

2024 General Election: Party Manifestos



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2024 General Election Manifestos

Last week, the main political parties published their manifestos for the 2024 general election. These set out the policies that the parties would implement if elected to Government on 4th July 2024. A manifesto commitment of a governing party is not legally binding. However, they are seen as the policies for which the party of Government have the strongest democratic mandate.

A manifesto is not a comprehensive outline of a party's intentions but gives the UK electorate commitments on key priority issues. Of significance to specialist publishers, the manifestos feature commitments on artificial intelligence, press regulation, and the role of the Royal Mail.

Links to each party's manifesto in full can be found at the end of the document.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and copyright

The Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party all made commitments to regulate AI that give hope for publishers' copyrights:

- Labour stated that regulators are “ill-equipped” to deal with AI and pledged to create a new Regulatory Innovation Office to help deliver AI regulation more quickly. They also promised to bring forward “binding regulation on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI models”.
- The Conservative Party promised to “ensure creators are properly protected and remunerated for their work, whilst also making the most of the opportunities of AI and its applications for creativity in the future”.
- The Liberal Democrats said they would create a “clear, workable and well-resourced cross-sectoral regulatory framework” for AI that “establishes transparency and accountability”. Additionally, they said they would “support modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules”.
- The Green Party said elected members will “push for a precautionary regulatory approach to the harms and risk of AI.” The party would “align the UK approach with our neighbours in Europe, UNESCO and global efforts to support a coordinated response to future risks of AI.”

PPA CEO Sajeeda Merali responded to Labour's commitment on AI in the manifesto, stating:

“While Labour’s focus on AI regulation centres on safety, the push for a coordinated approach provides opportunities for the PPA and other publishing stakeholders to engage with Labour’s new regulation office to address intellectual property and competition concerns. We agree that AI regulations must be implemented swiftly and will collaborate with Labour, if they win the election, to ensure a sustainable digital economy where publishers benefit from audience engagement without having their content illegally appropriated by LLMs”.

The PPA will continue to engage with key political stakeholders to raise awareness about the need for regulatory mechanisms to enforce transparency for LLMs so that publishers can assert their copyrights.

Press Regulation

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats noted their approach to press regulation, both with contrasting proposals.

- The Conservatives said they “oppose any regulation and state control of the press including attempts to bring forward Leveson 2 or re-open the royal charter on press self-regulation.”
- The Liberal Democrats will “support independent, Leveson-compliant regulation to ensure privacy, quality, diversity and choice in both print and online media, and proceed with Part Two of the Leveson Inquiry.

The PPA has affirmed the stance of being against introducing a state-backed regulator, due to the disruption it would cause to the publishing sector and investigative journalism. After the parliamentary wash-up period, the Media Bill, which included a provision to repeal section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, was passed. If this was activated, it would mean publishers would have to join a state-approved regulator or else be forced to pay both party’s legal costs if ever taken to court (even if they won the case).

Labour has previously expressed opposition to repealing Section 40, after Thangam Debbonaire, Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said Labour wanted the press to be regulated in a way that made it “accountable for its reporting” and that “meets the highest ethical and journalistic standards”. She said that Labour supports the [amendment](#) to give the Secretary of State powers to commence section 40 of the Act, because it would incentivise more publishers to join an approved regulator.

The PPA are pleased that the Media Bill completed its passage, repealing Section 40. We note that Labour has not said they would change this if elected into Government but we will monitor for any significant developments and respond accordingly.

Royal Mail and Saturday Deliveries

The Labour and Conservative parties have both made commitments to maintain the universal service obligation (USO) for Royal Mail.

- Labour said they will “ensure any proposed takeover is robustly scrutinised and maintaining a comprehensive USO”.
- The Tories have said they will “ensure the USO is maintained which is affordable and efficient for customers” and they ensure Saturday deliveries won’t be scrapped.

The PPA responded to Ofcom’s consultation on [the future of the universal postal service](#), which included member input on how particular Royal Mail reforms may impact publisher’s business models, particularly on the issue of removing Saturday deliveries. The universal service obligation is the requirement to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to postal services at uniform price and service, no matter their location.

Under the USO, the Royal Mail are required to deliver mail six days a week: Monday to Saturday. The impact of reducing Royal Mail’s letter delivery from six to five days would have a significant impact on several publishers’ business models, particularly those that publish have time-sensitive titles and depend on the reliability of the Royal Mail.

Given Labour’s open comment on ensuring any proposed changes are robustly scrutinised, we will continue to engage with key stakeholders and the next Government on this issue to ensure our sector and the consumers we serve are reflected.

The PPA has been in contact with Ofcom to monitor the status of their consultation response. We will then engage accordingly, and maintain contact with stakeholders including future ministers to ensure the needs of the sector and consumers remain.

Conclusion

The main parties addressed some of the key issues for the specialist publishing sector: such as AI, press regulation and Saturday postal deliveries. The PPA are engaging with key stakeholders on these issues, as well as other relevant policy areas that were not present in the manifestos, such as data privacy reforms.

For further questions on the manifestos, please contact our Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Eilidh Wilson, Eilidh.wilson@ppa.co.uk

Party Manifestos

- Conservative ([link](#))
- Labour ([link](#))
- Green Party ([link](#))
- Liberal Democrats ([link](#))