

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1 2HQ

31 March 2020

Dear Chancellor

The News Media Association represents the news publishers of around 1000 national, regional and local newspapers, reaching an audience of around 48 million adult readers each month in print and online. Their titles reach audiences in every corner of the UK, including the vulnerable and the elderly whom the Government is most anxious are kept accurately and fully informed of Covid-19 developments.

Inside and outside Parliament, Government has referred to the vital role played by these titles' journalism, how they are critical to providing essential information about coronavirus to the public, that it is imperative that they are able to continue to do so and that the Government will work with the industry to ensure that they can do so.

However, publishers rely on advertising revenue to provide this service and to continue to perform this vital role. And, in the midst of the crisis and the necessary lockdown, that revenue is falling by rates of up to 80 per cent or more. The small, independent publishers of local titles are most acutely affected.

The Government could quickly implement two measures to provide immediate support to the industry and to ensure that essential Government information continues to reach all sectors of the public, including importantly at the most local level:

- Commit immediately significant government media spend to newspapers (online and print, national and local) to ensure key public information messages are communicated to readers. This could include an immediate and sustained advertising campaign running in all newspapers at the same time with the same basic messages. Certainty of timing, placing and spend of such advertising would hugely assist local titles. We have provided the Cabinet Office and other government departments with necessary information and can continue to liaise to provide any assistance with the practical operation.
- Extend the 100% business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses to news publishers. Our members are struggling to understand why the business rates holiday has just been extended by [guidance](#) published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to miscellaneous businesses such as tanning shops and estate agents for example, but not to news publishers which are providing vital information to the public and every local community throughout the UK.

The NMA would once again ask that the Government recognise the news media industry's value to the public and the threat it is currently under by immediately putting in place these measures. The NMA is happy to assist in any way.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Newell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Newell
Chief Executive
News Media Association