

Recovery plan is vital for the survival of newspapers

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The Scottish Conservatives have launched a newspaper recovery plan to support the long term future of the industry.

The recovery plan will support local journalism and local newspapers through additional funding streams, support national media with additional Scottish Government advertising spend, rates relief and a journalism foundation.

The plan itself has been drafted in collaboration with the National Union of Journalists and follows previous interventions from the Scottish Conservatives to support the sector.

In April, Donald Cameron, Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary launched a short term local newspaper appeal seeking increased financial assistance for the industry after lockdown caused serious damage to circulation figures.

And just last month, Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary managed to secure the same financial support for local newspapers as the retail, leisure and hospitality industries.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow economy and culture secretary launched the plan today which will –

- Establish a Journalism Foundation – to invest in local journalism, innovative media projects, new start ups and vital areas of quality and investigative journalism which are no longer supported elsewhere.
- Confer “asset of community value” status on local newspapers, ensuring that titles facing closure, or potential sale to owners who fund little local content, could be preserved for potential community ownership.
- Offer rates relief and other financial support for journalistic co-operatives and local social enterprises taking over titles from major commercial operators, and running them as not-for-profit enterprises.
- Ensure that government and agency advertising is strategically invested in innovative journalism and local and hyperlocal news initiatives, as well as in mainstream media.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

“The lockdown has had an extreme impact on local and national media circulations.

“Despite opposition from the SNP the Scottish Conservatives managed to secure additional financial support for local newspapers last month.

“At the time we said that it wouldn’t be enough and we called on the SNP government to put forward a longer term plan to help this struggling industry.

“Our plan supports local and national papers; from the ground up, through advertising and with support for journalists.

“A functioning media is absolutely crucial for a well functioning democracy – there is simply no option, the SNP government must support newspapers and ensure their long term survival.”