



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 9 - ECONOMIC RESPONSE
PUBLIC INTEREST NEWS FOUNDATION**

Introduction

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On 9 July 2024, the Inquiry opened Module 9 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 6 August 2024.
2. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 9, which states that this module will examine how economic support was delivered by the UK Government, the Devolved Administrations and Local Government by examining a broad range of economic interventions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes economic support for business, jobs, the self-employed, vulnerable people and those on benefits. It will also consider additional funding given to relevant public services and the voluntary and community sectors.
3. On 5 August 2024, the Inquiry received an application from Public Interest News Foundation for Core Participant status in Module 9. This Notice sets out my determination of the application.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 9 on 13 September 2024 (the “Provisional Decision”). The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 20 September 2024 at 4pm.

5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.

Application

6. Applications for Core Participant status are considered in accordance with Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provides:

5.—(1) The chairman may designate a person as a core participant at any time during the course of the inquiry, provided that person consents to being so designated.

(2) In deciding whether to designate a person as a core participant, the chairman must in particular consider whether—

- (a) the person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates;*
- (b) the person has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates; or*
- (c) the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.*

(3) A person ceases to be a core participant on—

- (a) the date specified by the chairman in writing; or*
- (b) the end of the inquiry.*

7. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I have considered whether the application fulfils the requirements set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 9.

Summary of Application

8. In making this determination, the fact that I have not referred to every matter or detail which is set out in the application does not mean that I have not considered it. The points addressed below are intended to capture what appear to be the most important points made in support of the application.

9. This is an application from the Public Interest News Foundation, which is a charity that promotes citizenship by supporting public interest news providers in the UK. The application is made pursuant to Rule 5(2)(a) and (b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006.
10. The Applicant submits that its role was direct and significant in relation to the matters relevant to Module 9 on the basis that it was involved in the development of a support scheme for newspaper publishers called "All in, all together". The Applicant's role included negotiating directly with the Department for Media, Culture and Sport and it says that its work was the subject of parliamentary debate on at least one occasion.
11. The Applicant submits that it also has a significant interest in an important aspect to which Module 9 relates because of its involvement in the "All in, all together" scheme. The Applicant also says that its interest is significant because it has a mandate from the independent news publishing sector to represent their concerns. The Applicant submits that the government entered into negotiations with it and another group in Spring 2020, which, it says, shows that their interest is significant.

Decision for the Applicant

12. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the application. Having done so, I have decided, in my discretion, not to designate Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) as a Core Participant in Module 9.
13. Whilst I appreciate that the Applicant may have played a role in the "All in, all together" initiative and may provide the perspective of independent public interest news providers, however I consider that the Applicant does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in the Module. The role does not appear to be to be direct and significant in relation to the core aspects of the Provisional Outline of Scope of Module 9. I do not consider, having regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently, that the Applicant's interest in Module 9 is sufficiently significant as to grant it Core Participant status in this Module. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry's wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many

people in this country could potentially have an interest in it and not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purpose of the Inquiry hearings.

14. It is not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will also hear and consider carefully the experiences of those who have suffered hardship as a result of the pandemic, through the listening exercise, Every Story Matters. The Applicant and its members may wish to contribute to the work of the Inquiry through this process. I made clear in my Opening Statement that this listening exercise is a significant and important task which will lead to summary reports of the impact of the pandemic to be used as evidence during the Inquiry's module hearings.
15. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by the Applicant, in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 9, I consider that the Applicant should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 9 and I confirm that this is my final decision.
16. I will keep the scope of Module 9 and the designation of Core Participants under review. My decision not to designate Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) as a Core Participant in Module 9 does not preclude Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) from making a further application in any later module. I will consider any future applications Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett
Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry
30 September 2024