolving landscape of user-generated content for news as well.

We are working with publishers to help ensure that high quality journalism online is financially sustainable

The majority of advertising revenue goes to publishers

There has been much discussion about the share of advertising revenue that goes to publishers. It's important to consider how the digital advertising market works and to address a number of misconceptions around it:

- One of Google's advertising tools is based on keyword advertising called AdWords. These adverts are sold as part of a live auction where advertisers bid against specific search terms. Adwords has allowed Welsh businesses to grow and export around the world. This is an advertising market that commenced with the internet.
- There is no advertising associated with Google News and the vast majority of news stories on Google Search will not have advertising served against them.
- Most publishers concentrate their advertising efforts on display advertising, where adverts will appear on newspaper websites. Many publishers will use Google's advertising technology, such as Adsense, as a way of monetising advertising without unnecessary bureaucracy or administration. In these cases, Google will show adverts on newspaper sites and share the click through revenue with the news publisher. *In every case, the majority of this revenue will*

> *go to the publisher and publishers will typically keep more than two thirds of this revenue.*

- We share billions of dollars with news publishers every year in this way and it is in our direct economic interests that news publishers are successful.

Our Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund helps publishers to develop sustainable business models

Our Digital News Initiative has worked with publishers across Europe to help tackle the issues faced by the news industry and ensure that it has a sustainable, long-term future. UK organisations who have received DNI funding include:

- Trinity Mirror
- The Financial Times
- Johnston Press
- Telegraph Media Group
- Magnum Photos
- South West News Service
- Independent Television News
- The Bureau of Investigative Journalism
- Full Fact
- The Ferrett Fact Check
- Bellingcat

Through our Digital News Initiative, we are working with publishers to help them develop business models that deliver long-term sustainability. This involves the sharing of good practice, as well as Innovation Fund support for projects across Europe that aim at creating sustainable business models.

The DNI has also worked with publishers across Europe to develop new models based on subscriptions, micropayments and other models. These have included:

- **HappyWall** is a joint project between Mediafin (De Tijd/L'Echo), Adhese and NGDATA to improve the customer experience of visitors and ultimately grow registration rates for Belgium's leading business newspapers De Tijd and L'Echo. The editorial team will be provided with a tailor-made newsroom dashboard to better understand audience behaviour as it relates to content they produce. At the same time a real-time personalized paywall will be created which allows sales and marketing teams to experiment with various targeting and admission techniques to increase conversion. These tools will be based on an integration

between the Adhese ad server and the NGDATA Lily Enterprise customer experience optimization platform.

- **Project Vario, from Trinitymirror.** For too long, promoted content businesses have been seducing publishers with guaranteed revenue, at the expense of user experience, and in exchange for data, and placements on article pages. Project Vario, from Trinity Mirror, will attempt to develop a compelling alternative to promoted content links in publisher apps; instead focusing on exclusive, targeted promotional offers that have real-life value to the users who wish to redeem them.
- **Project Arete**, led by Dennis, will develop a prototype digital advertising trading platform (Sell Side) designed specifically for premium Publishers. Its key USP will be that it will guarantee transaction transparency for both the sell side and the buy side. This layer of verified transparency will afford legacy publishers the ability to demonstrate and execute the true value of their media and audiences.
- **WAN-IFRA - Monetisation for VR and 360 video news.** To stimulate the creation of original VR news content, WAN-IFRA will lead a collaboration with leading Benelux news publisher Mediahuis to test new monetisation channels for VR and 360 video experiences. We anticipate developing several ad units - static image, 2D video or interactive elements that can be placed in appropriate spatial position in a 3D GUI overlay on 360 degree video footage. The prototype ads will offer a template for publishers to better monetise initial experiments in VR or 360 video storytelling. The project will also stimulate discussion about non-intrusive VR ad formats in a news context.

Our next round of DNI funding will be focusing exclusively on monetisation projects for medium and large publishers.

We are working with publishers to help them support subscriptions across our services

In general, we work closely with publishers because we truly believe that is the best path to building great products that work for everyone. In the past publishers have told us they have needed help with issues of a slow mobile web, so we worked together on our open-source Accelerated Mobile Pages project. Similarly we heard that video was important and we helped create YouTube Player for Publishers, a new solution to provide a video hosting, streaming and ads management platform for publishers.

Today we are being asked to focus more on subscriptions especially given the growing trend towards digital subscriptions for the news industry and how important a revenue

stream it is for many publications. So we are now in active discussions with publishers around the world with a view to taking what we do to support subscriptions to another level. We're focused on how we can support subscriptions and paywalls across our services to help make subscription-based content more visible in Search. And we want to make sure that publishers are a part of this effort. We will be sharing more about this work over the coming months.

Technology and innovation can help journalism thrive in the future

Technology can help quality journalism to thrive and reach a growing audience in the future. That is why we worked with publishers to develop Accelerated Mobile Pages and the YouTube Media Player. The DNI has also funded a variety of projects aimed at harnessing technology to promote journalism. Some of these projects with UK publishers include:

- **Snappd - Unlocking the stories format for publishers -** Publishers are very much aware of the massive reach and engagement levels of stories particularly among the younger demographic. However they have been unable to effectively utilise this content as it is locked away in the platforms of Snapchat and Instagram. The aim is to allow publishers to access this new wave of video storytelling and provide streamlined communication between creators and publishers. This will create a place not only for publishers to easily curate content but also for creators to have chance to collaborate.
- **Eyewitness Media Verification -** Eyewitness media usage in news is still in its infancy, but it is maturing rapidly. Verifeye Media is committed to increasing the value of eyewitness media, both in the minds of the industry as well as the audience. By building a set of tools that facilitates verification at point of creation, we can increase the speed with which eyewitness media can be used, and we can amplify the voices of those who have a story to tell. We can also accelerate the exposure of fake stories, building more trust in eyewitness media, and trust in media as a whole.
- **The Telegraph Roboblogger -** Enhancing The Telegraph's reputation for insight and analysis by creating and publishing dynamic and rich visualisations of sport in real time for its audience. Roboblogger ingests real-time statistics and creates graphics and charts. for the Rugby World Cup, the graphics showed how each team scored from various points on

the field, the number of tackles they made, the distance they carried the ball, and more.

- **Magnum Photos Platform -** A global news-driven storytelling platform, upholding editorial values to celebrate the role of photography and independent journalism in world events and culture. According to Magnum Photos Global Digital Director, "Magnum Photos has always strived to record and share the stories that matter most. From current and cultural affairs to hard news and cultural projects, our new digital publishing platform enables us to publish our stories directly to our audience. Thanks to Google's support, we've been able to jumpstart our digital activity, beginning a process of transformation within the agency and finding new ways of creating, distributing and monetising content through a direct-to-consumer strategy. In the past few months a host of new stories including reporting on Brexit, migration and the state of US politics, released through our platform and social channels, have proved the crucial role that excellence in photography plays in an image-saturated world."
- **News Immersified -** Legacy media is grappling with the challenge of attracting younger consumers. By creating an app based on a messenger platform with a range of interactive narrative choices this project will use gamification to turn passive consumers into active users to increase engagement and user retention. Interactive storytelling in newsrooms has been held back by the fact that developing, designing and coding a project costs time and money. This app will be open-source and free for journalists and newsrooms who want to use it to bring their stories to this important audience segment.
- **Associated Press Verify -** The importance of user generated content (UGC) to news coverage continues to grow and is anticipated to continue in the future. However, sourcing and verifying UGC takes considerable time and resources with mistakes often leading to misleading news entering the public domain. AP Verify will automatically collect and assess the data needed to verify content, saving considerable editorial time and bringing trusted content to the news viewer quicker than ever before.
- **DMINR -** DMINR is a research and verification tool to help journalists work with big data and conduct investigations in the digital era. It will act as a verification tool to quickly find information to help verify (or debunk) facts - particularly timely and important in the era of fake news. The tool will use highly advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to mine public data and make sense of results. It will utilise lateral search

and API aggregation to find connections in big data and multiple lateral search locations. It will incorporate a highly-advanced search capability, AIML and a visual connection finder interface to then make sense, verify and visualise those connections.

- **Project Vario (Trinity Mirror) -** Project Vario will attempt to develop a compelling alternative to promoted content links in publisher apps; instead focusing on exclusive, targeted promotional offers that have real-life value to the users who wish to redeem them. The goal is to solve the commercial problem for publishers, SME advertisers, and consumers, at the expense of promoted content providers.

The Digital News Initiative has helped support innovative local journalism in Wales

- We believe in a strong and dynamic media at both the national and the local level, which is why we are working extensively with local media to help them build their reach and develop sustainable business models.
- Through Google News Lab, we have provided training to regional journalists across the country, including in collaboration with Trinity Mirror Regionals and the NUJ, to help journalists make the most of opportunities offered by technology.
- The Digital News Initiative has worked with local and regional media to ensure they can prosper in the digital news environment. We have also worked with regional press to help them build sustainable business models and to help them with the use of video and other technologies.

Examples of some of the projects funded by the Digital News Initiative that help promote local journalism include:

- **Sourced - a data resource for local media from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.** Local News Lab, at the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, is a national resource for local journalism. The Lab works directly with journalists across the UK to support the investigation and publication of public interest stories from data, promoting transparency and accountability at all levels.
- **Press Association RADAR -** RADAR will deliver a daily diet of compelling stories for local news outlets. Using a combination of editorial expertise and automation, applied to the burgeoning supply of open data and the increasing sophistication of distribution tools, RADAR will provide a major enhancement to the local digital news ecosystem, with some 30,000 stories a month created by Urbs journalists and AI, and distributed by the Press Association. Mass localising news stories in

this way can significantly benefit the news ecosystem by providing a high quality, high volume of content for many new and established regional media outlets. This will provide a significant boost to the local media industry at a time when budgets are under increasing pressure - but when the public's interest in local news is as high as ever.

The Google News Lab has delivered training to journalists in Wales

We support newsrooms and journalism via our Google News Lab, a team dedicated to collaborating with and training journalists all around the world. The Google News Lab's main efforts include:

- Training approximately 3500 journalists and journalism students about the use of technology in reporting and storytelling in the UK in the last two years.
- Running the "Google News Lab Fellowship"[4], which offers newsrooms the opportunity to host a journalism student of their choice for two months whilst Google provides the stipend. Over the past two years of running the Fellowship, we matched 14 students with newsrooms in the UK.
- Delivering the Digital News Roadshow in collaboration with Trinity Mirror Regionals to provide evening tutorials outside of London, with events being held already in Belfast, Birmingham, Manchester, and Cardiff.
- Providing free workshops to journalists in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast and Manchester, in partnership with the National Union of Journalists.
- We partnered with Trinity Mirror to provide a free evening innovation workshop for journalists, the Digital News Roadshow took place in Cardiff last summer.
- Working with the Welsh chapter of the National Union of Journalists, we provided a free half-day of tuition for freelance journalists, with in-person training on a range of digital tools last autumn.
- We supported the European Data & Computational Journalism Conference in Dublin, an event co-organised by teaching staff at Cardiff University.

Google Consumer Surveys have contributed to empowering local journalism at the UK General Election, including in Wales:

Trinity Mirror, Johnston Press and Newsquest formed a partnership coalition with Google Surveys as their polling partner to conduct a series of surveys on voting

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[4] https://newslab.withgoogle.com/fellowship-uk

intentions and to understand which key policies from each party were relevant to their community based readers. "We were able to build up a strong regional and national picture. The results of each survey were then put together by Trinity Mirror's data unit with analysis and graphics for publication." - Toby Granville, Newsquest

The aim of this partnership was to allow local people to be heard through a trusted vehicle of local news.

We ran 5 bespoke surveys specifically to gauge the interest of the Welsh people. These appear across Welsh local news sites, such as the Daily Post.

See example articles here:
- Wales Online
- Daily Post NHS debate
- South Wales Argus UK Election

This was offered as a free-of-charge service as part of our partnership. Since the election finished, our local news partners have continued to use this service running hundreds of surveys to gauge the opinions of those who matter most to them - their readers.

Our efforts to help tackle fake news

Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Core to that mission is to help people find what they are looking for and access the wealth of information now available on the Internet. In adherence to our mission, Google sees its role to help people find useful and relevant information by supporting the development of quality content online, restricting the flow of money to deliberately misleading content and ensuring our reporting and feedback tools are as effective as they can be.

Tackling inaccurate and misleading content is important to us and we have taken a number of steps over recent months to tackle the issue. This is also something that we are continuing to work hard on.

- ***New advertising policies -*** We have introduced new policies against "misrepresentation" to take action against websites who misrepresent their ownership or primary purpose. This helps to cut off the supply of money to those

who are in the business of deliberately deceiving people about who they are and what they publish. We have strict sets of policies that help us keep our content and search networks safe and clean overall: in 2016 alone, we took down 1.7 billion ads that violated our policies, and performed similar diligence on our publisher networks, removing more than 100,000 publishers from AdSense and preventing ads from serving on more than 300 million videos that were inappropriate for advertising. We have been conducting a thorough review of our policies and recently committed to strengthening our brand controls for advertisers.

- ***Promoting fact-checkers in Search and News -*** We have introduced fact-checking to both Google News and Search to provide users to improve their understanding by third party organisations, and publishers with the means to showcase their work to check public claims that other people have made, or that are floating around the internet.
    - In Google News, the fact-check 'label' identifies articles whereby news publishers and fact-checking organisations fact-check public claims that others have made.
    - In Search, when you conduct a search on Google that returns results containing fact checks for one or more public claims, you may see that information clearly on the search results page. The snippet will display information on the claim, who made the claim, and the fact check of that particular claim.
- ***Funding fact-checking projects -*** Our DNI initiative has also funded a number of fact-checking projects throughout Europe, including several in the UK, including Full Fact and the Ferret. We support organisations like the Trust Project, which is finding ways to distinguish authoritative journalism from promotional content and fakery, or the First Draft Coalition, which addresses challenges related to truth and trust in the digital age. Via our Google News Lab, we also provide free in-person training and online learning materials on ways to leverage digital tools for reporting and storytelling to newsrooms all around the world.
- ***Search ranking -*** To help prevent the spread of offensive or misleading content, we've improved our evaluation methods and made algorithmic updates to surface more authoritative content.
    - *New search rater guidelines* -We use external search raters to help us gather data on the quality of our results and identify areas where we need to improve. Earlier this year, we updated our Search Quality Rater Guidelines to provide more detailed examples of low-quality webpages for raters to appropriately flag, which can include misleading information,

unexpected offensive results, hoaxes and unsupported conspiracy theories. These guidelines will begin to help our algorithms in demoting such low-quality content and help us to make additional improvements over time.

○ *Ranking changes* - We combine hundreds of signals to determine which results we show for a given query—from the freshness of the content, to the number of times your search queries appear on the page. We've adjusted our signals to help surface more authoritative pages and demote low-quality content.