

Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State Baroness Morgan of Cotes

On 9 January I instructed my officials to write to the Daily Mail and General Trust plc (DMGT) to inform them that I was 'minded to' issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN). I can confirm today that I am issuing the PIIN.

This relates to concerns I have that there may be public interest considerations – as set out in section 58(2B) of Enterprise Act 2002 – that are relevant to the recent acquisition of JPI Media Publications Limited, and thus the i newspaper, by DMGT and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

I invited the Parties to submit representations to me, which they have done. I have noted their representations regarding protections for editorial independence, including commercial incentives for maintaining the editorial position of the i. However, I continue to believe that it may be the case that the public interest consideration of sufficient plurality of viewpoints in newspapers is relevant to this merger. I thus consider it appropriate to intervene in this matter.

At this stage, my decision to issue the PIIN triggers the requirement for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to report to me on jurisdictional and competition matters; and for Ofcom to report me on the media public interest consideration in section 58(2B) of the Enterprise Act 2002 – namely, the need for, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable, a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers in each market for newspapers in the United Kingdom or a part of the United Kingdom. I have asked both the CMA and Ofcom to report back to me by 13 March 2020.

My role as the Secretary of State in this process is quasi-judicial and procedures are in place to ensure that I act independently and follow a process which is scrupulously fair, transparent and impartial.

DCMS will update Parliament once both reports from the regulators have been received and considered.