

## Notes of the PRP consultation event held on 14 July 2015 at Cardiff University

### Introduction

Between 8 June and 31 July 2015 the PRP held a public consultation on how we will receive and determine applications for recognition from independent press self-regulators. As part of the consultation we held eight public events across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The events were an opportunity for the public to have their say on the proposed recognition process and to find out more about the PRP.

The event at Cardiff University was hosted by Professor Justin Lewis and Dr Andy Williams of Cardiff University. David Wolfe QC, Chair of the Press Recognition Panel chaired the discussion. 19 people attended the event. The notes below summarise the discussion that was had by the attendees. The notes have been anonymised to protect the identity of individual members of the public.

### Discussion

David was asked how someone could go about setting up a regulator. David explained that there were no rules about how to set up a regulator, however, if the regulator wanted to be recognised by the PRP then they needed to meet the criteria in the Royal Charter.

The PRP received funding by HM Treasury for 3 years of operation from inception i.e. 3 November 2014 so it would be free for regulators to apply for recognition until such point as the PRP had to start charging in 2017. The PRP needed to make sure that we had a charging/funding scheme that took into account different sizes and resources of regulators and it would consult separately on charging in 2016.

Asked why he thought IPSO had decided not to apply, David said that he was not in a position to answer this as it was a matter for IPSO. David was asked if IPSO would be able to operate as an independent regulator without being recognised. David replied that it was possible for them to operate without being recognised.

David was asked whether the legal 'sticks' could come into force before there was a regulator for publishers to join. He explained that in part this could be the case. Exemplary damages would come in on 3 November 2015 (the first anniversary of the PRP's inception). The cost shifting provisions would only come into force when there was a recognised regulator in place. David explained how this might make it easier for people to bring a court case against a publisher. The issue of what would happen if a publisher willing to join a regulator found it was too expensive to join was raised. David advised that the PRP would ensure it was able to accommodate different sized regulators.

David was asked whether the PRP covers the Welsh published press. David confirmed that it did.

David was asked whether the PRP would be able to state whether or not a regulator, who did not apply for recognition, met the criteria. David explained that the PRP would only assess regulators who applied for recognition and who provided the evidence required for this assessment to be made.

David also explain that regulators would have to meet all of the criteria to gain recognition - there is no scope for partial recognition, where a body would get recognition by showing they meet just some of the criteria.

There were a number of questions about who would be covered by the Charter definition of a 'relevant publisher': would it included 'one man bands'; someone publishing a newsletter with someone else; how would a "blog" be defined.

David explained the definition and how various contributors with an editor exercising editorial control would count as a 'relevant publisher'. It was about editorial control. Multi author blogs with editorial control would probably count as a relevant publishers.

There were exemptions for specialist publications which were listed in Schedule 15 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. Local authority newspapers/publications, for example, were exempt. The boundaries between 'hyperlocals' and small businesses were discussed. David stated that the editorial aspect was important in defining relevant publishers. The Act defined this, not the PRP. The Charter applies to the UK. The Crime and Courts Act 2013 covers England and Wales only.

David was asked how the PRP expected a regulator to enforce the Standards Code and whether the PRP expected them to apply sanctions. David discussed criterion 18 (the power to investigate) and criterion 19 (the power to fine and impose sanctions, including the publication of corrections). The PRP would have to ensure that a regulator had the correct framework that described how they would impose sanctions and exercise their powers.

David was asked what would happen to press regulators that did not follow the code. David explained that the PRP's role was to act within the scope of the Charter - it would hold recognised regulators to account in accordance with the criteria in the Charter. It would use cyclical reviews and ad hoc reviews as appropriate. The PRP would develop a process for both.

There was a discussion about whether local authorities should only publish their statutory notices with publishers that sign up to a recognised regulator. It was noted that the DCLG were currently consulting on the placing of statutory notices.