BOARD PAPERS

77th Press Recognition Panel Board Meeting

Tuesday 11 June 2024

PRP INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD MEETING

77th Meeting of the Press Recognition Panel
Tuesday 11 June 2024, 10:00 - 13:00
Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street London W1W 8HF

AGENDA

			Indicative timings
	<u>**Public session**</u>		
1.	**Welcome**	Chair	10:00
2.	**Apologies for absence**	Chair	10:00
3.	**Declarations of interest**	Chair	10:00
4.	**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024, outstanding actions and matters arising** *For noting*	Chair	10:00 – 10:05
5.	**Chief Executives report April 2024** PRP13(24) *For noting*	SU	10:05 – 10:10
6.	**Chief Executives report May 2024** PRP14(24) *For noting*	SU	10:10 – 10:15
7.	**Finance reports April and May 2024** Paper PRP15(24) and PRP17(24) *For noting*	SU/AG	10:15 – 10:20
8.	**Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 and audit timetable** Paper PRP16(24) *For decision*	Chair	10:20 – 11:00
9.	**Any other business and close of public session** *Including comments from the floor*	Chair	11:00 – 11:05
	<u>**Confidential session**</u>		
10.	**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024, outstanding actions and matters arising** *For noting*	Chair	11:05 – 11:10

11.	**Chief Executives report April 2024** PRP13(24) *For noting*	SU	11:10 – 11:15
12.	**Chief Executives report May 2024** Paper PRP14(24) *For noting*	SU	11:15 – 11:20
13.	**Finance reports April and May 2024** Paper PRP15(24) and PRP17(24) *For noting*	SU /AG	11:20 – 11:25
14.	**Forward Plan** *For noting*	SU	11:25 – 11:30
15.	**Strategy Session** *For discussion*	Chair	11:30 – 12:00
16.	**Any other business and close of meeting**	Chair	12:00 – 12:10

Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 3 September, 10:00 – 13:00

Location: Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street London W1W 8HF

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL

Minutes of the 76th Meeting of the Press Recognition Panel Board

Tuesday 23 April 2024, 10:00 – 13:00

Held at Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London W1W 8HF

Present: Kathryn Cearns (Chair), Suzanne Rab, Mark Annie and Mullins Williams

Online: Zahera Harb and Adam Gibbs joined via Teams

In attendance: Susie Uppal and Hal Briggs

BOARD MEETING — PUBLIC SESSION

Welcome and Opening

1. The Chair welcomed the Members and attendees to the 76th meeting of the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) and opened the meeting at 10:00.

Apologies for absence

2. None.

Declaration of member's interests

3. Other than interests already declared and recorded in the PRP's Register of Interests, the Board noted no new declarations of interest.

Matters of the meeting held 20 February 2024, outstanding actions and matters arising

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February were **noted** as being factually correct. The Chair **agreed** to sign a copy of the minutes as a correct record.

Chief Executives Report March 2024

Paper PRP09(24)

5. The Board **noted** the contents of the Chief Executives report for March 2024 and papers with thanks.
6. The Board noted the letters provided as annexes in the March report.
7. The Board noted that the April CE report would be issued at the end of April.

Finance Report March 2024

Paper PRP10(24)

8. The Board **noted** the contents of the Finance report and supporting annex for the period ending 31 March 2024.

9. Adam Gibbs stated that there has been little movement in the last reporting period. The Budget was approved by the Board in March, and the bank interest has been added to the budget.

10. Board member Mark Williams informed the Board that the NAO confirmed at the ARC meeting held on the 19 March that the additional grant money received from the MOJ was to be accounted for in the 2023/24 accounts.

Annual Governance Procedures and Policies Review (2nd tranche)

Paper PRP11(24)

11. The Board **noted** and **agreed** the proposed revisions to the second tranche of PRP procedures and policies as part of the 2024 annual review.

Any other business

12. None raised.

13. The Chair closed the public session at 10:50.

<u>BOARD MEETING — CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</u>

Matters of the meeting held 20 February 2024, outstanding actions and matters arising

14. The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February were **noted** as being factually correct. The Chair agreed to sign a copy of the minutes as a correct record.

15. Redacted

Chief Executives Reports March 2024

Paper PRP09(24)

16. The Board **noted** the contents of the Chief Executives report and papers for March with thanks.

17. Redacted

18. Redacted

19. Redacted

20. Redacted

21. Redacted

22. Redacted

23. Redacted

24. Redacted

25. Redacted

26. Redacted

27. Redacted

Finance Report March 2024

Paper PRP10(24)

28. The Board **noted** the contents of the Finance report and supporting annex for the period ending 31 March 2024.

Risk Register Review

Paper PRP12(24)

29. The Board **noted** the paper and annex provided by the Executive.

30. Redacted

31. Redacted

32. Redacted

Annual Governance Procedures and Policies Review (2nd tranche)

Paper PRP11(24)

33. Redacted

Forward Plan

34. The Executive Administration Manager was asked to amend and add the additional meeting dates to the plan to reflect the additional meetings required for the 2023/24 annual report and financial reviews and sign off.

35. The Board **noted** and **agreed** with the matters being brought forward for June 2024.

Any other business

36. Redacted

37. The Chief Executive asked the Board members to continue to share the PRPs social media posts as this is proven to aid reach.

Date and time of the next meeting

38. The next scheduled meeting of the Board will take place at 10:00 on Tuesday 11 June 2024 at Mappin House.

Meeting close

39. The Chair closed the meeting at 11:35.

Drafted: Halina Briggs, PRP Executive Administration Manager

Signed: Kathryn Cearns, the Chair

PRP13(24)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

Chief Executive's Report — April 2024

Meeting: by Email

Status: For noting

Lead responsibility:
Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details:
020 3443 7072

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Board on executive activity since the March 2024 report.
2. The Board is invited to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report and note the latest position regarding the PRP's finances.

Executive Summary and Board Matters

3. The Board is being updated in respect of organisational matters.

Delivery Updates

Communications

4. Redacted
5. We have used the videos created with Board members earlier this year to post key messaging on social media platforms (X and LinkedIn), gaining more engagement than usual - in terms of reactions, reposts, reposts with comments and new followers.

Board Member Recruitment

6. NOMCO met with Green Park Executive on the 25 April to shortlist potential candidates. 7 candidates were selected for interview, all 7 candidates requested informal chats and I arranged for these to be held week commencing 29 April ahead of interviews on the 8 and 17 May.

Media Bill

7. At the time of writing, we are awaiting dates for the Media Bill to be considered at Committee Stage in the House of Lords. We have continued to engage with Parliamentarians to inform the debate and counter misinformation. This has included supporting Baroness Hollins in hosting an event on 16 April 2024 for members of the House of Lords, MPs with an interest in this issue and other experts to discuss the implications of repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 and the various alternative options that have been proposed. We remain of the view that none of the alternatives that have currently been proposed will achieve the three policy objectives of protecting the public, safeguarding news publishers' freedom of speech and incentivising participation in the Recognition System.

8. As of 19 April 2024, amendments have been tabled including that the safeguards for freedom of speech in Section 40 should be retained but the protections for the public repealed, that Section 40 should not stand part of the Bill and that the Government should be required to consult and report on alternative incentives to encourage publishers and press self-regulators to participate in the Recognition System. We will continue engaging with Parliamentarians as the Media Bill progresses

External Matters Update

9. Annex A includes an update on key external matters relevant to our work.

Devolved Nations

10. There are no implications/differences in relation to the areas of work covered in this paper and the devolved nations.

Communications

11. There are no other issues to report which have communications implications, so far as I am aware.

Risks

12. There are a range of risks involved in the areas of work covered in this paper.

13. A robust position in relation to the PRP's finances is required in order to avoid reputational damage and to ensure compliance with HM Treasury's Managing Public Money.

14. The introduction of the Media Bill including a clause repealing Section 40 represents a risk to the wider Recognition System. Without the protections and incentives included in Section 40, or a suitable alternative being put in place, there will continue to be no advantage for news publishers to join an Approved Regulator. This means that there is little prospect that the Recognition System can gain sufficient traction with the industry to work as intended and the public will not be protected from press harm.

Recommendations

15. The Board is asked to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report.

Attachments

Annex A: External matters update

Update on key external matters

1. The update on key external matters is a research-informed piece based on a sample of information available in the public domain.

Commercial Landscape

2. As reported by Press Gazette, the Mail on Sunday's average print circulation fell below 600,000 in March. According to ABC, its circulation fell by 1% compared to February and 10% versus March 2023, reaching 594,414. Its circulation is now about half of where it was in October 2017. While print sales are down 5% to 524,545 in that time, paid subscriptions are up 404% to 69,869. Also, in March, the Daily Star grew its average circulation by 3% month-on-month to 134,924, while the Daily Mirror (237,233) and FT (109,181) were up 1%. The biggest year-on-year decline was at the Sunday People, down 21% to 57,163. The only paid-for title not to see a decline was the FT, which stayed steady year-on-year.

3. The Independent's audience was up 8% month-on-month in March to 21m, moving from sixth to fourth place in Press Gazette's latest ranking. Its growth was the joint-highest in the top ten, with The Telegraph in ninth place, which was also up 8% month-on-month to 15.5m. Mail Online (22.7m, up 6%) and Metro (14.3m, up 5%) also saw audiences that were at least 5% bigger than in February. ITV (14m) and the Mirror (20.7m) saw the biggest falls, at 3% each. Year-on-year, all of the UK's biggest newsbrands apart from the Independent (up 8% year-on-year) saw smaller audiences in March 2024 compared with March 2023. ITV (down 18%), Mirror (down 17%), Metro (down 15%), the Sun (23.7m, down 15%) and the Guardian (down 14%) all saw-double digit drops year-on-year.

4. New Press Gazette analysis of ABC data shows that the Daily Mail's Saturday edition sells nearly double the copies of its weekday editions, a trend that has been widening over the past decade. In February 2014, the weekday circulation was 1.5m, while Saturday circulation was 58% higher at 2.4m. Now, the Saturday circulation stands at 1.2m, 96% higher than weekdays at 607,914. The picture is similar to other national newspapers. FT Weekend's circulation is 106% higher than the average weekday edition (53% higher in 2014). The i's Saturday circulation is now 49% higher than its weekday edition (16% lower in 2014). The Daily Star's Saturday edition was 11% lower than its weekday sales in 2014 but is now 3% higher.

5. As reported by Press Gazette, new Pamco data has revealed that the Sun is narrowly the biggest commercial newsbrand in the UK in terms of overall reach with a total monthly reach of 26.5m, including online and print, compared to Mail's 26.3m. However, margin of error keeps them in a statistical draw. Both titles have seen declines in total reach over the past six months due to decreased referrals from social media and Google. Overall, the UK newsbrand market reaches 46.2m people monthly. Pamco combines November 2023 online data from Ipsos iris

with print circulation data from December 2021 to December 2023, integrated with a survey of 22,000 people per year.

6. The Guardian reported that the Independent is set to take control of BuzzFeed and HuffPost in the UK and Ireland, aiming to establish “Britain’s biggest publisher network for gen Z and millennial audiences” by combining their publishing, data, and advertising platforms. Under a multiyear licensing deal, the Independent will take over HuffPost UK as well as BuzzFeed’s sub-brands in the UK, including Tasty UK and the Black British identity brand Seasoned.

7. Press Gazette reported that Reach is planning to create a central team of journalists to produce traffic-driving content for use across multiple of its national and regional websites. The proposal will see around 300 journalists from the company’s total of about 2,000 editorial staff moved into the new Reach Content Hub. Jon Livesey, currently head of sport for the Mirror, Express and Star, is understood to be leading the content hub. Manchester Evening News editor Sarah Lester and Daily Mirror associate editor Jane Lavender are also expected to play key roles.

8. Press Gazette reported that UK digital newsbrand Joe Media has been bought out of administration for the second time in under four years. News and lifestyle site joe.co.uk, which has a social media-led model and is aimed at 18 to 35-year-olds, was rescued by Irish entrepreneur Michael O’Rourke in a pre-pack deal worth £3.6m, as first reported by the Sunday Times. The business entered administration on 22 December after owners Greencastle MM LLP approached KPMG for insolvency and restructuring advice in response to “financial pressure”.

9. As reported by Press Gazette, the FT has become the first major UK-based news publisher to announce a content licensing deal with ChatGPT owner OpenAI. It follows Politico, Business Insider and Bild owner Axel Springer which signed a deal to provide current content and training data to OpenAI in December. The FT deal was described by the publisher as a “strategic partnership and licensing agreement”. It will mean ChatGPT users will be able to see “select attributed summaries, quotes and rich links to FT journalism in response to relevant queries”. The deal covers both real-time, current content and archive data for training.

10. Press Gazette reported that up to 15 sports staff are being made redundant at the Mail titles as publisher DMG Media continues a broader digital shift across the business. Those affected include cricket correspondent Paul Newman, racing correspondent Marcus Townend, Spanish football reporter Pete Jenson and chief sports reporter Matt Hughes, as well as several production staff. Lee Clayton, the Mail’s global publisher for sport, previously emailed staff saying the desk would be changed “with a digital team leading the commissioning process, supported by newspaper experts who can publish print editions to tight deadlines”.

11. The Guardian reported that filings for News UK show that the Sun faced a loss of £66m last year, contributing to total losses of £515m over five years, amid high costs associated with paying damages to victims of illegal information gathering. The Sun's UK online digital audience fell to 23.8m unique users compared with 27.8m in 2022, and its total print and digital reach fell to 27.2m users compared with 30.7m the previous year. However, Times Media Ltd, owner of the Times and Sunday Times, reported a profit of just below £61m, driven in part by rising online subscribers.

Legal

12. As reported by BBC News, Hugh Grant has settled his privacy case against News Group Newspapers (NGN), avoiding a potential £10m legal bill even if he had won. Grant had sued NGN, alleging journalists had used private investigators to tap his phone and burgle his house. Despite denying the claims, NGN settled out of court, saying that it was "in both parties' financial interests not to progress to a costly trial". Grant said he "did not want to accept" the "enormous sum of money" he had been offered to settle - but that a trial was likely to prove "very expensive". The actor added the money had a "stink" about it, and therefore, the funds he has received will be "repurposed via groups like Hacked Off into the general campaign to expose the worst excesses of our oligarch-owned press".

13. The Guardian reported that a high court judge has rejected a request from NGN to delay its trial for alleged unlawful information gathering. Lawyers for NGN said the court should first look at whether the claimants, including Prince Harry and 41 others, could have known they had a claim earlier and could thus be ruled out of proceedings. Claims usually have to be brought within six years. Mr Justice Fancourt said there was "plainly considerable risk" that examining the timings of the claims would be costly and push the full trial back by another two years, which was "unsatisfactory". He said it "was not just and convenient … to vacate all 42 claimants' trials in January 2025 in order to hear a trial of only one issue instead".

Political

14. Andy Carter (Conservative, Warrington South) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many grants were made to local newspapers under the Future News Fund pilot; and what the value was of each grant.

    Julia Lopez (Conservative, Hornchurch and Upminster) responded: "The Future News Fund sought to invest in new technological prototypes, start-ups and innovative business models to explore new ways of sustaining the industry in this changing landscape. In 2019, Government invested £2 million in the Future News Fund, which received 178 applications. Grants were awarded to 19 projects, ranging from funding to support the trial of a digital wallet model where publishers were able to offer the option to readers to pay for news on a casual basis, to funding to a local news publisher to build a new system to involve members and the local community in the reporting of local news.

It was designed to be open to as wide a range of innovations as possible, including those from existing news publishers. The government was not involved in deciding which organisations should receive funding. Nesta made these decisions independently with advice from industry experts. Nesta's evaluation of the Fund was completed in 2020, and can be found alongside further information on the grantees here: https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/future-news-fund/"

15. George Eustice (Conservative, Camborne and Redruth) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2024 to Question 12565, whether she plans to instruct the Civil Procedure Rule Committee not to amend the Civil Procedure Rules as recommended in paragraphs 73 and 74 of Part L of the Leveson Inquiry.

    Julia Lopez (Conservative, Hornchurch and Upminster) responded: "The Government has no plans to instruct the Civil Procedure Rule Committee to amend rules of court in regard to the commencement and implementation of section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. This aligns with its commitment to repeal section 40."

16. A new Trusted Voices report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee has said that scientists working across government should be encouraged to take on a wider public-facing role in the media to combat the spread of misinformation. The report, prompted by concerns over government communication during the Covid pandemic, says the government should allow scientists to respond directly to the media and be more proactive in publishing evidence used in policy making. The report also recommends the Government publish advice for departments and public bodies on how to communicate with young people using new apps and platforms, including consistent advice on TikTok.

Approved regulator

17. Impress has issued a statement acknowledging and apologising for a service standard failure in the matter of the complaint investigation 669/2023 Vanessa Boon and Derby News. Following its investigation, Impress issued an adjudication to both parties but subsequently received further input from the publisher, leading to a modification in the proposed remedy. Impress failed to give Boon an opportunity to respond to this before publication, causing procedural unfairness. To address this, it provided Boon with another chance to respond and then reconsidered all representations before making a final decision on the remedy. This procedural irregularity led to false impressions for both parties regarding the final outcome. Impress intends to review its internal processes to prevent such issues in the future.

Campaigners' news

18. In a letter co-ordinated by the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition, more than 60 editors, journalists, writers, publishers, academics, and experts have written to Justice Secretary Alex Chalk KC MP calling on the Government to support amendments to the Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation Bill, which is at committee stage in the Commons. The signatories are calling on the Government to address "the fundamental flaw" at the centre of the Bill's early dismissal mechanism that requires a court to make a subjective judgement as to the intent of a SLAPP claimant to determine whether the legal action can be identified as a SLAPP. The signatories also highlight concerns that deficiencies of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) were previously made clear to the Government but have been replicated in full in the Anti-SLAPP Bill and called for the definition of public interest in the Bill to be refined in order to further strengthen the legislation.

19. Hacked Off has responded to the news that Hugh Grant settled his high court claim against NGN. CEO Nathan Jones-Sparkes said: "The allegations of burglaries and theft which formed Mr Grant's claim are devastating. Yet again, rather than see them tested in court, News UK have done everything to avoid facing accountability. In a general election year, this should be a warning to politicians. For decades the endorsement of Murdoch's papers has been seen as an electoral prize, with politicians going to huge lengths to secure his support. Increasingly, that support is looking like an electoral liability with unregulated newspapers desperate to avoid court scrutiny over very serious allegations, and ordinary people left vulnerable to their abuses of power. If we ever discover that the same kinds of illegality and abuses took place at the Sun as the News of the World, politicians who sought to ingratiate themselves with the Murdoch papers may come to regret their association".

20. The chairs of the NUJ's Ethics and Equality Councils have written to Fraser Nelson, the editor of the Spectator, over a recently published column by Lloyd Evans where he talks about visiting Cambridge to watch a lecture by political scientist Lea Ypi and then goes on to describe a visit to a prostitute. The letter says: "Mr Evans's descriptions of Ms Lea Ypi and the prostitute he said he paid to have sex with him are not only degrading and appalling, but they also rely upon sexist tropes that disregard any editorial ethical standards – including press regulator Ipso's Editors' Code of Practice, of which The Spectator is a member… Whereas we do not speak for Ms Ypi, we feel an apology is needed. We also think that The Spectator must ensure that this kind of sexist and degrading content is not printed in your magazine again."

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

Chief Executive's Report — May 2024

Meeting: 11 June 2024	**Status:** For noting
Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive	**Contact details:** 020 3443 7072

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Board on executive activity since the April 2024 report.
2. The Board is invited to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report and note the latest position regarding the PRP's finances.

Executive Summary and Board Matters

3. The Board is being updated in respect of organisational matters.

Delivery Updates

Communications

4. On 9 May 2024 the Chair wrote to MPs and members of the House of Lords (Annex A) regarding the PRP's latest report on IPSO's rulings. As well as directing them to the follow-up and original reports, she discussed the context around the proposed repeal of Section 40 in the Media Bill.
5. On 9 May 2024 186 national press/Impress contacts were sent a press release (Annex B) regarding the PRP's follow-up report on IPSO, including a quote from the Chair. It highlighted several cases where IPSO had failed to act properly or effectively, leaving the public unprotected. This led to online articles by Hacked Off (Independent press standards body finds IPSO "fails to protect children and victims of crime), HoldTheFrontPage (Publishers should be fined for editor's code breaches, says report'), and the Swansea Standard (IPSO fails to protect children, victims of crime, and the public at large).
6. A thread of tweets about the IPSO report posted on X/Twitter was seen hundreds of times. A separate tweet by Hacked Off that linked to the report, as well as its own story, attracted many retweets and HoldTheFrontPage also tweeted a link to its story. The LinkedIn post about the IPSO report saw significant engagement.
7. On 17 May 2024 the Chair wrote to members of the House of Lords (Annex C) ahead of the consideration of the Media Bill at Committee Stage, In addition other members were sent a letter linking to a longer briefing (Annex D).
8. A set of social media posts on X/Twitter regarding Sir Brian Leveson's letter (Annex E) responding to some of the assertions that have been made about the proposed repeal of Section 40 saw increased engagement. A PRP LinkedIn post about the letter also saw significantly increased engagement.
9. Redacted.

Board Member Recruitment

10. NOMCO shortlisted 6 candidates for interview, interviews took place on Friday 17 May and Monday 20 May 2024. 2 candidates are under consideration for appointment. The next stage in the process is that following Board confirmation to appoint the Chief Executive will write to the CEO of the CSC (standing in for the Commissioner for Public Appointments) for confirmation that the process followed was fair, open and merit based as required under the Charter and the candidates will be notified of the Boards decision.

Media Act 2024

11. Following the announcement of a general election by the Prime Minister on 22 May 2024, the Media Bill was incorporated into the 'wash up' procedure for completing unfinished business before the Parliament is dissolved.
12. The Bill was rushed into Committee Stage in the House of Lords the day after Report Stage where a range of peers objected to the inclusion of Clause 50 as the wash up procedure is meant to include only uncontentious issues.
13. Sir Brian Leveson had responded in writing to a request from Baroness Hollins (Annex E) to expand on the origin and rationale of his recommendations which eventually led to the creation of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. The letter was quoted at both Report Stage and Committee Stage, and we have at Baroness Hollins' request and with Sir Brian's permission, published this letter on our website. However, the Official Opposition were not persuaded by this or other arguments to support any amendments to Clause 50.
14. The now Media Act received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. Section 50 of the Media Act 2024 repeals Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

External Matters Update

15. Annex H includes an update on key external matters relevant to our work.

Devolved Nations

16. There are no implications/differences in relation to the areas of work covered in this paper and the devolved nations.

Communications

17. There are no other issues to report which have communications implications, so far as I am aware.

Risks

18. There are a range of risks involved in the areas of work covered in this paper.
19. The repeal of Section 40 represents a risk to the wider Recognition System. Without the protections and incentives included in Section 40, or a suitable alternative being put in place, there will continue to be no advantage for news publishers to join an Approved Regulator. This means that there is little prospect that the Recognition System can gain sufficient traction with the industry to work as intended and the public will not be protected from press harm.

Recommendations

20. The Board is asked to note the contents of the Chief Executive’s report.

Attachments

Annex A: Copy of letter issued to MPs and Lords 9 May 2024
Annex B: Copy of press release issued 9 May 2024
Annex C: Copy of headline Media Bill briefing issued 17 May 2024
Annex D: Copy of full Media Bill briefing issued 17 May 2024
Annex E: Copies of Baroness Hollins and Sir Brian Leveson letters
Annex F: Redacted
Annex G: External matters update

PRP INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

Dear <<First Name>>

Re: Media Bill - Proposed repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013

In the context of the debate around the repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 as part of the Media Bill, the government has stated on a number of occasions that the existence of IPSO as the regulator of large sections of the press has removed the need for the measures to ensure independent press regulation that Parliament voted for following the Leveson Inquiry and report.

For example, the government's Impact Assessment on the repeal of Section 40 states: *"The consultation response also recognised that when s.40 came into legislation, it was envisaged that news publishers would become members of PRP-approved regulators. However, the vast majority of publishers have not joined a PRP-backed regulator. There now exists a strengthened, independent, self-regulatory system for the press. The government recognises there has been a raising of standards across industry and commencement of s.40 is no longer necessary to improve regulation of publishers."*

This assertion has been repeated a number of times during the debates. The government has produced no evidence in support of these claims of strengthened independent regulation and improved press standards.

In January, the Press Recognition Panel published a report showing that, in fact, IPSO performs no better than its predecessor, the pre-Leveson Press Complaints Commission, and acts predominantly as a complaints handler and not a regulator.

IPSO has never issued a fine against a publication, launched a standards investigation, or imposed significant sanctions on any publishers despite serious breaches of its Code of Practice.

In our new report released today, we highlight some of the cases where IPSO's failure to act properly or effectively has led to the public remaining unprotected and where the lack of a proper regulator means there is no serious deterrent to press intrusion or malpractice.

The report includes cases where the publication concerned has:

- Placed children at risk by mounting a dangerous pursuit in two cars along a motorway in search of a picture.
- Without public interest justification, published the names and photographs of the children of a recently deceased mother, commenting on their current life and wellbeing whilst living with their father and speculating with regards to the circumstances of their mother's death. Publication of this private material has had a huge impact on the children.
- Committed an "egregious breach" of the requirement to protect victims of sexual assault by publishing information allowing them to be identified.
- Led to a whistle-blower losing her job when a reporter failed to protect their source.
- Ignored repeated requests by IPSO to desist from harassing an individual, leaving photographers camped outside her house for weeks.

We think it is important to bring these matters to your attention so that Parliament has a more accurate and complete picture when making its decision on this matter.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss this report or our work and approach to press regulation.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Cearns

Kathryn Cearns OBE
Chair
Press Recognition Panel

Press release
9 May 2024
For immediate release

IPSO fails to protect children, victims of crime, and the public at large

In January this year, the Press Recognition Panel published a report showing that the UK's main press complaints body, IPSO, performs no better than its predecessor, the Press Complaints Commission.

IPSO has never issued a fine against a publication, launched a standards investigation, or imposed significant sanctions on any publishers despite serious breaches of its Code of Practice.

In a new report released today, we highlight some of the cases where this lack of regulatory teeth has led to the public remaining unprotected, with no serious deterrent to press intrusion or malpractice.

The report includes cases where the publication concerned has:

- Placed children at risk by mounting a dangerous pursuit in two cars along a motorway in search of a picture.
- Without public interest justification, published the names and photographs of the children of a recently deceased mother, commenting on their current life and wellbeing whilst living with their father and speculating with regards to the circumstances of their mother's death. Publication of this private material has had a huge impact on the children.
- Committed an "egregious breach" of the requirement to protect victims of sexual assault by publishing information allowing them to be identified.
- Led to a whistle-blower losing her job when a reporter failed to protect their source.
- Ignored repeated requests by IPSO to desist from harassing an individual, leaving photographers camped outside her house for weeks.

No fines were levied by IPSO in any of these cases, and no investigations were launched.

Kathryn Cearns OBE, Chair of the Press Recognition Panel, says:

"This latest research, which follows our report published in January, builds a picture showing that, as a result of IPSO's regulatory capture by its publishers, the public remains almost completely unprotected from bad behaviour by the press. No matter how lamentably a newspaper has conducted itself, including during the complaints process, there is simply no method of adequate deterrent open to IPSO which would help prevent any repetition of the behaviour."

-ENDS

Latest report published 8 May 2024 - IPSO Rulings Review - a follow up report by the Press Recognition Panel 8 May 2024

Report published 22 January 2024 -A Review of the UK's Independent Press Standards Organisation's Complaints Process and Related Issues

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Notes to editors:

- The Press Recognition Panel came into existence on 3 November 2014 as a legal body created under the Royal Charter that followed the Leveson Report into the culture, practices and ethics of the press.
- The Charter ensures the PRP's independence from outside influence, including from government or the press.
- The role of the PRP is to consider whether press regulators meet the 29 recognition criteria in the Charter. If the PRP is satisfied that a regulator meets the criteria, the PRP will recognise it. If a regulator does not meet all 29 criteria, then the PRP will not recognise it.
- The application process was developed following a UK-wide consultation by the PRP. The consultation included eight events across the UK, with 200 written responses received from members of the public, academics, small and large publishers, representative bodies, campaigning organisations, and regulators.
- The PRP covers regulators of 'relevant publishers' as defined in the Crime and Courts Act 2013.
- The PRP will also carry out reviews to make sure approved regulators continue to act in accordance with the Charter, and it will withdraw recognition from a regulator that does not.
- More information about the Press Recognition Panel and its procedures can be found at www.pressrecognitionpanel.org.uk

PRP

INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

Dear <<Formal Salutation>>

Ahead of consideration of the Media Bill at Committee Stage in the House of Lords, we have prepared a headline briefing to help inform the debate regarding Clause 50 and the proposed repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

Repealing Section 40, without an alternative in place to ensure all news publishers can be held accountable, will undermine independent press self-regulation and return us to a pre-Leveson Inquiry state where press misconduct can thrive. The public deserves better.

If you would like a more detailed briefing on this subject, please get in touch. Further information is also available in our Eighth Annual Report to Parliament on the Recognition System.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Cearns

Kathryn Cearns OBE
Chair
Press Recognition Panel

PRP

INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

Dear <<Formal Salutation>>

Ahead of consideration of the Media Bill at Committee Stage in the House of Lords, we have updated our briefing on Clause 50 and the proposed repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

This updated briefing includes an assessment of an additional amendment that has been tabled (paragraphs 88-90) and a summary of our recently published follow-up report on IPSO's complaints process and related issues, which examines IPSO's rulings in more detail (paragraph 24).

You can view our updated briefing on Clause 50 here:
Press Recognition Panel Briefing for the House of Lords

Our IPSO follow-up report can be found here:
IPSO Rulings - a follow up report by the Press Recognition Panel

I hope you find this additional information helpful. If you would like to explore any of these matters in more detail, we would be happy to arrange a meeting or a telephone call to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Cearns

Kathryn Cearns OBE
Chair
Press Recognition Panel

25th April, 2024

[redacted]

Dear Sir Brian

As you know, the government is seeking to remove Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 from the statute book. I write now because a number of Members of both Houses who wish to contribute to Parliamentary debates on this matter are concerned at the ways in which Section 40 and the broader framework of independent press regulation is being characterised. In particular, Parliamentarians have noted that claims are being made that Section 40 is unjust, asserting that it undermines the freedom of the press in the following ways:

- a regulator recognised by the Press Recognition Panel must be regarded as a "state regulator", with all that implies about government interference and powers of censorship;

- by forcing news publications to pay costs in libel cases even when they win, Section 40 offends against principles of natural justice;

- Section 40 threatens to bankrupt small publishers, which will not be able to afford to fight libel and privacy cases;

- it also threatens to "chill" good journalism and encourage SLAPPs;

- Section 40 is about the past and not the future, addressing out-of-date, historical problems when new ones are far more pressing.

I appreciate that you are not able to engage with what is a matter of political argument but I know that colleagues in Parliament would find it helpful if they were able, in the coming debates, to cite your recollection of how you took these challenges into account when developing your Report in 2012.

With all good wishes,

Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins, FRCPsych, FRCPCH, FRCP hon, FHEA

The Rt. Hon. Sir Brian Leveson

Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins, FRCPsych, FRCPH, FRCP hon, FHEA
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1st May 2024

Dear Baroness Hollins

Thank you for your letter of 25th April in relation to the Government's proposal to repeal s. 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 and for the interest that you and your parliamentary colleagues have shown in the origin of the proposals in my Report into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press which led to the provision in the first place. I continue to believe that it is inappropriate for me to engage in political argument in connection with a Report which I wrote as a serving judge although I incorporate into my Report my correspondence in 2018 with the then Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport which was concerned with Part II of the Inquiry and itself entered the public domain. I am also willing to explain the origin and purpose of the recommendation which I anticipate led to s. 40.

At the core of my Inquiry and its Recommendations was my fundamental belief in the freedom of the press and the vital importance of freedom of expression. Nothing that I said or recommended undermined those beliefs. In the circumstances, before dealing with the assertions which your letter lists, I should set out the background to recommendation at 5.5 of Part K, Chapter 7 of my Report.

Throughout the Inquiry, one of my concerns was that individuals without substantial means caught up in public interest events were utterly unable to seek redress for defamation or unlawful intrusion into their privacy simply because they could not afford to litigate against an all powerful press: as a result, to a number of witnesses, I floated the idea of arbitration as part of the activities of a regulator. In response, Lionel Barber, then Editor of the Financial Times, made a very powerful point when he gave evidence on 10th January 2012 when he said:

> "I don't wish to pre-judge what Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the Guardian, may want to say on this, …. and from what I've seen I think it's promising, to look at whether this new body, the Media Standards Board, whatever you want to call it by the way, it will have to have a new name can offer an arbitration process or some form of resolution where parties do not immediately resort to the court, forcing news organisations to employ highly expensive barristers, and before you know where you are, you've seen £100,000 plus disappear. We don't have that kind of money. Therefore and this is a real problem, because the Financial Times is an independent news organisation with plenty of resources. We have more than 600 journalists, more than 100 foreign correspondents. We're happy to write about the connection between oligarchs and the Kremlin, we've written thousands of words in that particular area and others, and every time we write about the rich and famous, particularly people who have really substantial sums of money, we get a letter a very threatening, bullying letter from a law firm, and I'm thinking one in particular that is simply outrageous. And, you know: "If you do not

> capitulate before noon on Saturday, you will be hung at dawn on Sunday", and this is bound to have even if you think that you're robust and the story is robust, it can have a chilling effect because you are aware of the cost of a libel action."

The conclusion that I reached was that it was essential that arbitration should work both ways – both to protect those without means who could not otherwise afford to litigate and also the press from the activities of oligarchs and others who could put enormous sums into seeking to prevent adverse stories about themselves or their activities. Thus I recommended (Part K, Chapter 7 para 5.5):

> "I recommend that it should be open to any subscriber to a recognised regulatory body to rely on the fact of their membership and on the opportunity it provides for the claimant to use a fair, fast and inexpensive arbitration service. It could request the court to encourage the use of that system of arbitration and, equally, to have regard to the availability of the arbitration system when considering claims for costs incurred by a claimant who could have used the arbitration service. On the issue of costs, it should equally be open to a claimant to rely on failure by a newspaper to subscribe to the regulator thereby depriving him or her of access to a fair, fast and inexpensive arbitration service. Where that is the case, in the exercise of its discretion, the court could take the view that, even where the defendant is successful, absent unreasonable or vexatious conduct on the part of the claimant, it would be inappropriate for the claimant to be expected to pay the costs incurred in defending the action."

I anticipate that it was this provision that later found itself reflected in s. 40 of the Crime and Courts Act. It is important to underline that the Act does not require an adverse award of costs against a successful organ of the press which is not a member of an approved regulator (or, indeed, against an individual – oligarch or otherwise – who does not avail himself or herself of available arbitration provided by an approved regulator). The Act is clear: s. 40(3)(c) allows the judge where "it is just and equitable in all the circumstances of the case to make a different award of costs or make no award of costs". I add that this provision deals with so-called SLAPP litigation fairly and appropriately thereby providing a way of defeating an oligarch intent on pursuing aggressive expensive litigation in an effort to silence criticism: that is precisely the concern that Mr Barber alluded to as set out above.

I turn to the specific claims that you have asked me to address.

A regulator recognised by the Press Recognition Panel must be regarded as a 'state regulator' with all that implies about government interference and powers of censorship.

I simply do not understand how this assertion can be made. My Recommendation (Part K, Chapter 7 para 6.5) was that "the responsibility for recognition and certification of a regulator shall rest with a recognition body" and that "In its capacity as the recognition body it will not be involved in regulation of any subscriber". That is to say, the recognition body regulated only the regulator in order to ensure that it satisfied the requirements of an independent self regulatory body and effectively 'did what it said on the tin'. As I understand it, the Royal Charter was specifically designed to ensure independence – independence of the press and independence of politicians. The recognition panel simply does not regulate the press.

It is for the PRP to explain how it regulates the self regulators (such as IMPRESS) but the suggestion that it is some kind of 'state regulator' of the press flies in the face of all that it was set up to do.

By forcing news publications to pay costs in libel cases when they win, s. 40 offends against the principles of natural justice.

Neither my recommendation (nor, as I read it, s. 40) 'forces' news publications to pay costs when they win. The recommendation encouraged news publications to establish an independent arbitration mechanism to resolve disputes which would then protect them from oligarchs intent on going to court in SLAPP type litigation while also allowing those without means who have been libelled or whose privacy has been invaded to seek redress without incurring vast costs which could not be afforded. Failure to attempt mediation can be taken into account in costs arguments. In any event, as I recommended, there is an overarching discretion so that the judge can reach a "just and equitable" resolution of any costs issue.

s. 40 threatens to bankrupt small publishers, which will not be able to afford to fight libel and privacy cases

This claim asserts the opposite of the effect of my recommendation. The purpose of encouraging all (including small publishers) to be a member of a recognised self regulator is to allow them to offer arbitration and thereby protect them from adverse orders for costs in the event that expensive litigation was chosen in an effort to force a small publisher to retract irrespective of the merits. The absence of some mechanism such as I recommended, however, means that those who, for want of financial means, are unable to 'take on' the press however seriously they have been defamed or their privacy invaded are deprived of all remedy. As to the question of threat, I am sure that the Press Recognition Panel and IMPRESS will be able to provide more evidence based on the experience of the last 11 years.

It also threatens to 'chill' good journalism and encourage SLAPPS

My recommendation was specifically designed to ensure that good journalism was encouraged, providing a quick, relatively inexpensive remedy to those who were defamed or whose privacy was unlawfully invaded without either side having to expend vast resources and energy pursuing in court litigation. At the same time, it provided real protection for the press from those with vast resources who sought to shut down what was legitimate investigative journalism: if such a person sought to use the power of money to litigate, the relevant press organisation would be able to demonstrate that such persons had been able to arbitrate and, having chosen a vastly more expensive route, could properly be required to pay the costs unnecessarily incurred. Far from chilling good journalism and encouraging SLAPPS, an appropriate arbitration scheme equally allowed vexatious claims quickly to be dismissed and meritorious claims to be quickly resolved.

s. 40 is about the past and not the future, addressing out-of-date, historical problems when new ones are far more pressing

My Inquiry was set up (in part 1) to address the culture, practices and ethics of the press and to make recommendations *inter alia'* for a new more effective policy and regulatory regime which supports the integrity and freedom of the press … and its independence, including from Government, while encouraging the highest ethical and professional standards'. Allegations of libel, invasions of privacy, misuse of personal data remain equally as relevant today and are as pressing as ever. My recommendation was intended to be an incentive to the press to join a recognised self regulator and gain protection from SLAPP type behaviour (not then so identified but described by Mr Barber in his evidence to me) while at the same time providing a cheap and reasonable alternative to those without means whose rights may have been infringed.

I have sought not to engage in the political arguments but I hope that you and your colleagues in Parliament will find the above helpful.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Brian Leveson

Update on key external matters

1. The update on key external matters is a research-informed piece based on a sample of information available in the public domain.

Commercial Landscape

2. As reported by Press Gazette, the i's print circulation is now higher than the Sunday Express for the first time in its history, according to the latest ABC data. In April, the circulation of the i stayed steady compared to the previous month and fell by 5% year-on-year to 126,266. The Sunday Express fell by 2% month-on-month and 17% year-on-year to 125,990. The biggest year-on-year print circulation decline was at the Sunday People, down 21% to 55,526. The largest month-on-month drop was 4% at the Daily Star Sunday, to 69,766. The Financial Times was the only paid-for newspaper not to see an annual decline, staying steady compared to April last year. Of the rest of the paid-for newspapers, the i was the only one to see a single-digit decline. The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday each declined by 10% year-on-year to 699,240 and 586,187 respectively.

3. Press Gazette reported that Reader's Digest magazine has closed in the UK, according to editor-in-chief Eva Mackevic, who announced on Linkedin that the magazine had "come to an end" after 86 years. She wrote: "Unfortunately, the company just couldn't withstand the financial pressures of today's unforgiving magazine publishing landscape and has ceased to trade."

4. As reported by Press Gazette, Caroline Waterston has been named the permanent editor-in-chief of the Mirror after holding the role on an interim basis upon Alison Phillips's departure. Waterston is a former deputy editor of the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People and deputy editor-in-chief of the Express and Star titles who has worked for Trinity Mirror then Reach since 2001.

5. The Guardian reported that RedBird IMI – a partnership backed by UAE's vice president and the US investment firm RedBird Capital Partners – is not moving forward with its proposed £600m takeover of the Telegraph group. The decision puts the newspaper group back up for sale, with several high-profile suitors expected to bid. RedBird IMI confirmed it was walking away because the British government published legislation that will block foreign states or associated individuals from owning newspaper assets in the UK.

6. Press Gazette reported that the Guardian is aiming to make "a small number of voluntary redundancies" among its journalists as it predicts pressures on costs and revenues will continue "into the next financial year, if not longer". Editor-in-chief Katharine Viner emailed staff saying that although the publisher is in "a much stronger position" than it was during "the last downturn", management "have to make some difficult decisions across the business". A Guardian News

and Media spokesperson said: “We’re targeting cost savings of around 4-5% this year through a range of initiatives including both staff and non-staff costs.”

7. As reported by Press Gazette, page views across the websites of the UK’s biggest commercial publisher Reach were down by a third in the first quarter of 2024. The publisher attributed this decline to the “deprioritisation of news during 2023 by major platforms” in its latest quarterly update. Both Facebook and Google have made major changes to their algorithms affecting news referral traffic in the past year. However, Reach said the impact of this was “partially offset” by a strengthened yield per page and added that the year-on-year drop in referral traffic will be less consequential as the year goes on.

8. Press Gazette reported that a new commercial tie-up that brings together The Independent, Buzzfeed UK, and HuffPost UK has launched under the Independent Media brand. Along with former Buzzfeed video sub-brands Tasty UK and Seasoned, the media network claims to be particularly strong in travel, food and drink, and technology. Independent Media says that according to Pamco and internal data, it gets 1.5bn content views across its combined platforms each month and that it reaches half of UK women and half the country’s LGBTQ population.

9. As reported by Press Gazette, music magazine Q has closed five-and-a-half months after being revived online. A team of six full-time journalists in the US and UK were told this month that they were losing their jobs as a result. Two days later, in a separate magazine relaunch, a new digital version of lads’ mag Loaded went live. Q magazine originally closed after 34 years in July 2020 after it was badly hit by the pandemic and the owner, Bauer Media Group, failed to find a buyer. Loaded shut down in 2015 after the print magazine’s circulation declined from 350,000 in 2000 to 34,360 at the end of 2014.

10. Press Gazette reported a dramatic reduction in revenue, audience, and staff sizes across the small independent (mainly local) UK media outlets monitored by the Public Interest News Foundation (PINF). PINF estimates the UK’s 300 to 400 independent publishers make between £18.6m and £24.8m in annual revenue combined. The previous year’s estimate was £30m to £40m. PINF monitors independent UK public news outlets with a turnover of less than £2m. On average, PINF found website reach by unique users has more than halved, and the number of employees has declined by a third.

Legal

11. BBC News reported that Gordon Brown has called for police to investigate whether News UK covered up phone hacking evidence. The former prime minister said that civil court documents show News UK deleted emails to stop police from seeing them. He also believes his phone may have been hacked while in No 10. News UK said Mr Brown’s allegations were “unfounded and wrong”. In 2015, prosecutors said there was no evidence of corporate

wrongdoing. However, Mr Brown said that the decision was based on an "incomplete picture" of the case against News UK.

12. Reuters reported that four current British newspaper editors are among 70 current and former Associated Newspapers employees named in a privacy lawsuit brought by Prince Harry and six other public figures over allegations of phone hacking and other serious privacy breaches dating back 30 years. Victoria Newton and Tony Gallagher, now editors of the Sun and the Times, respectively, are named, as are the editor of the Sunday Times, Ben Taylor, and the Mail on Sunday, David Dillon. Restrictions on identifying them were lifted when Associated Newspapers filed its written defence at the High Court.

13. As reported by BBC News, the High Court has ruled that Prince Harry cannot broaden his legal action against News Group Newspapers (NGN) to include new allegations about Rupert Murdoch's alleged knowledge of unlawful activity at the group as it added "nothing material" to the case. NGN, which denies the allegations, stated the court had "thoroughly vindicated" its position by refusing permission to introduce "large and significant" amendments. Harry was also denied permission to extend the case timeline back to 1994 and 1995 to include allegations involving Princess Diana and to add new claims that the Sun targeted his now wife Meghan Markle in 2016. However, he was allowed to include allegations of landline phone tapping and make further accusations against journalists and private investigators.

Political

14. Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour, Slough) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what support is available to media organisations to (a) detect and (b) counteract foreign disinformation.

    Saqib Bhatti (Conservative, Meriden) responded: "The Government takes the issue of information threats to national security seriously, and the UK has a strong record of working closely with a wide range of different stakeholders to tackle these risks.

    We recognise the invaluable role of a free and independent press in providing accurate and reliable information. Government works to complement the efforts of our independent press sector through a number of initiatives to counter disinformation.

    For example, in 2022 the Government provided the BBC World Service with £4.1m emergency funding to help it to continue to bring independent, impartial and accurate news to people in Ukraine and Russia and counter disinformation in the face of increased propaganda from the Russian state. The Government has also directly sanctioned Russia-backed state media organisations who spread disinformation, helping to prevent the most prolific and harmful sources of disinformation from spreading propaganda to UK audiences online.

The Government has also recently passed the Online Safety Act (OSA), which includes the Foreign Interference Offence as a priority offence. This will require social media companies to take action against a wide range of state-sponsored disinformation and interference targeted at the UK. Ofcom will produce guidance for providers on how they should fulfil these duties. The consultation for this guidance closed in March 2024 and Ofcom is currently finalising these codes, due to come into force at the end of 2024."

15. Michael Fabricant (Conservative, Lichfield) tabled a question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to promote independent news networks by ensuring that (a) Government and (b) other public announcements are made by buying space on news websites not owned by newspaper groups (i) in areas where no local printed newspapers are available and (ii) generally.

    Alex Burghart (Conservative, Brentwood and Ongar) responded: "The Government runs a number of communications activities, including campaigns, across a range of media channels. For each activity, channels are selected based on whether they will reach the target audience effectively to have the most impact.

    Independent news networks can form a key part of this and we consider them wherever necessary."

16. Michael Fabricant (Conservative, Lichfield) tabled a question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2024 to Question 23369 on Government Departments: Press, how much and what proportion of total Government expenditure on communications activities was with independent (a) broadcast media and (b) web-based only news media, including those that are members of the Independent Community News Network, in the last 12 months for which data is available.

    Alex Burghart (Conservative, Brentwood and Ongar) responded: "This figure is not held centrally. Channels are selected based on whether they will reach the target audience effectively to have the most impact. Independent news networks can form a key part of this and are considered where appropriate. Government constantly and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its communications to ensure the right audiences are reached in the most efficient way."

17. Dr Neil Hudson (Conservative, Penrith and The Border) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support local journalism.

    Julia Lopez (Conservative, Hornchurch and Upminster) responded: "The Government is committed to supporting local and regional newspapers and other news outlets as vital pillars of communities and local democracy. They play an essential role in holding power to account, keeping the public informed of local issues and providing reliable, high-quality information.

Amid an evolving media landscape and changes in consumer behaviour, we are working to support journalism and local newsrooms to ensure the sustainability of this important industry. We are introducing a new, pro-competition regime for digital markets. The regime, which aims to address the far-reaching power of the biggest tech firms, will help rebalance the relationship between publishers and the online platforms on which they increasingly rely. This will make an important contribution to the sustainability of the press.

Additionally, our support for the sector has included the delivery of a £2 million Future News Fund, the extension of a 2017 business rates relief on local newspaper office space until 2025; the publication of the Online Media Literacy Strategy; and our work through the Mid-Term Review of the BBC Charter to encourage greater collaboration and transparency from the BBC in the local news market and other markets in which it operates. The BBC also supports the sector directly, through the £8m it spends each year on the Local News Partnership, including the Local Democracy Reporting Scheme.

We are also reducing regulatory burdens on commercial radio providers, and strengthening requirements on the provision of local news through the Media Bill to ensure commercial radio continues to provide high quality local journalism.

We continue to consider all possible options in the interests of promoting and sustaining news journalism."

18. Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) tabled a question asking His Majesty's Government, following the recent content licensing agreement between The Financial Times and OpenAI, what assessment they have made of the potential implications this may have for the AI industry; and what steps they are taking to further promote transparency and accountability in AI-driven content generation and distribution.

    Viscount Camrose (Conservative) responded: "The Government wants the AI sector and our creative industries to grow together in partnership and is encouraged to see agreements being reached between AI developers and press publishers.

    As set out in its response to the AI White Paper, the Government believes there should be greater transparency from AI developers in relation to data inputs and the attribution of outputs. It is considering ways to achieve this and will engage closely with right holders and AI developers."

19. Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) tabled a question asking His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relationship between police forces in England and Wales and journalists; and what discussions they have had with those police forces in this regard.

    Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Conservative) responded: "The College of Policing publishes guidance in the form of Authorised Professional Practice designed to assist those working in police forces who engage with the media. It takes account of the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry in 2012 and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services 2011 report on police relationships with the media and other parties.

The Leveson Inquiry made eight recommendations (68 and 75-81) concerning the press and the police, focused on providing greater transparency and openness. These were accepted by the Government, the College of Policing and the then Association of Chief Police Officers (superseded by the National Police Chiefs' Council). All the recommendations have been addressed."

20. Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak both addressed the Society of Editors 25th Anniversary Conference in April. Their speeches covered several key themes, including press freedom, media ownership, regulation, big tech, and AI. Sunak stressed the importance of journalists having the freedom to "inform, investigate and report, without fear or favour." He added: "That's why we're acting to protect a free press here at home." He then pointed to the repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, saying: "[Section 40] could stifle freedom of speech and threaten the sustainability of the press." Frazer ended her speech by saying: "I want you to know that this Conservative Government will always stand on the side of newspapers and will always ensure that the press is free to speak the truth."

21. In a recent interview, Shadow Culture Secretary Thangam Debbonaire said that Labour would not seek to revive the second stage of the Leveson Inquiry. She said: "We have to make sure that, no matter what, we do protect our free press. When I say 'no matter what', I don't mean: they're not allowed to break the law, they're not allowed to harass people – that's already a criminal offence. So there are plenty of things that are covered by criminal law." When asked about Labour's plans to hold the media accountable, Debbonaire said: "There is already media regulation, there is already the criminal and civil law. We don't have plans to do anything, any new legislation in that area, no."

22. As reported by Press Gazette, the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill was passed by Parliament. The legislation was rushed through in the 'wash-up' following the calling of a UK general election. The law will enable tech companies such as Google, Facebook, Apple, and others to be given "strategic market status" and be regulated by the Digital Markets Unit (a division of the Competition and Markets Authority). The DMU could compel tech companies to pay for the news content which appears on their platforms and will work to establish codes which ensure companies serve the best interests of consumers. It will have the power to fine tech companies 10% of annual turnover if they abuse their market positions.

23. Press Gazette reported that the Media Bill has been passed, including the repeal of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. The Bill was rushed through in the 'wash-up' following the Prime Minister's decision to call a general election. Lord Parkinson told the Lords that repealing the law was a manifesto commitment. He added: "The Government is committed to protecting media

freedom and the invaluable role of press freedom in our society and our democracy." Labour peer Lord Lipsey said: "I think that the Government is trying to smuggle things through under wash-up which should not be in the legislation." Speaking of amendments put forward by colleagues, Lord Bassam said: "[The Labour Party] will not support our colleagues if they push this to a vote. We are content for the Government to conclude business on this group, which we hope will enable us to make progress on the Bill."

Approved regulator

24. Press Gazette reported that Impress has ordered Muslim news site 5Pillars to either remove or significantly alter an episode of its podcast which the regulator says encouraged "hatred and abuse" towards Jewish and LGBT people. The February podcast is a two-hour interview with Mark Collett, the leader of the far-right political party Patriotic Alternative and a former British National Party spokesperson. Impress said that the interview – in which Collett said "Jewish influence" was being "wielded in such a way that they have a negative impact on the white population" and that gay and transgender people were "poison" and "degenerate" – breached the discrimination clause of the Impress Standards Code.

IPSO

25. IPSO has appointed Karen Barnes to its lay-majority Board. Before joining Eye to Eye Media as editorial director of delicious, Barnes worked for Hearst UK as head of the Good Housekeeping Institute and Associate Editor for Good Housekeeping magazine. Also, the former First Minister of Wales, Professor Right Honourable Carwyn Jones, is joining IPSO's Complaints Committee as a lay member. He was previously the chief legal advisor to the Welsh Government and held ministerial responsibilities for Open Government and Rural Affairs. He is a professor of Law at Aberystwyth University, chair of the environmental charity Size of Wales, and a non-executive director of the Food Farming and Countryside Commission.

26. As reported by the National, the Times has been reported to IPSO after it published a cartoon showing ex-first ministers Nicola Sturgeon, Alex Salmond, and Humza Yousaf, and soon-to-be first minister (at the time of publication) John Swinney being hanged. The Peter Brookes cartoon has been widely shared on social media and hailed by the likes of Spectator chairman Andrew Neil and TalkTV panellist Adam Boulton. But after being heavily condemned by figures inside and outside the party, SNP MSP Kevin Stewart has now reported the publication to IPSO. He said he "adores" satire but found this particular graphic "horrific and toxic".

27. Press Gazette reported that Conservative MP Scott Benton, who was filmed undercover by The Times offering to lobby on behalf of the gambling industry for cash, has had a complaint to IPSO rejected. Benton said the article breached

Clause 10 of the Editors' Code which says journalists cannot use subterfuge unless acting in the public interest. The MP said there was no public interest in the story because it did not expose wrongdoing. IPSO said: "The committee considered that the publication had demonstrated that, prior to the meeting with the complainant, the publication had considered which element of the public interest would be met by undertaking the planned subterfuge."

28. As reported by Press Gazette, Open Democracy has won a complaint against the Express over an article wrongly suggesting it was run by billionaire George Soros. IPSO found the article in breach of Clause 1 (accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice and said it "gave the misleading impression that Open Democracy was operated, or had been founded by, George Soros – and that he therefore had some degree of control over it". The article remains online but with a correction stating: "Mr Soros does not own or control openDemocracy – nor does he directly fund the organisation. Rather, a grant-giving organisation founded by Mr Soros awarded grants which totalled a small portion of openDemocracy's total funding in 2022."

Campaigners' news

29. Hacked Off CEO Nathan J Sparkes has responded to a report in the Telegraph headlined 'Sex is biological fact, NHS declares' which claims that '[the NHS] will ban trans women from female-only wards'. He says that "these statements do not reflect the reality of the NHS' position". The story refers to a consultation that the government is carrying out over proposed changes to the NHS Constitution. Jones says: "These proposals appear to have been made by the Government and the (political) Secretary of State, not the NHS as an independent body." He says that the proposed changes are "minor" and "blown out of proportion by The Telegraph and other newspapers, to support their culture war agendas." He adds: "False or misleading claims in newspapers like The Telegraph risk misinforming the public and damaging the integrity of the debate."

30. The Committee to Protect Journalists, CPU Media Trust, English PEN, Foreign Press Association, Global Witness, News Media Association, News Media Europe, Reporters Without Borders, Society of Editors, and WAN-IFRA have written a joint statement welcoming the UK government's commitment to repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 in the Media Bill and urging it to pass the legislation "as quickly as possible". The statement says: "Repealing Section 40 will go a long way towards strengthening the UK's reputation as a global champion for freedom of speech. … Attempting to force titles into state-backed regulation, which is what Section 40 was designed to do, is incompatible with the principles of free speech. Never again must the UK go down this dangerous road. For all of us, the stakes are far too high."

31. The News Media Association has welcomed the passage of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill. NMA Chief Executive Owen Meredith said it "marks a very important milestone in addressing market failure in the digital

economy, and ultimately delivering a level playing field between publishers and platforms.” He added: “Once Royal Assent is granted, the Competition and Markets Authority will have the tools it needs to make a real difference. I hope they move swiftly to make use of those powers to deliver for consumers and businesses. … the new regime must empower news publishers to reap fair reward for their investment in news – helping to secure a sustainable future for trusted independent UK journalism for many years to come.”

32. Hacked Off has responded to a letter from Sir Brian Leveson on Government falsities about the reforms he proposed on press standards. Commenting, CEO Nathan J Sparkes said: “Sir Brian Leveson’s detailed and impartial remarks undermine deliberate attempts by Government and newspapers to mislead voters and Parliament. … There was never a threat to the financial interests of the press from his recommendations; neither was there any prospect of political interference in his proposed framework. The press did not fear for their finances or their independence; they feared for their ability to abuse and bully ordinary people with impunity. Sir Brian’s letter does not address the politics, only the facts. And the fact is, newspapers have lied about the impact of section 40, and a Government desperate for press support has been complicit in those lies.”

PRP15(24)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

FINANCE REPORT

Meeting: 11 June 2024

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details: Susie Uppal, Adam Gibbs (JS2)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on the finance and banking position as at 30 April 2024.

2. The Board is invited to note the latest financial position.

Background and analysis

Finance

3. A bank-reconciled set of management accounts as at 30 April 2024 is attached at Annex A. The management accounts also include the original budget for the year to March 2025.

4. The deficit for the period to date is £7,839 against a year to date budget deficit of £29,414. This represents a positive variance of £21,575 compared to the year to date forecast. The variance is largely due to a provision of £15,000 in the budget for April towards strategic research which was invoiced in full after the month end.

Devolved Nations

5. There are no specific implications/differences in relation to the areas of work covered in this paper and the devolved nations.

Communications

6. There are no specific communications implications to draw out.

Risks

7. A robust position in relation to the PRP's finances is required in order to avoid reputational damage and to ensure compliance with HM Treasury's *Managing Public Money*.

Recommendations

8. The Board is invited to **note** the latest financial position regarding the PRP's finances.

Timeline for future work

9. JS2 Ltd will continue to provide updates on the PRP's financial position at meetings of the Board.

Attachment

Annex A: Management accounts as at 30 April 2024

Annex A to PRP15(24)

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 30th April 2024

	1 month to April 2024				Full year to March 2025
	Actual £	**Budget £**	**Variance £**		**Budget £**
Income					
Subscription fees	22,667	22,667	-		281,238
Bank interest	4,388	4,667	279		56,000
Total Income	**27,055**	**27,334**	**279**		**337,238**
Expenditure					
Board and Committee costs					
Salaries & NIC	6,074	7,794	(1,720)		81,930
Travel & Subsistence	160	135	25		1,270
Other costs	-	-	-		2,000
Total Board and Committee Costs	**6,234**	**7,929**	**(1,695)**		**85,200**
Communications					
Publications	-	-	-		3,800
Communications tools	534	500	34		4,500
Website and Upgrades	395	543	(148)		2,516
Total Communications Costs	**929**	**1,043**	**(114)**		**10,816**
Other costs					
Executive team costs	15,805	19,329	(3,524)		260,279
HR & Recruitment	7,500	7,643	(143)		17,057
Strategic research	-	15,000	(15,000)	£15k Provision for strategic research in April, but was invoiced in May	40,000
Office costs	546	657	(111)		8,097
Meeting rooms	806	2,000	(1,194)	Provision for meeting rooms (for recruitment) not utilised	9,500
Travel & Subsistence	164	120	44		1,440
IT Hardware	-	-	-		1,600
Information Technology	495	640	(145)		7,920
Accountancy	1,538	1,629	(91)		25,939
Audit Fees	-	-	-		15,000
Printing & Stationery	27	20	7		1,480
Insurance	408	354	54		4,909
Legal	-	-	-		10,000
Subscriptions & publications	417	373	44		4,636
Finance charges	15	10	5		180
Sundry expenses	10	-	10		10,640
	27,731	**47,776**	**(20,044)**		**418,676**
Total Expenditure	**34,894**	**56,748**	**(21,853)**		**514,692**
Surplus / (Deficit) for the period	**(7,839)**	**(29,414)**	**21,575**		**(177,453)**
Reserves Bfwd	**1,564,303**	**1,564,303**			

Reserves Cfwd	**1,556,464**	**1,534,889**

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 30th April 2024

	Apr-24		Mar-24	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets				
Current account	215,435		70,606	
Fixed term deposit accounts	1,254,293		1,004,293	
Deposit account	253,024		252,474	
Cash at bank		1,722,752		1,327,373
Prepayments	7,521		8,337	
Accrued Income	7,352		433,514	
Third Party Deposit	911		911	
Sundry debtors		15,784		442,762
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	2,350		3,220	
Deferred income	141,293		163,960	
Social security and other taxes	5,952		6,267	
Pensions	2,602		3,166	
Sundry creditors and accruals	29,875		29,219	
		182,072		205,832
Net Current Assets		**1,556,464**		**1,564,303**
Net Assets		**1,556,464**		**1,564,303**
Funds brought forward				
Funds bought forward at 31 March		1,564,303		820,488
(Deficit)/ surplus for the period		(7,839)		743,815
		1,556,464		**1,564,303**

PRP17(24)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

FINANCE REPORT – MAY 2024

Meeting: 11 June 2024

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details: Susie Uppal, Adam Gibbs (JS2)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on the finance and banking position as at 31 May 2024.

2. The Board is invited to note the latest financial position.

Background and analysis

Finance

3. A bank-reconciled set of management accounts as at 31 May 2024 is attached at Annex A. The management accounts also include the original budget for the year to March 2025.

4. The deficit for the period to date is £27,205 against a year to date budget deficit of £44,603. This represents a positive variance of £17,398 compared to the year to date forecast. Approximately half of this variance is due to a provision of £7,500 in the budget for May towards recruitment which is now expected to be settled in June.

Devolved Nations

5. There are no specific implications/differences in relation to the areas of work covered in this paper and the devolved nations.

Communications

6. There are no specific communications implications to draw out.

Risks

7. A robust position in relation to the PRP's finances is required in order to avoid reputational damage and to ensure compliance with HM Treasury's *Managing Public Money*.

Recommendations

8. The Board is invited to **note** the latest financial position regarding the PRP's finances.

Timeline for future work

9. JS2 Ltd will continue to provide updates on the PRP's financial position at meetings of the Board.

Attachment

Annex A: Management accounts as at 31 May 2024

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st May 2024

	2 months to May 2025				Full year to March 2025
	Actual	**Budget**	**Variance**		**Budget**
	£	**£**	**£**		**£**
Income					
Subscription fees	46,090	46,090	-		281,238
Bank interest	9,567	9,333	(234)		56,000
Total Income	**55,657**	**55,423**	**(234)**		**337,238**
Expenditure					
Board and Committee costs					
Salaries & NIC	11,719	14,730	(3,011)		81,930
Travel & Subsistence	447	270	177		1,270
Other costs	-	-	-		2,000
Total Board and Committee Costs	**12,166**	**15,000**	**(2,834)**		**85,200**
Communications					
Publications	-	-	-		3,800
Communications tools	534	1,000	(466)		4,500
Website and Upgrades	431	1,085	(654)		2,516
Total Communications Costs	**965**	**2,085**	**(1,120)**		**10,816**
Other costs					
Executive team costs	35,233	41,577	(6,344)		260,279
HR & Recruitment	7,500	15,287	(7,787)	Final tranche of recruitment costs £7.5k provided for in May but not yet incurred	17,057
Strategic research	15,000	15,000	-		40,000
Office costs	1,106	1,313	(207)		8,097
Meeting rooms	1,879	3,500	(1,621)	Provision for meeting rooms (for recruitment) not utilised	9,500
Travel & Subsistence	295	240	55		1,440
IT Hardware	-	-	-		1,600
Information Technology	1,189	1,280	(91)		7,920
Accountancy	3,194	3,205	(11)		25,939
Audit Fees	-	-	-		15,000
Printing & Stationery	27	40	(13)		1,480
Insurance	830	720	110		4,909
Legal	2,640	-	2,640		10,000
Subscriptions & publications	803	759	44		4,636
Finance charges	25	20	5		180
Sundry expenses	10	-	10		10,640
	69,731	**82,941**	**(13,210)**		**418,676**
Total Expenditure	**82,862**	**100,026**	**(17,164)**		**514,692**
Surplus / (Deficit) for the period	**(27,205)**	**(44,603)**	**17,398**		**(177,453)**
Reserves Bfwd	**1,564,303**	**1,564,303**			
Reserves Cfwd	**1,537,098**	**1,519,700**			

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st May 2024

	May-24		Mar-24	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets				
Current account	170,138		70,606	
Fixed term deposit accounts	1,254,293		1,004,293	
Deposit account	253,594		252,474	
Cash at bank		1,678,025		1,327,373
Prepayments	6,678		8,337	
Accrued Income	11,961		433,514	
Third Party Deposit	911		911	
Sundry debtors		19,550		442,762
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	2,002		3,220	
Deferred income	117,871		163,960	
Social security and other taxes	7,096		6,267	
Pensions	3,578		3,166	
Sundry creditors and accruals	29,930		29,219	
		160,477		205,832
Net Current Assets		**1,537,098**		**1,564,303**
Net Assets		**1,537,098**		**1,564,303**
Funds brought forward				
Funds bought forward at 31 March		1,564,303		820,488
(Deficit)/ surplus for the period		(27,205)		743,815
		1,537,098		**1,564,303**