

**Minutes of the 97th meeting of
the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland
held hybrid (at Landmark House, Belfast and via Microsoft Teams)
on Thursday 2nd October 2025**

Present

Colm Murphy	ACNI Chair
Aodhan O'Donnell	ACNI Member
Jackie Neill	ACNI Member
Michael Wilson	ACNI Member
Paul Wickens	ACNI Member
Carrie Matchett	NI Member of Communications Consumer Panel
Karen Baxter	Ofcom Board Member for Northern Ireland
Maria McCann	Content Board Member for Northern Ireland (by Teams)

In attendance

Jonathan Rose	Northern Ireland Director
Judith Carville	Regulatory Affairs Manager
James Stinson	Regulatory Affairs Manager
Bimpe Archer	Regulatory Affairs Manager
Jane Hillis	Regulatory Affairs Advisor

Other Ofcom colleagues (via Teams)

Apologies

NextGen NED observer

Item 1: Welcome, apologies and declaration of Members' Interests

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from the NextGeneration NED observer.
3. The Chair informed members that the Committee will have another Next Generation NED candidate for 2026 and that Paul Wickens has agreed to be their mentor.
4. Two members declared changes in interests which have been notified to the NI Director and the Governance team.
5. The Chair informed members that interviews for a new Committee member had taken place and the interview panel's recommendations presented to the Ofcom Board for decision. Subject to the Board's approval, the appointee will be in place for the December Committee meeting.

Item 2: Minutes of the 96th meeting held on 12th June 2025 and Actions

6. The Minutes of the 96th meeting were approved, with a minor amendment.
7. Actions from the previous meeting were agreed as completed.

Item 3: Interim Committee Business & Issues since last meeting

8. The Broadcasting sub-group lead thanked members for the Committee's consultation responses to Ofcom's local radio news proposals as part of the Media Act. The lead also advised there would be further Media Act consultations in the near future, and he would keep the Committee advised on which they should respond to.
9. The Committee discussed the BBC's failure to meet its own programming targets for Northern Ireland, as reported in its annual report in July. The Broadcasting sub-group members agreed to provide a briefing note on the subject to record their concerns and share with Ofcom and non-executive members.
10. The Connectivity & Consumer sub-group lead flagged several open or upcoming consultations they would be responding to, including guidance for super-complaints and tackling scam calls.
11. The Committee congratulated the NI team on a very successful Future of Connectivity event held at the end of June.
12. The NI CCP member and a committee member noted their recent attendance at an NI CCP Hub event on changes to the postal service in NI. The biggest concerns were the impact these changes would have on the most vulnerable, the lack of awareness of two local pilots and targeted stamp discount.

Item 4: Committee Discussion on Agenda items:

13. Members discussed the points they wished to raise on Items 7, 8, 9 and 11.
14. The Chair noted discussion on AI during the previous meeting and informed members they could direct any related questions to the Ofcom colleague presenting the Public Policy update.

Item 5: Board update from Northern Ireland Member

15. The Board member reflected on the Board's most recent meetings, highlighting discussions on the ongoing implementation of Ofcom's three-year plan and the Online Safety Act. The Board member also looked ahead to the Board's upcoming strategy day later in the month.

Item 6: Content Board update from Northern Ireland Member

16. The Content Board member reflected on the Content Board's most recent meeting, noting the review of the Broadcasting Code in relation to the matter of politicians as presenters. The member also noted the introduction of advertising restrictions on less healthy foods, Channel 4's acquisition of a Glasgow-based indie producer, and the future regulation of Electronic Programme Guides.

Item 7: Additional Safety Measures

17. The Chair welcomed members of the Additional Online Safety Measures team who gave a brief introduction to their paper.
18. Members agreed they supported the proposals and stressed the importance of being able to stop illegal content quickly.
19. A Committee member queried the definition of a 'crisis' and when a situation moved from being a local crisis to a UK-wide one.
20. Committee members discussed whether post-crisis analysis should be made public.
21. The Committee discussed the importance of reporting functions being easy to find and use and how service providers conveyed information around reporting functions to users.
22. The Chair thanked the team for their clarity on the subject, noting freedom of expression and online safety is a hard balance to achieve.
23. The Committee agreed to submit a response to the consultation.

[Maria McCann left the meeting]

Item 8: Mobile Investment Programme

24. The Chair welcomed the Mobile Investment Programme team who gave a brief introduction to their paper.
25. A Committee member queried how Ofcom defined quality of network performance and how it is measured.
26. Members discussed price versus quality and how at differing stages one can be more important than the other for consumers. A member suggested a price and quality ranking system to help inform consumers.
27. Members agreed Ofcom's 'Map your mobile' is a valuable tool, particularly for consumers in rural areas and encouraged Ofcom to increase its public awareness.
28. A member noted that, compared to Great Britain, better mobile coverage on roads was more important than better coverage on trains.
29. Members discussed the complexities around planning approval for mobile masts and the need for providers and government to work together.

Item 9: Plan of Work

30. The Chair welcomed the Plan of Work team who gave a brief introduction to their paper.
31. Members discussed the draft objectives for Northern Ireland and made the following suggestions:

- Consider including a reference to the postal USO work, given its significance for NI consumers
 - Focus the PSM objective on delivering for audiences in terms of representation and portrayal
 - Reflect the importance of network resilience, given the recent storm impact in NI
 - Consider promoting the opportunity created by the near ubiquity of full fibre broadband in NI
32. Members discussed the challenge of addressing the underlying causes of the recent spate of 5G mast attacks in Belfast.
33. The Chair thanked the Plan of Work team and looked forward to the stakeholder event to be held in January.

Item 10: Public Policy Update

34. The Chair welcomed a member of the Public Policy team who gave a brief introduction to their paper.
35. The Committee noted the UK Government's plans for a digital ID and discussed its application in NI.
36. The Committee discussed the next stages in Ofcom's PSM work, the BBC's Charter Renewal, and the potential impact of changes at STV.
37. The Committee discussed at length the growing impact of AI in the sectors Ofcom regulates and the balance between innovation, investment and consumer protection.

Item 11: Media Act

38. The Chair welcomed the Media Act team who gave a brief introduction to their paper.
39. The Committee noted the progress made so far on updating existing regulations and introducing new ones, under the Act.
40. Members discussed a number of upcoming consultations with the team to help identify opportunities to submit responses relevant to Northern Ireland audiences.
41. The team thanked the Committee for its consultation response regarding PSB quotas and noted the impact on Ofcom's final decision.
42. Members agreed that the team should return to the Committee in the spring for a further update.

Item 12: Communications Consumer Panel Update

43. The CCP member reflected on the paper provided to the committee and highlighted a number of items.
44. She reported on a recent meeting of the NI Consumer Hub focussed on the proposed changes to the postal USO which had helped raise awareness of issues relevant to Northern Ireland.
45. The member looked forward to the next Consumer Hub meeting in December which would focus on Online Safety.
46. The panel member discussed the CCP's recent conversation on big transitions and what a good transition looks like.
47. Members were informed of an upcoming AI conference that may be of interest.
48. The panel member informed the committee of research on network outages being published soon which will include looking at the experience of moving house with VOIP.

Item 13: Northern Ireland Directors Report

49. Jonathan Rose introduced his paper to the Committee. He highlighted the Media Nations NI report's publication and upcoming stakeholder event; the revised Northern Ireland Equality Scheme published in August, thanking the Committee for its early advice; and police update in relation to the recent 5G mast attacks.

Item 14: Any Other Business

50. The Committee congratulated Maria McCann on her reappointment for another term on the Content Board.
51. The NI team noted their upcoming meeting with Jim Shannon MP to discuss broadcasting matters following his recent comments at a Westminster Hall debate.
52. The two sub-group leads advised they would be updating their plan of work.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

53. The next scheduled Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 4th December 2025.

Approved:



Date: 04.12.2025