



**YORKSHIRE POST**

**NEWSPAPERS LTD**

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9 July 2012

Ms K Brudenell  
Solicitor to the Inquiry  
The Leveson Inquiry

Dear Ms Brudenell,

Thank you for your letter of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012, received by email.

I note that you are seeking my comments on the proposals for self regulation contained in the witness statement made by Lord Black of Brentwood, dated June 7<sup>th</sup> 2012.

I wish to point out I am not authorised to comment on Lord Black's scheme on behalf of Johnston Press plc ("JP"), the parent company of the Yorkshire Post. Similarly, I am unable to give any assurances, promises, or commitments on JP's behalf. These are matters to be decided by the Board of Directors once a final proposal is produced.

Personally, I agree with the general thrust of Lord Black's proposal, though I (and no doubt my management colleagues) have reservations with regard to its likely cost. Nevertheless, bearing in mind JP's commitment to the PCC and its Code, I am confident that the company will continue to support the principle of self regulation, though whether it will support all aspects of Lord Black's proposals I do not know.

With regard to your specific questions:

- 1, My name is Peter Leslie Charlton and I am the Editorial Director of Yorkshire Post Newspapers.
2. I am a board member of the Society of Editors and the society has been



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consulted informally and formally at various stages of the proposals' formulation. The Society of Editors broadly supports the proposals put

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forward as they maintain the vital principle of the press combined with sensible pragmatic and dynamic measures to alleviate public concern. There will be a tightening in some areas, an enhanced code and there will be a back-up extra investigatory arm that will become available for rare occasions when it might actually be needed - rather than left expensively in place assuming that it will be needed often, for which there is absolutely no evidence.

Indeed, as evidence to the inquiry by regional editors underlined: the PCC worked well for both papers and complainants. Most people who used it - rather than looking on from the outside - thought it worked well. Regional newspapers have also an enviable record in satisfactorily resolving readers' complaints themselves.

3. The decision to enter into a contract with any new regulator would be a decision for JP's Board of Directors. As stated in my first witness statement, I am the founder chairman and current board member of JP's Editorial Review Group, which advises JP on editorial policy. I fully expect that the advice of the ERG would be sought by the Board before it made a decision whether or not to enter into a contract with any new regulator. The views of other senior JP editors, who are not members of the ERG, might also be sought.

Editors are, and should be, responsible for maintaining standards in any newspaper and as a consequence protecting the image of the newspaper, its websites and corporate brands. That responsibility and their relationship with their journalists should not be compromised by any new system.

4. For the reason stated above, I am not able to give the Inquiry any kind of commitment with regard to Lord Black's proposals at this time.
5. If JP were to agree to Lord Black's proposals, I am confident that compliance with them would make no practical difference to the way my staff and I operate. In light of the current culture, practices and ethics of the newspaper,



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we would have no difficulty at all in meeting the standards and expectation envisaged by Lord Black's scheme.

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6. There is still further work required on the detail of funding, proposed contracts and incentives to join the scheme. The regional press as a whole is concerned at the additional cost that they may be compelled to incur. It is perhaps appropriate to point out that no allegation of wrongdoing has ever been against any regional publisher. Loading regional publishers with additional costs without justifiable reason could be disastrous for a number of them particularly at this time. We remain concerned that the new proposal has not yet adequately addressed the regulation of online only publishers.

As I have previously said in my earlier statement, to my knowledge, the regional press has never engaged in the type of behaviour, alleged at the Leveson Inquiry.

Accordingly, though I (and JP) remain absolutely committed to the concept of ethical self regulation, I think it is important that the Inquiry appreciates that any new regime must be proportionate to the events of the past, the conduct which is to be prevented in the future, and the financial consequences of the new scheme.

From a regional press perspective, Lord Black's recommendations, if implemented, may be seen by publishers to be financially onerous and disproportionate because it is endeavouring to resolve a non-existent problem.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely

Peter Charlton  
Editorial Director  
Yorkshire Post Newspapers



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