

Monday morning welcome

Welcome to the Society of Editors 16th Annual conference. This year I am delighted to welcome you to Southampton.

This weekend we are based at the astounding Grand Harbour Hotel. It is a short distance from the waterfront and is the home of cruise liners including the iconic Queen Mary 2 and Queen Victoria. Southampton continues to be a major passenger and cargo port and alongside ferries and smaller ships, it provides a gateway to the rest of the world. If you get a chance to explore, please do go and wander along the waterfront.

In a year in which the freedom of the press has seen threats from our government bodies and European legislators, it is fitting to remember that our country is judged as a benchmark by those further afield that are not afforded the same freedoms as we are. It is not just worth fighting for on our behalf, but on the behalf of others.

It is our duty to resist any further attempts to shackle an industry that has boasted freedom of the press for more than 300 years. Fundamental cornerstones of a free press such as the protection of journalistic sources should not be threatened by our public bodies. As mentioned previously, journalism is not terrorism and it should not be allowed to be treated as such by those we are trusted with holding to account by the public.

The work of the Society has never been more important.

That said, the past year has seen the industry finally start to put some of the perceived failures of the past behind us. We have welcomed the introduction of the new Independent Press Standards Organisation and heard last night from its tough chairman Sir Alan Moses. Not only does it appear to be in safe hands, it looks set to provide the tough regulation and systems for redress that both Sir Brian Leveson and the victims of press intrusion have called for. We remain optimistic about the future of self-regulation.

We may have made strides in the family courts and council meetings where secrecy has now been replaced by transparency and openness as the default position but we remain vigilant in ensuring that the same is implemented in the Coroner's courts and court martial. Alongside this we have welcomed the revision of reporting restrictions guidelines in the criminal courts as a way of ensuring court staff and journalists work together for mutual benefit.

This year's conference will focus on much of what has faced the industry in the past year and much of what we expect to come.

From issues such as the police and the media, a close look at the varying business models across national and regional titles and whether readership is now on the rise alongside online advertising revenues and digital opportunities, we will be asking top industry figures to reveal their visions for the future.

Also on the agenda is devolution and what it will mean for the media, new threats from the 'right to be forgotten' and RIPA to continuous personal development and sports rights.

Thank you.

So now the theme of this conference is the *full steam ahead* and, of course for the press there is the challenge of navigating many issues around the public's right to know. And all that should be seen against a background of improving ad spends. It is patchy – better for national newspapers than regionals. It will still be a challenge to pay for the journalism that is so important to our way of work and more generally to the way of life in the UK but it should give us all grounds for optimism.