

Earlier this week the Media Secretary Karen Bradley published a consultation on the future of press regulation. This has long been a controversial issue due to the bad practices, including phone hacking, of a minority within a wider industry but that behaviour has led to a threat of regulation that may deeply affect many papers be they local, regional or national.

I have enormous sympathy with the victims of phone hacking, such as the Milly Dowler family, and those who are identified for criminal acts that they did not commit, such as Christopher Jefferies. I believe my own phone was once hacked and I have definitely been the victim of scurrilous and inaccurate reporting. Despite this I do not believe, and never have, that further regulation of the press would do anything other than threaten its purpose and existence.

Police operations against journalists have cost the public over £43 million and the last one, Operation Elveden, closed last week without securing a single conviction including that of a constituent of mine, whose life, family and career was deeply affected by his lengthy and ultimately pointless trial.

Journalists do a good job. We politicians might not like what they write sometimes but then nor should we. Because as someone else once said in a democracy you need a free press. We need to be held to account both collectively and individually. And you need a financially healthy industry, one that can compete in an evolving and competitive media environment.

The remaining issues that are outlined in the public consultation paper are fundamental to the future of this paper and others and I would highly recommend that if you care about the role the KM plays in it that you take the time to read and respond to it. And I am not just saying that because I get a column in the paper but because I believe in a strong, healthy, purposeful and ultimately free press.