PRP INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

BOARD PAPERS

90th Press Recognition Panel Board Meeting

Tuesday 8th September 2026

PRP INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD MEETING

90th Meeting of the Press Recognition Panel
Tuesday 8th September 2026, 10:30 to 13:00
Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London, W1W 8HF

AGENDA

			Indicative timings
	Public session		
1.	**Welcome**	Chair	10:30 – 10:30
2.	**Apologies for absence**	Chair	10:30 – 10:30
3.	**Declarations of interest**	Chair	10:30 – 10:35
4.	**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2026, outstanding actions and matters arising** *For noting*	Chair	10:35 – 10:40
5.	**Chief Executive's Report – June & July 2026** Paper PRP24(26) *For noting*	SU	10:40 – 10:50
6.	**Chief Executive's Report – August 2026** Paper PRP25(26) *For noting*	SU	10:50 – 11:00
7.	**Finance Report – July 2026** Paper PRP26(26) *For noting*	SU/JS2	11:00 – 11:05
8.	**Finance Report – August 2026** Paper PRP27(26) *For noting*	SU/JS2	11:05 – 11:10
9.	**Board Recruitment Update** Paper PRP28(26) *For noting and decision*	SU	11:10 – 11:15
10.	**Any other business and close of public session** *Including comments from the floor*	Chair	11:15 – 11:25

Confidential session

11.	**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2026, outstanding actions and matters arising** *For noting*	Chair	11:25 – 11:30
12.	**Chief Executive's Report – June and July 2026** Paper PRP24(26) *For noting*	SU	11:30 – 11:40
13.	**Chief Executive's Report – August 2026** Paper PRP25(26) *For noting*	SU	11:40 – 11:50
14.	**Finance Report – July 2026** Paper PRP26(26) *For noting*	SU/JS2	11:50 – 11:55
15.	**Finance Report – August 2026** Paper PRP27(26) *For noting*	SU/JS2	11:55 – 12:00
16.	**Board Recruitment Update** Paper PRP28(26) *For discussion and decision*	SU	12:00 – 12:20
17.	**SORR Planning** Paper PRP29(26) *For discussion and decision*	SU/AS	12:20 – 12:40
18.	**Forward Plan** Paper PRP30(26) *For noting*	SU	12:40 – 12:50
19.	**Any other business and close of meeting**	Chair	12:50 – 13:00

Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 22 October 2026, 10:30 to 13:00
Location: Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London, W1W 8HF

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the 89th Meeting of the Press Recognition Panel Board
10:30 – 13:00 Thursday 18th June 2026
Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London, W1W 8HF

In attendance

Chair:	Kathryn Cearns
Board members:	Annie Mullins, Zahera Harb, Suzanne Rab (online), Mark Williams, Hayley Stallard
Executive:	Susie Uppal, Wendy Collinson, Alan Shade
JS2:	Charlie Billingham

PUBLIC SESSION

Welcome

1. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming members of the PRP Board and Executive.

Apologies

2. Apologies were received from JS2 Director, John Speed.

Declarations of Interest

3. None received.

Minutes of the 88th PRP Board meeting held on 21 April 2026

4. The Chair invited any comments on the draft minutes.

5. Board member Zahera Harb queried if Chris Waiting's title is Independent **Member** – Industry Standards or Independent **Advisor** – Industry Standards.

   Action: The Executive to confirm Chris Waiting's title for the minutes.

Post-meeting note: Chris Waiting's letter of appointment, dated 7 January 2025, confirms his title as Independent Member – Industry Standards.

6. Board member Hayley Stallard requested that paragraph 19 of the minutes be clarified to reflect that the decision taken was to either change the title of the Data Protection Policy to 'Subject Access Policy' and to have a separate data protection policy, or to retain the title of 'Data Protection Policy.'

   Action: The Executive to amend the minutes as requested.

Chief Executive's Report – April & May 2026

7. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Report was largely up to date.

Finance Report – May 2026

8. JS2 Accounts Associate Charlie Billingham introduced the Finance Report to the end of May, noting that:

   a. We are in line with budget;

   b. There is a slight negative variance against bank interest income with lower rates being offered;

   c. There are small variances in expenditure, but these end up largely netted off;

   d. Redacted.

9. Redacted.

10. Charlie Billingham flagged that HMRC increased the business mileage rate to 55 pence per mile in May 2026, backdated to 1st April 2026. He asked if the Board would agree to implement this increase and that the Gifts, Hospitality and Expenses Policy be updated accordingly, to which the Board agreed with effect from 1st April 2026.

    Action: The Executive to update the Gifts, Hospitality and Expenses Policy as agreed and to publish on the website.

    Post-meeting note: The policy has been updated on the website.

Board Roles and Recruitment

11. The Chief Executive presented the Board Roles and Recruitment paper, noting that:

    a. The Board decided in April that Zahera Harb's and Harry Rich's respective terms of appointment should be extended, and that Chris Waiting's should not be extended.

b. We are now looking for two new board members to be in place by the end of Q1 2027 and the Executive has drafted a recruitment timetable.

c. The Executive has circulated a Skills Matrix exercise for completion by all Board members.

d. The Nominations Committee (NOMCO) will meet on Wednesday 24 June. The PRP Chair also chairs NOMCO and the Committee includes Board member Suzanne Rab and Independent Member Julie Ferguson.

e. The Executive is flagging to the Board that Julie Ferguson's final term of appointment is due to expire in June 2027, which will not interfere with the recruitment process.

f. The Board will review the NOMCO - Terms of Reference (ToR) in February 2027, as part of the Annual Governance Review, and will have the opportunity to discuss the ToR then.

12. The Board discussed the role of Independent Member – NOMCO, including the following points:

    a. Redacted.

    b. Redacted.

    c. Redacted.

    d. Redacted.

    e. Redacted.

13. Redacted.

    <u>Action</u>: Redacted.

14. The Board agreed that the Executive should amend the Independent Members Terms of Reference to align terms of appointment as an initial 3-year term, with the option of a year-by-year extension subject to the approval of the Board.

    <u>Action</u>: The Executive to amend the Independent Members – Terms of Reference Policy as agreed.

    <u>Post-meeting note</u>: The policy has been updated on the website.

15. The Board then discussed the preparation for the recruitment of two new Board members, including the following points:

a. The NOMCO will draft role specifications based on the results of the Skills Matrix exercise. The Executive will circulate the results of the exercise so that Board members can comment and agree. The Board agreed that the Recruitment Timetable should be updated to include this activity.

b. The Executive is preparing a briefing document for the NOMCO, along with the Skills Matrix results.

c. The Board agreed that it will approve the role specifications at its September meeting and the Recruitment Timetable will be updated to reflect this.

d. The selection of a recruitment agency. The Chief Executive invited recommendations from Board members for inclusion in the tender process.

Action: All Board members to send recruitment agency recommendations to the Chief Executive for consideration.

e. The Board agreed that the Board member with financial responsibility, Mark Williams, should take part in the tendering process, and that this should be included in the Recruitment Timetable.

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

Chief Executive's Report – April & May 2026

16. Redacted.

    a. Redacted.

    b. Redacted.

17. Redacted.

18. Redacted.

19. Redacted.

Action: Redacted.

Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26

20. Redacted.

    a. Redacted.

    b. Redacted.

c. Redacted.

d. Redacted.

e. Redacted.

21. Redacted.

22. Redacted.

23. Redacted.

    a. Redacted.

    b. Redacted.

    c. Redacted.

    d. Redacted.

    e. Redacted.

24. The Executive will update the ARA as agreed and will notify the NAO of the changes.

25. The Chair confirmed that if anything substantive comes up, the Board will be notified. The Board agreed to delegate responsibility for signing off the ARA to the Chair and Chief Executive.

26. The Chair expressed her thanks to everyone involved for their hard work on the ARA.

27. Redacted.

    a. Redacted.

    b. Redacted.

    c. Redacted.

28. Redacted.

29. Redacted.

    Action: Redacted.

Publication Scheme – Reporting Review

30. The Executive presented the Reporting Review to the Board, as a requirement of the updated Publication Scheme agreed by the Board at its meeting in October 2025. The Board discussed the register of meetings the PRP has held with stakeholders, including the following points:

    a. This is the first 6-monthly reporting review, and it was agreed by the Board in October that the first review should be held in the confidential section of the meeting. The Chair said that these reviews should always take place in the Confidential section.

    b. Redacted.

    c. Redacted.

    d. Redacted.

    e. Redacted.

31. The Board agreed that, subject to these amendments, the list of stakeholder meetings should be published on the PRP's website.

    Action: The Executive to update the list of stakeholder meetings as agreed and publish on the website.

32. The Board discussed the proposed amendments to the Publication Scheme and the implications of treating some categories of stakeholders differently. The Chair suggested that, in the case of Senior Government Officials and ministers, we should make it clear that we would not normally agree to anonymity. The Board agreed with this and suggested we insert an extra line in the policy.

    Action: The Executive to update the Publication Scheme as approved by the Board, and to publish it on the website.

    Post-meeting note: The policy has been updated on the website.

Forward Plan

33. Redacted.

    Action: Redacted.

Any Other Business

34. Redacted.

    Action: Redacted.

35. The next meeting of the PRP Board will be held on Tuesday 8 September 2026, 10:30 – 13:00, at Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London, W1W 8HF

PRP24(26)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

Chief Executive's Report — June & July 2026

By email: 31 July 2026

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility:

Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details:

Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Board on executive activity since the April & May 2026 report.

2. The Board is invited to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report.

Executive Summary and Board Matters

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

Operational Updates

Finance Report – June 2026

4. A bank-reconciled set of management accounts as at 30 June 2026 is attached at Annex A. The management accounts also include the original budget for the year to March 2027.

5. The surplus for the period to date is £416,372 against a year-to-date budget surplus of £414,742. This represents a positive variance of £1,630 compared to the year-to-date budget. The variance is due to minor underspend across expenditure, partly offset by a slightly lower bank interest received than expected.

6. The Finance Report for July will be included in the August CE Report.

Annual Report and Audit (ARA) 2025/26

7. Following review by the ARC and approval from the Board, the PRP's Annual Report and Audit 2025/26 was certified by the C&AG on Wednesday 24 June and was laid before Parliament on Tuesday 30th June.

Board Recruitment

8. The Nominations Committee (NOMCO) met on 24 June.

9. NOMCO reviewed the results of the Skills Matrix exercise and the Royal Charter criteria for Board appointments. It discussed the skills and experience priorities for the recruitment of two new Board members, together with the approach to engaging a recruitment agency. Further work will now be undertaken on the role specifications and Selection Panel membership, with proposals due to be presented to the Board at its September meeting.

Communications

10. Following publication of the Government's media Green Paper on 23 June 2026, the PRP published an initial statement on 26 June and shared this through social media and circulated to stakeholders. On 10 July, we published our full consultation response, setting out how the Recognition System could provide an independently verified trust signal and arguing that eligibility for future prominence arrangements should be linked to membership of an Approved Regulator. The response was circulated to 1,144 parliamentarians, 229 PRP contacts and 215 Impress publications. Our Green Paper social media posts received more than 1,000 views and 85 engagements.

11. Redacted.

12. Following the judgment for Associated Newspapers in the case brought by the Duke of Sussex and others, the PRP published social media posts highlighting the wider access-to-justice issue and the need for independent regulation and affordable redress. The posts received 3,814 views and 164 engagements. Media law commentator David Banks challenged the use of costs incentives to encourage participation in the Recognition System. The PRP responded that the repealed provisions were intended to provide low-cost arbitration as an alternative to litigation, rather than punish the press. Banks accepted that legal costs are a serious barrier to justice but maintained that they should not influence publishers' choice of regulator.

13. On 14 July the Centre for Media Monitoring event examined The Spectator's coverage of Muslims. The discussion considered recurring patterns of hostile and misleading reporting, the political, cultural and commercial factors driving them, and the value of greater coordination between organisations concerned with press standards, representation and democratic accountability.

Correspondence and Meetings

14. Redacted.

15. Redacted.

16. Redacted.

17. Redacted.

Economics Research Consultation

18. On 15 July, the PRP launched its invitation to tender for independent research into the economic costs and benefits of implementing incentives for news publishers to participate in the Recognition System: [Invitation to tender: research on the economic impact of effective press regulation].

19. The tender window will close on 3 September 2026, and we anticipate that the research will commence on 1 October 2026, concluding by 15 January 2027, subject to the successful tenderer's proposed methodology and timetable.

Executive Update

20. Redacted.

Independent Members – Terms of Reference

21. At its June meeting, the Board agreed that the Executive should amend the Independent Members' Terms of Reference to align terms of appointment as an initial 3-year term, with the option of a year-by-year extension subject to the approval of the Board. The policy has been duly updated and published on our website on 24 July.

Gifts, Hospitality and Expenses Policy

22. Following the Board's agreement to adopt the new HMRC basic mileage rate increase at its June meeting, the PRP's Gifts, Hospitality and Expenses Policy was duly updated and published on 9 July.

Media Green Paper

23. Following consultation with Board members, the PRP submitted its formal response to the Government's consultation on *Watch this space – A new strategic direction for UK media* on 10 July.

Publication Scheme Policy

24. At its June meeting, the Board reviewed the register of stakeholder meetings held by the PRP between November 2025 and May 2026. The approved list was published on 20 July 2026. The Board also approved the proposed amendment to the Publication Scheme Policy, providing greater clarity regarding our dealings with stakeholders. The Policy has been updated and was published on our website on 20 July.

External Matters Update

25. Annex D includes an update on key external matters in June & July 2026 that are relevant to our work.

Devolved Nations

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

Communications

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

Risks

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

29. The repeal of Section 40 represented a risk to the wider Recognition System. Without a suitable alternative being put in place, there continues to be little 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

30. The Board is asked to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report for June and July 2026.

Attachments

Annex

A: Management Accounts for June 2026
B: Redacted.
C: Redacted.
D: External Matters Update

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 30th June 2026

	3 months to June 2026			Full year to March 2027
	Actual £	Budget £	Variance £	Budget £
Income				
Subscription fees	73,750	73,750	-	300,070
Grant income	430,000	430,000	-	430,000
Bank interest	10,671	11,250	(579)	41,625
Total Income	**514,421**	**515,000**	**(579)**	**771,695**
Expenditure				
Board and Committee costs				
Salaries & NIC	20,597	21,360	763	84,063
Travel & Subsistence	252	570	318	1,920
Other costs	-	-	-	4,750
Total Board and Committee Costs	**20,849**	**21,930**	**1,081**	**90,733**
Communications				
Publications	-	-	-	4,350
Communications tools	-	-	-	-
Website and Upgrades	148	147	(1)	2,106
Total Communications Costs	**148**	**147**	**(1)**	**6,456**
Other costs				
Executive team costs	63,126	62,576	(550)	266,749
HR & Recruitment	-	430	430	50,136
Strategic research	-	-	-	30,000
Office costs	1,802	1,920	118	7,796
Meeting rooms	1,224	2,124	900	7,529
Travel & Subsistence	604	360	(244)	2,240
IT Hardware	-	-	-	1,920
Information Technology	2,025	2,160	135	8,640
Accountancy	6,765	6,772	7	33,391
Audit Fees	-	-	-	16,500
Printing & Stationery	-	60	60	1,340
Insurance	491	790	299	3,624
Legal	-	-	-	10,000
Subscriptions & publications	925	959	34	2,793
Finance charges	90	30	(60)	180
Sundry expenses	-	-	-	7,909
	77,052	**78,181**	**1,129**	**450,747**
Total Expenditure	**98,049**	**100,258**	**2,209**	**547,936**
Surplus / (Deficit) for the period	**416,372**	**414,742**	**1,630**	**223,759**
Reserves Bfwd	**1,774,009**	**1,774,009**		
Reserves Cfwd	**2,190,381**	**2,188,751**		

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 30th June 2026

	Jun-26		Mar-26	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets				
Current account	377,969		396,519	
Fixed term deposit accounts	1,736,222		1,232,359	
Deposit account	211,901		211,294	
Cash at bank		2,326,092		1,840,172
Prepayments	2,790		4,138	
Accrued Income	12,187		5,985	
Third Party Deposit	926		926	
Sundry debtors		15,903		11,049
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	4,600		2,166	
Deferred income	102,122		27,966	
Social security and other taxes	7,859		6,383	
Pensions	366		654	
Sundry creditors and accruals	36,667		40,043	
		151,614		77,212
Net Current Assets		**2,190,381**		**1,774,009**
Net Assets		**2,190,381**		**1,774,009**
Funds brought forward				
Funds bought forward at 31 March		1,774,009		1,894,436
(Deficit)/ surplus for the period		416,372		(120,427)
		2,190,381		**1,774,009**

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. Press Gazette reported that most of the UK's largest local news websites lost audience and engagement in April, with only 16 of the 75 titles analysed growing year on year. Average monthly audience fell 19% to 1.5m and average time spent declined 16.4%. Reach titles were hardest hit following changes to Google Discover, accounting for 18 of the 20 steepest audience falls, although the company said much of the lost traffic had previously come from outside titles' local areas. The Manchester Evening News remained the largest local newsbrand with 8.9m monthly users, while Newsquest accounted for most of the growing titles.

3. Press Gazette reported that most of the UK's 50 biggest news websites continued to lose audience year on year in May, with only 12 recording growth and 30 declining by more than 10%. The BBC remained the largest newsbrand with 42.3m users and was the only top-ten title to grow year on year. Newsquest's Oxford Mail and Herald Scotland recorded the strongest growth, rising 106.6% and 60.1% respectively, while the Daily Mail had the steepest decline among the top ten, down 25.1%. Reach titles Examiner Live and Daily Record were among the hardest hit overall, although 30 newsbrands recorded month-on-month audience growth.

4. Press Gazette reported that Mehdi Hasan's left-of-centre news company Zeteo is launching in the UK, targeting audiences dissatisfied with established media. Zeteo UK will begin publishing daily in September, led by former ITV News political correspondent Shehab Khan as political editor and former Guardian comment editor Becky Gardiner as head of opinion, with contributors including Owen Jones, Peter Oborne, Grace Blakeley and Sangita Myska. The subscription-led outlet aims to become financially self-sustaining within a year, with its initial launch funded by the US operation, which has more than 650,000 subscribers. It is regulated by Impress.

5. Press Gazette reported that The Times is close to generating more revenue from digital than print, with publisher Christopher Longcroft saying returns from digital investment are accelerating. The Times and Sunday Times have around 676,000 paying digital subscribers, up 7.5% year on year, and reported adjusted operating profit of £76m on revenue of £391m in 2025. Longcroft said the focus is on attracting engaged audiences who convert to subscriptions, with new "bonus accounts" generating around 120,000 additional users since October. He also said published journalism would remain "human-made", although staff are encouraged to use AI tools for research and other internal processes.

6. Press Gazette reported that the Mirror has launched a premium online subscription service, becoming the fourth Reach national title and the fifteenth title in the group to introduce a paywall. Mirror+ costs £3.99 a month or £19.99 for the first year and offers exclusive content, fewer adverts, unlimited app access and special offers, while most news will remain free. The move follows similar launches at the Daily Record, Express and Daily Star and comes as Reach seeks new revenue sources following a sharp fall in referral traffic from Google Discover. Editor-in-chief Chloe Hubbard said the service would give loyal readers deeper access to journalists and in-depth reporting while allowing them to support the title directly.

7. Press Gazette reported that DMGT has renamed its consumer news division from DMG Media to Daily Mail as part of an organisational restructuring. Vere Harmsworth, son of owner Lord Rothermere, has been promoted from chief commercial officer to executive chairman of Daily Mail, which will include the Mail titles and their digital brands. Metro will transfer to Harmsworth Media alongside the i Paper and New Scientist, while both divisions will remain within Associated Newspapers. Lord Rothermere said the changes were intended to support the growth of the group's news brands and continued investment in talent, technology and products.

8. The Guardian reported that German media group Axel Springer has completed its £575m takeover of Telegraph Media Group, ending three years of uncertainty over the titles' ownership. Axel Springer secured the deal after outbidding DMGT and receiving regulatory approval in the UK, Ireland and Austria. Chief executive Mathias Döpfner said the group would accelerate the Telegraph's digital and AI transformation and expand it in the US, with the ambition of making it the leading centre-right English-language media outlet. He said editorial independence would remain "sacrosanct" and backed existing editors Chris Evans and Allister Heath. However, TMG chief executive Anna Jones has departed, with Axel Springer executive Carolin Hulshoff Pol appointed in her place.

9. Press Gazette reported that Substack has published its first ranking of the 50 newsletters with the most UK paying subscribers. Michael Howell's finance newsletter Capital Wars ranked first, followed by Azeem Azhar's Exponential View and Sam Freedman's Comment is Freed. News titles in the list included Jim Waterson's local publication London Centric in eighth place, Zeteo UK in 36th, the Will Hayward Newsletter in 45th and Peter Geoghegan's Democracy for Sale in 48th. UK paid subscriptions on Substack passed 500,000 in April, making Britain the platform's largest market outside the US.

10. Press Gazette reported that the Canary suspended its national weekday print edition after a two-week trial, following its claim that Lloyds had closed its account and withheld a substantial amount of money. The Impress-regulated publisher said it had been left with barely any funds and unable to pay all staff, although it maintained that the initial print run had always been intended as an operational

trial and that it planned to relaunch. It appealed for donations and suggested the decision might form part of a wider pattern of politically motivated debanking, while acknowledging that Lloyds had given no reason for its action. Other independent media figures described the case as a threat to press freedom and called on Lloyds to explain its decision or restore the account. Lloyds said it did not comment on individual customer accounts.

11. Press Gazette reported that Reach is moving away from high-volume publishing towards more original, brand-specific journalism after steep falls in traffic and revenue. In the first half of 2026, revenue fell 9% to £232.9m, digital revenue declined 11%, and website audiences dropped 40%, partly because Google referral traffic fell 55%. Reach said it would focus instead on digital subscriptions, video and AI licensing, with 40,000 paid online subscribers across 15 brands and a target of 75,000 by year-end. However, further job cuts are expected in the second half of 2026, with regional print production and affiliate roles already at risk. The company's share price fell by almost a quarter following the results.

12. Press Gazette reported that New Internationalist has raised more than £160,000 from over 1,600 supporters, exceeding its crowdfunding target and bringing the Impress-regulated magazine back from the brink of financial failure. The co-operative publisher, which has 13 part-time staff, blamed rising print costs, weaker subscription marketing, reduced grant funding and falling Google traffic linked partly to AI-generated search summaries. Revenue fell from about £989,000 in 2024/25 to £756,000 in 2025/26, producing losses of more than £100,000 and £149,000 respectively.

Legal

13. BBC News reported that Prince Harry and six other claimants – Baroness Doreen Lawrence, Sir Elton John, David Furnish, Elizabeth Hurley, Sadie Frost and Sir Simon Hughes – lost their High Court privacy case against Associated Newspapers, publisher of the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday. Following a 46-day trial, Mr Justice Nicklin dismissed all 97 allegations of unlawful information gathering, which included claims of voicemail interception, phone tapping, bugging and the deceptive acquisition of medical, financial and travel information.

    - The judge said the seriousness of the allegations required convincing evidence and that "suspicion, even where understandable", was not proof. He assessed the disputed incidents individually rather than deciding whether unlawful practices were generally widespread at the newspapers, and accepted journalists' lawful explanations for how information had been obtained. He also found insufficient evidence that senior Associated figures Paul Dacre, Peter Wright and Elizabeth Hartley had lied to the Leveson Inquiry.
    - Harry and Baroness Lawrence called the ruling a "complete and obvious whitewash" and said they had received neither justice nor accountability. Associated Newspapers described it as an "overwhelming victory" and

"vindication" of its journalism. Dacre went further, characterising the litigation as a campaign to destroy the newspaper and revive Leveson Part Two. Associated has said the combined legal costs exceeded £50m, although responsibility for those costs remains to be determined.

- Much of the supportive press commentary presented the judgment as a victory for press freedom and a major setback for Hacked Off and campaigners seeking a second Leveson inquiry or greater regulation. The Telegraph, Times and Express also linked the case to wider concerns about the Government's Media Green Paper and who might determine which news providers are considered "trusted".
- Legal analysis focused on the weakness of the claimants' evidence, particularly the disputed statement of private investigator Gavin Burrows, who subsequently denied making the admissions attributed to him. Commentators said the ruling reinforced the need to prove unlawful sourcing article by article, rather than relying on generic evidence about practices elsewhere in the press.
- More critical commentary cautioned that the legal defeat did not vindicate every aspect of the Mail titles' journalism. Alan Rusbridger highlighted evidence of highly intrusive reporting into pregnancies, relationships and medical treatment; the judge described one unpublished draft concerning Sadie Frost's ectopic pregnancy as potentially "grotesque and unjustifiable". The claimants also established that Associated had spent more than £3m on private investigators, although they could not prove that they had been commissioned to act unlawfully.
- Professor Steve Barnett argued that the result differed from previous cases against Mirror Group and News Group largely because the judge required article-specific proof: generic evidence of unlawful practices could not be used to infer that a particular story had been sourced illegally, and the claimants had to exclude plausible lawful explanations for each article.
- The Observer concluded that the result was likely to weaken the case for press reform in the short term, but said the wider political contest over Leveson, independent regulation and the Green Paper would continue under the incoming Burnham Government.

14. The Law Society Gazette reported that media lawyer Iain Wilson, vice-chair of the Society of Media Lawyers, has argued that new anti-SLAPP legislation is unnecessary and could increase the cost and complexity of defamation proceedings. Responding to Private Members' Bills introduced by Baroness Stowell and Sir John Whittingdale, Wilson said courts already have powers to strike out abusive or unmeritorious claims and that questions of public interest should generally be determined at trial. He questioned the evidence that courts are facing significant numbers of SLAPP claims and argued that legislation focused on issued proceedings would not address concerns about pre-publication legal threats. Wilson also criticised politicians for responding to media lobbying without sufficiently consulting lawyers representing victims of media and online abuse.

15. BBC News and Press Gazette reported that the Sun's publisher, News Group Newspapers, has agreed to pay "substantial" libel damages and legal costs to former Coronation Street actor Qasim Akhtar. The newspaper falsely alleged that Akhtar had supported an Islamic cleric, was associated with extremism and radicalisation, and had moved to Pakistan and trained with firearms. NGN accepted that the claims were entirely false, acknowledged the serious harm caused to Akhtar's reputation, family life and safety, and admitted that it had failed to seek his response before publication. The Sun apologised unreservedly and agreed not to repeat the allegations.

16. Press Gazette reported that the Daily Mail is facing a proposed US class action alleging the "systematic" unauthorised use of photographs taken from social media. Photographer Matthew Moore claims the publisher copied an image he owned from Instagram, uploaded it to its own systems and credited the platform rather than the copyright holder. The lawsuit alleges this was part of a wider practice affecting numerous creators and estimates potential liabilities could exceed $10m a year under US copyright law. It seeks to represent photographers whose work was republished without permission or with allegedly false platform credits; the claims have not yet been determined by the court.

17. BBC News reported that energy entrepreneur Dale Vince is set to receive damages from Associated Newspapers after the Court of Appeal upheld his data protection claim over a 2023 Daily Mail article. The story concerned another Labour donor accused of sexual harassment but placed photographs of Vince immediately beneath the headline, creating a misleading impression for casual readers. Although Vince's earlier libel claim failed because the article clarified the position when read as a whole, the Court of Appeal ruled that using his personal data in this way was nevertheless unfair under data protection law. A HoldTheFrontPage legal analysis said the ruling could open a significant new frontier for claimants over misleading combinations of headlines and images, although the established principle that libel articles must be read as a whole remains intact.

18. Press Gazette reported that Associated Newspapers has agreed to pay substantial libel damages and legal costs to Loose Women panellist Nadia Sawalha and her husband, Mark Adderley, over false articles published by the Daily Mail and Metro. The reports wrongly suggested that Adderley had shared material supporting Hamas and antisemitic conspiracy theories, and that Sawalha endorsed those views. Both titles published full corrections and apologies, acknowledging that the allegations were untrue and had caused distress. Sawalha and Adderley said the claims had endangered them and their family, while their solicitor described the allegations as serious and damaging.

19. PR professional Anna Melton said the Daily Mail has apologised and paid her a financial settlement after publishing a first-person article under her name that she did not write. The article, which appeared in print and online, falsely presented her as the author of a piece about mothers taking cocaine at children's parties,

causing what she described as significant professional and personal harm. Melton said it took almost 11 months to secure the outcome after an initially discourteous complaints process, and that IPSO had failed to resolve the matter. She credited the Press Justice Project, her legal team and support from LinkedIn users with helping her obtain redress, and said the case raised wider concerns about editorial standards, complaints handling and the effectiveness of the current press regulation system.

20. Press Gazette reported that Mirror Group Newspapers has agreed to pay "substantial" damages and legal costs to model Paul Sculfor over the alleged unlawful acquisition of private information while he was dating Jennifer Aniston and Cameron Diaz. His claim concerned nine articles published between 2007 and 2009 and was supported by call data and private investigator invoices identifying him as a target. Mr Justice Fancourt allowed the case to proceed despite its age, finding that Sculfor had been misled into blaming family and friends for the disclosures and therefore did not discover the possible phone hacking earlier. MGN apologised for the distress caused and acknowledged that his information should not have been obtained or used in the manner it was.

Academic

21. The Reuters Institute's 2026 Digital News Report, based on surveys of almost 100,000 people across 48 markets, highlights significant challenges for trust, engagement and accountability in news globally. For the UK specifically:

    - Trust in news fell five percentage points to 30%, below the 37% global average. However, trust in individual news brands was broadly stable, with the BBC, ITV News, Channel 4 and Financial Times among the most trusted.
    - Half of UK respondents now sometimes or often avoid the news, up four points, while the proportion highly interested in news has fallen from 70% in 2015 to 37%.
    - Although established print and broadcast brands still dominate UK news consumption and direct access remains comparatively strong, television use has fallen by 12 points since 2021, and younger adults increasingly favour social media and video networks.
    - Concerns about platforms are particularly high: 73% distrust news on social media and 77% are concerned about fake news and misinformation. Some 18% consume news from a news-focused creator or influencer each week.
    - Only 10% pay for online news, while use of AI chatbots for news remains low and did not increase over the past year. UK audiences also expressed substantial dissatisfaction with coverage of major issues, particularly immigration.

Political

Parliamentary questions

22. Lord Watts (Labour life peer) tabled a question asking His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take, if any, to introduce legislation to raise standards in the British press.

    Baroness Twycross (Labour life peer) responded: “In the UK, there is a self-regulatory system for the press, which is independent from Government. This is important for press freedom and to ensure the public has access to accurate and trustworthy information from a range of different sources. However, with this freedom comes responsibility. We expect publishers to operate within the bounds of the law and adhere to high ethical and professional standards, as well as ensure appropriate routes to redress if these standards are not met.

    Looking ahead, we are closely following trends in media consumption and are carefully considering the best route forward to safeguard public trust in our news media. There are currently no plans for legislation on press standards.”

23. Liz Jarvis (Liberal Democrat, Eastleigh) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the regulatory framework for print and online news publishers; what assessment she has made of the potential merits of independent regulation for the print and online media in safeguarding press freedom, accuracy and better standards; and what proposals her Department are considering to strengthen independent regulation of national news publishers.

    Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded: “As a government we are closely following trends in media consumption and are carefully considering the best route forward to safeguard public trust in our news media.

    In the UK, there is a self-regulatory system for the press, which is independent from government. This is important for press freedom and to ensure the public has access to accurate and trustworthy information from a range of different sources. However, with this freedom comes responsibility. We expect all publishers, both local and national, to operate within the bounds of the law and adhere to high ethical and professional standards, as well as ensure appropriate routes to redress if these standards are not met.

    The majority of traditional publishers are members of IPSO. Some publishers have joined Impress, while others, including the Financial Times and the Guardian, have chosen to stay outside either regulator with their own detailed self-regulatory arrangements. These regulators enforce codes of conduct, for both print and online news publications, which provide guidelines on a range of areas including accuracy. If they find that a newspaper has broken the code of conduct, they can order corrections.”

24. Matt Vickers (Conservative, Stockton West) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to protect media plurality and ensure that a wide range of political viewpoints are represented in UK broadcasting.

Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded: “The Government is strongly committed to supporting a free, sustainable, and plural media landscape. Newspapers, news magazines and broadcasters play a unique role in providing accurate news and information, and are a key part of our democracy.

Through the public interest media mergers regime set out in the Enterprise Act 2002, the Secretary of State is able to intervene in acquisitions if she believes public interest considerations may be relevant. These include plurality of views for newspapers and plurality of persons with control for newspapers and broadcasters.

In addition, Ofcom’s Broadcasting Code includes rules to ensure due impartiality is preserved on matters of political or industrial controversy, and matters relating to current public policy. In dealing with these matters an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme, or in clearly linked and timely programmes.”

25. Matt Vickers (Conservative, Stockton West) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) protect media plurality and (b) ensure a wide range of political viewpoints in broadcasting.

    Matt Vickers (Conservative, Stockton West) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Ofcom on maintaining operational independence when considering complaints against licensed broadcasters.

    Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded to both questions: “The Government is strongly committed to supporting a free, sustainable, and plural media landscape. Newspapers, news magazines and broadcasters play a unique role in providing accurate news and information, and are a key part of our democracy.

    Through the public interest media mergers regime set out in the Enterprise Act 2002, the Secretary of State is able to intervene in acquisitions if she believes public interest considerations may be relevant. These include plurality of views for newspapers and plurality of persons with control for newspapers and broadcasters.

    In addition, Ofcom’s Broadcasting Code includes rules to ensure due impartiality is preserved on matters of political or industrial controversy, and matters relating to current public policy. In dealing with these matters an appropriately wide range of significant views must be included and given due weight in each programme, or in clearly linked and timely programmes.

    Ministers and officials have regular discussions with Ofcom on a range of issues. However, Ofcom, by law, carries out its regulation of licensed broadcasters independently of the Government, and the Government does not intervene in Ofcom's operational decisions. It is for individual broadcasters to determine how they comply with the requirements in the Broadcasting Code.”

26. Ian Sollom (Liberal Democrat, St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to implement the recommendations of Part One of the Leveson Inquiry; and whether she plans to resume Part Two.

    Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded: “The Leveson Inquiry led to changes in the regulatory system of the press, which included the creation of the Press Recognition Panel, by Royal Charter, and two new press regulators, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and the Independent Monitor of the Press (Impress). This is a self-regulatory system, which was established to be independent from Government and protect press freedom. A free and fair press is vital to ensure the public has access to accurate and trustworthy information from a range of different sources. We are also clear that with this freedom comes responsibility, and newspapers must operate within the bounds of the law.

    Given the substantial changes to the news landscape over the past decade, the Government remains of the view that beginning the second part of the Leveson Inquiry is not the right way forward. As a government we are closely following trends in media consumption and are carefully considering the best route forward to safeguard public trust in our news media.”

27. Sir James Cleverly (Conservative, Braintree) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Amplify: The Local Media Action Plan, published 17 March 2026, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposals to review statutory notices on the financial viability of local and regional newspapers.

    Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded: “The Local Media Action Plan sets out our plans for a review of statutory notices, including a consultation on whether changes are needed to better ensure that communities have access to journalistic scrutiny of local decisionmaking.

    Our review will take into account factors including the financial viability of local and regional newspapers, and will be informed by the following principles, that we:

    - continue to drive transparency and accountability in local governance
    - serve all audiences
    - help ensure value for money to the local authorities and others required to publicise the information contained within statutory notices
    - maintain a link to journalistic scrutiny
    - foster innovation in the local media ecosystem and do not unfairly disadvantage local news outlets with a proven track record in public interest journalism regardless of whether they operate in print, online or both.

    We aim to launch the consultation in Autumn 2026 and publish a response in the first half 2027 with details of our planned next steps.”

28. Kevin McKenna (Labour, Sittingbourne and Sheppey) tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework for news publishers in (a) raising press standards and (b) addressing (i) discrimination and (ii) other abuses.

Ian Murray (Labour, Edinburgh South) responded: "As a government we are closely following trends in media consumption and are carefully considering the best route forward to safeguard public trust in our news media.

In the UK, there is a self-regulatory system for the press, which is independent from government. An independent press is important for press freedom and to ensure the public has access to accurate and trustworthy information from a range of different sources. However, with this freedom comes responsibility. We expect all publishers, both local and national, to operate within the bounds of the law and adhere to high ethical and professional standards, as well as ensure appropriate routes to redress if these standards are not met.

The majority of traditional publishers are members of IPSO. Some publishers have joined Impress, while others, including the Financial Times and the Guardian, have chosen to stay outside either regulator with their own detailed self-regulatory arrangements. These regulators enforce codes of conduct, for both print and online news publications, which provide guidelines on a range of areas including discrimination. If they find that a newspaper has broken the code of conduct, they can order corrections."

Debates

29. During a Commons debate on digital safety for children, Liberal Democrat MP Christine Jardine compared reliance on technology companies' self-regulation with the historic approach to the press. She said decades of press self-regulation had ultimately led to the Leveson Inquiry and questioned why the same mistake was being repeated with tech platforms.

30. During a Lords debate on government departments' use of X, ministers highlighted concerns about disinformation, bots and foreign actors using social media to fuel division and unrest. Cabinet Office minister Baroness Anderson said Ofcom must use its Online Safety Act powers and that the Government would consider further action if these proved insufficient. She also said that, as most people now access news online, it was important to protect "free and fair journalism" and ensure access to genuine and accurate information. Responding to a proposal to provide newspapers in secondary schools, she said the suggestion would be fed into the Government's current DCMS consultation, alongside its media literacy work.

31. Parliamentary scrutiny of the Media Green Paper focused on how "trusted news" would be defined and whether prominence could become linked to "state-approved regulation". In both the Commons and Lords, ministers said the proposals could cover local and national publishers as well as broadcasters, but

that the eligibility criteria would be determined through consultation in an open and transparent way. Conservative MPs and peers questioned whether newspapers might be required to join a recognised regulator and whether titles such as the Telegraph, Guardian or GB News would qualify, while Jeremy Corbyn urged the Government not to forget the Leveson recommendations. Giving evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy said possible criteria could include industry codes, the type of institution and public perceptions of trust.

32. In a Commons debate following the death of Ann Widdecombe, MPs raised concerns about media and social media conduct. Labour (Co-op) MP Helena Dollimore asked the Government to address newspapers publishing material that could identify politicians' homes, while Conservative MPs Mark Pritchard and Sir Iain Duncan Smith called for stronger action against harmful, violent and abusive online content. Reform UK MP Suella Braverman criticised newspaper commentary and conspiracy theories surrounding Widdecombe's death and urged greater restraint. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said she would raise the privacy concerns with the Speaker, House authorities, DCMS and IPSO, and indicated that the Government might need to go further in holding social media companies accountable.

33. During Report Stage of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, Liberal Democrat MP Tom Morrison proposed an amendment expressly covering misleading information supplied by public authorities or officials to recognised news publishers. Andy Slaughter (Lab) supported the amendment, citing the promotion of police lies after Hillsborough and failings in the News of the World phone-hacking investigations, while Ian Byrne (Lab) referred to the vilification of Hillsborough victims and renewed his call for Leveson Part Two. Justice Minister Catherine Atkinson said the Bill's offence of misleading the public already extended to information given to recognised news publishers, making the amendment unnecessary, and noted that any prosecution would require the Director of Public Prosecutions' consent. The amendment was debated but not made.

34. During Prime Minister's Questions, Dr Rupa Huq (Lab) asked whether the accountability principles behind the Public Office (Accountability) Bill could also be applied to the "gutter press", arguing that media coverage had sometimes compounded the suffering of families affected by scandals such as Grenfell and Windrush. Sir Keir Starmer said the Hillsborough law was intended to address the further injustice caused when the state failed to admit wrongdoing and establish the truth, but he did not respond directly to Huq's point about press accountability.

Committee news

35. The Science, Innovation and Technology Committee warned that the Government has not done enough to tackle the online amplification of

misinformation following unrest in Belfast. Committee chair Dame Chi Onwurah said recommendation algorithms had previously helped drive violence during the Southport disorder, but most of the Committee's proposed reforms were rejected. She welcomed Ofcom's plans to recommend crisis protocols for some platforms, but said stronger measures were needed to limit the viral spread of legal but harmful content and speed up regulatory responses. Onwurah urged the Government to revisit the Committee's recommendations and explain the role of social media in the Belfast unrest and its planned next steps.

36. The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee has launched an inquiry into the implementation, enforcement and impact of the Online Safety Act, one year after key child-safety duties came into force. The Committee said concerns had arisen that the regime was not working effectively and that Ofcom had been too slow or insufficiently robust in holding technology companies to account. The inquiry will examine both Ofcom's enforcement and whether weaknesses in the legislation itself are limiting its effectiveness or leaving it unable to respond to emerging harms. Chair Baroness Keeley said the Committee would consider what legal and regulatory changes were needed to make online services safer. Written evidence is invited by 7 September 2026.

Other political news

37. Following his appointment as Prime Minister, Andy Burnham restored the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, transferring digital policy and online safety back into the culture department, and reappointed Lisa Nandy as Culture Secretary. He abolished the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, expanded the business department to cover innovation and science, and appointed Kanishka Narayan as a joint Cabinet Office and business department Minister for AI. The Media Stack described Burnham as the most strongly pro-Leveson Prime Minister to enter Downing Street, citing his longstanding commitment to reviving Leveson Part Two following his work on Hillsborough.

38. Press Gazette reported that newly released messages reveal Peter Mandelson and Wes Streeting attended a dinner with senior News UK figures, including Lachlan Murdoch, Rebekah Brooks and Times editor Tony Gallagher, three days before the 2024 general election. The meeting appeared to form part of a Labour effort to secure press support, with Streeting later praising Mandelson's "masterful" handling of Gallagher and saying the party would need "strong outriders". An ally of Streeting said he had met editors from the Guardian, Sun and Times at Keir Starmer's request to seek endorsements. The Guardian and Sunday Times backed Labour before the dinner, the Sun endorsed Labour on election day, while The Times declined to support any party.

39. The Canary reported that Green Party leader Zack Polanski has accused the Telegraph of "making up quotes" after it paraphrased comments about 7p vegetables and supermarket exploitation as "Food is too cheap". The Canary

argued that this distorted Polanski's meaning by implying he believed all food was too cheap, rather than criticising low prices as evidence that workers and farmers were being exploited. Polanski said parts of the media were "literally lying".

40. The Guardian reported that the Attorney General's Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have stopped posting on X over concerns about misinformation, abuse and far-right content. Attorney General Richard Hermer acted following unrest in Southampton and Belfast, where agitators used the platform to promote division and violence, although his office may still use it to counter disinformation. Two weeks later, Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy announced that she and DCMS would also leave, saying X now favoured "abuse and misinformation over meaningful debate" and was unhealthy for democracy and communities. The moves make the two departments the first in Government to withdraw from the platform.

41. The Government published its media Green Paper, Watch this Space, proposing that social media and video-sharing platforms could be required to give greater prominence to news from public service media and other "trustworthy providers". The consultation also covers wider public service media reform and stronger media literacy responsibilities. Press reaction focused heavily on who would determine which publishers were "trustworthy". The Times and Telegraph warned of political bias, state overreach and the possibility that prominence could become linked to membership of a "state-sanctioned regulator".

42. The Telegraph reported that US House Judiciary Committee chair Jim Jordan has warned Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy that proposals to give greater online prominence to the BBC and other trusted news sources could threaten free speech and infringe the rights of American technology companies. In a letter requesting a briefing from DCMS, Jordan argued that the plans would prioritise "state-sanctioned" media and influence public discourse rather than preserve a competitive marketplace of ideas. The intervention reflects wider tensions between the UK Government and Washington over regulation affecting US tech companies, including social media age restrictions and the digital services tax.

43. The Government has launched a Local News Fund offering up to £12m over two years to support the financial sustainability of local journalism in England and Wales. In 2026/27, local print, online, television and radio outlets can apply for grants of up to £125,000 to develop digital tools, reach younger audiences and generate new revenue, while organisations providing shared industry infrastructure can bid for up to £275,000. A further £1m will be reserved in 2027/28 to revive or establish news provision in "news deserts", with up to 37 local authority areas currently lacking a dedicated local outlet. Applications will be assessed by government officials and an independent industry steering board.

44. The Guardian reported that Nigel Farage threatened Sky News with "serious consequences" after being questioned about financial support from George

Cottrell, accusing the broadcaster of harassing his family and breaking “all the rules, Leveson and everything else”. Sky said it had not contacted any member of his family. Farage also had a heated confrontation with Times editor Tony Gallagher over coverage of his finances and a photograph accompanying a story about his properties, which Reform figures said created a security risk. The Times denied that it identified any location. His invocation of Leveson was said to have angered senior newspaper figures and highlighted worsening relations between Reform UK and the right-wing press. Commentary in The New World and The Sun accused him of treating legitimate scrutiny as persecution, exposing tension with his longstanding support for free speech and a free press.

Approved regulator

45. Impress announced that its Dublin-based subsidiary, Impress Dispute Resolutions, has been certified by Irish regulator Coimisiún na Meán as an out-of-court dispute settlement body under the EU Digital Services Act. The service will allow users across the EU to challenge content moderation decisions by major platforms including TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and X, covering issues such as illegal content, account suspensions, privacy breaches, hate speech, misinformation and non-consensual images. The service will be free to users, with platforms bearing the cost where a dispute is decided in the user’s favour. Decisions will be non-binding but may support regulatory enforcement and identify wider problems such as discriminatory algorithms, shadow-banning and demonetisation. The service is due to launch in August 2026.

IPSO

46. Lynn News reported that the Sandringham Estate has put up signs outside properties in Wolferton telling journalists not to approach residents or enter private land, warning that breaches will be reported to IPSO. The signs followed repeated visits by national, international and local media to homes near Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor’s residence. The article noted that while the properties are private, surrounding roads remain public and photographers may legally take pictures from them. The Sandringham Estate declined to comment.

47. IPSO rejected a complaint by Sophie Molly against The Sunday Times over a comment column that referred to her as a “bloke”, “Mr Molly” and a “lunatic” after she objected to a Christmas card design. Molly alleged breaches of accuracy, discrimination and harassment. IPSO found the descriptions were clearly presented as the columnist’s provocative and satirical opinions about her actions and his views on sex, gender identity and censorship, rather than factual claims about her mental health. It acknowledged that the references were offensive to Molly but concluded they were not prejudicial or pejorative in context under the Editors’ Code. IPSO also ruled that publication of a single critical article did not constitute harassment, and the complaint was not upheld.

48. IPSO upheld Jenny Holmwood's complaint against the Norwich Evening News over an article published on the day of her partner's death. The newspaper reported unverified claims that she had formed relationships with lodgers and rented rooms because of financial difficulties, but could not provide the reporter's notes or evidence that it had checked the allegations. IPSO found serious breaches of Clause 1 because the claims concerned Holmwood's personal life and finances, were potentially damaging, and were neither corrected nor apologised for. It also upheld the complaint under Clause 4, finding that publishing the claims in the immediate aftermath of the death, in a way that implied relevance to it, showed a failure to handle grief sensitively. IPSO required publication of its adjudication and separately criticised the newspaper's unsympathetic conduct during the complaints process.

49. Press Gazette reported that IPSO upheld part of Victoria Mayo's complaint against the East Anglian Daily Times over its coverage of assault allegations against her, which were later dropped. IPSO accepted that the newspaper's contemporaneous notes supported its report that Mayo was accused in court of pulling her partner's hair. However, it found a breach of Clause 1 after the article stated that photographs of injuries would be shown at a later hearing, despite the reporter's notes containing no such reference and a police report recording no obvious injury. IPSO said this significantly misrepresented the nature and seriousness of the alleged offence and ordered the newspaper to publish corrections online and in print. Complaints under Clause 2 over the use of a Facebook photograph and Clause 3 concerning prominence were rejected.

Campaigners' news

50. Hacked Off argued that national newspapers are repeating misleading analysis from the Centre for Social Justice without adequate scrutiny. It highlighted a Daily Express claim that 27 young foreign workers were hired for every British worker, saying the figure compared changes in employment totals over six years rather than actual hiring rates, and a Sun claim that six million workers would be better off on benefits, which relied on an unusually generous hypothetical claimant rather than typical circumstances. Hacked Off said both stories presented politically charged conclusions unsupported by the underlying data and demonstrated the need for newspapers to verify think-tank research before publication.

51. The News Media Association welcomed the introduction of anti-SLAPP Private Members' Bills by Baroness Stowell in the House of Lords and John Whittingdale MP in the Commons. NMA general counsel Sayra Tekin said SLAPPs exploit cost, delay and pressure to silence public interest reporting, and argued that Baroness Stowell's Bill would allow courts to dismiss abusive claims early while preserving legitimate access to justice. She said stronger protections were particularly important for local and regional publishers and freelance journalists, and urged the Government to work with both parliamentarians to deliver effective legislation.

52. The NUJ, News Media Association, Independent Media Association and Hacked Off broadly welcomed the Government's media Green Paper's focus on trusted news and platform power, but differed sharply over how eligibility for prominence should be determined. The NUJ supported greater prominence for public service media and a national media literacy initiative, while calling for dedicated funding, AI transparency and action to protect journalism jobs. The NMA warned that any regime must preserve plurality and should not narrow eligibility beyond the Online Safety Act definition of a "recognised news publisher". By contrast, the IMA said that definition was too broad because it does not require independent enforcement of standards, and argued that prominence should reward publishers subject to independent regulation. Hacked Off similarly said the public benefit of prominence should be conditional on meaningful standards of accuracy and ethics, rejecting claims that independent regulation amounted to "state control" and arguing that the Green Paper offered an opportunity to strengthen public accountability.

53. Hacked Off reported on its Better Media Rally in Westminster, where victims of press abuse, campaigners, academics and public figures called for implementation of the Leveson reforms and independent press regulation. Speakers including Hugh Grant, Misan Harriman and Tulisa Contostavlos criticised IPSO's low complaint uphold rate, lack of standards investigations and industry funding, while arguing that press freedom must be matched by accountability. The event also highlighted concerns about discriminatory and misleading coverage, including reporting affecting Muslim communities, domestic abuse victims and Hillsborough families. Campaigners expressed hope that an incoming government under Andy Burnham might revive Leveson Part Two and introduce a regulatory system independent of both politicians and publishers.

54. Hacked Off criticised The Spectator and City AM for what it described as false and misleading claims about press regulation and Andy Burnham's possible support for reform. It rejected suggestions that Hugh Grant or Hacked Off campaign for censorship, restrictions on free speech or "state control", arguing instead for regulation independent of both government and publishers, with no power to prevent publication. Hacked Off also disputed both outlets' accounts of the Leveson recommendations and Section 40, saying these were intended to create independent complaints handling and protect regulated publishers from meritless litigation. It accused the publications of relying on distortions to defend the current IPSO system and said independent regulation would strengthen, rather than weaken, press freedom and public trust.

55. The NUJ expressed concern that the Canary had suspended its national weekday print edition and might be unable to pay all staff after Lloyds reportedly closed its account and withheld funds without explanation. General secretary Laura Davison said cutting off an independent publisher's financial access in this way set a "disturbing precedent for press freedom", threatened employment for

staff and freelancers, and risked weakening media plurality. The union said it was in contact with the Canary and was seeking clarification from Lloyds.

56. The NUJ welcomed the Government's £12m Local News Fund, saying it recognised that local journalism could not be left solely to market forces and played a vital role in democracy and social cohesion. The union noted that £6m would be distributed in 2026/27, including grants of up to £125,000 for local outlets and up to £275,000 for industry-wide infrastructure, with £1m earmarked for tackling "news deserts" in 2027/28. However, it urged the Government to go further through increased investment, a 6% windfall tax on tech companies, clearer labelling of AI-generated journalism, media ownership reform and better conditions for staff and freelancers.

57. Hacked Off said the High Court judgment had not exonerated the Daily Mail or removed the case for Leveson Part Two. Jacqui Hames argued that the civil proceedings were limited to whether unlawful methods could be proved in relation to 57 specific articles, rather than being a wider investigation into the publisher's practices. She said the claimants established that Associated Newspapers had paid more than £3m to private investigators who used unlawful methods, but could not provide sufficient evidence linking that activity to the individual articles. Hames also argued that much of the reporting was unjustifiably intrusive regardless of how the information was obtained, and said the case reinforced the need for Leveson Part Two and effective independent press regulation.

58. ARTICLE 19 said the High Court judgment exposed the limits of relying on individual civil claims to address wider questions of press accountability. Although the claimants failed to prove that unlawful methods were used for the specific articles at issue, the court accepted that Associated Newspapers had used private investigators and that some had obtained information through deception or in circumstances suggesting unlawful activity. ARTICLE 19 argued that these broader concerns remain unresolved and called on the Government to complete Leveson Part Two, saying press freedom should be protected through independent accountability rather than freedom from scrutiny.

59. Hacked Off rejected press claims that it was behind or funded the privacy litigation against Associated Newspapers, stressing that the organisation had no formal role in the cases and that Hacked Off was not criticised in the judgment. It accepted that the claimants failed to prove unlawful sourcing for the 57 articles at issue, but argued that the Mail had not been broadly exonerated. Hacked Off said the judgment demonstrated the limits of individual court actions and strengthened the case for completing Leveson Part Two and introducing independent press regulation.

60. The Centre for Media Monitoring published No Mere Spectator, an analysis of 3,733 articles about Islam and Muslim communities published by The Spectator between 2018 and 2025. CfMM found that 57.4% of articles were "biased" or "very biased", rising to 72.8% for coverage of Islamophobia, while only 11.6% of

all articles were assessed as unbiased. The report identified recurring narratives linking Muslims with extremism, security threats and incompatibility with British society, as well as the dismissal of concerns about Islamophobia and the portrayal of Muslim political participation, immigration and demographic change as threats. CfMM said these were sustained editorial patterns rather than isolated lapses and argued that the findings raised wider questions about media standards, accountability and the representation of Muslim communities.

61. The Evening Standard reported that Tulisa Contostavlos has launched a “Fix the Press” campaign calling for independent press regulation following the collapse of her 2014 drugs trial, which arose from an undercover Sun on Sunday sting by Mazher Mahmood. Tulisa said the experience devastated her reputation and argued that IPSO is not sufficiently independent because it is funded and controlled by the newspaper industry. Backed by Hacked Off, she is calling for a regulator independent of both government and publishers, with powers to investigate, fine and protect the public. Tulisa, Christine Flack, Hillsborough campaigners Margaret Aspinall and Sue Roberts, and other victims of press misconduct also wrote to Prime Minister Andy Burnham urging him to act on his previous commitment to Leveson and require publishers to join an independent regulator.

62. Hacked Off board director Mandy Garner urged Prime Minister Andy Burnham to act on what he has described as the British state’s “dangerous” lack of accountability. In an open letter, she linked failures in press regulation with wider problems in the criminal justice system and the repeated failure to implement recommendations from public inquiries, arguing that this erodes public trust. Drawing on her family’s experience after her daughter was killed and on the Daily Mail’s publication of footage relating to her death, Garner criticised systems that resist admitting mistakes or providing meaningful redress. She called on Burnham to complete the unfinished work on independent press regulation and ensure that inquiries lead to action rather than further delay.

PRP25(26)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

Chief Executive's Report — August 2026

Meeting: 8 September 2026

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility:

Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details:

Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Board on executive activity since the June/July 2026 report.
2. The Board is invited to note the contents of the Chief Executive's report.

Executive Summary and Board Matters

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

Operational Updates

Board Member Interests

4. The Chair has notified Zahera Harb, the Senior Independent Board Member, that she has taken on two new external appointments. With effect from 1 September 2026, she will become a Non-Executive Director of the Low Carbon Contracts Company Ltd and the Electricity Settlements Company Ltd, and designate Chair of their Audit and Risk Committee. The Chair has also informed Zahera Harb of a further appointment which remains confidential pending an official announcement. The PRP's Register of Interests will be updated accordingly.

Board Recruitment

5. Following NOMCO's consideration of the Skills Matrix, further work has been undertaken to develop the recruitment process for two new Board members. An updated recruitment timetable has been prepared, with the intention that the process will be substantially completed during Q1 2027 and preferred candidates formally appointed in April 2027.

6. Recruitment priorities and considerations have been refined, and an Invitation to Quote (ITQ) has been developed for the appointment of a recruitment agency. The September Board will be asked to approve the timetable and ITQ.

Communications update

7. The PRP issued a statement following the death of Professor Jason Arday and the subsequent public debate about press standards, discrimination and accountability. Professor Arday had faced intense media scrutiny in the weeks before his death. The statement offered sympathy to his family and friends, focused on the wider issues raised by harmful, discriminatory and cumulative reporting, and identified the continuing need for effective, independent press self-regulation.

8. The statement was published on the PRP's website and social media channels and prompted a range of responses and wider discussion about press regulation and accountability, including:

    a) Impress Chair Caron Bradshaw OBE shared the statement on LinkedIn, adding that "media accountability should be non-negotiable".

    b) Media law commentator Charlie Moloney published an X thread describing the statement as "very interesting" and engaging with its argument that accountability should reflect the cumulative impact of content across different formats. He raised questions about how responsibility for cumulative harm could be attributed to individual publishers or pieces of content, and whether regulatory assessment could move beyond case-by-case article reviews.

    c) Guido Fawkes published an article which characterised the PRP as a "state press body" and accused it of using Professor Arday's death to "push Government into media regulation".

Correspondence

9. On 10 August, the Chair received a response from IPSO Chair Jenny Watson (Annex B) to her letter on 22 July (Annex A), which followed their introductory meeting on 6 July.

10. Redacted.

11. On 7 August, the PRP responded to a Freedom of Information request from a Private Eye journalist seeking correspondence with Government since January 2021 relating to the PRP's funding, future and viability, departmental responsibility, reserves and the repeal of Section 40. Relevant information was disclosed, subject to limited redactions of third-party personal data.

Economic Research Tender

12. Following publication of the invitation to tender more generally on 15 July, the PRP also undertook targeted outreach to a range of economic consultancies, academics and relevant professional networks to encourage interest in the research. Several organisations and individuals have responded with expressions of interest, questions and advice on the scope and approach to the work.

13. Questions received during the tender process have included points relating to the research scope, methodology, available evidence and budget. To ensure all potential bidders have access to the same information, the PRP has published an FAQ on its website and will update it as needed to reflect further questions received.

14. The tender remains open until 3 September 2026. Presentations with shortlisted bidders are expected to take place during the week commencing 21 September, with the successful tenderer appointed by 30 September and research commencing on 1 October. The project is currently expected to conclude by 15 January 2027, subject to the successful bidder's proposed methodology and timetable.

External Matters Update

15. Annex C includes an update on key external matters in August 2026 that are 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 communications implications to report.

Risks

18. The principal continuing risk relating to the areas of work covered in this paper concerns the effectiveness of the wider Recognition System. The repeal of Section 40 removed the principal incentive originally intended to encourage participation. Without a suitable alternative in place, news publishers continue to have little advantage in joining an Approved Regulator. There is therefore little prospect of the Recognition System gaining sufficient traction across the industry to operate as intended, leaving the public without consistent and effective protection from press harm.

Recommendations

19. The Board is asked to **note** the contents of the Chief Executive's report for August 2026.

Attachments

Annex

A:	Letter from PRP Chair to IPSO Chair Jenny Watson – 22 July 2026

B:	Letter from IPSO Chair Jenny Watson to PRP Chair – 10 August 2026

C:	External Matters Update

Press Recognition Panel
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London W1W 8HF
E: office@pressrecognitionpanel.org.uk
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Jenny Watson CBE
Chair
Independent Press Standards Organisation
10 Eastcheap
London EC3M 1AJ

22 July 2026

Dear Jenny,

Follow-up to meeting on 6 July 2026

Further to our meeting on 6 July 2026, I wanted to thank you for your time. It was helpful to understand the Independent Press Standards Organisation's current position on seeking recognition as an Approved Regulator.

We had useful discussions with your predecessor about the changes IPSO would need to make before an application for recognition could succeed. It was therefore disappointing to hear IPSO characterise the Recognition System as "state regulation" and rely on that characterisation as a reason why it would not seek recognition.

This represents a marked departure from the position taken by your predecessor, who publicly acknowledged that the Recognition System was not state regulation.

In reality, significant practical constraints on any application for recognition lie instead within IPSO's own constitutional and contractual arrangements. Its ability to make significant reforms or seek recognition is constrained by the industry it regulates, including through the formal role of the Regulatory Funding Company and provisions allowing publishers to withdraw on minimal notice if IPSO applies. These arrangements are among the reasons why we continue to question IPSO's claimed independence from industry control.

The Royal Charter was deliberately designed to prevent state interference in press self-regulation. Its safeguards include:

- placing appointments to the PRP Board outside ministerial control, with no role for Ministers in selecting or appointing Board members;
- placing responsibility for its budget and the management of its funds with its independent Board, subject to public accountability requirements; and
- preventing either the expansion or dilution of the PRP's functions without a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament, approval by the Scottish Parliament where relevant, and the unanimous agreement of the PRP Board.

Taken together, these mechanisms protect the PRP from interference by Government, the press industry or any other third party.

As we discussed, while the PRP currently receives public funding, that funding is provided strictly within the framework established by the Royal Charter. The provision of funding does not confer any ability on Government to direct the PRP's activities or influence its decisions. Public assurance is provided through our adherence to the general principles of *Managing Public Money* and independent audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Recognising IPSO's stated position that it will not seek recognition, it would nevertheless be helpful to understand precisely which aspects of the Recognition Criteria IPSO, or its members, consider objectionable. We have been unable to identify any requirement within the Royal Charter that would inhibit IPSO's ability to address concerns about news publishers effectively or otherwise disadvantage IPSO or its members. On the contrary, the independent assurance provided by the Recognition System would arguably strengthen IPSO's position by enabling it to respond more robustly to criticism – whether from campaigners who believe it does too little or from sections of the industry that believe it does too much.

While I recognise that our positions differ, we would be keen to continue this conversation. The questions raised by the future of press regulation, trusted news and public confidence in journalism are unlikely to disappear, and I believe there remains value in maintaining an open and constructive discussion.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Kathryn Cearns OBE
Chair
Press Recognition Panel

For accountable journalism

Kathryn Cearns OBE
Chair, Press Recognition Panel
By email c/o: [redacted]

10 August 2026

Dear Kathryn,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 July 2026 and for your time when we met.
I note what you say about my predecessor's comments, but IPSO's position is, as you accept, unchanged: we do not intend to seek recognition.
While we disagree on this issue, it is clear that there are many areas of mutual interest and concern for the Press Recognition Panel and IPSO. In particular, the issue of trust in news will continue to be relevant – not least following the government's green paper. I would be happy to keep the conversation going, particularly where we share these areas of mutual interest.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Jenny Watson
Chair, IPSO

10 Eastcheap
London
EC3M 1AJ
0300 123 2220
inquiries@ipso.co.uk

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. Press Gazette analysis found that the Financial Times had the highest proportion of under-35 users among UK national newspaper brands, at 27%, followed by the Guardian at 24.4%. The Guardian had the largest absolute young audience, at 5m, while the Sun reached 4.4m. Across the 50 largest newsbrands, people aged under 35 represented about 21% of audiences but only 15.5% of time spent; GB News had the smallest proportion of under-35 users at 9.9%.

3. Press Gazette reported rapid growth in news publishers' TikTok audiences since 2024. The Daily Mail remained the largest news publisher account, increasing by 16.6m followers to 26.5m, followed by BBC News at 16m. Reuters recorded particularly rapid proportional growth, while Sky News added more than 5m followers. Press Gazette noted that the expansion comes as social and video platforms have overtaken television and news websites/apps as a source of news internationally in the Reuters Institute's 2026 Digital News Report.

4. The Telegraph reported that Telegraph Media Group Holdings made a £3.9m pre-tax loss in 2025 despite remaining profitable on an underlying basis, as the costs and uncertainty associated with its prolonged ownership dispute weighed on the business. Turnover fell slightly to £273.2m, and print revenues declined, although digital subscriptions and advertising both grew by 8%. The company also said AI-generated search answers had contributed to a 20% fall in revenues from travel and other lifestyle content. Axel Springer completed its £575m takeover in June and has pledged further investment in digital growth and international expansion.

5. Press Gazette reported that Pink News is proposing to cut nine to 11 of its 25 staff and close its London office after changes to Snapchat's publisher model. The outlet expects revenue from Snapchat – currently a large majority of its overall income – to fall by 80–90% or more as Snap retires its Shows and Publisher Stories formats. The remaining team would work remotely from November, with the publisher saying it is moving towards a smaller structure and a more diversified mix of revenues. Staff were also told its in-house Quill platform would automate parts of editorial and social publishing. The proposed redundancies follow a separate round of cuts in March.

Legal

6. Journalism.co.uk reported on University of Sheffield research suggesting that legal risk is contributing to self-censorship in UK newsrooms, particularly among

smaller and less well-resourced publishers. Interviews with journalists, lawyers and press freedom experts found defamation remained the principal concern, while privacy and data protection risks were becoming increasingly significant. Participants described stories being withdrawn following legal threats because defending them could be prohibitively expensive, even where the underlying journalism might be sound. The research highlighted a widening gap between large organisations able to afford extensive pre-publication legal advice and local or independent outlets that cannot.

Political

7. The Guardian reported calls from publishers and the NUJ for stronger support for local journalism as the Burnham Government seeks to devolve more political power. The News Media Association argued that devolution would be weakened without professional local journalism capable of scrutinising increasingly powerful councils and mayors, while the NUJ warned that decades of closures and “news deserts” meant provision could not be left solely to the market. Local publishers welcomed the Government’s £12m Local News Fund but said wider problems remained, including declining visibility on technology platforms, difficulties monetising journalism and restrictions on reporters’ access to politicians.

8. Green Party leader Zack Polanski backed proposals for a “Media Sovereignty Act” that would ban foreign and offshore ownership of UK media, introduce a social media levy to support independent, local and co-operative journalism, require greater transparency around think-tank funding and introduce new regulatory requirements for media organisations. Polanski argued that concentrated billionaire ownership undermined a free press and called for greater support for independent media. Separately, following Professor Jason Arday’s death, he supported calls for an inquiry into the “culture and behaviour” of the press and criticised IPSO as “toothless”; proposed Green Party policy would support completion of Leveson and regulation by a genuinely independent recognised regulator.

9. Polanski also renewed his criticism of press standards after the Mail on Sunday published an article describing the summer’s prolonged hot weather as “glorious”. He accused parts of the press of spreading climate misinformation and called for Government action, against a backdrop of earlier research finding that most UK newspaper coverage of June’s extreme heat did not mention climate change.

10. The Guardian reported that Richard Tice’s lawyers threatened it over its reporting on his financial affairs and indicated they would seek documents potentially identifying confidential sources. Labour chair Bridget Phillipson called this a “chilling attempt to silence the free press”, while press freedom and anti-corruption campaigners criticised the use of legal threats to pursue journalists’ sources. Separately, The Times reported that Reform supporter Arron Banks had instructed private investigators to examine Sunday Times journalist Gabriel Pogrund following investigations into Nigel Farage’s funding. Conservative peer

Lord Young and former Culture Secretary Sir John Whittingdale were among those warning that such tactics could have a chilling effect on investigative journalism. Tice, Farage and Banks disputed aspects of the reporting and allegations surrounding Reform's finances.

11. BBC News reported that former Cambridge professor Jason Arday, 41, was found dead in south London on 14 August, shortly after resigning from the University amid allegations of plagiarism and questions about aspects of his reported achievements. Arday had denied plagiarism while acknowledging errors in his work, and said before his death that the level of public scrutiny and personal attack had become "unrelenting". His family said a "campaign of misinformation" had been too much for him. Prime Minister Andy Burnham described his death as "a tragedy on so many levels" and called for a period of reflection rather than rushing to judgment. No.10 subsequently said the Government would let processes, including an inquest, take their course before judging calls for a public inquiry.

12. Politics Home reported that political pressure for action on Professor Arday's treatment by the media increased following his death. More than 50 MPs and peers from several parties wrote to IPSO asking it to investigate whether the coverage was proportionate and justified, arguing that it went substantially beyond the public interest in the plagiarism allegations and raising concerns that Arday's race contributed to the intensity and framing of scrutiny. Labour MP Dawn Butler separately urged IPSO to use "every lever" available, while Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey described parts of the coverage as "disproportionate, unfair, mean and nasty". A Good Law Project campaign calling for a public inquiry has also attracted support from MPs and other public figures.

Approved regulator

13. Impress said Professor Arday's death and the sustained scrutiny preceding it had raised significant public concerns about media accountability, while emphasising that different parts of the UK media operate under different regulatory arrangements and offer different forms of redress. It highlighted that Impress-regulated publishers are subject to standards covering discrimination, harassment, privacy, intrusion and reporting of suicide and self-harm, and that Impress can investigate serious or systemic breaches involving multiple articles or patterns of conduct. It also pointed to its ability to issue advisory notices requesting privacy and non-contact on behalf of individuals. Impress encouraged anyone concerned to report using the complaints processes of whichever oversight body applies to the relevant publication.

IPSO

14. IPSO announced that Sarah Norman, Richard Neville and former Sunday Express editor David Wooding will join its Board in September. Norman, who has no newspaper or magazine industry background, will be a lay member, while

Neville brings more than 30 years' experience in Scottish newspapers and Wooding nearly 40 years in journalism. IPSO said the appointments would strengthen the Board's range of expertise, including on AI and the different legal and media environment in Scotland.

15. Press Gazette reported that IPSO rejected Angela Rayner's privacy and harassment complaint against the Sun on Sunday over publication of a photograph showing her walking with her partner. Although IPSO had previously circulated privacy notices about photographers around her properties and her family, it found that the photograph was taken in a public place away from her home, did not reveal private information or her precise location, and was published amid reporting about a possible Labour leadership bid. IPSO also found no breach of its harassment provisions, noting that requests to desist from photography were not permanently binding and that there was insufficient evidence linking other photographers near Rayner's homes to the newspaper.

16. IPSO said it was reviewing a high volume of complaints and concerns about coverage of Professor Jason Arday and would take action where potential breaches of the Editors' Code were identified. It said it was also examining the complaints collectively to consider whether they raised broader issues requiring further action, and reminded publishers of obligations relating to privacy, harassment and reporting grief and shock. Press Gazette reported that complaints concerned coverage by IPSO-regulated titles including the Times, Telegraph, Daily Mail, Sun and Spectator. NewsCord facilitated complaints about individual articles, although IPSO stressed that complaints must be verified as coming from real individuals and had previously raised concerns about automatically generated complaints and complainants' awareness of how their data was being used.

17. Analysis by NewsCord identified 274 substantive written articles about Professor Arday in the 22 days before he was found dead, including 214 published between his resignation statement on 5 August and 13 August. Its corpus indicates that 182 of the 274 articles were published by IPSO-regulated outlets, with the Telegraph, Times, Daily Mail and Spectator among the most prolific. Hacked Off published analysis by media law professor Paul Wragg arguing that the case exposed limitations in IPSO's ability to address cumulative or systematic media conduct, including the procedural threshold for standards investigations and its reliance on voluntary publisher membership. NewsCord disclosed that it is itself regulated by Impress.

Campaigners' news

18. Writing on Inforrm, Hacked Off chief executive Nathan Sparkes criticised IPSO for declining to investigate a complaint from media lawyer Jonathan Coad about a Telegraph article describing Hacked Off's preferred model as "state regulation" and "state control". IPSO said differing views existed over what constituted state regulation and that describing a regulator recognised through the Royal Charter

system in those terms did not raise a possible Clause 1 breach. Sparkes argued that this confused the establishment of the independent Recognition System by Royal Charter with government control of recognised regulators, and said the response demonstrated weaknesses in IPSO's approach to factual accuracy.

19. In an extended Guardian interview, Tulisa Contostavlos discussed her "Fix the Press" campaign, which calls for an independent regulator that publishers do not control, fund or appoint and which has powers to investigate and impose fines. Tulisa said her campaign was not a vendetta following the Sun on Sunday sting that preceded her collapsed drugs trial, but was intended to prevent similar harm to others. She criticised IPSO as effectively allowing the industry to "mark its own homework" and said social media harms did not remove the need to address newspaper standards. Hacked Off subsequently criticised the Guardian interview for describing the Leveson system as "government-backed" and suggesting no major media organisations had joined an independent regulator, pointing to more than 200 Impress-regulated publishers and stressing the Recognition System's separation from government.

20. Trans Media Watch set out plans for a renewed campaign on press regulation, calling for implementation of the Leveson framework alongside stronger responses to what it described as "group hate" and the cumulative impact of hostile coverage across multiple publications and social media. The organisation argued that existing complaints mechanisms focus largely on identifiable individuals and fail to address harms directed collectively at protected groups or the cumulative effect of sustained media "pile-ons". It cited coverage of Professor Jason Arday as an example and said these issues should be considered alongside implementing independent press regulation.

21. Hacked Off, the Good Law Project and Media Reform Coalition all called for stronger press accountability following Professor Arday's death. Hacked Off said the intensity and intrusiveness of the coverage had gone beyond legitimate scrutiny of academic standards and called on the Government to complete the framework for independent press accountability. The Media Reform Coalition backed a public inquiry and full implementation of the Leveson recommendations, including independent self-regulation. The Good Law Project went further in explicitly attributing Professor Arday's death to press harassment, alleging that media organisations continued intensive coverage despite warnings about his wellbeing and arguing that racialised and ableist elements contributed to the treatment he received.

22. The NUJ said concerns about aspects of the coverage were legitimate and called on media organisations to reflect carefully on their reporting, while also warning against portraying all journalists as unethical and condemning threats, racial abuse and harassment directed at individual reporters following Professor Arday's death. It reiterated its support for strengthened independent regulation, greater newsroom diversity and stronger ethical safeguards for journalists. Separately, several Amnesty UK networks said scrutiny of academic integrity was

legitimate but must be fair, proportionate and subject to due process, arguing that the scale of coverage raised wider questions about racism, ableism, media ethics and the point at which scrutiny becomes dehumanising.

23. The Good Law Project also criticised the Guardian specifically, arguing that it intensified its coverage after Professor Arday resigned, adopted lines originating in right-wing newspapers and continued publishing despite warnings about his vulnerability. It questioned the editorial assessment of the remaining public interest against possible harm. Guardian News & Media rejected what it called inaccuracies and distortions in the criticism, said its reporting resulted from months of careful investigation, and stood by its journalists. It also condemned targeted and “racialised” harassment of individual reporters and rejected claims that its reporting had been motivated by a personal conflict between Arday and one of its journalists.

24. A separate Change.org petition has proposed an “Arday’s Law” that would impose limits on the number of articles news organisations could publish about one individual within a defined period. The petition argues that the volume of reporting about Professor Arday showed the potential cumulative harm of a media “pile-on” and calls for legislation that balances freedom to report with privacy and wellbeing. This differs from calls for Leveson-style independent regulation, which proposes a direct statutory restriction on coverage volume rather than stronger accountability for content or conduct.

PRP26(26)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

FINANCE REPORT – JULY 2026

Meeting: by email

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details: Susie Uppal, John Speed (JS2)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on the finance and banking position as at 31 July 2026.

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 July 2026 is attached at Annex A. The management accounts also include the original budget for the year to March 2027.

4. The surplus for the period to date is £411,545 against a year-to-date budget surplus of £412,802. This represents a negative variance of £1,257 compared to the year-to-date budget. The variance is due to a combination of timing differences on spend vs the phased budget, additional Executive team costs, being partly offset by an increase in bank interest received as a result of a higher balance in fixed term deposits, and lower board and committee costs.

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 July 2026

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st July 2026

	4 months to July 2026				Full year to March 2027
	Actual £	Budget £	Variance £		Budget £
Income					
Subscription fees	98,874	98,874	-		300,070
Grant income	430,000	430,000	-		430,000
Bank interest	15,564	14,813	751		41,625
Total Income	**544,438**	**543,687**	**751**		**771,695**
Expenditure					
Board and Committee costs					
Salaries & NIC	27,611	28,174	563		84,063
Travel & Subsistence	252	720	468		1,920
Other costs	-	-	-		4,750
Total Board and Committee Costs	**27,863**	**28,894**	**1,031**		**90,733**
Communications					
Publications	-	-	-		4,350
Website and Upgrades	198	196	(2)		2,106
Total Communications Costs	**198**	**196**	**(2)**		**6,456**
Other costs					
Executive team costs	83,981	81,315	(2,666)		266,749
HR & Recruitment	-	573	573		50,136
Strategic research	-	-	-		30,000
Office costs	2,343	2,510	167		7,796
Meeting rooms	3,095	2,510	(585)		7,529
Travel & Subsistence	633	480	(153)		2,240
IT Hardware	-	-	-		1,920
Information Technology	2,626	2,880	254		8,640
Accountancy	9,020	9,013	(7)		33,391
Audit Fees	-	-	-		16,500
Printing & Stationery	1,228	80	(1,148)	Annual report costs budgeted in September	1,340
Insurance	658	1,110	452		3,624
Legal	-	-	-		10,000
Subscriptions & publications	1,150	1,284	134		2,793
Finance charges	98	40	(58)		180
Sundry expenses	-	-	-		7,909
	104,832	**101,795**	**(3,037)**		**450,747**
Total Expenditure	**132,893**	**130,885**	**(2,008)**		**547,936**
Surplus / (Deficit) for the period	**411,545**	**412,802**	**(1,257)**		**223,759**
Reserves Bfwd	**1,774,009**	**1,774,009**			
Reserves Cfwd	**2,185,554**	**2,186,811**			

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st July 2026

	Jul-26		Mar-26	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets				
Current account	326,079		396,519	
Deposit account	212,108		211,294	
Cash at bank		538,187		607,813
Fixed term deposit accounts	1,746,000		1,232,359	
Investments		1,746,000		1,232,359
Prepayments	2,347		4,138	
Accrued Income	7,096		5,985	
Third Party Deposit	926		926	
Sundry debtors		10,369		11,049
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	101		2,166	
Deferred income	76,999		27,966	
Social security and other taxes	6,191		6,383	
Pensions	(85)		654	
Sundry creditors and accruals	25,796		40,043	
		109,002		77,212
Net Current Assets		**2,185,554**		**1,774,009**
Net Assets		**2,185,554**		**1,774,009**
Funds brought forward				
Funds bought forward at 31 March		1,774,009		1,894,436
Surplus / (deficit) for the period		411,545		(120,427)
		2,185,554		**1,774,009**

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

FINANCE REPORT – AUGUST 2026

Meeting: 8 September 2026

Status: for noting

Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Contact details: Susie Uppal, John Speed (JS2)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on the finance and banking position as at 31 August 2026.

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 August 2026 is attached at Annex A. The management accounts also include the original budget for the year to March 2027.

4. The surplus for the period to date is £411,115 against a year-to-date budget surplus of £409,820. This represents a positive variance of £1,295 compared to the year-to-date budget. The variance is due to an increase in bank interest received as a result of a higher balance in fixed term deposits, and lower board and committee costs, being partly offset by timing differences on spend vs the phased budget, and additional Executive team costs.

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 August 2026

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st August 2026

	5 months to August 2026				Full year to March 2027
	Actual £	Budget £	Variance £		Budget £
Income					
Subscription fees	123,998	123,998	-		300,070
Grant income	430,000	430,000	-		430,000
Bank interest	20,554	18,375	2,179		41,625
Total Income	**574,552**	**572,373**	**2,179**		**771,695**
Expenditure					
Board and Committee costs					
Salaries & NIC	34,403	34,988	585		84,063
Travel & Subsistence	252	870	618		1,920
Other costs	-	-	-		4,750
Total Board and Committee Costs	**34,655**	**35,858**	**1,203**		**90,733**
Communications					
Publications	-	-	-		4,350
Website and Upgrades	247	245	(2)		2,106
Total Communications Costs	**247**	**245**	**(2)**		**6,456**
Other costs					
Executive team costs	103,835	101,095	(2,740)		266,749
HR & Recruitment	-	717	717		50,136
Strategic research	-	-	-		30,000
Office costs	2,923	3,100	177		7,796
Meeting rooms	3,180	2,896	(284)		7,529
Travel & Subsistence	633	600	(33)		2,240
IT Hardware	-	-	-		1,920
Information Technology	3,266	3,600	334		8,640
Accountancy	11,163	11,253	90		33,391
Audit Fees	-	-	-		16,500
Printing & Stationery	1,228	100	(1,128)	Annual report costs budgeted in September	1,340
Insurance	825	1,430	605		3,624
Legal	-	-	-		10,000
Subscriptions & publications	1,375	1,609	234		2,793
Finance charges	107	50	(57)		180
Sundry expenses	-	-	-		7,909
	128,535	**126,450**	**(2,085)**		**450,747**
Total Expenditure	**163,437**	**162,553**	**(884)**		**547,936**
Surplus / (Deficit) for the period	**411,115**	**409,820**	**1,295**		**223,759**
Reserves Bfwd	**1,774,009**	**1,774,009**			
Reserves Cfwd	**2,185,124**	**2,183,829**			

Press Recognition Panel
Period ended 31st August 2026

	Aug-26		Mar-26	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets				
Current account	295,917		396,519	
Deposit account	212,315		211,294	
Cash at bank		508,232		607,813
Fixed term deposit accounts	1,746,000		1,232,359	
Investments		1,746,000		1,232,359
Prepayments	2,499		4,138	
Accrued Income	11,878		5,985	
Third Party Deposit	926		926	
Sundry debtors		15,303		11,049
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	592		2,166	
Deferred income	51,874		27,966	
Social security and other taxes	6,111		6,383	
Pensions	(85)		654	
Sundry creditors and accruals	25,919		40,043	
		84,411		77,212
Net Current Assets		**2,185,124**		**1,774,009**
Net Assets		**2,185,124**		**1,774,009**
Funds brought forward				
Funds bought forward at 31 March		1,774,009		1,894,436
Surplus / (deficit) for the period		411,115		(120,427)
		2,185,124		**1,774,009**

PRP28(26)

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL BOARD

Board Roles and Recruitment Update – September 2026

Meeting: 8 September 2026	**Status:** for discussion and decision
Lead responsibility: Susie Uppal, Chief Executive	**Contact details:** Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on developments regarding Board and Independent Member roles and recruitment since the June meeting.

2. The Board is invited to:

- **note** recent activities relating to the recruitment process;
- **note** and **approve** the latest version of the recruitment timetable (Annex A);
- Redacted.
- Redacted.
- Redacted.
- **note** the latest updates regarding Independent Members.

Background and Analysis

3. At its 21 April meeting, the Board **noted** that the terms of appointment for three Board members expire in 2027: Annie Mullins (Q2, confirmed), Zahera Harb and Suzanne Rab (both Q3 but extendable for up to a further three years).

4. It was agreed that the Board would be running at the minimum number of members allowed under the Royal Charter after Annie leaves and should take the opportunity to build in greater resilience. The Board therefore **approved** recruiting two new Board members in Q3 2026, with the intention that the recruitment process would be substantially completed during Q1 2027, with the preferred candidates formally appointed in April 2027.

5. At its meeting on 18 June 2026, the PRP Board **agreed** that:

a. NOMCO would consider the results of the Skills Matrix exercise and identify proposed skills, experience and knowledge priorities for the recruitment of two new Board members, for subsequent circulation to the Board for agreement.

   <u>Post-meeting note</u>: The priorities and considerations for recruiting two new Board members were circulated to the Board for comment on 5 August. No amendments were proposed.

b. The Executive would prepare a briefing document for NOMCO, together with the Skills Matrix results.

c. The Board would approve the draft role specifications at its September meeting.

d. Board members would be invited to recommend recruitment agencies for consideration.

e. Mark Williams, as the Board member with responsibility for finance, should be involved in the recruitment agency selection process.

f. The Executive would update the Recruitment Timetable at Annex A.

Recent activities on Board recruitment

6. NOMCO met on 24 June 2026 to consider the requirements for the recruitment process.

7. NOMCO reviewed the results of the Board Skills Matrix exercise (Annex B) and the Royal Charter criteria for Board appointments. It discussed the skills and experience priorities for recruiting two new Board members, along with the approach to engaging a recruitment agency.

8. Redacted.

9. Redacted.

10. Equality and diversity considerations have also informed the proposed recruitment approach. The PRP's first Equality Objective is to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, including in its external recruitment activities. The recruitment process will seek to attract a diverse range of candidates and be open and transparent.

11. Board and NOMCO members were invited to recommend recruitment agencies for consideration. The proposed ITQ at Annex C has been developed to support the next stage of the process. Written quotations will be sought in accordance with the PRP's Procurement Policy, with the number of quotations

and final approval requirements determined by the anticipated contract value. The quotations and final recommendation will be shared with the Board member with responsibility for finance, and the appointment will be subject to the relevant approval requirements under the Procurement Policy.

12. Selection Panel membership remains to be confirmed. An update will be provided at the meeting.

13. The latest Board recruitment timetable is attached at Annex A. This has been updated to reflect progress since June and the current proposed timetable for the appointments.

Updates regarding Independent Members

14. At its meeting on 18 June 2026, the PRP Board agreed that the Terms and Conditions of Service for Independent Members should be amended to provide for an initial three-year term, with the option of year-by-year extensions subject to Board approval. The policy was updated on the PRP website on 24 July.

15. At the June Board meeting, it was noted that Julie Ferguson's second term of appointment as Independent Member – NOMCO was due to expire at the end of June 2027. Redacted.

16. The Board is asked to **note** that Chris Waiting's final term of appointment ended on 7 July 2026.

Devolved Nations

17. There are no specific implications for the devolved nations arising from the recommendations in this paper. Redacted.

Communications

18. The Board's decisions will be published as part of the agreed Board meeting minutes on the PRP website in line with usual practice.

19. The appointed recruitment agency will be briefed on the eligibility, independence and political activity requirements applying to Board appointments under the Royal Charter and PRP policies.

Risks

20. If the eligibility, independence or conflict-of-interest requirements are not correctly interpreted and applied, the PRP could be exposed to reputational damage or challenge.

21. Failure to follow the PRP's Procurement Policy, including the requirements for written quotations, evaluation and approval, could expose the PRP to challenge and weaken the audit trail.

22. The PRP is committed to fair, open and merit-based recruitment for all roles. A robust recruitment process for Board members will help ensure the Board continues to have the skills, experience and knowledge required to meet its Royal Charter obligations.

Recommendations

23. It is recommended that the Board**:**

- **notes** recent activities relating to the recruitment process;
- **notes** and **approves** the latest version of the recruitment timetable (Annex A);
- Redacted.
- Redacted.
- Redacted.
- **notes** the latest updates regarding Independent Members.

Attachments

Annex A: Recruitment Timetable 2026/27
Annex B: Redacted.
Annex C: Redacted.
Annex D: Redacted.

Annex A to PRP28(26)

PRP INDEPENDENTLY OVERSEEING PRESS REGULATION

PRP Recruitment Timetable 2026/27

18 June 2026	The Board reviewed and approved the Recruitment Timetable and agreed on next steps to recruit two new Board members.
24 June	NOMCO reviewed the Skills Matrix and considered the skills, experience and knowledge requirements for the recruitment process, together with equality and diversity considerations and the approach to engaging a recruitment agency.
July-August	Recruitment requirements were refined; draft role documentation and the proposed Invitation to Quote for recruitment agencies were developed; and arrangements for the Selection Panel were progressed.
8 September	The Board reviews progress and considers for approval the updated timetable, draft role specification, and proposed approach to appointing a recruitment agency.
September	Written quotations are sought from recruitment agencies and assessed in accordance with the PRP Procurement Policy.
By end of September	Recruitment agency selected and appointed, subject to the relevant approval requirements.
Mid-October to early February 2027	Recruitment pack finalised, and campaign launched. Applications are received, and candidates are longlisted and shortlisted in accordance with the agreed process.
End of February	Interviews take place.
March	Preferred candidates identified and relevant eligibility, independence and conflict-of-interest checks completed. The recruitment process is submitted to the Commissioner for Public Appointments as required by the Royal Charter.
April	Commissioner for Public Appointments confirmation received and appointments formally made. New Board members take up their roles.