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Senator Ben Shenton
Chairman, Media Working Party
Morier House
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Dear Ben,

I write in response to the public call for evidence to the Media Working Party's consultation regarding the way the States communicates with the island's public.

I am providing information specifically to assist with the question you pose regarding "Who do you believe to be 'the media'?" which may also be relevant to the subject of blog sites and other information sources. The comments below are not made with the intention of suggesting or influencing any kind of discrimination between content providers, but to set local existing media organisations within the context of the changing new media landscape.

The island currently supports a range and diversity of what we term 'traditional' media, providing comprehensive coverage of news and reflecting all aspects of island life. The digital revolution has created opportunities for many new ways of information delivery, particularly in an audio-visual form. The rate of development of these new platforms is rapid and we will undoubtedly see a future media landscape which is very different from today's, having responded to new trends in the way citizens consume news and information. An increasing number of online community sites, blog sites and other content sources will unquestionably find their place within society. However the fundamental principles which underpin the delivery of authoritative and credible news are unlikely to change.

Those principles of quality journalism which encompass accuracy, impartiality, fairness and legal knowledge underpin the role that the 'traditional' media plays in our society and is the basis of those news services provided by existing public service broadcasters and which remain highly valued within our society.

The UK Government's Digital Britain Report published in June 2009 stated that regional news services provide essential public content: "It is important for civic society and democracy for people to have a range of sources of accurate and trustworthy news at all levels.... At the heart of our commitment to UK Media is the Government's commitment to a free, independent and active press. Whether at a local, regional or national level it is essential that high quality, independent journalism should continue to thrive and keep UK citizens informed."

Each year Channel Television commissions independent research which measures television viewing frequency and trends including internet usage. In the most recent survey carried out by Guernsey-based research company Islands Analysis, in December 2009, respondents were

asked about the importance of local broadcast news – 83% stated it was very important or important to have a professionally produced half-hour daily news programme dedicated to the Channel Islands.

Regulation of Channel Television

Many existing media organisations operate within a framework of self-regulation. Channel Television operates within an environment of statutory regulation, in common with all other UK commercial broadcasters. Our service is regulated by Ofcom, the communications regulator. We hold a licence to broadcast a regional news service on Channel 3 and the licence carries with it certain statutory obligations as a public service broadcaster.

Those obligations fall into two main categories for the purposes of this consultation response. The first is in terms of the amount and range of programmes provided – Channel Television must meet minimum requirements for the number of hours it broadcasts of news, current affairs and other programmes during each year. Secondly, those programmes must meet both technical and editorial standards. The editorial standards are set out in the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, which broadcasters are required to observe under the terms of their licence and which offers protection for viewers and those who may be the subject of our news reporting. The Code includes areas such as:

- Harmful or offensive material
- Impartiality, accuracy and undue prominence of views and opinions
- Fairness including fair coverage of elections and referendums
- Privacy
- Protecting Under 18s
- Sponsorship rules
- Commercial references

The Code also ensures that unlike the traditional press, where it is accepted that an editorial stance may be taken on various issues, commercial regional television news must remain entirely impartial.

Complaints can be made to Ofcom by any person or body who considers that a broadcaster has failed to comply with a relevant requirement and if it is found that the Broadcasting Code has been breached, Ofcom has the power to impose financial sanctions or may, in the most extreme case, revoke a broadcaster's licence.

So while the internet has challenged the idea of journalism, the need for in-depth research and reporting does not disappear. Our role as a public service broadcaster carries with it responsibilities to our viewers and to those involved in our reporting. And it is those responsibilities which distinguish our service from certain new types of 'citizen media' or blog sites that we see emerging at both a national and a local level.

I hope these comments assist the work of your working party. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries or require further information.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Rankine