

An open letter from local media publishers to Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnson, and Jo Swinson

We write to you on behalf of local news brands, in print and digital, which reach 40.6 million people a month.

During this election, politicians and candidates from all parties have gone to great lengths to praise local media and its important role in communities.

You have applauded local media's investigative reporting and powerful campaigns and celebrated its vital role in championing local communities.

And you've acknowledged that local news brands are an essential part of the democratic process by holding power to account and providing high-quality news.

It is widely known that the news media industry, particularly the local media sector, is facing significant challenges caused by changing news consumption habits and tech platforms' dominance in the digital advertising market.

So you would understand our amazement when election campaign material imitating local newspapers from the three major political parties started to appear through people's letterboxes.

To discover that local media is under attack by those who had purported to be supporters is extremely worrying.

Why are political parties passing off their fake newspaper propaganda as trusted local news?

Not only are you taking advantage of our highly trusted credentials, you are also actively undermining our business models.

Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but this has to stop.

The News Media Association and its members are calling on all political parties to immediately end this damaging practice which harms and undermines our democratic society.

Furthermore, we urge you all to help ensure the sustainable future of journalism.

At a time when trust in politicians and institutions is so low and fake news on social media is rife, why not instead be properly held to account by the journalists who write for our papers and websites?

Whichever party wins the election, we call on you to implement the recommendations of the Cairncross Report, move government advertising spend back into trusted news media channels and protect press freedom.

We look forward to your assurances that these measures will be taken promptly and the damaging effects of your campaigning materials will stop with immediate effect.