NUJ submission to CMA Sky/ITV merger inquiry

August 2026

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is the voice for journalism and journalists in the UK and Ireland. It was founded in 1907 and has more than 22,000 members working in broadcasting, newspapers, news agencies, magazines, book publishing, public relations, and digital media.

The NUJ opposes the proposed Comcast ITV takeover as it raises significant concerns in relation to competition, media plurality and upholding the public interest.

<u>Competition and market concentration</u>

The proposed acquisition would significantly increase concentration within the UK broadcasting sector. Comcast would hold a dominant position in terrestrial advertising, with estimates suggesting it would control more than 70% of the UK TV advertising market. Ownership of streaming advertising would be less significant, however, television advertising remains a critical source of revenue for public service broadcasting. Such a prominent concentration of market power risks reducing competition and limiting choice for advertisers and audiences. This increase in revenue could also give Comcast an advantage in the ongoing shift to digital, making it more likely to dominate and reduce competition in the streaming market in the future.

<u>Media plurality</u>

The CMA has previously blocked mergers involving major media organisations on the grounds of upholding media plurality and the public interest. Previous cases such as Rupert Murdoch's £11.7 billion bid to take over Sky were found by the CMA to give "too much control over news providers in the UK across all media platforms." Project Kangaroo, an online TV joint venture between ITV, Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide, was blocked in 2009 by the Competition Commission on the grounds that it risked creating a monopoly over UK-originated TV content.

The NUJ's News Recovery Plan calls for strengthened media ownership rules to safeguard plurality. It says:

"The NUJ wants to see a maximum market share for UK provision set at 25 per cent across all platforms and on each of radio, television, newspapers and online. Any market share that reaches or is liable to reach 15 per cent should be subject to a public interest test. Private

firms would be required to divest so that their share does not exceed 25 per cent, or they could choose to set up public trusts or other publicly governed and accountable structures, following a public interest review and agreement."

This proposed takeover runs counter to our policy, as it would represent a further concentration of ownership in an already highly concentrated market.

<u>Public service broadcasting</u>

Another important issue is whether Sky will maintain ITV's existing public service broadcast offering. Although assurances have been given publicly regarding the continuation of these commitments, mergers on this scale typically create commercial incentives that weaken investment, including in regional news. This is a part of the sector where competition is already lacking following years of decline. We have seen around 300 local papers close since 2005 and significant cuts to BBC Local Radio, with millions across the UK now living in news deserts. While ITV's regional output has itself become increasingly consolidated over the years, it has played a vital role in providing communities with trusted and valued news, and any reduction in those commitments would have wider implications for democratic accountability and informed public debate. Any review of the proposed takeover of ITV must consider this context and the importance of media plurality and access to news as part of a sustainable competitive market.

The acquisition would also result in the loss of a significant British media company to overseas American ownership. The consolidation of the UK's broadcasting sector into the hands of international media groups reduces the number of independent competitors operating in the UK market.

<u>Industrial relations</u>

The union is concerned about the implications of the proposed acquisition for journalists' jobs and terms and conditions, and the future of ITV's recognised trade union agreements as Sky does not recognise the NUJ. There is a danger that post-takeover Comcast will exercise too much influence over terms and conditions, limiting competition over wages and workplace benefits across the sector. We note that last year Sky (owned by Comcast) was found to have been part of a cartel and shared market sensitive information over freelance rates, although it escaped a fine for whistleblowing on the other companies involved. This merger would make such anti-competitive measures easier and more impactful in the future.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The NUJ believes the proposed takeover raises significant competition and public interest concerns. We urge the CMA to subject the plans to rigorous scrutiny and prioritise media plurality by ensuring continued competition between news providers, while protecting public service broadcasting in the UK.