



## 68th Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland (ACNI)

Wednesday 20 June 2018

Minutes

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### Present:

Maureen Edmondson	ACNI
Alan Meban	ACNI
Kathy Graham	ACNI
Paul Wilson	ACNI
John Ellison	ACNI
Fiona Macmillan	ACNI
Carrie Matchett	ACNI
Rick Hill	CCP
Tim Suter	Ofcom
Katie Pettifer (via VC)	Ofcom
Steve Gettings (via VC)	Ofcom
Jonathan Rose	Ofcom
Sinead Lee	Ofcom
James Stinson	Ofcom
Rebecca Robinson	Ofcom

### 1. Welcome, apologies, minutes from last meeting and matters arising

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Carrie Matchett, as this was her first meeting and Tim Suter, Ofcom Board Member. Minutes and actions from the last meeting were agreed, subject to a minor edit.

Steve Gettings gave the Committee an update on a Code of Conduct for members. It was explained that the Codes for Board and Content Board were being refreshed and that it was desirable for Advisory Committees to have a “principles-based” code of their own. Steve said a draft Code was likely to come back to the Committee in the Autumn.

The Committee endorsed the “principles-based” approach.

The Committee also noted that the Register of Interests on the Ofcom website needs updating.

### 2. Future Governance: Tim Suter

Tim gave the Committee an update on work taking place on future governance arrangements within Ofcom, including the Advisory Committees.

He explained the work was designed to get the best out of the Advisory Committees, with a focus on ensuring that advice is sought and given at a time when it can be most useful.

The Committee:

- Suggested that more time could be spent on briefings / inductions to bring members up to speed on the breadth of Ofcom's responsibilities.
- Questioned whether members had enough time to participate and prepare for meetings and other events effectively. Members are expected to contribute 12 days a year to their work on the Committee but generally contribute much more than that.
- Recommended Ofcom consider again whether the Nations' Board Members should also chair their nation's Advisory Committee.
- Stressed that ACNI brought a collective and collaborative expertise to its work and was not keen on Ofcom seeking one-to-one advice from Committee members. It said small sub-groups had worked well in the past and should be continued to ensure timely inputs to policy. These in addition to well-timed full meetings.
- Said an out-of-London collaborative forum, currently the Nations Committee, needed to be maintained in some form after any changes.

### **3. Information Security Policy: Alison Crosland, Steve Gettings, Declan Costello, Nihal Newman**

The Committee was given an update on Information Security Policy, which means members are no longer posted hard copies of Committee papers and will receive these into their Ofcom e-mail accounts.

The Committee:

- Expressed frustration at the IT measures that have been put in place to support this new process, which members felt has made giving effective advice difficult.
- Urged Ofcom to find a solution that would allow members to view and annotate papers on their own devices. Ofcom was asked to assess software packages such as MinutePad or bespoke board pack software.

**Action:** *ICT support and effective solutions for Committee members to be arranged by Ofcom before the next meeting in September. This is subject to Committee members making themselves available for ICT to understand their individual issues and requirements.*

### **4. Director's Report: Jonathan Rose**

Jonathan gave an update on recent developments in Northern Ireland. He highlighted the CBI Broadband Working Group, which is looking at how £150m for broadband might be best spent, as well as a recent broadcast standards case.

### **5. BBC Representation and Portrayal and Annual Report: Max Owens, Jacquie Hughes, Alison Preston, Jaspal Samra, Rebecca Taylor, Luca Antilli**

The team provided some background information on the two BBC reports which will be published in the autumn.

The Annual Report will cover standards, competition and performance.

The Committee:

- Recommended that Ofcom and/or BBC should hold a stakeholder meeting to discuss the BBC Annual Report once it is published and that Ofcom stakeholder engagement should take place in advance of the planning for the next report.
- Expressed concern about the lack of BBC Board Member for Northern Ireland and hoped this would not have negative implications for the BBC's performance in Northern Ireland.
- Asked about how BBC will report on its network production targets in its Annual Report.

The Thematic Review of Representation and Portrayal will be based on qualitative and quantitative research carried out across the UK, including in the devolved nations. The Committee noted that the focus groups were held in Belfast, Derry and Dungannon and that an academic seminar was held as an additional research method for this report.

The emerging findings for the research show that people from Northern Ireland are generally satisfied with the representation and portrayal but that on-screen talent can remain quite London-centric. There were also comments from some participants that the portrayal of Northern Ireland and its people on TV tends to focus on negative aspects such as the Troubles.

**Action:** *Update on research results and publication plans to be shared at the next meeting.*

## **6. 700MHz clearance update: Alistair Goff, Graham Plumb, Peter Madry**

The team outlined the progress made so far in preparing for the 700MHz clearance. The Committee:

- Said that the planning for 700MHz clearance appeared to be moving smoothly.
- Noted that any changes to transmitters would be complete in time for clearance.
- Urged that adequate communication should be made with PMSE users and that Local Councils might be a good vehicle for communicating the message to community and church groups.
- Asked for further details on the PMSE grant scheme and what body would be responsible for running the scheme.

**Action:** *700MHz team to make PMSE team aware of ACNIs concerns regarding adequate communication and notice for PMSE users and to provide further details of the grant scheme when available.*

## **7. Government and Parliament Update: Katie Pettifer**

Katie highlighted some points from her report.

The Committee:

- Discussed some of the potential communication implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland, including cross-border broadcasting and mobile roaming.
- Noted that Sharon White had made a speech to the Connected Britain conference the previous day where she highlighted the importance of improved mobile coverage and the broadband USO, particularly for rural consumers.
- Discussed the BEIS Consumer Green Paper noting that telecoms advocacy has been earmarked for change within the paper. The Committee does not want any reform of consumer advocacy to be regressive for consumers in Northern Ireland and there may be an issue around the lack of coherency for consumer advocacy among the devolved nations.

They said that the ultimate aim should be to keep the good quality representation that exists for consumers in Northern Ireland whilst not wishing to add to the regulatory burden.

**Action:** *Rick and Kathy to draft ACNI response to the Consumer Green Paper.*

*Katie to provide further information on the proposal in the Consumer Green paper for regulators to develop 'scorecards' on company performance.*

## **8. Migration to VOIP: Katie Hanson, Paul Overbury, Kathryn Searle, Alan Pridmore, Liz Roberts**

The team provided some background on the PSTN switch off and migration to VOIP services, noting that for most customers this will mean that they must unplug their phone from the socket and plug it into their router instead. There may be implications for consumers with other devices connected to their phone lines such as personal alarms.

The Committee:

- Noted that Ofcom's regulatory remit with this change only extends to the emergency services calling within one hour of a power cut and Ofcom is working with industry to ensure this is met.
- Highlighted that the change is most likely to affect vulnerable consumers
- Expressed concern that the ability to dial emergency services would be limited to one hour of a power cut and also that other numbers (for example, relatives) would not be able to be called at all.
- Recommended that VOIP products will need to be provided that are not too expensive for light users of telephony.
- Welcomed the fact that relevant stakeholders have been approached and engaged at this early stage.
- Asked whether more collaboration could exist between utility providers and regulators in Northern Ireland to establish a register of consumers with critical care needs.
- Welcomed that telecoms providers were working with industry to enable the testing of existing equipment.
- Said that communication with the public will be required.
- Noted the potential implications for people who did not have broadband/modem.

## **9. Nations Committee Report: Maureen Edmondson**

Maureen provided an update on the last Nations Committee meeting which included a presentation from the Openreach Monitoring Unit.

The Committee discussed the reorganisation of BT NI Network's host organisation and that BT Group will have a new Chief Executive by the end of the year.

**Action:** *Ofcom to re-circulate the OMU Implementation Report to members.*

## **10. CCP Update: Rick Hill**

Rick noted that the issues with the VOIP switchover will be discussed at the next Panel meeting and the Panel will continue to input its concerns to Ofcom.

He raised the second-class stamp safeguard and that Ofcom will need to be mindful of older and vulnerable consumers. The NI Consumer Council has published a report on the value of 2nd class post for consumers.

#### **11. Content Board Update: Jonathan Rose**

Jonathan noted that the Northern Ireland Content Board Member has now been appointed and this will be Angelina Fusco. She will attend her first Content Board meeting in July.

The Radio diversity report was discussed at the last Content Board meeting, as was the issue of the regulation of harmful online content in terms of scope, harm, standards, process and enforcement.

The Committee said it was encouraging that Ofcom is looking into this and raised the difficulty in regulating international content and the challenge for Ofcom to rethink how it does broadcast content regulation in a fast-changing context.

#### **13. AOB: Maureen Edmondson**

The Committee noted the Localness in Radio consultation which was a tabled document and said that there were no specific issues in this for Northern Ireland.

This was the last meeting for Fiona MacMillan and she was thanked her contribution. The next ACNI meeting will be Maureen's last and it was mentioned that ACNI recruitment has begun for a new member and that a chair will be appointed in the Autumn from within the Committee, as per the Committee's Terms of Reference.

#### **14. External Presentation: Virgin Media: Conor Harrison, Roddy O'Flaherty**

Virgin Media presented on its 'Project Lightning' rollout which aims to bring fibre-to-the-home to a further 80-90,000 Northern Ireland premises this year.

The community-funded project in Test Valley was discussed, as was the potential for communities in Northern Ireland to avail of such an initiative.

Conor explained how the Virgin Media network was planned and utilised to bring FTTP and how the technology is future-proofed. The take-up of Virgin Media services once the infrastructure is available was also discussed.

The Committee thanked Virgin Media for its presentation.

**Date of next meeting: 13 September 2018**