

PRESS ISSUES

1. Now that the Assembly has moved to Parliament Buildings there are some issues which need to be addressed in the short and longer term to achieve two objectives. Firstly, members appear to be generally agreed that the press and media should be treated positively in a manner which acknowledges their need for appropriate access to elected representatives. Secondly that there are reasonable restrictions on that access to enable members, the executive and staff to go about their business in certain parts of the building without undue interference.
2. There are also questions as to whether, and if so what type of, accreditation there should be to the Assembly and can the press and media form a representative group to liaise with the Assembly.

Facilities for Press and Media

3. It is proposed to create an area in which the press and media can operate, write and file reports, carry out live radio and TV interviews and socialise in the basement close to the West door. The layout of this area is currently being planned to try to accommodate various needs and a plan will be available soon.

4. Sufficient space will be made available in the Gallery of the Chamber to accommodate around 50 journalists and proceedings will also be relayed by monitor to the Basement. It is intended to have a Press Bar in the Basement for use only by journalists, members and Assembly party press officers.
5. The Basement will also house the sound and vision control equipment and personnel from Macmillan Media who will also supply TV and audio feeds and/or tapes as required.
6. Press access into the building will have to be considered at a later date [depending on other security issues]. However, it is proposed to issue photographic press passes to accredited journalists, etc, which would permit access to certain restricted areas such as the press suite, restaurant and shop in the Basement, the Press Gallery in the Chamber and the Central Hall. This does not preclude Press being brought into other areas as guests of members but in such cases the usual guidelines regarding guests will apply. It is hoped that such a process could start at the end of August. The issue of accreditation is discussed later in this paper.

Use of Still or Film Cameras and Recording Equipment

7. As is the case at Westminster it is proposed that the use of cameras, both still and film, and recording equipment should not be permitted in any areas other

than the press suite in the Basement, except with the specific permission of the Presiding Officer.

Accreditation

8. During the discussion with representatives of the press and media on 8 July the possibility of a lobby system was discussed. It was clear that there was no enthusiasm at all for a lobby system which most of those present felt was elitist and unnecessary. However while this was the view expressed by the press it might be that members hold a different view and that they would prefer a lobby system which gives particular members of the press access to certain areas and other privileges not available to others. Accreditation to the Assembly might therefore simply be a form of registration based on either membership of the NUJ or a letter from a recognised organisation. Details of each person accredited would be held for administrative purposes.

Press Conference

9. At present there is no facility available for the holding of press conferences by the Executive and Assembly members and it is therefore suggested that a portion of the Long Gallery should be used for this purpose in the interim. However, this option permits access to the press and media to areas outside those previously specified in this paper and will therefore require permission from the Presiding Officer and a strict monitoring role. Consideration will

need to be given by parties as to how they can help to ensure that the rules on access are not breached by those representatives of the press and media attending party press conferences.

Assembly Secretariat

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