

- Surname: **Howells**
- Forename(s): **Rachel Jane**
- Name of the organisation (if applicable): **Port Talbot Magnet**
- Your email address:
- :
- :
- As an individual (please indicate):
- :
- For an organisation (please indicate): **Local/regional newspaper/magazine/website**
- :
- Question 1: Do you agree with the principle of using indicators and examples of evidence as guidance to applicants and the PRP in determining applications?: **Yes**
- Give reasons if you wish.:
- Question 2: Do you agree with the indicators and evidence we propose?: **No**
- Give reasons if you wish. For specific comments on the criteria, use the comments box on the matrix.: **We are in broad agreement with the indicators and evidence you propose but have several concerns about individual points, as follow (numbers correspond with the matrix): 6. Funding of this system will almost certainly have a direct bearing on the fees charged by regulators. We therefore have a general concern about the sustainability and funding of the entire regulatory system, which we note is not underwritten by state funding beyond 2017/18. Both regulatory bodies and the PRP itself will inevitably seek at least a proportion of their own financial support from their members, and we worry that this will cascade into rising membership costs for relevant publishers now, and perhaps even more in the future. We particularly worry we will be priced out of the market in future. For example, what provision will be in place to avoid a single monopoly regulator evolving some years down the line if competing regulators cannot sustain their funding. A monopoly regulator could charge almost any fee for membership, potentially leaving many relevant publishers exposed. We would like to suggest fees or fee caps (as proportions of turnover) be written in to the plan at this stage, to avoid this scenario in future. 8A. The phrase "when an individual has made it clear that they do not welcome press intrusion" and its related indicators and evidence risk a scenario whereby someone who should be scrutinised by the press in the public interest are able to block press scrutiny, and we would seek clarification or protection for the public interest function of the press on this point. 9 and 10. The indicators in these criteria are potentially too onerous for small publishers. In particular, the accessibility of the complaints mechanism specified in point 10 is of concern in this regard, though many of these indicators are onerous, time-consuming, or potentially expensive (eg if legal advice is required on wordings etc). We would ask that the limited resources, including limited human resources, of many hyperlocals are taken into account and specified in the indicators here, in that regulators should be required to help small publishers and hyperlocals to write and implement any such policies and provide template procedures and suggested wordings for policies. We fear that potentially onerous requirements for small or hyperlocal publishers, which are often in a precarious financial position, will put some out of business and/or discourage them from establishing in the first place. 19. Similarly, financial sanctions may be disproportionate or impossible in the case of hyperlocals, and we think the sanctioning process needs to take greater account of the ability of hyperlocals to furnish regulators with financial records (many make no profit, seek no profit, and therefore may keep no accounts), and also their ability to pay possible sanctions. Fines may not be appropriate in some instances. Also, will individuals be liable for sanctions in the event their organisation**

cannot pay? There is a need for greater clarity here. **22. Again, affordability will key for hyperlocals, and we welcome pricing guidelines or greater transparency on potential costs for members - the 'carrot' may not turn out to be much of a carrot for small publishers if these costs are too high. 23. We welcome the sentiments laid out in this criterion and would like to see more account taken of the financial constraints of many hyperlocals in the requirements of membership of a regulatory body.**

- Question 3: Do you agree with our proposed approach to dealing with applications?: **Yes**
- Give reasons if you wish.:
- Question 4: Do you agree with our proposed approach to discussions with applicants?: **Yes**
- Give reasons if you wish.:
- Question 5: Do you agree with our approach to granting recognition?: **Yes**
- Give reasons if you wish.: **However, we would also note that we are concerned that the new legislation leaves us at risk of vexatious claims, particularly as there is no guarantee a regulator will be appointed, and if a regulator is appointed it may not be affordable for hyperlocals or small publishers with little or no income or profit. We would like to see what plans are in place for vulnerable relevant publishers in case either of these possibilities comes to pass. We would also like to know what will happen if there is a time lag between the new legislation coming into force, and the appointment of a regulator - will the legislation be delayed if no regulators are appointed?**
- Question 6: Do you consider that our proposals will have any impacts, either positive or negative, including on our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty?: **Yes**
- Give reasons if you wish.: **Broadly we agree that the incentives of regulation are positive for the hyperlocal sector, and are keen to sign up to a code of standards that makes our work transparent and trustworthy. However we remain concerned that regulation may not be tailored adequately to the sector, and hope the comments outlined above will clarify these concerns.**