

# Press plan attacked as a futile waste of taxpayer money

by AlexSpence Media Editor

*The Times* 2 November 2013

The Government's plans for press regulation will lead to a "redundant quangocracy", critics have warned.

Officials are expected to begin implementing a new regime approved by the Privy Council within weeks. However, without the support of any newspaper publishers, it would result in the creation of a body with nothing to do, critics said.

Jonathan Isaby, political director of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "There are serious questions to be asked about how much taxpayers' money is being spent on establishing the associated and potentially redundant quangocracy. As the process begins to set up a recognition panel which may yet have no regulator to recognise, experience tells us that considerable sums of our cash could get squandered on an entirely futile exercise. That would be an unacceptable waste of money."

On Wednesday the Queen approved a Royal Charter agreed by the three major political parties, intended to implement Lord Justice Leveson's recommendations for regulation of the press.

Newspaper and magazine groups are opposed to the new regime because it could allow Parliament to interfere in their ability to publish freely. They have said they will not agree to be regulated by anybody recognised under the politicians' charter. The new regime is due to begin after the charter is formally sealed in the next few weeks, but Maria Miller, the Culture Secretary, has said it could take up to a year before it is operational.

Sir David Normington, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, will start the process by choosing a group of grantees to select at least five others to sit on the board of a "recognition panel" that will monitor a regulator overseeing newspaper publishers.

The panel will prepare its own annual budgets, which it is envisaged will eventually be funded by the industry. For the first three years, though, the cost will be met by the taxpayer.

The Government said it does not have an estimate of how much the body will cost to establish.

The panel's board will be made up of five to nine people with "senior-level experience in a public, private or voluntary sector organisation". It will also have an administrative staff.

Government officials are unclear what they or the board will do if nobody applies for recognition.

A spokeswoman for the Commissioner for Public Appointments said several legal formalities had to be completed before the appointments process could begin. These include amending legislation because the role is technically outside the commissioner's remit.

In the meantime, newspaper publishers are setting up their own self-regulator, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipsos), without charter recognition. The publishers argue that, with powers to impose fines of up to £1 million, it will fulfil Lord Justice Leveson's requirement for stricter, but still independent, regulation. The industry hopes that Ipsos will be running within months and will win public trust, making the politicians' regime redundant.<sup>1</sup>

Website: [www.francisbennion.com](http://www.francisbennion.com)

Doc. No..2013-004-NFB

*The Times* 2 Nov 2013

For full version of abbreviations click 'Abbreviations' on FB's website.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Times* 2 November 2013.