

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Assistant Private Secretary

Room 206

Tel [redacted]
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Minister for Tourism, Film and Broadcasting Dr Kim Howells MP

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20/01/27/277/4

File - News Int

To

[redacted]

cc

[redacted]

From

[redacted]

Andrew Ramsay

Date

31 July 2001

[redacted]

Bill Bush

[redacted]

NOTE OF MEETING WITH NEWS INTERNATIONAL - THURSDAY 26 JULY

1. Kim Howells was grateful for the briefing you provided for his meeting with Les Hinton (Executive Chairman) and Alison Clark (Director of Corporate Affairs), News International. [redacted] attended the meeting on behalf of [redacted].
2. Kim started the meeting by running through the procedure for Royal Assent on the Paving Bill which would allow the establishment of OFCOM. Kim went on to add that the draft of the main Communications Bill will be published for consultation early next year and was grateful for News International's comments on the Communications White Paper (received in February).
3. Les Hinton discussed their concerns with Foreign and Cross Media Ownership. News International consider the existing rules to be inconsistent and somewhat arbitrary. They want all restrictions on foreign ownership removed and would prefer media markets to be regulated solely through competition legislation, which they felt could be further improved by the removal of the special newspaper regime that currently exists. Kim said that his background in the DTI allowed him to appreciate these concerns. He went on to suggest a meeting between Baroness Blackstone, who will be taking the Paving Bill through the Lords; and Patricia Hewitt (Secretary of State, DTI) may be helpful to News International. Kim also suggested contacting DCMS/DTI Officials and the Specials Advisers - Bill Bush at DCMS and Ed Richards at No 10 - who are involved in the Bills.
4. Kim said he would welcome a letter from News International if they had any ideas on solving potential problems with Foreign and Cross Media Ownership. This would assist with the drafting of the Bill ready for the consultation period early next year. [DCMS to expect letter in early September.]

why?