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The election and beyond - what's in it for the media?

The economy, health, welfare, immigration, Europe, Scotland ... the media industry comes down the list in this election, but party manifestos do not ignore it completely. The BBC, press regulation and media plurality are common themes. For those who have not had the time, or perhaps the inclination, to wade through the paper, *James Hardy* of *NewLawsLegal* gives a snapshot of who promises what.

Conservatives pledge to:

- ✚ freeze licence fee at least until the next BBC charter renewal
- ✚ continue to top-slice the fee for digital infrastructure to support superfast broadband
- ✚ consult on business rate relief for local newspapers
- ✚ provide “explicit protection” for journalists in a British Bill of Rights
- ✚ ensure police cannot access journalists’ records without court approval
- ✚ bring in a tax credit for children’s television
- ✚ protect intellectual property by continuing to require internet service providers to block sites that carry large amounts of illegal content

Labour will work towards:

- ✚ taking “steps to protect media plurality, so that no media outlet can get too big”
- ✚ keeping Channel 4 in public ownership
- ✚ implementing the recommendations of the Leveson inquiry, with the expectation that the press will establish a mechanism for independent regulation

Liberal Democrats are looking to:

- ✚ introduce public interest defence for journalists breaking the law

- ✚ create a “first amendment law” to make courts and public bodies take into account the importance of a free press
- ✚ ensure journalists have the right to challenge requests under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act for access to journalists’ communications before they happen, unless it will endanger an investigation
- ✚ remove ministers from influencing the appointment of board members to Ofcom or the BBC Trust
- ✚ legislate for an independent system of press regulation if after 12 months “there is significant non-cooperation by newspaper publishers”

UKIP pledges to:

- ✚ decriminalise non-payment of the licence fee and look at reducing the cost of the £145.50 payment
- ✚ abolish the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Greens are shooting for:

- ✚ the replacement of the licence fee with funding from centralised taxation
- ✚ scrapping the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, partly to protect journalists
- ✚ further legislation to enforce the Leveson system of press regulation if all major newspapers do not agree to a system backed by royal charter

SNP promises to:

- ✚ change the way the licence fee is distributed to give BBC Scotland more than £100m extra funding
- ✚ transfer control of broadcasting in Scotland to the Scottish Parliament and influence BBC charter renewal to protect Scottish interests
- ✚ review progress on implementation of the Leveson proposals