

# Society of Editors

www.societyofeditors.org

*From the Executive Director*

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

13 January 2020

Dear Prime Minister

As you will be aware, changes have been introduced to the way in which journalists attending parliament as part of the lobby system are briefed. The changes which began this week have caused some consternation among members of the Society of Editors who are concerned the new system will create barriers to covering democracy and impede the vital work of a free press.

As a mark of their concern, several editors of national and regional newspapers and news outlets have agreed to add their names to this letter to you requesting that the new lobby system be looked at again.

In particular, editors are concerned at the lack of consultation before the changes were introduced and the new requirement that lobby correspondents must now leave the Houses of Parliament and travel to Downing Street to attend the daily lobby briefings.

It is felt the changes are likely to prove extremely difficult, particularly in the afternoon when correspondents are also required to be in Parliament to report on proceedings.

There is a concern that these new measures will be to the detriment of all lobby correspondents, but especially those who work for regional titles and also smaller publications and websites.

The problems faced in negotiating the security surrounding Downing Street and also the fact journalists will not be able to carry their mobile phones are added concerns.

With your background as a journalist in both the regional and national press you will be aware of just how important access to those at the heart of government is in producing accurate and balanced coverage. During the recent Queen's Speech your government committed itself to protecting freedom of expression and you yourself have often spoken of your support for a free press.

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Ian Murray

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*From the Executive Director*

The daily lobby briefings play a vital role in ensuring the UK's democracy is scrutinised by the media, but also, we would contend, ensures that those involved in the politics of the nation have face to face access with journalists.

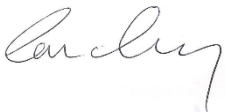
While the Society and its members appreciate the stated aim of the new lobby system is to enable increased access to advisors and others working within government, our members do believe the arrangements carry with them risks of producing the opposite effect.

We would urge you to ask those involved in providing access to your administration to further consult with the industry, particularly in the form of the Lobby Committee which represents those journalists working at Westminster, to seek ways in which the aims of improved communication can be set against the practicalities of day to day covering of Parliament.

We would ask you also to give assurances that no journalists recognised under the lobby system will be barred from attending the Downing Street briefings.

May we in advance thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours,



Ian Murray

Executive Director

Society of Editors

Cc: Lee Cain, Director of Communications, 10 Downing Street.

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## List of signatories

<b>Alison Phillips</b>	Editor	Daily Mirror
<b>Ben De Pear</b>	Editor	Channel 4 News
<b>Cait Fitzsimons</b>	Editor	5 News
<b>Chris Evans</b>	Editor	The Telegraph
<b>Christian Broughton</b>	Editor	The Independent
<b>Christian May</b>	Editor	City AM
<b>Darren Thwaites</b>	Editor-in-Chief	Manchester Evening News
<b>Deborah Bonetti</b>	Director	Foreign Press Association and UK correspondent for Il Giornno
<b>Dorothy Byrne</b>	Head of News and Current Affairs	Channel 4
<b>Doug Wills</b>	Managing Editor	Evening Standard
<b>Gary Jones</b>	Editor	Daily Express
<b>Geordie Greig</b>	Editor	Mail Newspapers
<b>Helen Dalby</b>	Editor-in-Chief	Reach North East
<b>James Mitchinson</b>	Editor	The Yorkshire Post
<b>Jimmy Leach</b>	Editor-in-Chief	HuffPost UK
<b>John Witherow</b>	Editor	The Times
<b>Jon Clark</b>	Editor-in-Chief	Daily Star and Daily Star Sunday
<b>Jonathan Levy</b>	Director of Newsgathering	Sky News
<b>Katharine Viner</b>	Editor-in-Chief	The Guardian
<b>Lloyd Embley</b>	Group Editor-in-Chief	Reach PLC
<b>Marc Reeves</b>	Editor-in-Chief	Reach Midlands Media Ltd
<b>Martin Ivens</b>	Editor	The Sunday Times
<b>Mike Norton</b>	Editor	Bristol Post
<b>Oliver Duff</b>	Editor-in-Chief	i
<b>Paul Webster</b>	Editor	The Observer

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<b>Peter Clifton</b>	Editor-in-Chief	PA Media
<b>Peter Willis</b>	Editor	The Sunday Mirror and Sunday People
<b>Roula Khalaf</b>	Editor	Financial Times
<b>Stuart Millar</b>	Editor	BuzzFeed UK
<b>Ted Verity</b>	Editor	The Mail on Sunday
<b>Ted Young</b>	Editor	Metro
<b>Tony Gallagher</b>	Editor-in-Chief	The Sun
<b>Victoria Newton</b>	Editor	The Sun on Sunday

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