



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales

Yr Is-bwyllgor Darlledu
The Broadcasting Sub-committee

Dydd Iau, 5 Chwefror 2009
Thursday, 5 February 2009

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Val Lloyd	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Joyce Watson) Labour (substitute for Joyce Watson)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Barrie Jones	Prif Olygydd, NWN Media Cyf Editor in Chief, NWN Media Ltd
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Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Aled Eirug	Ymgynghorydd Cyfansoddiadol Constitutional Adviser
Annette Millett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Stefan Sanchez	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Nerys Evans:** Bore da, bawb. **Nerys Evans:** Good morning, everyone. I extend a warm welcome to Members, witnesses and members of the public to this meeting of the Broadcasting Sub-committee.

[2] Atgoffaf bawb i ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol, BlackBerrys ac unrhyw ddyfeisiau electronig eraill sy'n amharu ar y system sain. Ni ddylech gyffwrdd â'r microffonau gan eu bod yn gweithio'n awtomatig. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân heddiw, ond os bydd larwm yn canu, cawn ein tywys o'r ystafell hon i un arall. I remind you to switch off mobile phones, BlackBerrys and any other electronic devices that interfere with the sound system. You should not touch the microphones because they come on automatically. We do not expect a fire drill today, but if any alarm sounds, we will be ushered out of this room and into another.

[3] Mae'r cyfarfod yn gweithredu'n ddwyieithog. Mae clustffonau ar gael. Gallwch glywed y cyfieithiad ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar sianel 1, ac ar sianel 0 mae'r sain wedi'i chwyddleisio. Cyhoeddir Cofnod o bopeth a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus. The meeting will operate bilingually, and headsets are available. You can receive the simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, and on channel 0, the sound is amplified. A Record of everything that is said publicly will be published.

[4] Mae Joyce Watson wedi We have received apologies from Joyce

ymddiheuro, ac yr wyf yn hapus i groesawu Val Lloyd yn ei lle. Yr ydym hefyd wedi cael ymddiheuriad gan Eleanor Burnham, ond, yn anffodus, nid oes neb yn dirprwyo ar ei rhan. Fe'ch atgoffaf fod angen i dri Aelod fod yn bresennol er mwyn cael cworwm.

Watson, and I am happy to welcome Val Lloyd in her place. We have also received apologies from Eleanor Burnham, but, unfortunately, no-one will be substituting for her. I remind you that three Members must be present for us to remain quorate.

[5] Yn anffodus, cafwyd ymddiheuriadau'r Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth, Alun Ffred Jones, hefyd. Gorfu iddo deithio i'r gogledd yn gynnar neithiwr oherwydd yr eira a ragwelir ar gyfer heddiw.

Unfortunately, we have also received apologies from the Minister for Heritage, Alun Ffred Jones. He had to travel to north Wales early last night because of the snow forecast for today.

9.32 a.m.

Casglu Tystiolaeth am Gyflwr Presennol y Diwydiant Papurau Newydd yng Nghymru

Evidence Gathering on the Current State of the Welsh Newspaper Industry

[6] **Nerys Evans:** Am nad yw'r Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth yn bresennol, symudwn ymlaen at yr ail dyst o dan yr eitem hon, sef Barrie Jones. Croeso cynnes iddo. Mae Mr Jones yn cynrychioli NWN Media Cyf., sef cwmni cyhoeddi ac argraffu annibynnol sy'n cyhoeddi papurau a chyhoeddiadau dyddiol, wythnosol a misol, a gwefannau rhyngweithiol. At ei gilydd, maent yn cyrraedd dros 1 filiwn o bobl bob wythnos. O fewn ei bortffolio Cymreig mae'r *Evening Leader*, y *Wrexham Leader*, y *Powys County Times*, y *Border Counties Advertiser*, y *North Wales Chronicle*, y *North Wales Pioneer*, y *Rhyl, Prestatyn & Abergele Journal* a'r *Denbighshire Free Press*. Mae digon yn y rhestr honno i'ch cadw chi'n brysur.

Nerys Evans: As the Minister for Heritage is not present, we will move on to the second witness under this item, namely Barrie Jones. A warm welcome to him. Mr Jones represents NWN Media Ltd, which is an independent publishing and printing company that publishes daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and other publications, as well as interactive websites. All together, they reach more than 1 million people a week. Within its Welsh portfolio is the *Evening Leader*, the *Wrexham Leader*, the *Powys County Times*, the *Border Counties Advertiser*, the *North Wales Chronicle*, the *North Wales Pioneer*, the *Rhyl, Prestatyn & Abergele Journal* and the *Denbighshire Free Press*. There is enough in that list to keep you busy.

[7] Croeso mawr i'r is-bwyllgor, Mr Jones, a diolch am eich papur diddorol. Fe'ch gwahoddaf yn awr i wneud sylwadau cychwynnol neu gyflwyniad byr cyn inni symud ymlaen at y cwestiynau.

A warm welcome to the sub-committee, Mr Jones, and thank you for your interesting paper. I invite you to make some introductory remarks or a short presentation before we move on to the questions.

[8] **Mr Jones:** Diolch. Gan mai grŵp iaith Saesneg ydym ni, yr wyf am gyflwyno fy nhystiolaeth yn Saesneg, ond yr wyf yn fodlon ceisio ateb cynifer o gwestiynau ag y medraf yn Gymraeg.

Mr Jones: Thank you. Given that we are an English-language group, I will give my presentation in English, but I am prepared to answer as many questions as I can in Welsh.

[9] Thank you for inviting me. I apologise first that my letter to you was somewhat in the nature of a rant, but I took the opportunity to write to you after reading some of the discussions and comments, from across the political spectrum, about the current state of the Welsh print media. It is a valid and timely discussion, but we found that we were slightly off

the radar of the discussion taking place, so, being an opportunistic editor in chief, I took the chance to wave the flag and write to you, and I thank you for inviting me along. That is essentially what I am here to talk to you about, but also to get your views, of course.

[10] We have a daily title covering north Wales but also straddling the border with Cheshire; however, its main editions are for north-east Wales, namely in Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire. There is a high penetration into the communities that we serve—far higher than the titles of Trinity Mirror plc in that area. We feel as though we represent a Welsh agenda, as there is a national element to our content, and we have titles stretching westwards—for instance, the *Denbighshire Free Press*, the *North Wales Chronicle* for Bangor, the *North Wales Pioneer* for Colwyn Bay and the *Rhyl, Prestatyn & Abergele Journal*, all of which are respected weeklies with a fair amount of solid journalistic tradition—right across to the Llŷn peninsula and Anglesey, and even into mid Wales, where we have the *Powys County Times*, which serves a huge geographical patch.

[11] I am sure that you have seen the paper. I have included some maps with it. We cover a fair spread. Our penetration in those areas is fairly deep. So, we were anxious that the debate that was taking place tended to concentrate very much on what was happening in Media Wales and Trinity Mirror. Alongside that, there is a swift-changing media environment anyway. We are currently investing a lot more of our resources in our online content.

[12] So, across the company, we feel that we are setting a credible Welsh agenda. Assembly issues are now more dominant, perhaps, in north-east Wales than they were some years ago, when there was—as I am sure you will be aware—general suspicion of all things southern, if I can put it that way. So, a lot has been done. The credibility and the public relations element of it has certainly had a huge effect in our area. People look this way far more than they once did. We are reflecting this in our titles. We want to play a part across a wider canvas, we want input and interaction, and we want to be seen for what we are: a Welsh company investing in Wales and making a Welsh statement. We want to be seen in that context.

[13] Eighteen months ago, we opened a new press in Deeside, with an investment of £15 million, which is significant. We are still a family-owned firm, and we felt that this was a huge investment of belief in the Welsh media. We now print all of our titles on that and we also print contract elements of other titles from other parts of the country on that. So, that has been a huge investment for us.

[14] I would like to hear your views on the way in which we are perceived and have come down here to fly the flag and tell you that we exist. We are in the north and we cover a fairly substantial patch. So, it would be interesting to hear some of your opinions about the state of the Welsh print industry and about us.

[15] **Nerys Evans:** Diolch yn fawr am eich sylwadau. Yn amlwg, yr ydym yn cynnal ymchwiliad i gyflwr presennol y diwydiant papurau newydd yng Nghymru. Mae gan Aelodau gwestiynau. Dechreuwn gyda Val.
Nerys Evans: Thank you for your comments. Obviously, we are conducting an inquiry into the current state of the newspaper industry in Wales. Members have questions. We shall start with Val.

[16] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you, Mr Jones, for your paper and your introduction. As a south Walian, I found your map particularly helpful—not that I am not aware of the map of north Wales, but, with regard to the distribution of your newspapers, it was an aid to me.

[17] If I take as my starting point the fact that NWN Media Ltd is the only independent newspaper group in Wales, could you tell us the importance of your independence for the

services that you provide in your region, particularly at a time when the sector is consolidating?

[18] **Mr Jones:** That is a very good description of the current state of affairs: consolidation. As we are all aware, it is a time of swift change for the media industry. Our evening paper is our flagship title. The most recent Audit Bureau of Circulations figures nationally show that not one single evening paper made any advancement in sale. The trend was downwards across the board. The wind of change that was hitting evening and daily papers 10 or 11 years ago is now hitting weekly papers, so sales are declining and, with that, the revenue base is also declining. Perhaps more seriously than that, conceptually, the model of newspaper profitability is, for the first time, being looked at in a slightly different way.

[19] We have had changes over the years with radio, television and so on, but the model was always the same in that newspapers were able to deliver an audience based around credible, trustworthy journalism and, on the back of that, you were able to attract lucrative, high-profile advertising. So the wheel went around. Now, with declining sales, the model is shifting slightly. Newspapers have to re-evaluate themselves and present themselves in different ways. We are no longer depended upon to provide stark, raw information, which is available elsewhere, such as our own website. There is now more of a trend towards analysis and opinion. So, that is how I am directing our titles at the moment.

9.40 a.m.

[20] So, our independence, in that sense, is key. I can fully understand what the larger groups of Northcliffe Media and Trinity Mirror are about. At the end of the day, we are businesses and there is no public element in that sense. Everything has to fit the model of profitability. To date, it suited that model of profitability to get the most credible and quality-based journalism that we could, because the more quality-based journalism that we get, the greater our audience and, therefore, the more advertising that we get. Conceptually, that is the change at the moment and we are wrestling with that. We can deliver an audience online and a large one at that, but the mechanics of tagging profitable advertising to that is not as clear cut as it is in print.

[21] If you look at some of the most successful national newspapers online, such as *The Guardian* and so on, they have a huge audience, but turning that audience into profitability is difficult, because, in terms of advertising, traditionally the print papers owned the delivery mechanism in that you were bringing the audience to the advertiser. However, online, that relationship is much more sophisticated and fragmented; we do not necessarily own that delivery mechanism online. As an independent group of newspapers, we still believe strongly in our locality and people have a great deal of loyalty to our titles. For example, in places such as mid Wales, the *Powys County Times* is seen as the absolute deliverer of all things and the local debates on all of the issues are still held on the *Powys County Times* letters pages as they always have been. However, even in traditional areas like that, there is a wind of change and we have to respond to that.

[22] We still have a huge belief in our print product and that is why we invested in a press. Our independence in north Wales is key. We see ourselves as a major player in terms of setting agendas and bringing important local issues to the table for debate in local newspapers as has and will always be the case.

[23] **Val Lloyd:** Can you comment on how the performance of your group contrasts with other newspapers in Wales? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your opposition, if you are able commercially to answer that?

[24] **Mr Jones:** Most publications in Wales have a unique character. Sometimes that

character and uniqueness is their geographical penetration. That is how it should be. We have no issues with competing with Trinity Mirror titles across our patch. It is a commercial world and that is fine; we are happy with that. It is only when something happens, or when it is suggested that something might happen, that the commercial battle breaks down and we think, 'Hang on—that is not quite how things should be'. A good example of that is the mooted BBC move of the last few years to, effectively, set up local web environments using public money, which, understandably, as a commercial concern doing exactly the same thing, we were not wild about. We argued that there was nothing wrong with journalistic competition and may the best service prevail, but if one side was being supported by the public purse, then there was something seriously wrong with that. I believe and I hope that that argument has prevailed.

[25] A small company like ours appreciates that there is a move towards online provision and we are investing heavily in that. It hits me between the eyes everyday in terms of the content that we provide in our print versions as compared with our online versions. We have a huge amount of interaction locally with our online stories. We can request readers' views on a story, however controversial, in our printed version and of course we get several letters, but if you put that same story online and ask for people's views, you are completely swamped with different views, including text language and so on. That is encouraging, because the journalism that we provide is obviously generating huge debate. At the moment, it is just a matter of getting that balance between our print version and our online environment. I am trying to spin one off against the other so that they lead back and forth to each other.

[26] **Nerys Evans:** On that point, what is the percentage of penetration of readers in the north-east?

[27] **Mr Jones:** It depends. Obviously, we are very strong in places such as Wrexham, which is where the *Evening Leader* started in the early 1970s on the back of a very successful weekly paper, the *Wrexham Leader*, which, probably a bit before that time, was the biggest selling evening paper in Wales. So, the evening paper was launched by the family firm, and it grew into Flintshire and eventually crossed the border to Cheshire with an edition. Recently, there has been a Denbighshire edition. That is our key area, and our penetration there is higher than that for any other newspaper.

[28] **Nerys Evans:** Could you supply us with those figures?

[29] **Mr Jones:** Those are in the paper that I provided.

[30] **Paul Davies:** You mentioned that the circulation of newspapers generally has reduced in recent years, and I noticed that circulation of the *Evening Leader* has declined from 32,000 in 1997 to 26,000 in 2005 and 21,000 in the first half of last year. Is that decline continuing, and how do you characterise the strength of the local and regional newspaper sector in Wales?

[31] **Mr Jones:** The decline has continued, although the situation is more buoyant now. The severe dip has eased, and there is more buoyancy, certainly more so than is the case for other evening titles, I would say. The decline in circulation is happening across the industry, and the evening titles have probably been hit harder than many others, in that they were probably seen as the ultimate in 'up-to-date-ness'. There was a real immediacy to evening papers, which people would buy because they wanted to know, for example, what the latest football results were. As the sense that newspapers were providing raw information declined, the evening titles were hit very hard.

[32] I have analysed all elements of this, and you eventually come back to the concept of news in its own right and what it actually means in a modern world. You could argue that the

concept of news has changed significantly. We all think that we know what news is, but if you look back at newspapers over the past 30 years, or perhaps a bit longer, what constitutes news really has changed. Back in the 1940s, newspapers told you things that you had no idea about. If you picked up a newspaper, you could read about the D-day landings—there would be a detailed account of what had happened—and people would think ‘Oh, that is what happened’, and would be aware of it based on what they were being told. There is now a very different concept of news. If you consider an event as recent as 9/11, by the time newspapers were being printed the following day, the battle had already been lost in terms of telling people something that they did not know. The challenge then was to deliver something that could engage an audience. The day after 9/11, there was a presumption across all print media that everybody knew what had happened, so they moved immediately into analysis. The bigger the news story, the more that is the case.

[33] The front page of *The Daily Telegraph* the day after 9/11 was not telling people that two towers had been destroyed in a terrorist bombing. It moved immediately to a war-on-America coverage and analysis of what this meant and how it had happened. So, the concept of news in that sense has changed, and that is very much the same for local papers. The most successful national papers in terms of reinventing themselves have been those that recognised this earliest and stopped trying, perhaps, to deliver hard, raw news evidence. However you may feel about that—the political elements of certain national papers—looking at this entirely in terms of identifying a target audience and hitting it front-on, a newspaper such as the *Daily Mail*, which has a clear target audience, successfully puts a package together intended to capture that audience. I would argue that the news element in papers such as the *Daily Mail* is very small. It is effectively a magazine, which is feature-driven and tuned in fantastically well to the phobias, aspirations, health fears and property-buying mania of a large section of the population, and, because of that, it is able to retain a fair element of its circulation. However, even papers deemed as successful as the *Daily Mail* are in decline. So, that is what we are dealing with.

9.50 a.m.

[34] I appreciate what you are saying, because when you look at some of the local evening titles you will see that the decline is very steep, but then again, when you consider something like the *Manchester Evening News*, it was selling 0.25 million copies not that long ago, but it sells a fraction of that now. The decline in sales in percentage terms of the bigger evening titles like *The Star* in Sheffield and the *Shropshire Star* is huge and the ABC figures on national titles that were released last week make quite disturbing reading for anyone involved in print media. The figures for *The Independent on Sunday* were down, period on period or year on year, something like 17 per cent, which is phenomenal and, in business terms, how sustainable is that? In terms of the credibility of the titles, based on what we sell now, I think that a large chunk of society in the area that we serve still turns to the *Evening Leader* for debates on issues of local and regional importance, although the volume of sales that we had 20 years ago has gone. I heard a presentation 15 years ago, and the chap said that the metropolitan evening paper is a dying beast that will die very slowly and profitably. Let us hope not.

[35] **Paul Davies:** You have already mentioned that your group runs a number of websites. How does that impact on your group and how do you think that it impacts on newspapers generally?

[36] **Mr Jones:** I think that we are still in pioneer land a little bit, with web development from print. Certainly on my part, there was an assumption that we could roll what we do in print over onto the web and that the general concept and profitability of what we do would remain static, but it does not work like that. It is a completely different environment, both commercially and editorially. We write online in a way that engages debate in a very

immediate way. There was a time, some years ago, when we would have been wary of putting our best stories online immediately, thinking, ‘This is going to sell papers’, but those days are gone. Nowadays, if a story breaks, it goes online first. Often, the story goes online first and because of the interaction that we have with the public, by the time that it goes into print, it is a better story. When there are tragic circumstances, we often get tributes to people and it turns the story around, it develops and moulds it, people are involved with it, and by the time that it goes into print it is a different and better story. When it works well, it can benefit both areas, I believe.

[37] **Paul Davies:** Are you making profits from your online services?

[38] **Mr Jones:** Yes, we are. We are making a profit, but obviously we want to grow it. In the next six months, we will be investing more to develop our websites to make them more interactive and user friendly. We also intend to develop the character of the sites more accurately for the various regions that we cover because places like Wrexham are very different, obviously, to Newtown and parts of mid Wales.

[39] **Paul Davies:** How important are your online services to your business? In other words, how much profit do you make from online services as a percentage of your group’s profits?

[40] **Mr Joens:** It is still quite small in terms of our overall profit, but we expect that to change quite significantly in the next 18 months because we have recently sanctioned a fair amount of investment in that area, which will need to bear fruit in terms of what we would expect from it. It is still early days for that and we are putting the plans together at the moment.

[41] **Paul Davies:** I notice that your group profits have reduced since 2004. What do you think that you need to do in order to turn that around?

[42] **Mr Jones:** Profitability has moved around significantly over a number of years for a variety of reasons, but in terms of the future, we need to stabilise our print products and ensure that we are still retaining our audience and appealing to them and are relevant to them while, at the same time, growing an online environment.

[43] **Paul Davies:** What is the importance, from your perspective, of local ownership, and can you comment on the recent changes in Trinity Mirror in Wales?

[44] **Mr Jones:** As far as we are concerned, local ownership allows us to be fairly confident in our patch, and it allows us to have faith in our local titles and their permanence. It allows us to deal with issues that are relevant and deep-seated in our communities.

[45] As for what is happening with Trinity, we have huge respect for its titles in Wales, but like many large media groups, it makes no secret of the fact that it has contracted in recent months, and in the last few weeks it has said that it is removing elements of the administration of its newspapers in Wales, effectively to run them from England, although it will retain a journalistic base in Wales. I fully understand that, as that is what is happening across the country, and not just in Trinity, but in Newsquest and other major media organisations—there is contraction in line with profitability.

[46] To date, we have not gone down that road. We still believe strongly in our positioning and in our titles, and there is no lessening of investment in them; in fact, it is the opposite. We will undergo an internal restructure, but that will be based on quality and delivering in areas where we feel we want to improve. There will certainly not be any cutbacks in that sense.

[47] **Val Lloyd:** I want to raise the issue of cross-media ownership. Do you have specific views on that and on the point about liberalising the ownership rules so that your group could perhaps own things such as radio stations?

[48] **Mr Jones:** My views on that are quite general. I would be in favour of liberalising the rules to fit in with the fast-changing world. I see no reason to adhere to models that have been in place for a fair length time and which were set up for the right reasons in another time just for the sake of it. There are parts of the country where profitability and the general service to the public offered by quality journalism could be improved by lessening the rigidity of those rules.

[49] **Val Lloyd:** You do not worry about centralisation, or centralisation of the means of spreading news?

[50] **Mr Jones:** That has to be borne in mind, and I do not think that you cannot relinquish the controls across the board, but there are areas where we could advance by reducing the rigidity of the rules. With regard to profitability, that would not diminish journalistic excellence; it could well improve it.

[51] **Val Lloyd:** On a different tack, what could the Welsh Assembly Government do to help the sector and, importantly, to sustain it into the future?

10.00 a.m.

[52] **Mr Jones:** If we start with the quality of the journalism, we need good regional debate about regional issues. We would ask the Assembly to support that wherever possible—I am sure that we would get that support—and where that is missing, to identify that lack. Wales is still served by some good-quality journalism. I am happy that we in the north and in mid Wales raise political issues and give them a good airing in our newspapers. There is a good, healthy and democratic debate. However, we need to be watchful that that continues at a time when media groups are looking at the business model, part and parcel of which is quality journalism, which is a profitable thing to do because it brings you a growing audience. On the back of that growing audience, you are able to sell advertising. If that model were to change radically, the quality and the extent of the journalism would suffer, but I do not think that we are at that stage yet, certainly not on our patch. Our company does a very good job in our area, and we want to be seen by a wider audience so that when there is a debate in the Assembly, we are seen in the areas that we cover as being the dominant element, and that there is not a presumption that the *Western Mail* or the *Daily Post* has Wales covered, because, frankly, we are stronger in some areas, without being too aggressive.

[53] **Val Lloyd:** I was nodding because the same situation would apply in Swansea, which is where I live and represent, and where the market penetration of the *Western Mail* is not huge.

[54] **Nerys Evans:** Ar y pwynt hwnnw, yr oeddech yn sôn bod angen i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad neu'r Cynulliad fel sefydliad helpu gyda dadleuon ranbarthol. A oeddech yn sôn am natur y trafodaethau a gwaith swyddfeydd y wasg yn y Cynulliad a Llywodraeth y Cynulliad wrth anelu at eich papurau? **Nerys Evans:** On that point, you mentioned that the Assembly Government or the Assembly as an institution should help with regional debates. Are you referring to the nature of the debate and the work of the press offices in the Assembly and Assembly Government in relation to your papers?

[55] **Mr Jones:** A ydych yn golygu'r dadleuon rhanbarthol yn ein papurau? **Mr Jones:** Do you mean the regional debates in our papers?

[56] **Nerys Evans:** Yn eich ymateb i Val, bu ichi sôn bod yn rhaid i'r Llywodraeth helpu gyda dadleuon rhanbarthol. A oeddech yn sôn am natur gwleidyddiaeth y Cynulliad a'r Cynulliad yn ymestyn y tu hwnt i Gaerdydd, neu a oeddech yn sôn am swyddogion y wasg y Cynulliad a Llywodraeth y Cynulliad yn anelu'n benodol at eich papurau?

[57] **Mr Jones:** Mae gennym bobl o'r Cynulliad yn ein hardal sydd yn gwneud llawer gyda'n papurau, ond hoffwn weld proffeil gwell i'n cwmni a'n papurau, a'r hyn a ddywed ein papurau, a chael adborth gan y Cynulliad. Yr ydym wedi rhoi sylw gweddol gryf i'r Cynulliad yn ystod y ddwy flynedd diwethaf, ar bynciau megis trafnidiaeth o'r gogledd i'r de—y trenau a'r ffyrdd, ac yn y blaen, sydd yn bynciau llosg yn ein hardal. Byddai'n braf cael barn gryfach gan y Cynulliad o ran dweud lle yr ydym yn gywir ac anghywir, a'r hyn y mae'n ei wneud i geisio gwella'r sefyllfa. Nid yw pobl yn ein hardal yn cael y neges rhywsut. Mae llawer o bobl yn meddwl mai rhywbeth i bobl y de yw'r Cynulliad, ac nid iddynt hwy. Rhaid cofio ein bod yn agos iawn at y ffin yn ein hardal, ac mae llawer o bobl yn ardal Wrecsam yn edrych draw at Lerpwl a Manceinion os ydynt am weld sioe, neu rywbeth—y rheini yw'r manau y byddant yn mynd iddynt; ni fyddant yn meddwl am Gaerdydd yn syth. Mae materion yn hynny o beth.

[58] Felly, gallai'r Cynulliad newid agweddau yn fwy byth, hyd yn oed pe bai ond o ran cynnig barn drwy ddweud, er enghraifft, 'Yr ydym wedi darllen beth yr ydych wedi ei ddweud yn y papur neithiwr, ac mae'n anghywir—dyma sut mae pethau ac mae'n bwysig bod pobl yn yr ardal yn deall hynny'. Nid yw'r neges honno yn cael ei chyfleu gan Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn ein hardal, ond nid yw hynny'n waith iddynt hwy mewn ffordd. Dylai'r Cynulliad fynegi barn a dweud, er enghraifft, 'Yr ydym yn ceisio gwella hynny, neu nid yw hynny yn mynd i wella, neu dyna sut mae pethau, neu mae'n wir am yr ardal yma ond nid am yr ardal honno'. Byddai mwy yn gallu cael ei wneud i wella hynny.

[59] **Nerys Evans:** A ydych yn sôn am

Nerys Evans: In your response to Val, you mentioned that the Government should help with regional debates. Were you referring to Assembly politics and the Assembly going beyond Cardiff, or were you talking about the press officers in the Assembly and the Assembly Government targeting your papers in particular?

Mr Jones: We have people from the Assembly in our area who have a lot to do with our papers, but I would like to see a better profile for our company and papers, and what our papers say, and have feedback from the Assembly. We have given relatively wide coverage to the Assembly during the past two years, on issues such as transport from north to south—the trains and the roads, and so on, which are hot potatoes in our area. It would be good to see a stronger opinion from the Assembly on where we are right and wrong, and what it is trying to do to improve the situation. Somehow, the people in our area do not get the message. Many people think that the Assembly is something for the people of south Wales, and not for them. You must remember that we are very close to the border in our area, and that many people in the Wrexham area look to Liverpool and Manchester if they want to see a show, or whatever—that is where they will go; they will not think immediately of Cardiff. There are issues in that regard.

So, the Assembly could change attitudes even more, if only to offer an opinion by saying, for example, 'We have read what you said in your paper last night, and it is wrong—this is how things are, and it is important that people in the area understand that'. That message is not being conveyed by the Assembly Members in our area, but that is not their job, in a way. The Assembly needs to express an opinion and say, for example, 'We are trying to improve that, or that will not improve, or that is the way it is, or that is true of this area but not of that area'. More could be done to improve that.

Nerys Evans: Are you referring to the

ochr y sefydliad yn hytrach na'r gwleidyddion?

institution rather than the politicians?

[60] **Mr Jones:** Ydw. Nid wyf yn gwybod yn union sut y byddai'n digwydd, ond byddai'n gwella'r ffordd y mae pobl yn gweld y Cynulliad yn ein hardal, mewn ffordd sydd yn unigryw i'n hardal. Yr ydym wedi cynnal polau piniwn yn Wrecsam yn y gorffennol gan ofyn, er enghraifft, 'A gredwch chi fod hyn yn berthnasol?', a byddai'r anwybodaeth am beth sy'n mynd ymlaen yn Llywodraeth Cymru yn eich synnu. Nid yw hynny'n beth iach iawn, a byddai'n dda o beth pe bai'r Cynulliad yn gallu gwneud rhywbeth i wella hynny.

Mr Jones: Yes. I do not know exactly how it would happen, but it would improve the way in which people perceive the Assembly in our area, in a way that is unique to our area. We have conducted opinion polls in the past in Wrexham and asked, for example, 'Do you think that this is relevant?', and the ignorance as to what goes in the Government of Wales would come as a surprise to you. That is not a very healthy situation, and it would be good if the Assembly could do something to improve that.

[61] **Nerys Evans:** Yr wyf yn cynrychioli Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru, sy'n cynnwys Powys, ac yr wyf wedi siarad â golygyddion yno. A ydych yn credu bod gwleidyddion wedi bod yn rhy gyflym i feirniadu'r ymdriniaeth o wleidyddiaeth Cymru mewn papurau rhanbarthol, ond, fel y dywedasoch, fod y Llywodraeth neu'r Cynulliad heb fod yn ddigon parod i ddarparu gwybodaeth gadarnhaol ynglŷn â gwleidyddiaeth yng Nghymru i chi?

Nerys Evans: I represent Mid and West Wales, which includes Powys, and I have spoken with editors from the region. Do you think that politicians have been too quick to criticise the coverage of Welsh politics in regional newspapers, but that, as you said, the Government and the Assembly have not been willing enough to provide you with positive information about politics in Wales?

[62] **Mr Jones:** Ydw, ond byddwn yn dweud wrthynt i fod yn benodol wrth roi'r neges allan, fod angen gweld yr hyn sy'n cael ei ysgrifennu'n lleol ynglŷn â'r Cynulliad a'r pynciau mawr yn yr ardal, ac i'r Cynulliad gael barn hollol glir amdanynt a dweud, 'Dyma'r ddadl sy'n cymryd lle yng Nghaerdydd', gan fynd ar draws y sbectrwm. Dylai'r neges ddweud beth mae hynny'n ei feddwl i ardal fel Wrecsam neu Fangor. Rhywsut, gallai'r neges honno fod yn gliriach.

Mr Jones: Yes, but I would tell them to be specific when they are putting out a message, to look at what is written locally about the Assembly and the big topics of the day in the area, so that the Assembly can have a completely clear view on that and say, 'This is the debate that is taking place in Cardiff', ranging across the spectrum. The message should convey what that means to an area such as Wrexham or Bangor. Somehow, that message could be made clearer.

[63] **Nerys Evans:** Pa gymorth y gall Llywodraeth Cymru ei roi i chi o ran hyfforddiant a sgiliau, boed hynny ar gyfer newyddiaduriaeth neu sgiliau eraill?

Nerys Evans: What assistance can the Welsh Government give you with regard to training and skills, whether they are journalistic skills or something else?

[64] **Mr Jones:** Pe bai ffordd o gael rhywun neu ran o'n cwmni i fod yn rhan o'r ddadl mewn unrhyw ffordd ffurfiol ar adegau, buasai hynny'n welliant i ni. Hefyd, mae ochr fasnachol i hyn. Yr ydym yn teimlo weithiau, pan warir arian ar hysbysebu, nad yw'n safle yn y gymdeithas yn y gogledd yn cael ei weld. Fel y dywedais, mae teimlad y

Mr Jones: If there were a way of getting someone or part of the company to be a formal part of the debate occasionally, that would be an improvement as far as we were concerned. There is also a commercial aspect to this. We sometimes feel, when money is spent on advertising, that our standing in the community in the north is invisible. As I said,

bydd pawb yn cael eu dal gan y *Western Mail* a'r *Daily Post*. Nid yw hynny'n wir, a phe baech yn hysbysebu am swydd benodol yn Wrecsam, byddwn yn dadlau yn gryf, er nad wyf yn gynrychiolydd gwerthiant, mai yn ein papur ni y dylai'r hysbyseb hwnnw fod. Nid ydym yn gweld bod hynny'n digwydd. Ar yr ochr fasnachol y mae hynny, ond mae'n rhan o'r hyn yr wyf yn sôn amdano.

there is a feeling that everyone will be covered by the *Western Mail* and the *Daily Post*. That is not true, and if you were to advertise for a specific job in Wrexham, although I am not a sales representative, I would strongly argue that, that advertisement should be in our paper. We do not see that that is happening. That is the commercial aspect, but it is part of what I am talking about.

[65] **Nerys Evans:** Beth yw'r prif heriau yr ydych yn eu hwynebu ar hyn o bryd, a beth allwch ei wneud i'w gorchfygu?

Nerys Evans: What are the main challenges that you currently face, and what can you do to overcome them?

[66] **Mr Jones:** Y prif heriau, fel y dywedais yng nghynt, yw gwerthiant y papurau—nid yw hyn yn berthnasol i ni'n unig, mae'n wir ar draws holl bapurau'r wlad—sut yr ydym yn symud at y we, ac i ba raddau yr ydym yn symud at y we, achos dyna sy'n digwydd. Mae cryfder yn dal i fodoli yn y papurau print, ac yr ydym eisiau eu cryfhau ym mhob man y medrwn.

Mr Jones: The main challenges, as I said earlier, are newspaper sales—this is not just true of us, but across all the newspapers in the country—how we are moving to the web and to what extent we do that, because that is what is taking place. Printed newspapers remain strong, and we want to make them stronger in every possible regard.

[67] **Nerys Evans:** Yn anochel, bydd yn rhaid i chi leihau costau a swyddi fel canlyniad i'r argyfwng ariannol presennol. Wrth ateb Paul, bu i chi sôn am y strategaeth ar gyfer y dyfodol ac ailstrwythuro. Beth ydych chi'n gweld fel dyfodol y grŵp?

Nerys Evans: Inevitably, you will have to cut costs and jobs as a result of the present economic crisis. In your response to Paul, you mentioned the strategy for the future and restructuring. What do you see as the future of the group?

[68] **Mr Jones:** Nid ydym am dorri swyddi, fel mae pethau ar hyn o bryd. Yr ydym yn symud adnoddau o gwmpas y cwmni i gyflawni gwahanol brosiectau. Ar hyn o bryd, yr ydym yn sôn am ehangu'n bellach. Mae dalgylch ein papur dyddiol yn fach i bapur dyddiol, ac mae rhannau mawr o ogledd Cymru lle nad yw'r papur dyddiol yn gwerthu. Gellid dadlau, gan ei fod yn cymryd adnoddau go lew i'w gynhyrchu, y dylem edrych ar ehangu'r dalgylch ar draws siroedd eraill, ond, er mwyn i hynny fod yn llwyddiannus, bydd angen i'r farchnad fod yno.

Mr Jones: We do not want to cut jobs, as things stand at the moment. We are moving resources around the company in order to achieve different projects. We are currently discussing further expansion. Our daily paper's patch is a small one for a daily paper, and there are large parts of north Wales in which the daily paper is not sold. It could be argued that, as it takes quite a lot of resources to produce, we should look at expanding our patch into other counties, but, for that to be successful the market will have to be in place.

[69] **Nerys Evans:** Diolch yn fawr. Mae hynny'n gorffen ein cwestiynau y bore yma. A oes sylwadau pellach neu unrhyw bwyntiau nad ydych wedi cael cyfle i'w codi yr hoffech eu hychwanegu?

Nerys Evans: Thank you. That brings our questions for this morning to an end. Do you have any further comments or points that you have not been able to express that you wish to add?

[70] **Mr Jones:** Nac oes, ond hoffwn ddiolch i chi am fy ngwahodd. Nid oeddwn

Mr Jones: No, but I would like to thank you for inviting me. I did not want what I wrote

eisiau i'r hyn a ysgrifennais ddod drosodd mewn ffordd negyddol, a gobeithio na wnaeth hynny. Yr oeddwn yn falch o'r cyfle i ddod yma i ddweud pwy yr ydym a beth yr ydym yn ei wneud, a chael eich barn chi. Felly, diolch am eich cwestiynau.

to come across as negative, and I hope that it did not. I was glad to have the opportunity to come here to tell you who we are, what we do and to hear your opinions. So, thank you for your questions.

[71] **Nerys Evans:** Diolch i chi am eich presenoldeb. Yr wyf yn gwerthfawrogi eich bod wedi teithio i lawr o'r gogledd ac y byddwch yn teithio yn ôl drwy'r eira mawr. Bydd eich tystiolaeth yn rhan werthfawr o'r ymchwiliad i bapurau newydd yng Nghymru. Byddwn yn danfon trawsgrifiad i chi o'r hyn sydd wedi cael ei ddweud yn y cyfarfod, fel y gallwch ei wirio o ran cywirdeb, ac fe'i cyhoeddir fel cofnod o gyfarfod heddiw.

Nerys Evans: Thank you for your attendance. I appreciate that you have travelled down here from north Wales, and that you will be travelling back through the heavy snow. Your evidence will form a valuable part of our inquiry into newspapers in Wales. We will send you a transcript of everything that has been said in the meeting to check for accuracy, and it will be published as a record of today's meeting.

[72] Mae hynny yn dod â chyfarfod y bore yma i ben. Diolch yn fawr.

That brings this morning's meeting to a close. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.10 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.10 a.m.*