



The BIG debate:

'Does the regional media have a future?'

20th November 2008

Austin Court, 80 Cambridge Street,
Birmingham B1 2NP

Starts 6.00pm – admission free. Drinks and nibbles provided!

The oldest press club in the world is to host a major debate into what the future holds for the region's media.

The event has been sparked by recent upheavals in the newspaper and television industry in the city.

At Trinity Mirror, the city's main local newspaper group, a massive restructuring programme has been announced which will see more emphasis placed on 'online' output. As part of the restructuring, 65 jobs are being lost.

At ITV, swingeing cuts to local news output has seen the East and West Midlands regions of 'Central News' merged, a move which will threaten more jobs.

Both these shake-ups have led to many commentators questioning whether the media boom in the region is now over, and whether the city is set to become merely an outpost for journalism, rather than a major centre.

Birmingham Press Club, which is sponsored by Royal Mail, has decided to tackle the issue head on, by holding a debate at Austin Court, Cambridge Street, on 20 November, entitled: 'Does the regional media have a future?'

The debate, chaired by former broadcaster Peter Tomlinson, will feature a panel drawn from TV, radio and the newspapers. The panel will include the editors of both of the city's leading

newspapers, Marc Reeves of the 'Post' and Steve Dyson of the 'Mail', and also Anita Wright, managing director of Global Radio Midlands, which owns Heart FM.

Also on the panel will be Chas Watkin, head of BBC regional and local programmes in the Midlands.

John Lamb, chairman of Birmingham Press Club, said: "We are not sure where the debate will lead, but we felt, as a press club, that we should be doing something constructive in the face of massive downsizing in the industry, particularly in Birmingham."

Bob Warman, the new president of the Press Club, and also one of ITV's longest serving regional news anchormen, said it was the right time to hold such an important debate.

"The ITV announcement and similar activity at Midland Regional Newspapers serves to emphasise the parlous state of the media in this region," he said.

"It is right that we should create a platform to express our anxiety and explore solutions, and the November event will go some way towards achieving that."

As well as analysing the current state of affairs, the event will also look back at how the various strands of the media have developed in the city during the past 20 years or so.

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