



The Press Recognition Panel
Mappin House
4 Winsley Street
London W1W 8HF

Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

By email only

6 November 2017

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing following your appearance in front of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee on 11 October 2017 in accordance with the PRP's policy of contacting stakeholders who comment on the Charter and its operation, with the aim of ensuring full and proper public understanding of those things. During your appearance, you stated:

When the Leveson Inquiry reported we simply did not see the same volume of online news sources, which are not regulated by either Ofcom or the Press Recognition Panel or anybody else. So the reason for the consultation was to say; given the situation today are we doing the right thing to continue with a process that was set out six years ago? Do we need to do something different because ultimately what we want to get to is the end where people do not have—

That includes local newspapers that are struggling enough. That includes many online organisations that simply were not considered when that vote happened in 2013. So I have to look at the situation today and look at how we best make—

As you are aware, while the number of online news sources has increased, the nature of what is involved has not changed beyond what was already anticipated. The Leveson Inquiry and the new system of regulation did cover the full range of relevant publishers. The Leveson Inquiry heard evidence from large and small publishers, operating online and in print. The Charter is as relevant today as it was at the time of the Inquiry and it applies to all relevant publishers, online and in print.

You also stated:

[T]he vast majority of newsprint press will never—have refused to sign up to a regulator that will seek recognition on the Press Recognition Panel because they believe that that is Government intrusion in the press. They may be right. They may be wrong. But that is the situation that we face ourselves with and I want to make sure that given that situation we take the appropriate steps to make sure that unacceptable press intrusion does not happen.

The new system of regulation was intended to balance the freedom of the press and

the public interest. In acknowledging the viewpoint of the traditional press, it is important the position of the public is not forgotten. If commenced, section 40 would put in place public protections in cases where publishers fail to sign up to the new system.

In relation to Government intrusion in the press, as you are aware, politicians are not involved in any way at all in the running of the PRP or in the decisions that we make, nor able to influence the way we discharge our obligations. Our Royal Charter completely separates the Government, parliament, and politicians from press regulation.

During your attendance, you stated:

[L]ocal press were very concerned and I received a number of representations about whether they were financially viable and whether they would be able to do sufficient investigative journalism that they are known for and have pride of. We all know that 63% of the public believe their local press, I believe it is, as opposed to about 20% for the national press. I want to see vibrant local press succeeding and they are concerned that full implementation of section 40 will stop them doing that.

The PRP has also heard expressions of concern about the potential impact of section 40 and arbitration schemes on local and regional publishers. These concerns have been expressed most clearly by national news publishers who own local papers.

As you are aware, the new system of regulation includes specific protection for local and regional publishers to avoid causing them financial hardship including in that the PRP has a specific power to dis-apply the arbitration requirements for local and regional publishers if such problems were to arise. Additionally, as with the courts, there is a filter system for arbitration, and claimants would need an arguable case before they could take a claim forward through arbitration.

I hope you find this useful in clarifying some areas of possible misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David Wolfe', written over a large, light-colored circular scribble.

Dr David Wolfe
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cc. Damian Collins MP, Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee