

North Devon Conservatives

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Philip Milton welcomes Conservative Local Newspaper Plans

The plans announced by David Cameron and Shadow Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt will review bureaucratic regulations around the ownership of local newspapers and will allow local newspapers to consolidate, both with each other and across platforms into online, TV and radio.

This will mean local newspapers will have the freedom to adapt to the digital world and develop new business models for the future. Most significantly this will encourage local newspaper groups to invest in ultra local television services.

David Cameron said:

“Local papers are closing and staff are being made redundant in the face of falling advertising revenue and competition from the internet and local authority free sheets. That's why today the Conservative Party is going to announce plans to sweep away the bureaucratic rules that mean that a rigid law decides who owns what bits of the media in local communities. This will give local newspapers more freedom to adapt to the digital world and to develop new business models for the 21st century.”

Jeremy Hunt added:

“The current rules were established in a pre digital era. It is now time to allow new industry models to emerge that will encourage investment not just in local papers but local online services and new local TV companies.”

Philip Milton, Conservative Prospective MP for North Devon, said:

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“I am fully behind the ideas put forward today by the Conservatives to help struggling local newspapers. We are lucky to have great local newspapers the Gazette, the Journal and the Western Morning News in North Devon so it would be a travesty if bureaucracy and regulations mean they are reduced to cutbacks or even disappear altogether. In my businesses I try to do all I can to support these invaluable local media”

Notes to editors

1. The Office of Fair Trading review of local and regional media. The Government's Digital Britain review asked the Office of Fair Trading to examine whether "any change is needed in the merger regime for local and regional media - with a particular focus on print media". Conservatives have been calling for the rules the OFT are examining to be relaxed. More significantly the review is too narrowly focused on the merger regime between print media companies and fails to examine the media ownership rules with regards to different media outlets.

2. Media Ownership Rules. The Communications Act requires Ofcom to review the Media Ownership Rules every 3 years. This was last carried out in 2006 and is due to happen again this year. However, this review is not part of the Government's Digital Britain review. This means that Government plans for local newspapers will not look at one of the most obvious solutions available, namely relaxing these regulations to allow local newspaper groups to enter other local media markets like local radio or more importantly local television.

3. Local TV is one of the biggest failings of the UK's broadcasting system. In a keynote speech on public service broadcasting Shadow Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt outlined his vision for local television. 29th October 2008. Read the full speech here: <http://www.shadowdcms.co.uk/newsshow.aspx?id=11&ref=89>

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Philip J Milton
Prospective Member of Parliament for North Devon



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