

# Content Board minutes 197(25)

Publication Minutes of the one-hundred and ninety-seventh meeting of the Content Board held on 2 December 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

## Present

Clive Jones	Chair and Ofcom Board Member
Simon Bucks	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member
Peter Horrocks	Non-Executive Member
Peter MacMahon	Non-Executive Member for Scotland
Kate Marsh	Non-Executive Member
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
Yolisa Phahle	Non-Executive Member

## Apologies

Kim Shillinglaw	Non-Executive Member
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## In attendance

David Edwards	Governance Manager
Chinmay Parikh	FCA/ Next-Generation NED observer
Laura Rhea	Director, Standards and Audience Protection

### Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed Members and attendees and Kate Marsh in particular who was attending her first meeting. This would be the last meeting for Bob Downes, his appointment as a member of the Ofcom Board and the Content Board would conclude on 31 January 2026. It was also the last meeting for Chinmay Parikh, having been an observer at Content Board meetings during 2025. Alison Marsden would be leaving Ofcom shortly and for that reason was not present on this occasion.

### Item 2: Declaration of members' interests

2. Clive Jones declared his role as Chair of the ITV Pensions Scheme and should it be required, to avoid a potential conflict, he would recuse himself from discussions related to the possible sale of ITV's broadcasting business to Sky.

**Item 3: Minutes of the meeting held 30 September 2025 and matters arising – Content Board minutes 196(25)**

3. The minutes of the Content Board meeting held on 30 September 2025 were **APPROVED**. There were no outstanding actions.

**Item 4: Chair's report**

4. Clive Jones highlighted some recent topics discussed by the Ofcom Board and focused on the main areas of work. July, September and October 2025 Ofcom Board minutes had been circulated for information. The November Ofcom Board meeting had been held in Edinburgh and the two-day trip included a visit to the National Robotarium at Heriot-Watt University and a stakeholder reception.
5. Content Board **NOTED** the report.

**Item 5: Broadcast and Media Group Policy and related teams' update – Paper CB 21(25)**

6. 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.
7. A number of points were highlighted/ discussed by Members, including:
  - BBC: Editorial decision-making and the recent resignation of the Director General and the CEO of BBC News and Current Affairs and a conversation about Ofcom's role in the regulation of the BBC.
  - ITV/ Sky: Potential merger of ITV's broadcasting business with Sky and regulatory issues, mostly for the CMA but some for Ofcom. Ofcom could be asked to undertake a public interest test by the Secretary of State and further developments could be expected in the New Year.
  - STV: Licence change requests, which would be discussed further under item 7 later in the meeting.
  - Standards: Complaints about 11 programmes broadcast by Talk and recorded as "not pursued" would be considered afresh under the Broadcasting Code.
  - The issue of standards complaints not pursued and whether the Content Board could have a role in determining the criteria used by the Executive when making those decisions (broadly because a complaint did not warrant investigation or it fell outside Ofcom's remit). The Chair would discuss this with the Executive and the Content Board could return to this issue in due course.
  - Radio: Local information at weekends and issues around pre-recording of bulletins; and changes to timings of when shared programming on BBC Local Radio can contribute towards its quota for locally made programming.
8. Content Board **NOTED** the paper.

#### **Item 6: EDI in broadcasting – Paper CB 22(25)**

9. Ofcom had published its 2024/25 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Broadcasting report on 28 November, combining quantitative data on who is working in broadcasting with qualitative data on what broadcasters are doing to promote equality of opportunity in their workforces. This year's report also provided a deep dive into data on disabled employees.
10. A number of points were highlighted/ discussed including:
  - The importance of making diverse socio-economic background and disability as continuing areas of focus; and data on intersectionality and granularity.
  - Issues around retention and career progression; representation and data collection at senior levels in broadcasting.
  - UK initiatives and how data should report on the widest view of the sector.
  - The merits of reflecting initiatives such as the Creative Diversity Network's 'Project Diamond' in this year's report.
  - Acknowledgement of the value in publishing EDI data as a lever to bring about positive change and the need to recognise that economic benefits are gained from EDI.
11. Members **NOTED** this year's EDI report.

#### **Item 7: STV licence change requests – CB 23(25)**

12. STV currently held two Channel 3 licences in Scotland, STV North and STV Central. Each licence required production of four hours of news on average per week, with two and a half hours broadcast in peak and typically met via *STV News at Six*.
13. STV was now seeking to change both licences with respect to regional news provision. In October it had submitted a formal request, subsequently provided a revised proposal and more details to support it and had engaged in discussions with Ofcom. In November the Executive had also met with Members of the Content Board to discuss the request.
14. The main justification put forward for the proposals was to maintain regional news provision on a sustainable footing whilst recognising that audiences were increasingly getting their local news online. STV had also presented editorial justifications.
15. Members were updated on STV's request and provided further input. Issues raised in discussion included an updated proposal of a 70:30 split between Scotland-wide and regional/ local news on the 6pm bulletin; an STV pan-Scotland digital news strategy; commercial pressures on the broadcaster; forthcoming elections in Scotland as part of the wider context; and the need to serve audiences in different regions and on all STV platforms.
16. Later in December Ofcom planned to consult on the proposals and would engage with stakeholders as part of that exercise. Ahead of publication, the Chair requested that Members of the Ofcom Board and the Content Board be provided with a short read-out of the consultation document and key messages.

17. Content Board **NOTED** the paper provided.

**Item 8: Information integrity in the age of Big Tech and AI**

18. Members received a presentation setting out an analytical framework for media/ tech and regulation; to test the framework based on some recent history that was already well understood; use of that framework to assess more recent tech and geo-political issues based on publicly available sources and *not* settled Ofcom positions; and as a way of stimulating a conversation.
19. Topics to introduce this included the traditional news media value chain; past thinking that the internet was a “dumb pipe”; shift in the volume of content to those who could organise and prioritise “limitless” information; revenue shift to intermediaries and concentration in the ad stack.
20. Other issues included transmission speed and the impact of information integrity on polarisation and democracy; news brands and trust; cycles in style of government, including a rise in populist tendencies but also oligarchy; massive investments in AI infrastructure/ development and a race to ‘superintelligence’; and tech firms spending hundreds of \$ billions on infrastructure each year.
21. GenAI appeared to be disruptive at every point in the value chain; changes in the supply chain were affecting audience trust; AI Agents could fundamentally reshape the new value chain and audience experience; whether regulation restricted growth; and a perception that Big Tech was regulated by Big Tech.
22. Members felt that these topics had been thought-provoking and that the Ofcom Board could benefit from a similar presentation. Reflections included the need to look forwards, at Big Tech, at how information is provided and to appropriate regulation that is fit for purpose; there were more ways to generate falsehoods than facts and harm experienced by acting on the former; a need for optimism that information integrity could be maintained; thinking in other jurisdictions and the impact of global events; pace, being proactive and risk of the deskilling of critical thinking.

**Items 9-10: Information items**

23. Content Board **NOTED** the following information items:
- Minutes of the Ofcom Board of 16 July, 24 September and 15 October 2025.
  - Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 17 September and 16 October 2025.

**Item 11: Any other business**

24. There being no other Content Board business, on behalf of Members the Chair wished to formally thank Ali Marsden, although absent from the meeting, for her valuable contribution to the work of Ofcom over several years and as an Executive Member of the Content Board. He wished to say farewell to Chinmay Parikh, on the completion of his observer role, wishing him well for the future. Last of all, the Chair said a warm thank you to Bob

Downes for his contribution during his membership of the Ofcom Board and the Content Board, the latter including a period as interim Chair.

**Item 12: Date of the next meeting**

25. The next scheduled Content Board meeting would be held on 20 January 2026.