

What is your position or specialism on this topic?

How do you think we could improve the way we receive news about politics?

- I've been a journalist for more than 25 years, working in national and international newsrooms in London, before returning home to Wales, where I work as an investigative journalist and community organiser and also research new ways to tell news stories.
- I believe that journalism has largely failed to meet its responsibilities and purpose – to provide people with information that helps them navigate the world and understand their place in it. That's because it relies on outdated formulas and habits which aren't fit for purpose in the twenty-first century's increasingly competitive and contested landscapes in media and society.
- Old business models (notably a reliance on advertising) have broken down, so the journalism industry has been hollowed out. Despite these fundamental changes, journalists' response has largely been to stick their fingers in their ears and hands over their eyes and carry on doing exactly what they've always done – despite the evidence that it's not connecting with users.
- The existential problem is one of trust – recent research shows that only around a third of people trust news overall, and only 43% trust even the news they use. Yet, journalists continue to do things which create distrust – e.g. routinely using anonymous sources in their political reporting. For my money, you can either have people trust you OR you can use anonymous sources – you can't have both.
- It's also worth noting that, for most people, their key sources of mis and disinformation are domestic politicians. I don't think the real problems around "fake news" are people falling for deepfakes or conspiracy theories, the fundamental problem is the uncritical platform we give to politicians (of all sides) who use journalists to spread lies.

What would your critics say about your position?

- Critics may say that traditional journalism still has large audiences
- They may say that using anonymous political sources enables journalists to get access to information that would otherwise remain secret
- Critics may also say that brands like the BBC are different from commercial broadcasters or newspapers and their different business model means that they are more trustworthy.

Thinking about your critics and/or alternative positions to yours, how would you respond?

Audiences for news are consistently falling, and young people in particular (the voters of the future) largely aren't engaging with those traditional news outlets.

It's not clear to me that the information we get from anonymous sources is true or valuable. Perhaps anonymous sources go to the journalists they think are the most pliant and uncritical – rather than the cultivation of anonymous sources being a great journalistic skill.

Arguably, the BBC's business model should help it provide more useful and trustworthy information – but it sees itself as in competition with traditional newspapers, so ends up somewhat dancing to their tune and mirroring their editorial agendas.

Initial Recommendations

Journalism should be much more user-focused – providing information to help citizens better understand events and policies. This would require new approaches to journalistic storytelling.

Journalism should focus on activities that rebuild trust – notably greater transparency around the processes of journalism.