

4 June 2020

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester
Churchgate House
56 Oxford Street
Manchester
M1 6EU

Dear Andy,

Greater support for local media required by Greater Manchester public bodies

I trust you and your family are well and healthy during these difficult times.

My objective in writing to you is to raise awareness in the public sector of local media, and to encourage partnerships both in terms of communication strategy and commercially.

I am the owner of two local and independent media brands; radio station Revolution 96.2, and the Oldham Evening Chronicle. Both have struggled financially in recent years after the banking crisis and the shift of advertising markets towards large, US-based social media giants.

Unlike many businesses, we haven't received any financial support from either the government or Oldham Council. Our businesses were not eligible for previous grant schemes, though we have furloughed the majority of our staff. Both Jim McMahon MP and Cllr Sean Fielding have engaged with us and we have applied for some funding with the discretionary grant scheme.

It's important to note that our radio station continues to broadcast 24 hours a day, and our local newspaper continues to publish articles throughout the current crisis. Our journalists and broadcasters are key workers.

Both of our media brands are independent - something we are proud of. We are also proud that both brands are based in the same building on Oldham Edge in Greater Manchester.

Our business model is local and proud. The remit of the radio station is to cover East Manchester, and the newspaper to cover the borough of Oldham. We reach between 200,000 and 250,000 people a month.

Sadly, it's difficult to engage with communication teams at some Greater Manchester local authorities. On the rare occasions we meet, I feel we are simply paid lip service, as opposed to embracing a constructive relationship.

It's disappointing that publicly funded bodies, that I understand should be working on behalf of their residents and their local economy, choose to treat grassroots media organisations in this way.

We are dedicated to supporting local business and organisations - it is something we are passionate about and have amazing relationships in this part of Greater Manchester. But whilst we support the organisations here, we do need some support ourselves.

The very real danger for the near future is that all 'local' broadcast media has German, Irish or other overseas owners and the talent and content is networked or syndicated from London with a tiny fraction of it coming from this area to pay lip service to being a local service and meet the bare minimum requirements of the regulator.

Whilst we still have to have too many decisions made in London, we shouldn't have to have our creativity and talent piped in from there. This means local authorities and other public bodies supporting their home-grown creative industries.

I would urge you to use your considerable influence with the public and arms-length bodies in Greater Manchester to raise awareness of the importance of working with independent local media, both in terms of communication and commercially.

You are most welcome to meet with us to discuss this matter further.

With very best wishes

Matt Ramsbottom
Managing Director
Credible Media Ltd