
News Industry's Media Freedom Success As Conservative Party Drops Charge**NMC Calls on Newsrooms To Challenge Any Fees for Press Accreditation**

The Conservative Party in the UK has agreed today (26/07/23) to drop a media charge for journalists covering its upcoming October party conference.

The decision, which will see the widely opposed "accreditation fee" for media attendance scrapped and a refund given to those who have already paid, comes after discussions between the party and industry bodies including the Foreign Press Association, the News Media Association, the News Media Coalition (NMC), and the Society of Editors.

Numerous news industry organisations and news businesses around the world had complained previously that having to pay for media accreditation at the conference was against the interests of press freedom, a barrier to reporting and would hamper open democracy. The party had said that the introduction of the fee was to discourage "over-accreditation" and the administrative burden of journalists applying but failing to show.

The reversal means no charge for media attendance - with those that have paid already being offered a refund. Payment for access to the media centre will continue in accordance with previous years.

The party has also extended the deadline for applying for free press passes until 31st August 2023.

In agreeing to scrap the fee, the party has asked journalists and media organisations to be mindful of the administrative burden of applying for places not likely to be used. The party also warned that "no shows" this year - 'without good reason' - may result in a levy being charged for future conferences.

In a joint statement welcoming the change, the group of four representative organisations said: "Following dialogue between the Conservative Party and industry bodies, we welcome the decision to withdraw the media accreditation fee and refund those that have already paid.

Andrew Moger, CEO of the NMC, said: 'Charging the free press to report freely is never a good option. Now that the up-front fee for accreditation applications has been withdrawn we are all keen to work with the Conservative party to help reduce avoidable over-applications. This has been a wake-up call and the NMC encourages all newsrooms, big and small, publisher or news agency, to be vigilant and opposed to any fees imposed for accreditation applications by political parties, the world of organised events or more generally.'

The joint statement added: “As recognised by the party, all party conferences provide a valuable opportunity for political parties to communicate their policies to the public and ahead of an anticipated general election year, the ability of the media to scrutinise and report freely from such events remains especially important and vital for democracy.’

“In agreeing to scrap the fee, the party has asked that journalists and news organisations are mindful of the number of applications they submit to attend the conference. While it is understood that the news agenda often dictates last minute changes, there remains a significant cost and time resource associated with accrediting applications – not least for the police. We are grateful to the party for listening to our concerns and acting accordingly.”

Full details of how to apply and of the refunds will be available on the Conservative HQ website in due course and journalists are asked to wait for the website to be updated in the coming days.

Editors notes:

The News Media Coalition is an international not for profit organisation which works with news event organisers, governments and other stakeholders to protect news content and news business freedoms from arbitrary controls or restrictions on newsgathering, distribution or content use. NMC Members include major publishing houses and national and international news agencies (in alphabetical order): Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Associated Newspapers, Australian Associated Press, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, EFE Agencia, ESI Media, European Pressphoto Agency, European Publishers Council, Getty Images, Guardian Media Group, News UK, PA Media, Reach plc, Shutterstock, SNTV Sports News Television, Stuff, Telegraph Media Group and Thomson Reuters.

More on the NMC

Further information can be found on the NMC website [here](#).

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