Paula Sussex

The Charity Commission has been through a challenging time. I see my role as Chief Executive is to:

- Implement the Board’s vision
- Become the most effective regulator possible

Context changing around us:
1. Public more aware of third sector and quicker to question the sector.
2. Greater scrutiny of charities in the press
3. Charities want the Commission to be doing good job in order to help maintain and increase public trust in the sector.

How is the Charity Commission becoming a more effective regulator?

- The Commission has secured additional funding and will, in part, use this funding to bring in new skills to the Commission.
- The Commission is changing to become a more risk-based regulator. It is about finding the minority of charities that are breaking the rules.
- It finds it can do more with less through the power of new technology. The sector is already very good at harnessing the power of digitisation and this has helped in times of smaller budgets.
- There are many reviews of the Commission going on but the Commission’s leadership believe in the capabilities of their team. Will use funding to bring in new skills too.
- Feels progress has been made with the current Board to make it a more active regulator.

Draft Protection of Charities Bill: Jack Rowley – Public Affairs Manager, Charity Commission

The Bill is about addressing loopholes in the Commission’s current powers to regulate. There will be different ways of addressing concerns, but the new powers will not impact most of charities, just the few who break the rules.

The bill committee will report by end of February and the government will respond by end of March, prior to the dissolution of Parliament for elections.

Q&A

Question: Would charities pay to be regulated by the Commission?
Answer: The Government finances the Charity Commission, which is unusual for regulators. Some charities have indicated an interest in potentially paying for expertise. The relationship with government and sector does need to be looked at. Options for funding models for the Charity Commission will be discussed in the New Year, and will look to have widespread involvement from the sector.

Comments from the floor:

- Would need to find the right model which doesn’t put off people registering their charities.
- It’s important to note that if charities had to pay for the regulator it would be taking money away from services. With charities money goes to providing necessary services, rather than profits, so comparisons with other sectors may not be appropriate.

Question: In terms of campaigning by charities does the Commission feel it has sufficient power to enforce accuracy in charities campaigns? Factual inaccuracy has been brought to the Commission before but apparently they have said they cannot do anything about it.

Answer: The Commission can take action on financial crimes, but in terms of incompetence of charities and bad management it cannot do much. In terms of campaigning, the specific guidance will be reviewed after the elections but it expects to see many test cases in run up to the elections. Things that might be okay outside of an election time period may not be okay during an election period but charities would not be disbarred.

Question: How should the charity sector be responding to ill-informed commentary on the sector? The recent publication of The Great Charity Scandal shows an interesting interpretation of statistics.

Answer: The charity sector should be more assertive and challenge those comments. It is sad that so much oxygen is used up with ill-informed criticism of the sector.

Question: Will the Commission work more with other regulators in the sector, like the CIC?

Answer: Yes, need to review that and work more closely. The Commission already had good working relationships with some regulators, but not necessarily all.

Question: When will the new register launched?

Answer: There is no firm date as yet but it will launch soon and it will be a lot better. The register data will be much clearer. There is currently a lot of misunderstanding about charities, what exists, what they do, who to donate to and the register should help with this.

About the APPG on Civil Society

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering exists to provide a forum for discussing issues affecting the voluntary and community sector with parliamentarians from across the political spectrum.

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1 The Commission has subsequently issued a clarification that the findings from its election case work will have to be reviewed after the election, as is normally the case. Such a review may or may not recommend changes to the CC9 guidance, which would be the subject of consultation. It has added that the Commission has set up a “rapid response case-handling system” to allow it to follow up swiftly any concerns that are raised about charities’ activity during the election campaign.
All Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering

How to get involved?

- **Come to a meeting** (details below)
- **Join the group** - APPG members get advance notice of all of our sessions as well as an invitation to our Christmas Parliamentary Reception. Email for details
- **Give us a call, visit our website or follow us on Twitter:**

  Web: [www.ncvo.org.uk/appg](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/appg)  
  E mail: [civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk)  
  Phone: 020 7520 2473  
  Twitter: #appgcs

Future Meetings

- Tuesday 20 January 2015 – Small Charities

Please RSVP to Pauleen Colligan-Genova on [civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk) or telephone 020 7520 2473.