

**Rebecca Evans MS**  
**Minister for Finance and Local Government**  
**Welsh Government**  
**5th Floor**  
**Tŷ Hywel**  
**Cardiff Bay**  
**CF99 1NA**

25 June 2024

Dear Minister,

We are three chief executives of local news publishing companies in membership of the News Media Association representing more than 30 titles in Wales (including WalesOnline, The Leader, South Wales Echo, Tenby Observer, South Wales Argus, and Cambrian News) reaching 2.4 million adults in print and digital every month; 90 per cent of the population of Wales.

We are writing with regard to Section 20 in the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill which would remove the statutory requirement for councils to publish council tax notices in printed local newspapers. We believe that, if enacted, this proposal could have the twin unintended effects of leaving large sections of the population unable to access the notices, and of causing significant damage to the provision of local news in Wales.

The requirement on local authorities to publish public notices in local newspapers ensures that important information is available to the public in a consistent way. Councils are of course free to publicise the notices in other ways but the statutory requirement to publish in local newspapers underpins consistency and transparency. New research shows that local news media in print and digital remains the number one platform used by the public to view public notices.

Without the statutory requirement, we fear that many people who rely on local newspapers would be unable to access the notices leading to a democratic deficit – a position supported by the Bill's own impact assessment.

The move could also trigger the removal of other types of notices from local newspapers, removing a significant revenue stream which directly supports the provision of local journalism in Wales. If public notices were removed from local papers, there would undoubtedly be title closures across the industry as many papers would become unsustainable.

The industry recognised the need to improve its offering with regard to public notices. That is why we launched the Public Notice Portal to harness the sector's huge digital audiences and further increase engagement with the notices. We have also adopted industry wide guidelines to make the notices easier to access in printed newspapers.

For these reasons, we would ask you to stand up for local journalism in Wales by removing Section 20 from the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill at the earliest opportunity during Stage Three of its passage through the Senedd. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss our concerns.

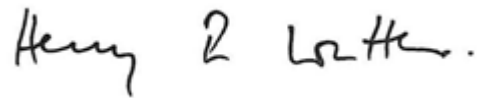
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Cammiade". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Danny Cammiade, The Tindle Group chief executive and News Media Association chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Mullen". The signature is highly stylized and cursive.

Jim Mullen, Reach plc chief executive

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Faure Walker". The signature is cursive and includes a period at the end.

Henry Faure Walker, Newsquest chief executive