

# Ex-Lords media committee chair Gilbert joins race for Ofcom job

The former chairman of an influential House of Lords committee has become the latest establishment figure to join the race to head Britain's media regulator.

Sky News has learnt that Lord Gilbert of Panteg, who chaired the upper chamber's communications and digital committee, is on a shortlist of candidates to replace Maggie Carver, Ofcom's interim chair.

Lord Gilbert joins two other peers – Lord Grade, the former BBC and ITV chairman, and Lord Vaizey, the former culture minister – among those being considered for the role by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

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One industry source speculated that Nadine Dorries, the culture secretary, favoured Lord Gilbert as Ofcom's next chair, although this suggestion was dismissed on Friday by people close to the process.

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The protracted search for a new chairman has descended into one of the most chaotic in recent Whitehall history, with Lord Burns, the last permanent incumbent, having stepped down well over a year ago.

Boris Johnson had signalled his determination to appoint Paul Dacre, the former Daily Mail editor, to the post, but the original process ended in failure, and Mr Dacre then withdrew altogether, publicly criticising those orchestrating the search.

Sue Gray, the senior civil servant whose report into lockdown-busting parties in Downing Street was published in partial form this week, is heading a panel presiding over the Ofcom appointment.

Last month, Sky News revealed that Mike McTighe, the chairman of Openreach, had ruled himself out of the Ofcom process.

The search process has been labelled a "shambles" that would

“put a reality TV series to shame” by Julian Knight, the MP who chairs the Commons culture select committee.

The hunt for a chair of the media and telecoms regulator comes at a critical time for key areas of policy relating to online harms, the future of the BBC and the speed at which superfast broadband services are being rolled out across Britain.

Ofcom is also grappling with the implications of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, having been told by ministers to examine the removal of Russia Today’s UK broadcasting licence.

A DCMS spokesman declined to comment, while Lord Gilbert’s office did not respond to a request for comment.