

Dear Sirs

I am a solicitor at Withers LLP specialising in media law. I would like to make the following points in response to the PRP's public consultation:

1. Parliament should be reminded by the PRP what the Leveson Report said should happen if the industry tried to veto his recommendations and refused to comply. The Leveson Report says: "***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. In the meantime, regardless of whether IMPRESS is recognised by the PRP, the PRP should strongly recommend to Parliament that the key 'guaranteed access to justice incentive' (section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act) should be brought into effect as Parliament had intended.

Until effective independent regulation is brought about, or a statutory regulator as a backstop is put in place as an the alternative, the majority of the British public will not be able to access justice or fair redress when wronged by the British media. With the British media unable to hold itself to account as it would do with other sectors and scandals (e.g. reform to banking regulation, MP expenses, etc), the public are relying largely on the PRP to represent their interests effectively. Bringing about at last a fairer, more responsible press in the UK is a huge challenge and also one of critical importance to British public life.

Yours sincerely

Rupert Cowper-Coles