

Response of the News Media Association to the Press Recognition Panel's Call for Information about the Recognition System 'Overseeing press regulation in the UK'

The News Media Association (NMA) is the voice of national, regional and local news media organisations in the UK- a £6 billion sector read by 42 million adults every week in print and online. The Press Recognition Panel has contacted the NMA for response to its consultation on 'Overseeing press regulation in the UK' as to whether the new system for overseeing press regulation in the UK under the Royal Charter has been a success or a failure, and factors affecting publishers' decisions in relation to joining an approved regulator.

The NMA maintains its fundamental opposition to the system of press regulation imposed by the Royal Charter, underpinned by statute and backed by the sanctions of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. The system is inimical to freedom of expression. The Charter was a political creation, imposed without industry agreement and intended to enforce industry involvement by statutory sanctions that contravene Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The industry has profound objections to the system, including the establishment and role of the Press Recognition Panel. It certainly does not ensure the freedom of the press or protect the interests of the public, rather the reverse.

The industry has rejected the system of press regulation under the Royal Charter. This has not of course consisted only of the strong combination of sustained and widespread condemnation by the industry itself and by a wide range of UK and international bodies concerned with freedom of expression, by industry representations and by legal challenge to the Royal Charter.

The industry also moved swiftly in response to establish a new, tough system of independent self-regulation. IPSO is the effective independent regulator of the newspaper and magazine industry. It has performed that role since September 2014. Its membership comprises the substantial majority of the publishers of national and local newspapers and magazine sector, who have entered into long term contractual arrangements. It has no intention of application for recognition by the Press Recognition Panel.

We are surprised that the PRP's public consultation paper makes no reference to this, in view of its functions to report on the success or failure of the system and to inform the public, at the relevant time, if there is no recognised regulator, or in the opinion of the Recognition Panel, the system of regulation does not cover all significant relevant publishers.

No member of the NMA has supported the Royal Charter system. The PRP has yet to make any decision upon recognition. No NMA member has declared any interest in joining IMPRESS, the sole applicant for recognition by the PRP. The PRP has received the NMA's responses to the PRP's first and second call for evidence on IMPRESS's application which sets out its views on the unsuitability of IMPRESS as a press regulator.

The NMA therefore maintains that the new system does not protect the freedom of the press and the interests of the public. Freedom of expression instead requires the Royal Charter to be dissolved and the relevant provisions of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 repealed.

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The NMA's response is not confidential.

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