



IMPRESS

Board Paper Cover

Meeting date	15 February 2022
Paper title	Impress Chair Appointment Panel Nomination to the Impress Board
Paper number	50-6
Paper author	Chris Kenny, Appointment Panel Vice-Chair and Chair of the final interview panel
Date paper was written	3 February 2022
Paper summary	The Appointment Panel nominates the appointment of Richard Ayre as the new Chair of IMPRESS from 01/04/22 on an initial term of four years. This follows an extensive Royal Charter compliant search and selection process in which four high calibre candidates were invited for final interview with the Panel. This followed an open and transparent process in which the position was advertised in the Sunday Times and on the websites of IMPRESS and the search consultants Starfish, who were selected by the Appointment Panel following a tender competition in which five firms were invited to bid. Prospective candidates all responded to the advertised brief for the role either as a result of open advertising or their attention being drawn to it by the search consultants. Under the terms of the Royal Charter, Schedule 3: Recognition Criteria, Paragraph 2 provides that <i>“The Chair of the Board (who is subject to the restrictions of criterion 5 (d) (e) and (f) can only be appointed if nominated by an appointment panel. The appointment of that panel must itself be conducted in an</i>

	<i>appropriately independent way, and must, itself be independent of the industry and of Government”.</i> The Board is invited to accept the nomination as required by Paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 of the Royal Charter on self regulation of the press.
Paper purpose (select one only)	☐ For information ☐ For discussion x For approval x For decision
Recommendation	

Impress Chair Appointment Panel Nomination to the Impress Board

1. David Robinson, Paul McFarlane, Jean Gray and I interviewed for candidates for the role as Chair on Monday. The Panel has endorsed the Nomination.

Process

2. Juliet Taylor of Starfish had produced a strong field, which more than justified the use of an external agency to identify candidates. She had been assiduous in identifying relevant leads and balanced in her own assessments of candidates during the long and shortlisting phases to ensure that the requirements specified in the person specification and recruitment literature were met.
3. To complete that process, the interview panel interviewed four candidates and sought to test
 - their understanding of current and potential changes in the media landscape
 - Impress' proposed strategic response to those changes and how that might need to involve further in future years
 - their approach to the ambassadorial role of the Chair
 - their approach to board management, both amongst non-executive directors and between non-executives and the staff
 - their level of ethical self-awareness
 - their perceptions of how they and, through them, the organisation might be attacked and the response to it.
4. The interviews therefore followed a broadly comparable shape in order to test these areas, although the precise questioning varied candidate by candidate as the conversations evolved.
5. As a broad generalisation, candidates dealt better with questions of external changes to the landscape than they did with how Impress might respond. There was recognition of the scale of the challenge, especially in relation to funding and enthusiasm for working hard to develop and implement the emerging strategy, but few new ideas that went beyond those already developed within the organisation. Our judgements therefore turned primarily on personal qualities and relevant experience, rather than matters of strategic direction.

Chair Nomination

6. Against that background, the panel nominate the appointment of Richard Ayre. Richard, who had considered the question of whether to apply very carefully, demonstrated good knowledge of current issues, but also a range of regulatory experience, both direct and indirect, through his exposure as a BBC trustee, vice-chair of the Food Standards Agency and the Ofcom Content Panel. He professed himself "a code geek" and gave examples of the kind of ethical and editorial guidance he offered as director of editorial policy at the BBC, but it was clear that he saw these activities as a means of maintaining a fair and vibrant news sector, rather than abstract intellectual exercises. He gave evidence of some tough regulatory decisions, including the removal of a Chief Executive, and of genuine passion in addressing matters of diversity, both when confronted with prejudice and when seeking to broaden the base of opportunity. His opening remarks tended to stress the challenge of the strategy, rather than its feasibility. However, when pressed, he made clear that he saw no reason to doubt the seriousness with which the board had come to its judgements about the way forward, but underlined that he would also be thinking about how to find a different way ahead should expectations not be realised over time. He struck us as shrewd, humorous, self-aware and quietly effective team builder around both the board table and with staff.

Other Comments

7. We could see all three unsuccessful candidates making a potentially strong contribution to Impress, as a Board member or in other capacities, depending on the Board's assessment of its own needs.

Conclusion

8. We therefore nominate the appointment of Richard Ayre as chair for an initial period of four years.
9. We further recommend that the Board, with the new Chair, considers whether it wishes to appoint a new non-executive director to replace David.
10. If it does decide to proceed with a new appointment, we consider that the Board should
 - Seek to identify what skills that appointee will need to have
 - invite the Appointment Panel, to consider whether any of the three unsuccessful candidates meet the necessary specification or whether a wider exercise is necessary

Chris Kenny

3 February 2022