



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,
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David Wolfe QC
Chair
Press Recognition Panel
Mappin House
4 Winsley Street
London W1W 8HF

INV2019/02196/DC
29th March 2019

Dear Mr Wolfe,

Thank you for your letter of 4th March regarding the interests of the Press Recognition Panel in a number of important matters.

I was pleased to see the DCMS Select Committee's final report of its inquiry into disinformation and 'fake news'. I am carefully considering the recommendations, and we will be responding in due course. I do, however, strongly believe that technology companies have a responsibility to their users and for the content they host. We will shortly be publishing a joint DCMS-Home Office Online Harms White Paper, which will set out a new framework for ensuring that online harms are tackled effectively while protecting freedom of expression and promoting innovation. It will also set clear expectations for social media companies to take action to protect their users from harm.

You also noted that Dame Frances mentioned the PRP in her Review, referencing how appointments to the proposed Institute for Public Interest News could be based on the manner of appointments to the PRP, in order to be fully independent from government. The government is carefully considering all of Dame Frances's recommendations and will produce a formal government response later this year.

We continue to acknowledge the important role the PRP plays in the existing regulatory framework for the press. The government does not, however, believe that section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 is an appropriate or proportionate part of this framework. We have set out that we will repeal section 40. Our full reasoning is outlined in our response to the Consultation on the Leveson Inquiry and Its Implementation.

We have no intention, however, of repealing section 34 of the Crime and Courts Act; which provides that exemplary damages may not be awarded against a relevant publisher in respect of a claim (related to the publication of news-related material where the publisher has been found liable) if the publisher was a member of an approved regulator at the material time. As, currently, all publishers are subject to the common law on exemplary damages, this exclusion of exemplary damages awards represents a clear incentive for publishers to become a member of an approved regulator.

Thank you again for writing to me on these matters, and your continued commitment to protecting the public from harm and defending free speech. I would strongly encourage you to read the Online Harms White Paper and the government's response to the Cairncross Review when they are published in due course, and I would be happy to meet you to discuss these matters once you have considered them both.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact my officials should you have any questions – please contact aimee.bell@culture.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Wright', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport