

©onsultageddon!

THE UK government has published its 171-page consultation on plans to change copyright law – dubbed “Consultageddon” by the Creators’ Rights Alliance – and the deadline for responses is 21 March. It outlines plans to implement all of last year’s Hargreaves review recommendations – so it’s effectively a powerful attack on the rights of creators (us).

One late addition is the alarming proposal for an “exception to copyright” to allow educational institutions to use parts of works without permission or payment. The proposal would deprive the authors of books, and other works used in schools and colleges, of an important source of income through collecting societies. The Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society is collecting evidence of the effect this would have – see www.alcs.co.uk and see

author Philip Pullman’s denunciation at pullman.notlong.com.

Another proposal which is likely against European Union law is finally to legitimise the “private copying” of works – but with the mandated “fair compensation” to “authors” (including photographers) set to zero.

There are plans to set up schemes to license use of “orphan works” (those whose creators cannot be identified) and for “extended collective licensing” (ECL) that would allow organisations such as the BBC to write one cheque to each collecting society for permission to use, for example, works in its archive – without inquiring who held rights in them. Neither of these is acceptable without also amending laws to give all creators the right (currently denied to journalists, including photographers) to be identified and to de-

fend the integrity of their work. Both are tied to government regulation of collecting societies. We will support the suggestion from officials that if ECL is to happen, a collecting society should need a vote of its members to approve each scheme.

Then there are the frankly sarcastic proposals – such as an exception allowing use in parodies (apparently requiring legislation legally to define what is “funny”).

The NUJ will be responding in the strongest possible terms and activists are booked up solidly with meetings with government officials for the foreseeable future.

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● Go to www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1202copy.html for details of the proposals – and explanation of some scary things they *would not* do.

Sponsored court reporters and other business models

A LOCAL news cooperative in Port Talbot, run by a board of seven journalists who met via the NUJ, continues to provide news coverage after the *Port Talbot Guardian*, the community radio station and the local council freesheet all closed down. *Port Talbot Magnet* (www.lnpt.org) carries news sourced by professional journalists, volunteers (some of them cooperative members) and members of the community who send in copy such as match reports.

Over three years *Magnet* has attracted £50,000 in funding. It has a “Pitch-In!” scheme that solicits story ideas and funding. *Magnet*’s Rachel Howells says Pitch-In has brought “new members, donations, advertising, a free office, and has paid for our public liability insurance”, which covers coop member volunteers.

The “Pitch-In!” scheme brings home the fact that if you want quality news coverage, it’s going to cost you. Its “Sponsor a court reporter for a day” section reminds punters that the now-vanishing practice of “reporting from an ongoing court case is a highly specialised job that requires training and experience... which will cost £150 a day.”

As we go to press *Magnet*’s commercial arm, which has sold stuff to



Jules Mattsson in December received a seasonal payment and an apology from the Metropolitan Police after twice being detained while photographing Air Cadets’ ceremonies in Ilford in 2010, when he was 16 (above).

Photo © Jules Mattsson: blog.julesmattsson.co.uk

Sky News, is putting their “first toe in the water of print” – as a media partner on one-off newspaper produced by a major cultural organisation. Cash from the project goes into paid *Magnet* reporting. The project is provisional on *Magnet*’s advertising sales people (they’re paid commission) selling advertising on it.

Meanwhile *Magnet* journalists are busy enough to turn away paid work, which they’re passing on. Rachel told the *Freelance* “we’re becoming more of an agency for members.”

Magnet’s 2010 market research revealed 63 per cent of people surveyed were willing to pay for local news, and a quarter of respondents “had never used the internet,” a phenomenon based on “socio-economic” background “rather than age”,

says Rachel. Her day job writing a funded PhD – on the “democratic deficit” caused by the decline of local media – and her work with *Magnet* “feed into each other.”

A pdf *Magnet* is planned, possibly a print-on-demand version, with readers paying a local print shop (but not *Magnet*) for a print-out. They’re talking with Ofcom and innovation investors NESTA about this and other “hyper-local” initiatives.

Such imaginative business models will be the focus of a London Freelance Branch conference later this year, working title “New Ways To Make Journalism Pay: 2”. See www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1002ways.html for its successful 2010 precursor.

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LFB meetings

12 March

Social networking

At Headland House

16 April

Travel writing

At Friends’ House

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