

## Kicking Off the Comms Review

For some sceptics, policy debate about media and communications is a stitch-up between powerful media corporations and governments that need their electoral support. In this view, civil society organisations, concerned citizens, academics and other interested parties do not have a voice in policymaking.

At a meeting organised by the MPP on June 20th, a diverse group of academics, policy makers, representatives from civil society groups and industry discussed the challenges of extending access to policy deliberation with a focus on the upcoming review of communications policy in the UK. Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt focussed the debate on growth and de-regulation in his [Open Letter](#) that launched the process, and as Damian Tambini pointed out in a [previous blog](#) there is nothing in the letter about the cultural or citizenship issues that have been so key to media regulation debate in previous policy cycles.

So what can Hunt be expecting in the responses to his letter? Judging by the opinions expressed at the LSE workshop, there will be some serious challenges to the growth and deregulation agenda. The workshop did not aim to debate the detail of potential policy options, but the following issues were among those suggested by attendees:

- Adapting content regulation to the new media environment in a way that addresses public concerns over access to content, particularly by minors, but that does not stifle innovation and free expression
- Examining options for positive regulation to encourage the creative use of new media and investment in original UK content
- A rethinking of impartiality conditions in the new media environment and how to create a level playing field for media across platforms
- Specific and effective measures to increase [media literacy](#) and bring disadvantaged groups into digital era
- A clear definition of net neutrality and a position on access, including ways to ensure universality of access to content, including publicly funded services

As responses come in to meet the June 30th deadline and in the lead up to a Green Paper planned for the end of the year, we can expect to see hot debate even within academia and civil society groups on issues such as [intellectual property](#) enforcement, data protection and privacy, and media ownership and pluralism. And the contested projects on local television and switchover of digital radio will come under renewed scrutiny. Despite the growth and de-regulation focus, the call for input does leave the field wide open. Let the games begin.

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