

19 January 2020

Future of Media Commission
Birmingham Tower West
Dublin Castle
Dublin 2
D02R866

Dear Commissioners

The Irish News, founded in 1891 and closely linked to the Belfast Morning News of 1855, has always played a key role in Irish society.

Our print readers have traditionally been drawn from all parts of the country, both before and after partition, and the arrival of the digital era has further developed the spread of our audience.

Although the year on year circulation performance of The Irish News has regularly been the best in the Irish daily newspaper market, north and south, over the last two decades, we face the same pressures as our counterparts in an increasingly uncertain media landscape.

We believe that the launch of The Future of Media Commission is an important development and we hope to play a full part in the deliberations which are to follow.

The commission's working definition of public service content is that it informs, educates and entertains the Irish public with regard to matters of Irish culture, identity, sport, language and other matters inherent to Ireland and the Irish people; provides the public access to high quality, impartial, independent journalism, reporting on matters of local, regional, national, European and international importance in a balanced way and which contributes to democratic discourse; brings the nation, including the diaspora, together at moments of great national importance; and ensures that creative Irish talent gets the opportunity to have their work reach audiences in Ireland and, where possible, further afield.

This is a set of criteria which closely reflects the journalism which has been associated with The Irish News over the last 130 years and which we intend to continue providing for decades to come.

We are keen to work with the commission and our colleagues in all sections of the Irish media to explore sustainable options for our future.

One of the central questions posed by the commission concerns how public service media can be more effective in promoting the Irish language, sport and culture. We have a long history of providing significant coverage in each of these sectors, and we would welcome the opportunity to consider ways in which the next stage of our development can be facilitated.

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Some form of encouragement for our Irish language pages, which reach out to people from all traditions, would be particularly timely. We believe that we can display a greater commitment to the Irish language than any other daily or Sunday newspaper, all without any form of official support. As well as our specialist Irish language sections, we also promote related issues through our annual GAA Club and Volunteer Awards and Young News Readers initiative. The latter scheme has allowed some 9,000 students from both sides of the border to engage with the Irish language unit at St Mary's University College in Belfast.

We would be grateful for the chance to participate in the commission's discussions and offer our thoughts in much greater detail over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Noel Doran
Editor