

## The Charity Commission levy - on the horizon?

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In an interview with *The Times* (3 November 2017) Helen Stephenson, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, suggested that the prospect of a levy on charities to support the Commission may now be one step closer to becoming a reality.

The suggestion of the Charity Commission imposing a levy on certain of the charities it regulates is familiar and has been broached in a number of interviews and statements over the past few years. The outgoing chairman William Shawcross proposed a consultation this summer and Helen Stephenson's predecessor as Chief Executive, Paula Sussex, raised the prospect in her own first interview with the *Independent* (24 June 2015).

In its favour proponents of a levy stress the unusual role of the Charity Commission in not charging for its services in comparison to other regulators. The Fundraising Regulator, which itself imposes a voluntary levy on larger charities, provides an illustration of how such a system might operate; the possibility of a flat-rate 'charity tax' upon all charities, which is broadly unpopular, remains unlikely.

It has been reported that Helen Stephenson has requested a consultation into a possible levy in the New Year. This would enable the sector to have its say on the principle and terms of a levy before the preparation of a Bill to go before Parliament. The final obstacle for any proposal to overcome, and perhaps at this point the most serious, is for any such Bill to find space within the mid-Brexit parliamentary agenda for consideration at all.