

## Will there be a green paper?

The [Leveson Inquiry](#) is playing havoc with the government's plans to bring forward proposals for a new Communications Act. This exchange yesterday in the Commons between newly appointed Shadow Culture Secretary Harriet Harman and Jeremy Hunt:

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): With mounting evidence of the Murdoch empire knowingly using illegal phone hacking, and with the Press Complaints Commission appointing a Tory peer, former Thatcher Cabinet Minister Lord Hunt, as its new supposedly independent chair, it is ever more evident that radical change is necessary and must not be kicked into the long grass. Will the Secretary of State tell the House when he expects to be in a position to bring forward his Green Paper, and when he expects to be able to introduce legislation?

Mr Hunt: (...) we are overhauling the system of press regulation. We do not want to go too far in the opposite direction and stop the press being free, vibrant and robust. That is very important. The independent inquiry by Lord Justice Leveson will be reporting on press regulation and the relationship between the press and politicians by September next year, and we hope to be able to bring to the House a White Paper before the end of next year, which will include what we think should happen on the basis of his recommendations.

A DCMS official tells me that the Green Paper is still planned for the turn of the year. The Government is taking the perfectly logical line that policy related to the Leveson Inquiry (part 1) (which includes media ownership and plurality, subject of a current Ofcom study) will be delayed for a White Paper at the end of 2012. Since Leveson cuts across much of the legislation this means one thing: this will be a particularly green – and likely quite short – green paper. As I suggested in my [submission](#), and Roger Darlington also [discusses](#), there is much to get on with: related to broadband, but the juicy stuff about media pluralism and ownership will have to wait.

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