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Newspaper and magazine publishers apply for Royal Charter on press regulation to implement Leveson recommendations

Publishers representing the national and local newspaper and magazine industry – and covering thousands of publications - are to apply for a Royal Charter for the establishment and recognition of a new system of tough, independent press self-regulation.

The draft Royal Charter published by the Government on 18 March – which has been condemned by a range of international press freedom organisations, including in the Commonwealth - has no support within the press. A number of its recommendations are unworkable and it gives politicians an unacceptable degree of interference in the regulation of the press.

This initiative by the UK's national, regional and magazine publishers completely accepts the need for a new regulator to be recognised by a genuinely independent body – which was a central conclusion of the Leveson Inquiry - and aims to help move the debate about the future regulation of the press to a constructive conclusion. Importantly, there will be a public consultation on the industry's proposals giving newspaper and magazine readers the chance to have their say – a consultation that the Government has refused for its state-sponsored scheme.

The industry's proposal is closely based on the draft Royal Charter published on 12 February which had been painstakingly negotiated with national and local newspapers and magazines, and accepted by Ministers. It is a workable, practical way swiftly to deliver the Leveson recommendations, which the industry accepts, without any form of state-sponsored regulation that would endanger freedom of speech. It has widespread backing across the industry. It will deliver a system of regulation which will provide real protection for the public and which offers:

- tough sanctions, with the new regulator having the power to impose fines of up to £1 million for systematic wrongdoing ;
- up-front corrections, with inaccuracies corrected fully and prominently;
- strong investigative powers enabling the regulator to investigate wrongdoing and call editors to account;
- genuine independence from the industry and from politicians with all the bodies making up the new regulator having a

- majority of independent members appointed openly and transparently; and
- public involvement in the framing of the Code of Practice which binds national and local newspapers and magazines.

This Royal Charter proposal will deliver on Leveson and bind the UK's national and local newspapers and magazines to a tough and enduring system of regulation – tougher than anywhere else in the western world – which will be of real benefit to the public, at the same time as protecting freedom of speech.

Notes

1. The 12 February Royal Charter can be accessed on the DCMS website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lord-justice-leveson-report-regulatory-system-for-the-press>
2. For more information, contact Lynne Anderson at the Newspaper Society on 020 7632 7400 or lynne_anderson@newspapersoc.org.uk