

1. In your opinion, has the new system for overseeing press regulation in the UK been a success or failure so far? Please explain your reasons.

So far, it has not worked. There are too many publishers outside the new system, aiming to continue in their old ways as if nothing had happened. (You could argue that one would be too many, but there are many more than one at present).

The publishers are too powerful to be allowed to carry on like this and the Government must act to bring them in to line.

Leveson – while offering one last voluntary chance to get their house in order - anticipated that this may happen and said that if it did, Parliament needed to act. **The PRP should take the opportunity of its report to remind Parliament of Leveson's words on this matter.**

He said: *"if some or all of the industry are not willing to participate in effective independent regulation, my own concluded view is to reject the notion that they should escape regulation altogether. I cannot, and will not, recommend another last chance saloon for the press. With some measure of regret, therefore, I am driven to conclude that the Government should be ready to consider the need for a statutory backstop regulator being established, to ensure, at the least, that the press are subject to regulation that would require the fullest compliance with the criminal and civil law, if not also to ensure consequences equivalent to those that would flow from an independent self-regulatory system."*

2. For publishers, joining an approved regulator is voluntary. For regulators, applying for Charter recognition is voluntary. In your opinion, what factors or issues will affect regulators' and publishers' decisions when they consider these choices?

I fail to understand how a voluntary system of regulation can be expected to work if there is no incentive to join. Regulation implies sanctions, and those being regulated must see that as a potential cost if they join. Therefore, they must be given some incentives to offset the potential costs, otherwise why should they join in?

Leveson considered this question and concluded that the voluntary version of the system would only have a chance to work if publishers were offered incentives for joining it. As such, he proposed a system of "cost-shifting" and it is this measure which is the main incentive for a publisher to join a recognised regulator - and for a regulator to seek recognition.

By attaining recognition and agreeing to offer low-cost arbitration, publishers are protected in

two ways. First, it reduces the effect of 'chilling' so it can publish stories without the subject of the story threatening to bankrupt the journalist/publisher. Secondly, if a claimant rejects the arbitration and chooses to go to court, the publisher is protected from paying courts costs.

It would be a win-win situation: ordinary people would be guaranteed access to justice through low-cost arbitration and the publishers would be freed from chilling and potential court costs if a rich individual or company chooses to reject the route of arbitration, instead insisting on going to court. This measure should have been achieved by section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013: a critical part of the Royal Charter system which Leveson recommended in outline terms. Parliament endorsed this measure too and intended it to apply. It is a part of the "recognition system".

But the Government is blocking it.

I urge the PRP to recommend to Parliament and the Government that section 40 is "commenced" as soon as possible, as it is integral to the system of recognition & incentives system.

Frank Allen