

Content Board minutes 194(25)

Publication Minutes of the one-hundred and ninety-fourth meeting of the Content Board held on 29 April 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Clive Jones	Chair and Ofcom Board Member
Dekan Apajee	Non-Executive Member for England
Simon Bucks	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member (via Teams)
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member
Peter Horrocks	Non-Executive Member
Peter MacMahon	Non-Executive Member for Scotland
Ali Marsden	Executive Member and Director, Standards and Audience Protection
Maria McCann	Non-Executive Member for Northern Ireland
Ruth McElroy	Non-Executive Member for Wales
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Executive Member and Group Director, Broadcasting and Media Group
Yolisa Phahle	Non-Executive Member
Kim Shillinglaw	Non-Executive Member

In attendance

Ali-Abbas Ali	Director of Broadcasting Competition
Vikki Cook	Director of Content Media Policy
David Edwards	Governance Manager
Laura Rhea	Director, Standards and Audience Protection
Chinmay Parikh	FCA/ Next-Generation NED observer

Other colleagues attending for specific agenda items

Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed Members and attendees. He flagged that John O’Loan would join later in the meeting to discuss an AI tool his company was developing.
2. The Chair also flagged that in the afternoon the Content Board standards subgroup would meet with the Executive to discuss Ofcom’s review of Rule

5.3 of the Broadcasting Code (prior to publication of a consultation on proposed changes).

3. At the previous Content Board meeting Ofcom's work to implement Part 2 of the Media Act 2024 (PSM prominence and availability) had been discussed. The Executive planned to engage further with Members at a stand-alone Teams session in the summer or possibly at the September Content Board meeting.

Item 2: Declaration of members' interests

4. There were no interests to declare.

Item 3: Minutes of the meeting held 18 March 2025 and matters arising – Content Board minutes 193(25)

5. The minutes of the Content Board meeting held on 18 March 2025 were **APPROVED** subject to clarification on a point which would be discussed with the Chair outside the meeting. There were no outstanding actions.

Item 4: Chair's report

6. The Chair updated Members on recent topics discussed by the Ofcom Board and focused on the main areas of work. March 2025 Ofcom Board minutes had been circulated for information.
7. The April Ofcom Board meeting had included discussion of Ofcom's Online Safety work programme for 2025/26; appointments were approved for the new Online Information Advisory Committee¹; and a Content Board update item that included review of Editorial Standards work for the period from September 2024 to February 2025 and the Content Board's Work Programme 2025/26.
8. The Ofcom Board had noted governance structures and ways of working as a productive topic for discussion at its Strategy Day in October. The Content Board welcomed that Ofcom Board discussion and in the interval Content Board Members could feed any views on governance arrangements (which included the Content Board and Ofcom's Advisory Committees) to the Chair, Bob Downes or to Will Harding. The Chair suggested also that the Content Board return to the governance topic in advance of the Ofcom Board strategy day. It was noted that Ofcom governance included various statutory committees, that it would be for Parliament to change those arrangements but the Government could have other priorities.
9. The Chair made some observations about the state of the UK's broadcasting and production sectors, including change and uncertainties. He flagged the importance of Ofcom's PSM Review and suggested that its findings would likely stimulate debates at Westminster and in the devolved administrations, further reasons for Ofcom to have the right organisational and governance

¹ [Appointments to Ofcom's Online Information Advisory Committee were announced on 28 April 2025.](#)

structures in place. In discussion a Member flagged the importance of converged content standards regardless of platform; another raised the important role the PSBs played in reflecting UK audiences and communities back to themselves (the BBC's plans to axe the long-running Scottish drama series *River City* and reactions amongst politicians and others were highlighted); and a Member suggested that the PSBs come together to discuss and contribute their thinking to an industrial strategy, with Ofcom acting as convener and thought leader.

10. Members **NOTED** the report.

Item 5: Broadcast and Media Group Policy and related teams' update – Paper CB 8(25)

11. Members had received a paper providing an update on key policy and project areas in the BMG and related teams. The paper was taken as read.

12. A number of points were highlighted/ discussed including:

- Bundling and “matching rights”: As part of work to implement the Media Act 2024 and following a recent consultation on Revised Guidance for Public Service Broadcasters on Commissioning Codes of Practice, the Executive was considering next steps. A Member highlighted the need to support content creation, in addition to broadcasters, and another queried, with indies of different size and scale, whether there was a need to differentiate regarding rights.
- VOD Standards Code: Also Media Act work, a consultation was expected to be published later in 2025, following the Secretary of State's decision on which VoD services would be designated as 'Tier 1 Services' and subject to the new Code
- Broadcasting Code: Work to consult on proposed changes to Rule 5.3 was progressing (referred to earlier in the meeting).
- Broadcast and Media Group: Following review of the systems, focus, structure and prioritisation of resources, some changes to ways of working would be introduced shortly.
- Availability of BBC Sounds: The BBC's decision to limit the availability of certain services on BBC Sounds in the Republic of Ireland had received significant media attention (in Northern Ireland and in the Republic). It was noted that this matter was outside Ofcom's remit.

13. Members **NOTED** paper CB 8(25) and additional oral updates provided.

Item 6: AI and news providers

14. John O'Loan joined the meeting to discuss AI as a powerful tool in journalism to deliver accurate and objective news and information to multiple platforms, linear and digital.

15. John explained and responded to questions about LNS Alpha Omega, an AI assistant designed for and from the point of view of journalists and a product being developed by his company iOMedia. It featured the ability to produce several outputs, in different languages, styles and formats and allowing reporters to focus on news gathering and deeper journalism. Rather than rely

on algorithmic code, it used everyday language. It was also designed with transparency and ethical features built in.

Item 7: Media Literacy 3-year strategy – CB 9(25)

16. Ofcom had published a 3-year media literacy strategy in October 2024, as required under the Online Safety Act 2023, and took the choice to focus its media literacy work on online services as well as broadcast services. Further details of this work were published simultaneously in a Making Sense of Media Annual Plan. The Content Board was briefed and discussed this area of Ofcom’s work.
17. A number of points were highlighted/ discussed by Members, including:
 - Education and how to reach young people. It was noted that media literacy was a greater part of the school curriculum in Wales and that Ofcom had responded through the Media Literacy team to the current UK Government consultation on the national curriculum. Equipping teachers to intervene and support media literacy went beyond a curriculum document and it was noted that barriers could be created by terminology, e.g. terms like 'media literacy' and 'digital citizenship'.
 - A Member suggested that there could be value in looking to partnerships with commercial companies and the brands favoured by young people to help deliver media literacy. Corporate Social Responsibility budgets was highlighted as a potential source of funding.
 - It was noted that both parents and children could be susceptible to misinformation and disinformation, while parents retain a role in promoting their children’s media literacy.
 - Part of this work was about changing behaviours and encouraging a growth mindset, getting people online, starting with what they wanted to do and pursuing a digital route, as well as triggering critical thinking about truth and accuracy.
 - It was suggested that advertising skills and professionals created emotional messages which could be utilised to stimulate media literacy.
 - There were older age groups to consider and issues of exclusion and engagement. Trust in broadcasters was greater amongst older people, perhaps something that could be tapped into to promote media literacy.
18. The Content Board **NOTED** paper CB 9(25).

Item 8: Channel 4 work programme – CB 10(25)

19. Members were updated on Ofcom’s interconnected workstreams on Channel 4 Corporation’s (C4C) annual Statement of Media Content Policy (SMCP), with Ofcom’s SMCP assessment due to be published shortly, and other C4C related work arising from the Media Act 2024 Part 1 (Commissioning Codes of Practice), Part 2 (Prominence and availability); and Part 3 (Channel 4 Commissioning).
20. Members discussed and noted the context for the work programme, change of leadership at C4C (a new Chairman was still to be appointed and today’s announcement that the Chief Executive would be stepping down in the coming months); Channel 4’s presence on YouTube (the Executive suggested

that Channel 4 be invited to a future Content Board meeting to talk about this); and revenues and commercial challenges facing C4C and independent producers.

21. The Content Board **NOTED** paper CB 10(25).

Items 10-11: Information items

22. The Content Board **NOTED** the following information items:

- Minutes of the Ofcom Board of 5 March 2025.
- Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 12/13 February and 13 March 2025.

Item 12: Any other business

23. There was no other business.

Item 13: Date of the next meeting

24. The next scheduled Content Board meeting would be held on Tuesday 1 July 2025.