

Journalism Matters: Trusted Journalism Is Critical To Combatting AI Misinformation

By News Media Association chief executive Owen Meredith

At the inaugural AI safety summit hosted by the UK at Bletchley Park this week, global leaders will be tasked with considering the risks posed by this rapidly advancing technology and how nation states act together to address challenges that cross national borders.

In doing so, we can also celebrate the huge human technological advances that have enabled the development of AI - presenting us all with enormous opportunities.

The power of AI technology to accelerate the production and dissemination of mis and dis information is not on the summit's formal agenda. But with national elections happening in the UK, US, and Europe next year, this threat to democracy is real.

More than ever, we need trusted sources of information such as news brands to counteract the onslaught of false information and enable us make sense of the complex world we live in today.

That's why data out later this week which is expected to show huge audiences for local news media is so important. People are rightly hungry for authoritative sources of news and information - we must continue to ensure that supply matches demand.

Next year's general election will see 650 constituencies elect a local MP. That's 650 local battles that will determine the future of our country. Six hundred and fifty individual elections that could be influenced by AI-generated false information.

AI offers an opportunity to newsrooms by automating less important tasks. The technology can free up journalists to devote their energies to the incredible scoops and investigations for which our news sector is rightly known across the world.

A free press, holding power to account and asking the awkward questions of powerful people is fundamental to our democracy. AI has the opportunity to enhance, or destroy, this mission.

As a regulatory framework is developed, it is critical that governments and regulators understand the importance of protecting our media sector from the harmful effects of this technology. AI cannot be allowed to use news publishers' content in any way without their express consent.

This means developing robust tools enabling publishers to fully protect their IP - the fuel that powers their businesses and enables them to invest further in journalism - from being exploited by third parties.

Otherwise, the exploitation of UK content creators by powerful tech companies will accelerate dramatically, causing untold damage to our creative economy.

Legislation is making its way through Parliament to address the overweening dominance of the tech platforms.

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill will give a new regulator - the Digital Markets Unit - the legal powers it needs to reset the balance, unlocking the full potential of the UK digital marketplace – and massively benefiting consumers along the way.

It is vital for the success of the new regime that nothing is done to weaken the Bill as it passes through Parliament.

The judicial review appeals standard - which has been carefully calibrated to make the regime as effective as possible – must be maintained.

This week, the industry comes together for the annual Journalism Matters campaign to celebrate the vital importance of trusted news and information to our society.

In an increasingly uncertain and unstable world, the need for trusted sources of information has never been greater.

Whether local or national, news media plays a critical role in keeping communities informed and campaigning on issues that affect people's day to day lives.

The industry has had a tough time in recent years, but it has continued to innovate and deliver value and trusted news and information for readers.

Readers are the heart of every newspaper, with journalists doing the detailed and diligent work to analyse every story to expose the truth and present the facts to our audiences.

To continue that work, it is imperative that government uphold its commitment to repealing Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 - a commitment made in the Conservative manifestos in 2017 and 2019.

The NMA has welcomed provisions in the Media Bill – which we hope will be confirmed the King's Speech next week - to repeal this pernicious piece of legislation. The Bill enjoys cross party support and should be progressed quickly.

There is much to be positive about for our industry which continues to perform its vital role scrutinising authority and holding power to account.

More than ever, we will need journalists to continue to do this on our behalf in difficult and uncertain times.

As we celebrate Journalism Matters week, I hope that you will join with me in celebrating the immense value that journalism continues to deliver for our democratic society.