

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF PCC GOVERNANCE FROM THE PRESS STANDARDS BOARD OF FINANCE

1. The Press Standards Board of Finance [PressBof] welcomes the review of PCC governance. This note summarises a handful of issues we believe ought to be considered, but we would be pleased to discuss any other issues that arise during the Panel's consultation process.
2. The industry is fully committed to effective self regulation through its Editors' Code of Practice Committee and the jurisdiction of the independent PCC, and believes that it has over the years delivered real improvements to standards of reporting. The PCC has proved to be an efficient and accessible regulator, and the system itself – based on a common-sense approach – has evolved over time to meet public expectations and concerns.
3. The existing structures of self regulation have, in our view, served the public well. This has been made possible by the significant financial investment – over £30 million - the industry has made in the PCC since it was established. This has been collected from registration fees paid across the industry – national, regional and magazine publishers – and while the levy is voluntary, compliance has been remarkably high.
4. The industry has always respected the independence of the PCC, establishing it from the very start with a majority of lay members and insisting that its funding was totally separated out from the complaints process. We also believe that, in a system of self regulation, industry involvement is crucial, and that has manifested itself in two key ways:
 - raising the funds to finance the PCC on the basis of an agreed budget but without interfering in how it is spent; and
 - providing editorial members (who are in the minority) of a high calibre to bring professional input to the work of the Commission.
5. It is in those two areas – securing the long term funding of the PCC, and continuing to ensure the highest standards of professional input into the system – that we would welcome discussions with the Governance Review Panel. These are crucial parts of the self regulatory system and it is vital that the

Articles of Association reflect that in a modern and up-to-date manner.

6. On the issue of professional appointments, we are aware that the role of the Appointments Commission may be ambiguous – partly as a result of history and precedent – and we would welcome the opportunity for this to be clarified. We have a number of suggestions to make on this front. In doing so, it is essential to point out that because this affects only the clear minority of members, there is no impact in any way on the independence of the Commission or the appointment of the public members.
7. On the issue of funding, the industry has an unequivocal commitment to the funding of the PCC, even though commercial pressures across the industry remain extremely tough. That we are able to do so is the result of a very high rate of levy compliance.
8. We are anxious to ensure that we are in a position to protect that vital part of the system and we believe it is important that the Articles of Association reflect the industry's role in this defined area. Again, this is not something which would impact in any way on the independence of the PCC. We would like to discuss this further with the Panel, and would welcome its views.

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