

Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AC/AM
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Kim Brudenell
Solicitor to the Leveson Inquiry
Royal Courts of Justice
London
WC2A 2LL
Solicitors.team@levesoninquiry.gsi.gov.uk

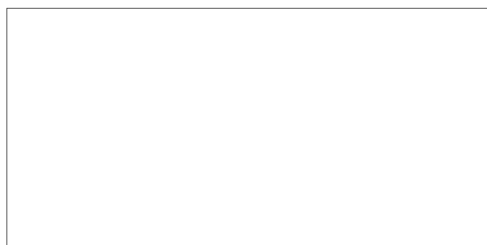
30th April 2012

Dear Ms Brudenell

Thank you for your letter of the 21st March asking me to provide a statement for the Lord Justice Leveson to assist him in his Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press.

I have considered the questions you have set out in your letter and have addressed these in my statement which I attach.

Yours sincerely



CARWYN JONES

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 060 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 060 4400
Ffacs * Fax 029 2089 8198
ps.firstminister@wales.gsi.gov.uk

MOD300001267

The Leveson Inquiry: A Statement from the First Minister of Wales

1. This is a witness statement for the Leveson Inquiry from the Right Honourable Carwyn Jones AM. I have served as First Minister of Wales since December 2009. Before that I served the Welsh Government in a succession of ministerial posts, latterly as Counsel General. I was elected as the Assembly Member for Bridgend in 1999 at the inaugural elections to the National Assembly for Wales and I have represented the seat continuously since then. Prior to my entry into full-time politics I worked as a barrister and as a law lecturer at Cardiff University.
2. Politicians have a legitimate wish to gain media coverage for their views and policies, and they will want their views to be properly understood by the public. The media, likewise, need to meet politicians to understand and challenge their views. It is legitimate and necessary for government to communicate its policies, programmes and procedures to the public and media coverage is an important part of this. There are also legitimate issues relating to the regulatory environment and the role of media in a business context. There is potential risk to the public interest if these separate issues are conflated and confused. In Wales, such risk is minimal in the sense that the Welsh Government does not hold devolved powers in areas like media ownership, competition law and the regulatory environment.
3. Politicians in opposition will clearly aim to secure media coverage on a news-interest basis. They may also seek to engage with public policy issues. This is legitimate, in my view. The public interest would not be served if politicians in opposition gave undertakings to media organisations about their commercial interests in return for favourable coverage.
4. I have no specific concerns regarding the interaction between the media and politicians in the run up to elections in the Welsh context. There is a healthy and robust relationship in Wales which balances the need for rigorous scrutiny on the one hand and an appropriate working relationship on the other. The need for transparency is important in this context.
5. The context of the recent history of relations between politicians and the media at the UK level has no equivalence in Wales where, as a result of the structure of the media in Wales, no such culture exists.
6. It is clear that technological developments are blurring traditional boundaries between print, broadcast and digital media – and over time it seems likely these distinctions will diminish. Public policy debate in the years ahead will need to keep abreast of these changes and policy will need to take account of merging platforms. For now, there is a significant distinction in terms of interaction with politicians. Broadcasters operate under regulatory requirement to report accurately and objectively. The print media operates without these requirements and are free to promote political and other forms of bias. Under our legal system, only the wealthy have recourse to libel action. I am instinctively opposed to legislation that would inhibit the press. Equally, papers must be accurate and truthful in their reporting, irrespective of the paper's editorial position: they should be obliged to correct misleading or inaccurate reporting when this occurs.
7. Both as First Minister and Leader of Welsh Labour I occasionally meet journalists, editors and senior executive figures. To the best of my recollection I have never met a newspaper proprietor or the owner of a television station.
 - (a) any meetings with editors and senior executive figures tend to be formal and generally take place in my office where I am supported by officials. These meetings tend to focus on economic development and public policy issues and not on editorial

matters. In general, in agreeing to meetings, I am responding to a request from the media organisation. To offer a sense of the frequency of these meetings I have recorded those held in the last 12 months as an appendix to this document. I regard “political editors” in Wales as working journalists and I interact frequently with them, and many other journalists, in the course of my work.

(b) I was hosted at dinner by “the Welsh lobby” (political journalists who cover politics in Wales) on 2 November 2010. I do not, otherwise, recall receiving, or participating, in any hospitality provided by news/ media organisations. At Christmas I host a modest reception for Welsh journalists who cover Welsh politics – the most recent of these was held on 7 December 2011.

(c) media organisations are important contributors both to the Welsh economy and to Welsh civil society and culture. It is important, for example, that I speak to the BBC about their overall programme making investment in Wales and their specific programming commitments to viewers and listeners in Wales, in both the English and Welsh languages. Engaging with political editors and journalists for the purpose of gaining coverage for policy and activity is an essential part of my work as First Minister and Leader of Welsh Labour.

(d) no media organisations (broadcasters or newspapers) based in Wales declare political support in the way which is common to the Fleet St press; this position does not, therefore, arise in Wales.

(e) meetings with executive figures on public policy matters are not routinely placed in the public domain, but might be publicised in response to questions about a current issue. When I meet political editors and journalists the aim, on my part, is always to generate coverage and this, by definition appears in the public domain.

8. We routinely consult stakeholders in Welsh civic society about the formulation of Welsh Labour party policy. This involves making policy consultation documents available to any organisation wishing to make comment on them. We also receive direct representations from organisations, which in the past have included S4C and the BBC. In particular S4C has regularly engaged in our policy development process and in making representations directly to the party on matters of interest to them. This would be in the form of either formal written submissions or meetings with party officials or politicians involved in the drafting of a manifesto or documents to discuss issues of concern.

9. None.

10. The media has no direct influence on the formulation and delivery of Welsh Government policy. The media is, or aims to be, a forum for expressing public opinion and therefore forms a part – but only a part – of public opinion in its entirety. To this extent, it might be argued that the media contributes indirectly to policy formulation in the sense that it forms a part of wider public opinion.

11. I can think of no example in Wales where the media has had influence on public and political appointments.

12. I was informed, orally, by my Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews that he was told by Chris Bryant MP, that his phone number appeared on a list of numbers held by News International. Mr Andrews has corresponded with the Metropolitan Police and he informed me that he is being represented by Bindmans in this matter. I was also informed, as Leader of Welsh Labour that the phone number of Julie Morgan AM, the Assembly Member for Cardiff North, also appeared on a list of numbers associated with the inquiry

centred on the News of the World. I, personally, have received no briefing or representations relating to conduct at News International and neither I, nor Welsh Labour, have made any statements or representations.

Appendix

Chief Executive and Chairman of S4C – 21st March 2012

Editor, Western Mail - 28th February 2012

First Minister's Christmas Media Reception - 7th December 2011

Director general of BBC and Director BBC Cymru Wales - 3rd November 2011

Director of BBC Cymru Wales – 20th October 2011

Chairman of S4C - 10th October 2011

Chairman BBC Trust - 21st June 2011 and 2nd Feb 2012