MEDIA ACCREDITATION

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of the SPCB’s media accreditation policy and the rights and access it gives members of the mainstream media at Holyrood. It also invites the SPCB to decide whether the additional criteria agreed by the SPCB in 2004 for considering accreditation requests from online media organisations, including bloggers (see para 8) remain valid and appropriate in today’s news environment.

2. This paper takes account of the SPCB’s discussion on media accreditation at its meeting in December 2016. SPCB were advised that accreditation requests from bloggers and other non-mainstream news outlets remain low. However as online media becomes more prevalent, it was agreed it would be sensible to consider the current policy to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Should the SPCB remain content with the criteria, it is proposed that they be formally incorporated on to the face of the existing policy for openness and transparency.

Timing

3. Routine, non-urgent.

Current policy

4. The SPCB’s media accreditation policy has been in place since 1999 and is based upon recommendations from the pre-devolution Consultative Steering Group (CSG).

5. The CSG recommended that wide media access to Parliament should be granted and that all reasonable accreditation requests from “bona-fide” media should be granted.

6. The clear intention is that wide media coverage of the Parliament should be encouraged to maximise public awareness of its work.

Eligibility

7. The SPCB’s policy is geared primarily towards journalists working for mainstream news organisations - this is in line with the CSG’s recommendations that:

- accreditation should be given to bona fide journalists who work for the mainstream media;

- accreditation requests require the applicant’s Editor or Head of News to confirm that the journalist is a bona fide representative whose work requires access to the Parliament (a commissioning editor is required in the case of freelance journalists);
• the Editor or Head of News confirms that the organisation is “engaged in commercial publishing with unrestricted circulation”; and

• the applicant does not have any potential conflicts of interest.

Online media
8. In 2004, the SPCB agreed that online media outlets, including bloggers, could be considered for accreditation against the following criteria, that the applicant:

• has no other paid employment or interests that might conflict with proper reporting of the Parliament;

• can provide a person of suitable standing as a referee as a substitute for an editor / head of news;

• that the website was not party political or a single issue campaign site; and

• that the site provided sufficiently balanced and regular coverage of the work of Parliament - the SPCB agreed this would not necessarily preclude comment-led copy, but journalists from sites that did not give a right of reply or where comment was from a single political perspective were unlikely to be granted accreditation.

Access and benefits of accreditation
9. Accreditation is provided for the sole intention of facilitating reporting on parliamentary business.

10. Accreditation gives the passholder the following benefits:

• access to almost all areas of the building, including right of access to the corridors on each floor of the MSP block;

• access to the media gallery in the chamber and front row seats in committees;

• access to the media tower and the potential use of desk space;

• use of the passholders entrance rather than the public entrance and via the security scanners (note: applies to full accreditation only following security clearance, not applicable to day pass holders);

• the right to sign in visitors to Parliament (again, full accreditation only following security clearance); and

• the right to take part in TV and radio interviews offering comment and analysis inside the building including in private areas like the Garden Lobby - a privilege only Members and accredited media enjoy.
**Current media passholders**

11. At present, 136 media personnel are accredited with full annual passes. This figure includes both journalists and broadcast technical staff.

12. Since 2004, a small number of online media outlets have been granted media accreditation or day accreditation (note: a media day pass provides one-off access to report on a specific event or item of business).

13. No bloggers from outside of mainstream media have been accredited since 1999.

**Practice elsewhere**

14. Westminster’s accreditation criteria are geared towards mainstream media. Whilst not specifically precluding bloggers, its criteria make it unlikely that bloggers will be granted accreditation in the foreseeable future. The established online news services of Buzzfeed and Huffington Post do however have accredited reporters at Westminster.

**Resources & Governance**

15. There are no resource or governance implications arising from this paper.

**Publication**

16. This paper can be published once the SPCB’s policy position has been agreed.

**Decision**

17. Accreditation is provided for the purpose of granting access to report on parliamentary business. The accreditation system provides the SPCB and Parliament with certain safeguards and conditions in return for this access, chief amongst which is well informed, broad-based coverage of chamber and committee business.

18. The 2004 criteria were framed with these safeguards and conditions in mind and the SPCB is asked to consider whether it is content that the 2004 criteria (see para 8) remain in place.

19. If agreed, these criteria will now be formally incorporated on to the face of the existing policy for openness and transparency, as illustrated in the Annex.

**Media Relations Office**

**March 2017**
SPCB Media Accreditation Policy

Newly added text shown in red below:

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/newsandmediacentre/12495.aspx

Media Accreditation

Journalists and other media personnel whose work requires access to the Scottish Parliament may apply for media accreditation. There are two options for accreditation to the Scottish Parliament.

- Full media accreditation for regular access to the Parliamentary complex.
- Media day-pass accreditation which allows access on a pre-arranged date to attend a specific event.

If you require regular access to the Parliament you should apply for full media accreditation. The media day-pass system allows occasional media access to the parliamentary complex to report on items of parliamentary business or a specific event. Freelance media who require accreditation are required to demonstrate that their work is likely to be used by a news organisation. As such, a supporting signature of an Editor / Head of News / Pictures Editor / or equivalent will be required when applying for accreditation.

- All accredited media are required to adhere to the Media Access: SPCB Terms and Conditions rules.
- All accredited media are required to adhere to the Scottish Parliament’s Code of Conduct for journalists and other media personnel.

Journalists representing online media outlets, including bloggers, will be considered for accreditation against the following criteria:

- the site provides sufficiently balanced and regular coverage of the work of Parliament - this does not preclude comment-led copy, but applicants from sites that do not give a right of reply or where comment is from a single political perspective are unlikely to be granted accreditation.
- that the applicant has no other paid employment or interests that might conflict with proper reporting of the Parliament;
- that the applicant can provide a person of suitable standing as a referee as a substitute for an editor / head of news; and
- the relevant website is not party political or a single issue campaign site.

Media Relations Office