

Appointment of the selection panel for the Independently Funded News Consortia pilots

The Minister for the Creative Industries, Siôn Simon, has appointed Richard Hooper as chair of the Selection Panel for the Government's procurement of piloted independently funded news consortia (IFNCs). IFNCs were a commitment of the Digital Britain White Paper published on 16 June 2009. The Digital Economy Bill, introduced on 20 November 2009, contains clauses that create new powers for Ofcom to procure IFNCs from 2013. Meanwhile, the Government will run three pilot IFNCs, one in Scotland, one in Wales and one in the Tyne Tees and Borders television region.

In order to meet our target date of selecting preferred bidders by March 2010, DCMS announced on 26 November 2009 next steps in the process, and published the Official Journal of the European Union advertisement which invited interested parties to submit pre-qualification questionnaires.

The panel will oversee the assessment of the bids received against pre-agreed selection criteria, using a structured scoring and weighting process. The main objectives of the panel are to:

- (a) Make a recommendation to DCMS which suppliers represent value for money, innovation and maximise economic and plural benefits;
- (b) Ensure the assessment of bids is undertaken fairly, objectively and follows due process;
- (c) Adhere to Government and European procurement policy; and
- (d) Record and assure the evaluation processes to ensure transparency and provide assurance to the Government and Departmental Accounting Officer.

The Panel's chair, Richard Hooper, said: "These three pilots will provide us with insights into new ways of providing multi-platform news in the Nations, locally and in the regions. The winning news consortia will be encouraged to exploit the wide range of today's convergent platforms – ITV/Channel 3, the internet, local commercial radio, community radio, local newspapers. The winning news consortia will also be seeking to build innovative business models for revenue generation."

The panel will be supported by an evaluation support team who will be directed by the panel. The panel does not make the contract award decision. The Secretary of State will make the final decision and award the contract on the basis of the recommendation put forward by the panel.

Panel Chair - Richard Hooper CBE

Deputy Chair of Ofcom, 2002-05 and Chairman of the Radio Authority, 2000–03. He recently chaired the Independent Review of the Postal Services Sector for Secretary of State Lord Mandelson. He is currently Senior Independent Director of Yell Group plc and of VocaLink Holdings Ltd; he was chairman of Informa plc until 2007. Made CBE in 2005 for services to the communications industry. Held managing directorship roles in other media and communications companies such as Super Channel, British Telecom, and Mills & Allen Communications. Began career in the

BBC as a General Trainee and was a founder of the Open University on the BBC side.

The 5 other panel members are:

Val Atkinson

Board member of NHS Quality Improvement Scotland; Lay Member of General Medical Council Fitness to Practise Panel; Lay Member of The Office for Judicial Complaints Review Body (England and Wales); Member of Generation Scotland Advisory Body on Genetics; Chair, Glasgow Repertory Company (charity). Spent twenty-seven years at BBC Scotland and retired as Deputy Head of News and Current Affairs. Led the BBC Scotland team in negotiations with the Scottish Office on broadcasting arrangements for the Scottish Parliament and was a member of the Scottish Constitutional Steering Group's Expert Panel on the Media. Trustee of National Galleries of Scotland from 1997-2005.

Fru Hazlitt

Former CEO of GCap Media plc and of Virgin Radio. Prior to this Fru spent 6 years at Yahoo! firstly, as European Sales Director and then as MD of Yahoo UK & Ireland. Is currently a non executive director of Betfair and of The Rare Tea Company.

Glyn Mathias

Has spent a career lasting more than thirty years in journalism, working as Political Editor for ITN at Westminster and Political Editor for BBC Wales in Cardiff. Went on to become an inaugural member of the Electoral Commission, serving as the Commissioner for Wales from 2001-2008. For the last two years, he has been a member of Ofcom's Advisory Committee for Wales, where his main focus was on the future of public service broadcasting in Wales. However his membership of this panel is in a personal capacity.

William Perrin

Founder of "talk about local", a unique public service project to bring an online voice to hundreds of deprived communities in England funded by 4IP, Screen West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands. Previously Tony Blair's civil service policy advisor on technology, culture, media and sport. Involved in the production of the Communications White Paper 2000 and the Ofcom paving bill. Runs the website www.kingscrossenvironment.com as part of wide ranging hyperlocal activity.

Marc Reeves

Has worked in the regional press for almost 25 years, most recently as editor of the Birmingham Post. He left the Post in December 2009 to launch a media consultancy business, and is a commentator on regional press issues and digital and social media developments. His career in the regional newspaper industry included roles as a reporter, editor and managing director for both family owned and large publishing groups. At the Post, he pioneered the use of social media tools, and the title is regarded as one of the leading online newspapers in the UK.

Panel advisor

Stewart Purvis will act as an advisor to the panel. He began his broadcasting career at the BBC. During the 1980s, he was Editor of Channel Four News and went on to become Editor-in-Chief of ITN and then Chief Executive from 1995-2003. He is currently the Partner for Content & Standards at Ofcom.