

**Minutes of the 84th meeting of
The Advisory Committee for Wales
held via Teams/ some in-person on 22 March 2022**

Present

Hywel Wiliam	Chair
Robert Andrews	Member
Aled Eirug	Member
Tom Crick	Member
Angharad Evans	Member (joined at item 5)
Rem Noormohamed	Member (joined at item 8)

In attendance

David Jones	Ofcom Board Member for Wales
Ruth McElroy	Content Board Member for Wales
Eleanor Marks	Director, Ofcom Wales
Elinor Williams	Regulatory Affairs Principal, Wales, Ofcom
Meleri Evans	Regulatory Affairs Manager, Wales, Ofcom
Liz Nash	Manager, Ofcom Wales team

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Sian Phipps	Communications Consumer Panel Member, Wales
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Agenda items	Action
<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed attendees to the 84th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Wales. He congratulated Professor Ruth McElroy on her appointment as the Content Board Member for Wales and her new role as the Head of School of Arts and Languages at Bangor University. The Chair noted that Aled Eirug joins the committee as a member and thanked him for his work as the Content Board Member for Wales.</p> <p>Apologies received in advance from Sian Phipps.</p>	
<p>2. Declaration of Members' Interests – oral</p> <p>Tom Crick – College of Experts; Swansea University</p> <p>Angharad Evans (joined at item 5). The member noted that S4C was one of her clients as well as BBC Studios (Natural History division - not for the public service arm) – she noted that will need to excuse herself from related discussions.</p> <p>Eleanor Marks mentioned that as of mid-March until the Autumn she will be working a four-day week.</p>	

<p>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2021 and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2021 had been previously circulated to members. The minutes were APPROVED following one amendment of a date corrected to Tuesday 13th September, as a true account of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising/outstanding Actions -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Central Square – visit to be rearranged at the convenience of all parties. • Network News Report – published 22 February. Enhanced coverage of devolved issues since the last analysis. A member asked how Ofcom intends to take the findings of the report forward? Another member asked what do the findings mean for audiences in Wales? It was agreed that we would organise a separate session for Prof Stephen Cushion to talk through the findings of the report. It was noted that the publication of the report had widespread media coverage in Wales and had been circulated to Members of Senedd Cymru’s Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee • Update on Local TV – Local TV Limited has made a request to Ofcom to change the programming commitments in seven of its licences, including Cardiff TV. • Mobile Demand Strategy – a further discussion will be organised for the committee later in April/ May • Online Safety Bill – an update was requested, and it was clarified that this was currently covered in the Public Policy update. 	
<p>Chairman’s Report</p> <p>4. The Chairman gave an oral update of his activities since the last meeting including attending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Melanie Dawes along with the other committee Chairs. • Plan of Work consultation – submitted the committee’s response to the Plan of Work team • MSOM – online seminar on Ofcom’s future approach to Media Literacy • Communications Consumer Hub for Wales – presentation from Royal Mail, discussion on Migration to VoiP • Fascinating site visit to meet with the team from Ogi in Abergavenny. 	
<p>5. Update: Ofcom Content Board Member for Wales</p> <p>The Content Board Member for Wales had previously circulated an update paper. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Studios – arrange a presentation from the team at Roath Lock. • IWA – research democracy report – it was suggested that the ACW engage with the report 	
<p>6. Communications Consumer Panel Update</p> <p>The Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales had previously circulated an update report on the Panel’s activities since the last meeting. In her absence, the Chair thanked the CCP Member for Wales for her paper.</p>	

7. Report – Wales Recent Developments

Members noted the contents of an update paper previously circulated commenting on topics including:

- Meetings with both the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Climate Change and Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport.
- Stakeholder engagement – meeting with the Communications Council for Wales, a site visit to Ogi to see full fibre deployment in Abergavenny, the Plan of Work event and the Welsh Government roundtable on the Online Safety Bill.
- Agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding with South Wales Police in line with that of the MOU agreed with the Metropolitan Police in relation to our work on illegal content.

8. Update: Ofcom Board Member for Wales

Ofcom Chair – process drawing to a close and an announcement will be made shortly.

Board Member for Northern Ireland – process completed

Board Member and Chair of Content Board – recruitment process nearing completion.

RT – 29 cases were being investigated and this process is continuing. Ofcom.

9. Update – Migration to VoIP

The Chair welcomed the team to the meeting. The team gave an update to the Committee, reminding Members that Migration to VoIP was a decision taken by industry and the process would be completed by 2025. Ofcom had a role to ensure that vulnerable consumers are protected, and that people can continue to contact the emergency services during a power cut. It was noted that the migration process had picked up pace in recent weeks and that discussions were ongoing with the Critical National Infrastructure sector to ensure that it was suitably prepared.

Committee Members raised the issue of the communicating of the process with both the public and organisations that rely on copper lines, drawing comparison to the mass methods used during the digital switchover from analogue TV. Colleagues also mentioned that Ofcom Wales was due to hold a series of events to engage stakeholders, beginning with representatives from the health sector shortly.

10. Update – Small Scale DAB licencing

Colleagues gave an update on progress of the small scale DAB licencing process.

Committee Members commended the ambition shown by Ofcom in opening four rounds of licensing for Small Scale DAB in total, adding that it was a good alternative to both DAB and FM and could provide a platform for new channels to launch, including those in the Welsh language. The team reminded the Committee that other possibilities also existed for analogue stations, noting that Radio Cardiff had successfully applied for a CDSP licence for local community services on reserved capacity on the Cardiff multiplex.

<p>11. Update – Public Policy</p> <p>Colleagues from the Public Policy team updated the Committee. The team noted that the Online Safety Bill had been introduced to Parliament and included new areas that would be in the scope of the Bill, as previously announced by the Secretary of State. The parliamentary scrutiny for the Bill be announced in due course.</p> <p>In other discussions, the Committee raised its concerns around PSTN and the impact on consumers in Wales. The team said that they were continuing to hold discussions with stakeholders, industry and the UK Government on Migration to VoIP.</p>	
<p>12. Channel 3 and 5 Relicensing/ Media Bill update</p> <p>The team gave an overview of Ofcom’s statutory duties in relation to the Channel 3 and 5 relicensing process for the period 2025-35 and outlined the role of the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the implications of the relicensing on ITV Cymru Wales in particular, and the benefits of retaining the licence and current obligations. The Committee noted the contribution that ITV Cymru Wales made to the PSB landscape in Wales, especially in providing plurality through its news and current affairs provision, and its Welsh language programming.</p>	
<p>13. Treating vulnerable customers fairly – consultation</p> <p>The team gave an update on their current consultation which aims to amend the voluntary guide ‘Treating vulnerable customers fairly: a guide for phone, broadband and pay-TV providers.’ The amendments will set out best practice recommendations to providers and the practical measures they could adopt to treat financially vulnerable customers fairly.</p> <p>The team said that while a relatively small proportion of broadband and mobile customers tend to fall into arrears, debt can be stressful and can have a significant impact on a person’s mental health. The team was mindful that more people may fall behind on their bills in 2022 due to rising retail prices and wider pressures on the cost of living.</p> <p>Committee Members discussed whether providers could do more in terms of offering social tariffs and making consumers more aware of what support was available.</p>	
<p>14. Climate Change</p> <p>The team explained that their work focusses on environmental matters within Ofcom’s regulated sectors, as opposed to reducing Ofcom’s own organisational environmental footprint, which they explained was a separate project within Ofcom.</p> <p>The team outlined their initial findings from analysing the carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e) from the sectors we regulate and found that overall they have a comparatively small CO₂e emissions impact.</p> <p>However, the communications sector has a potentially significant role in enabling the UK to achieve reductions in energy usage and to manage resources more efficiently. The</p>	

<p>team said that this underlines the importance of Ofcom’s objectives - for example to support investment in the deployment of competing gigabit-capable networks to provide consumers with a choice of fast and high-quality services. And Ofcom could potentially provide advice or signpost consumers to make communication choices that align with their environmental values.</p> <p>The team also discussed the impact of promoting competition may have on the environment.</p>	
<p>15. Consultation Responses:</p> <p><i>The following are publications considered by the committee: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling spectrum sharing in the upper 6 GHz band Local TV Limited Improving the accuracy of Calling Line Identification (CLI) data 	
<p>Consumer complaints update</p> <p>16. Contents NOTED.</p>	
<p>Forthcoming Consultations & Publications</p> <p>17. Contents NOTED.</p>	
<p>Any Other Business and future agenda items</p> <p>AOB –</p> <p>Future meeting dates confirmed as:</p> <p>Thursday 23rd June 2022</p>	