June 2020

Thank you for contacting me about support for independent and local newspapers during coronavirus.

I appreciate just how important independent newspapers can be.

Ministers do share your desire to help independent publications through this period of hardship and they are in regular dialogue with publishers to ensure that the Government response to the challenges they are facing is as effective as possible.

A variety of support has already been made available for local newspapers. Importantly, this includes the designating of journalists and ancillary staff as ‘key workers’, meaning they have been able to keep working and have access to childcare and education for their families.

A major coronavirus public information campaign has been launched, through which Ministers have sought to maximise advertising opportunities for news outlets. Worth up to £35 million in advertising revenue, this campaign brings together over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to reach 49 million people a month.

As with any media planning approach, titles have been selected on their ability to engage with audiences and to ensure value for money, reach and targeting efficacy. It is my understanding that the vast majority of titles involved are local papers, and additional titles have been selected in order to further reach priority audiences including BAME and older men.

The Chancellor also brought forward the zero rating of VAT on all e-publications to the 1st May - seven months ahead of schedule. The Government expects the tax relief to be passed on to consumers in the form of reduced prices, and publishers should benefit from increased sales.

Independent publishers may also benefit from several measures included in an unprecedented business support package, such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Job Retention Scheme, Bounce Back Loans, VAT deferrals, and coverage of statutory sick pay costs.

Finally, you might like to know that I also placed adverts in the Daventry Express – the most important of all local newspapers.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**