

Meeting of the Ofcom Advisory Committee for Scotland held at the Ofcom Scotland Offices, 125 Princes Street, Edinburgh

Tuesday 25 June 2019 – 10.30-16.00

Present:

Liz Leonard – Chair ACS
David Connolly – ACS
Laura Anderson – ACS
Stephen Speirs - ACS
Julie Pirone - ACS
Amanda Britain – ACS (Consumer Panel Member for Scotland)
Maggie Cunningham – ACS (Content Board Member for Scotland)
Glenn Preston – Ofcom
Jonathan Ruff – Ofcom
Amy Preston – Ofcom
Debbie Hughes - Ofcom

Emma McFadyen – Ofcom (by VC)
Katie Pettifer - Ofcom (by VC)
Jessica Rees – Ofcom (by VC)
Guy Holcroft - Ofcom
James Stinson – Ofcom (by VC)

Action

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 LL welcomed everyone, acknowledging it was the first session for the two new appointees to the Advisory Committee for Scotland, Stephen Speirs and Julie Pirone.
- 1.2 Bob Downes, Carmel Teusner and Stefan Webster sent their apologies.

2. Members' interests

- 2.1 No interests were declared by members.

3. Minutes of previous meeting of 14 March

- 3.1 The minutes were approved with one amendment. AB asked for a small change to the section covering her Communications Consumer Panel/Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled people update, at Section 4.1 of the March minutes. **JR**
- 3.2 GP confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. Director's Report

- 5.1 GP provided members with an overview of some of the key developments in Scotland since the March meeting, including:

- Meetings with key broadcasting and telecoms stakeholders, including MG ABLA, UKCTA, O2, STV, the Scottish Government and Stuart MacMillan MSP.
- The introduction of the Scottish Government’s Bill to create the new Consumer Scotland body. There was a short discussion about the remit of this new body and the potential linkages to our own consumer work programme. LA and JR agreed to discuss this further and will consider whether the ACS should respond to the Scottish Government’s call for evidence. **LA & JR**
- Our recent engagement with the two key Committees of the Scottish Parliament; the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.
- The recent meeting of Cross-Party Group on Digital Participation on 28 May, which hosted Linnar Viik (Estonian e-Governance Programme Director) and Roger Halliday (Chief Economist at the Scottish Government).
- There was a short discussion about the changes to the ‘Localness on Commercial Radio’ regulations, with LL providing background context for new ACS members.
- Developments in the post/parcel sector, including the research commissioned by the Scottish Government to examine the costs underpinning parcel surcharging. It was agreed post should feature as an agenda item at the next meeting given developments in this area. **JR**

6. General policy/political update, Katie Pettifer

6.1 KP provided ACS members with an overview of the key public policy developments across the UK since the March meeting, including:

- The UK Government’s progress on Brexit and the results of the European Elections, which took place towards the end of May. There was a short discussion about the implications for international mobile roaming following the UK’s exit from the EU.
- Recent activities of UK Parliament Committees, including preparations for an upcoming appearance by Ofcom before the EFRA Committee on 10 July.
- The publication of the UK Government’s Online Harms White Paper which proposed a new regulatory framework to be overseen by an independent regulatory body.
- The UK Government’s review of digital radio announced by Digital Minister Margot James MP on 13 May. There was a short discussion about the take-up of DAB Radio in Scotland.

7. ‘Making Sense of Media’ presentation, Jess Rees

- 7.1 JR provided ACS members with a short overview of the key findings from Ofcom's 'Making Sense of Media' research.
- 7.2 The data showed that children are more likely to nominate Instagram as their favourite social media platform, and less likely to nominate Facebook. While teenagers were increasingly feeling pressure to look a certain way the research also demonstrated an awareness that social media could portray life differently to reality with young people finding strategies to still be themselves. It also highlighted the growth of teenagers having multiple personal Instagram accounts that show different types of content.
- 7.3 ACS members noted the research which shows there is a growing need for young people to be equipped with digital skills and critical thinking skills in this area.
- 7.4 Parental concerns included pressure to spend money online and companies' collection of individual's data.
- 7.5 In the short discussion following the presentation it was highlighted that Ofcom would be further developing its Making Sense of Media workstream and that further engagement with the ACS on the outputs would be desirable.
- 7.6 JR agreed to circulate a copy of the slide pack to ACS members following a request from DC. **JR**
- 8. Media Nations report 2019 presentation, Guy Holcroft and James Stinson**
- 8.1 GH and JS provided an overview on the findings from the Media Nations 2019 report, due for publication in early August. Key findings included that while broadcasting hours continued to decline, this was from a very high base. Public service broadcasters were still thought of positively and radio had stable listening figures. Scotland had the highest daily viewing of broadcast TV out of all the UK's nations and some of the highest consumption figures for local radio.
- 8.2 There was a short discussion about the factors that might impact consumers' choice between listening to national or local radio. It was suggested that a car-based culture might be a factor and make local radio more important for consumers. GP noted the research did not drill into cultural differences but that there might be opportunity for ACS to respond to consultations about this topic in the future.
- 9. News Plurality in Scotland**
- 9.1 GP and AP provided ACS members with an overview of the key trends in the news and media landscape in Scotland, including viewing habits and newspaper consumption.
- 9.2 There was a short discussion about the new BBC Scotland channel, with AP highlighting some of the public criticism around the timing of its flagship news programme. AP also noted the declining revenue figures of the key media companies in Scotland and the decreasing value of Scottish newspaper titles,

adding that the (previously free) Scotsman is now adopting a subscription model for its website.

- 9.3 The ACS were given an initial preview of research showing the different mediums through which Scotland accesses its news. The ACS were informed that the full findings will be published in the upcoming News Consumption Report 2019. The committee requested an opportunity to have a more in-depth session on the findings for Scotland, once the research has been published. A follow-up session will be scheduled for August 2019.

AP

10. Summary of Consultation responses to Review of Regional Programming (Made Out of London), Glenn Preston

- 10.1 GP provided a summary of the consultation process, noting that PSBs in particular had argued that more time was needed for implementation given commissioning cycles. The updated Guidance would come into effect for programmes broadcast from January 2021 to reflect this feedback.

- 10.2 GP also noted Ofcom had decided to gather further evidence regarding plans to require the substantive base to be operational prior to the point of commission. Although some stakeholders had been supportive of the proposal, feedback from some of the PSBs indicated that this change could harm the development of production centres in the nations and regions, by disincentivising production companies from opening. Ofcom still considered that this change could bring greater longer-term sustainability to the production sector in the nations and regions. However, more evidence would be gathered from PSBs to assess its impact before deciding whether to implement it.

11. Content Board update, Maggie Cunningham

- 11.1 MC summarised the key issues that have been discussed by Ofcom's Content board recently, including:

- The UK Government's Online Harm White Paper;
- Russia TV sanctioning continues;
- Fallout from deregulation around local radio;
- Britbox – proposal was for a partnership between the PSBs (initially with ITV owning 90% and the BBC 10%), with consideration also being given by Ofcom to the potential effect of Britbox on the success of iPlayer.

12. Consumer Panel/ACOD update

- 12.1 AB summarised some of the key developments for the Communications Consumer Panel and the Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled people, including:

- In April, the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport, approved the appointment of Rick Hill MBE as Chair of the Communications Consumer Panel.

- The Panel will soon receive additional funding from the UK Government, allowing it to provide telecom advocacy functions during the time that DCMS is consulting on options for a formal telecoms advocate.
- The Panel also intends to develop ‘nations hubs’ across the UK; AB indicated she might be able to provide ACS members with more information on these plans at the September ACS meeting.
- AB highlighted the Panel’s concerns around a recent power outage in Colonsay, which affected telecoms services in the surrounding area.
- The Panel remained interested in the Migration to VOIP project and had recently met with Ofcom’s Consumer Policy team to discuss the wide-ranging implications for older people who are more reliant on copper services to provide care alarms etc.
- There was a short discussion about the Lloyds Digital Index on Digital Participation and the merits in discussing this at a future Cross-Party Group meeting at the Scottish Parliament.

13. 5G Rural First update, Stephen Speirs

- 13.1 SS provided ACS members with an update on the progress of the 5G Rural First programme, a co-innovation project led by Cisco, alongside the University of Strathclyde and other partners from business, government and academia.
- 13.2 SS began by highlighting research commissioned by Visit Scotland, which suggested that ‘better connectivity’ was one of the most important factors for tourists visiting Scotland.
- 13.3 SS explained that the programme is seeking to create rural test-beds and trials for 5G wireless and mobile connectivity across three key sites; Orkney Islands, Shropshire and Somerset. He also discussed some ‘real world’ applications for 5G services, including the potential benefits for the Agritech sector in Scotland e.g. monitoring crops and livestock more effectively. He also discussed some of the possible applications for tourism, including use of ‘augmented reality’ at popular historical sites.
- 13.4 There was a short discussion about concerns raised by some residents who are worried about the health implications of 5G. JP advised that similar issues arose prior to the launch of the older 3G and 4G networks. JR explained that Public Health England has main responsibility for providing health guidance in this area.

14. Fixed and mobile telecoms round up, Jonathan Ruff

- 14.1 JR provided ACS members with an update on the key telecoms policy developments since the last meeting in March.
- 14.2 JR explained that Ofcom had identified “universality” (i.e. better broadband and mobile for all) as one of our key priorities in the Annual Plan for 2019/20. JR then provided members with an overview of the latest Connected Nations mobile and broadband coverage figures for Scotland and highlighted some of the key

workstreams being taken forward by Ofcom, the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

- 14.3 ACS members were invited to comment on further ways in which Ofcom might improve fixed and mobile coverage, over and above our current key workstreams (i.e. implementation of the broadband USO and the 700MHz and 3.6 GHz– 3.8GHz spectrum auctions). There was a short discussion about other regulatory levers, the effectiveness of publishing coverage information for consumers, our ability to show ‘thought leadership’ and the benefits of using our ‘convening powers’ to bring key stakeholders together.
- 14.4 ACS members were interested to know more about Ofcom’s role implementing the USO and how it would interact with the Scottish Government’s ‘Reaching 100%’ programme. There was a short discussion about the potential for consumer confusion and Committee members suggested that Ofcom consider a proactive consumer information campaign.
- 14.5 LL sought views from Committee members on the role the ACS could play and suggested that a Scottish Government official attend an upcoming meeting. JR indicated that there would be benefit in doing this once the procurement phase of R100 had concluded.
- 14.6 The Committee also queried the cost implications for consumers and whether R100 or the USO programmes would be affordable. JR explained the affordability provisions contained within the Broadband USO legislation. GP also explained that the Universal Service Provider will be required to undertake analysis and cost modelling to understand which premises exceed the USO reasonable cost threshold of £3,400. LA also highlighted her concerns around the perceived lack of choice on R100/USO for consumers in Scotland.

15. AOB

15.1 Brexit update:

This session’s Brexit update was included as part of the General Policy update.

15.2 Future meetings:

Committee members suggested the following topics could be addressed in the December meeting:

- Post (focusing on the user needs project)
- Consumer panel update following the new hub meeting scheduled for November
- Pressures on STV
- BBC Scotland channel