



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

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Dear Lord Gilbert,

The Future of UK Journalism Report

I am writing to you regarding the Communication and Digital Committee's Report 'Breaking News? The Future of UK Journalism'. As you will be aware, the Charity Commission submitted [written evidence](#) to the preceding inquiry on the issue of when journalism can be charitable.

The Commission welcomes the Report, which amongst other things explains in its Conclusion that while charitable status can be beneficial for some news organisations, there are charity law restrictions on campaigning, and organisations may not use their resources for non-charitable purposes. It is important to be clear that charitable status is not right for every news organisation.

We would however like to address statements in the Report that the Charity Commission has recognised public interest journalism as a charitable purpose. These statements, which refer to the Commission's decision to register the Public Interest News Foundation (PINF), do not accurately represent our position on when journalism can be charitable.

We recognise that charities can and do use journalism as a means to further their charitable purposes. While the advancement of journalism is not listed in the Charities Act as a description of charitable purpose, charitable news organisations can further recognised purposes such as the advancement of education or citizenship, just as PINF has set out to do. Indeed, our Register already includes a number of charities involved in journalism and media work.

The reason the Commission accepted the registration of PINF therefore is because we determined that the charity was established for such exclusively charitable purposes, not because public interest journalism itself is a charitable purpose. As such, the decision to register PINF does not indicate a change in the law or in the Commission's application of it.

We also note the statement in the Report that 'there is a debate around whether the Charity Commission is fair in the way it grants charity status and applies the criteria in the Charities Act 2011'. The Commission firmly rejects any suggestion that it does not apply the criteria for assessing charitable status fairly. As noted in your report, whether or not an institution is a charity is a matter of law. The Commission has published guidance on how it makes registration decisions, which can be found [here](#).

More information on why we decided to register PINF as a charity, can be found [here](#). We have also set out more information about when journalism can be charitable in a blog, [here](#).

I hope the above information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Latham, Director of Communications and Policy
Charity Commission for England and Wales