

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for drawing attention to your concerns over The National.

At the Glamorgan Star, a free independent local newspaper covering the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend County borough, we also find ourselves severely impacted by the 'cost of living' crisis.

The National ceased the print edition last year and went entirely online. This protected it from the subsequent rise in energy prices by having no printing and distribution costs. but even this drastic action has failed to change the minds of its owners.

In contrast, at the Glamorgan Star we strongly believe that the combination of a print edition and an online presence helps us reach a wider range of people – including many who are less digitally aware. We have the highest independently audited circulation figures of all other local papers in the Vale of Glamorgan- including Newsquest titles.

However, the cost of printing and distribution have skyrocketed, and this could be a real threat to our existence, and in particular our ability to offer employment to young people.

There is a national shortage of newsprint that has literally resulted in printing costs doubling. The printers have advised to expect it to increase much further by the end of 2022.

Over the last year, we have been employing a promising student from Cardiff and Vale College. 12 months ago, the Welsh Government were offering a £4,000 grant to take that student on for a full apprenticeship. This funding has ceased and as a small independent newspaper we have doubts as to whether we can afford to take on an apprentice without funding support.

So many things are in peril with the cost-of-living crisis. As well as the rise in printing and distribution costs, we have concerns that business owners will be forced to cut back on advertising.

A local newspaper such as the Glamorgan Star offers much to a community:

1/ It gives a sense of community to its readers – a sense that the community still exists and is made up of a wide range of interests. (The tendency of online news driving people into their own filter bubble is well documented).

2/ We welcome a wide range of opinions. We have columnists who talk about a variety of subjects and welcome contributions from all areas.

3/ It gives local and national government a chance to make a considered and meaningful contact with the electorate – either through legal notices and press releases or by being given the opportunity to comment on local issues.

4/ A newspaper such as the Glamorgan Star will always seek to highlight local issues in a professional way – giving a balanced view of these issues.

5/ The Glamorgan Star came into existence to fill the gap left by the closure of the Glamorgan GEM owned by the Tindle Newspaper Group in 2020. Staff made redundant were re-employed by myself and we have been delighted by the eagerness that community groups have shown in contacting us.

Such groups have commented that they have been able to grow and do more because of publicity in our printed newspaper.

I would be grateful if you would consider any funding that could be made available to help us as a hyper local community newspaper spanning the Vale of Glamorgan and beyond, whether it be in the form of a grant to offset the major costs of printing or possible funding for an apprentice junior reporter. It would be a delight to discuss this with you further.

There is a direct link to the full digital version of the newspaper below.

In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Attracta Loftus

Managing Director

Dear Committee,

Further to my previous emails, I am not sure whether you have had a chance to look at our request for help but we have just received another letter from our printers warning us of a further significant cost increase on both newsprint and to cover increasing energy costs. Since first publishing our newspaper, our print costs have increased by £731.77 which is an increase of 110% and in October it will rise again.

I have attached a copy of the letter from the printers which we received this morning.

A small company like ours producing a vital free newspaper for the community spanning from Cardiff to Bridgend is in danger now on not being able to continue which would mean local job losses (reporters, sales people, production staff and delivery driver), and importantly the service we provide to our readers, many of whom rely on us to keep connected to their communities and surrounding areas.

We have also suffered some loss of advertising with local businesses not being able to afford to advertise and as a free newspaper with no cover price, advertising is our only source of revenue.

I would be grateful if the Committee would review our request for help and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards,

Attracta

Attracta Loftus

Managing Director

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6<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Customer

Due to the continuing energy/inflation crisis that we are all experiencing, we expect to see a further significant increase in costs in our printing activities. Most notably our electricity prices will change from 1st October. All of this will result in increased manufacturing costs for every job we produce on our presses. The energy marketplace is extremely volatile meaning that we are currently unable to accurately assess the impact of this situation.

We would like to provide you with as much notice as possible. However, due to the uncertainties described above, we are not in a position to tell you how much your jobs will increase by at this moment.

All invoices from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 onwards will be potentially subject to both paper increases and additional costs to reflect the increased energy costs. We will do all we can to keep these increases to a minimum and will advise you of revised pricing once we can obtain some level of certainty on our costs.

Your continued custom and patience with this difficult situation is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Tweedy

Sales Manager

**Contract Print Department**