

# Minutes of the 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Committee for Scotland

Hybrid meeting in person and virtually over Microsoft  
Teams on 12 June 2025

## Present

Jess McBeath	Chair
Ashe Hussain	Member
Polly Tolley	Member
Cameron Speirs	Member
Caroline Di Stefano	Member (Online)

## In attendance

Bob Downes	Ofcom Board Member Scotland - up to Agenda Item 21
Peter MacMahon	Content Board Member for Scotland - Agenda Items 16-25 only
Michael Wardlow	Communications Consumer Panel (CCP) – Agenda Items 4-10 only
Sital Patel	Ofcom’s Next Generation NED Observer
Glenn Preston	Ofcom Scotland Director (Online)
Stefan Webster	Ofcom Scotland
Ross Hamilton	Ofcom Scotland
Lyndsey Scott	Ofcom Scotland
Dion Barnaby	Ofcom Scotland
Debbie Hughes	Ofcom Scotland
Kerry Alexander	Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) – Agenda Items 13-15 only
Chris Hudson	Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) – Agenda Items 13-15 only
David Cairns	Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) – Agenda Items 13-15 only
Sarah Meyers	Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF) – Agenda Items 28-31 only

Other Ofcom colleagues

## Welcome, introductions, conflicts, and apologies

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1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Helen Froud, Chair of CCP. It was advised that another member of the Panel would join the meeting for Agenda Item 3.
2. It was NOTED that a member may have a conflict of interest on any future Consultation Responses on frauds and scams as this is the main area of their work with their employer. Recusal could be used if necessary.

## Minutes of the 99th meeting held on 25 February 2025

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3. The minutes of the 99<sup>th</sup> meeting were APPROVED by the Committee. In the discussion of actions which arose from the February meeting, it was NOTED that:
  - The Scottish Government's Digital Connectivity roundtable event has been organised to be held in the Ofcom Scotland office on 17 June.
  - Ofcom's Online Safety and Media Literacy event on the guidance of protecting women and girls was held in the Ofcom Scotland office on 22 April.
  - Ofcom's Group Director for Network and Communications met with Royal Mail representatives in April about their proposals and pilots. They also visited one of the pilot sites which helped inform the Committee's response to the consultation on the Postal USO which was submitted on 8 April.
  - A representative from the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF) would attend today's meeting.
  - The Ofcom Scotland team would liaise with the Governance Team re sharing the Committee's Annual Report for 2024 with Ofcom's Board, Chief Executive and the other Advisory Committee Chairs.
  - It was NOTED that the Ofcom Scotland team will continue to receive the Ofcom Contact Centre Information Report for the time being.
  - It was asked if the Ofcom Scotland team can provide a list of key political personnel to the committee.

## Verbal updates

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4. A member highlighted Consumer Scotland's Consumer Detriment Survey, which identified significant harms in markets like childcare and used cars, and high-volume consumer harms in the Internet market. It was suggested that Ofcom should look into the dataset behind the survey.
5. They also highlighted the recent spending review, which allocated significant funding to digital government and HMRC and expressed concerns about digital participation issues in Scotland. An Ofcom Scotland colleague provided an update on digital inclusion efforts and the Scottish Government's digital inclusion alliance, noting the need for more funding and dynamics.
6. A member advised that they had submitted a response on behalf of the Committee on Ofcom's Telecoms Access Review, which highlighted concerns about Scotland's access to full fibre and the need for continued investment in Gigabit-capable networks.
7. A member expressed concern about the ending of the BBC Scotland soap River City in August 2026. They highlighted the potential impact on training and industry, as well as the loss of diverse and skilled workforce and contemporary storylines reflecting Scottish culture.

8. A member provided an update on the Royal Mail pilots in Scotland, noting generally positive responses but some fatigue among staff. They advised of the potential impact on rural areas and the need for method changes to improve quality of service.

9. The CCP member provided an update on various issues, including the importance of addressing vulnerabilities, the impact of the universal postal service on rural communities, and concerns about VoIP outages and scams. They also mentioned the need for better promotion of social tariffs.

10. A member advised they are seeing more interest in online safety in the areas of health and gaming in Scotland.

## Director's Report / Public Policy update

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11. The Ofcom Scotland Director presented their report and highlighted a few key points to NOTE:

- Ofcom's Broadcasting & Media Group Director and Ofcom Scotland's Director met with the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to discuss BBC Scotland's decision to stop making the soap drama, River City in 2026, amongst other issues. The decision was made due to the change in audience viewing habits. The money saved will be reinvested in shorter high impact, high end dramas for Scottish audiences.
- Building Digital UK's £1.9 billion expenditure (existing commitment) on the Project Gigabit "Type C" procurement to deliver on the transformation of the digital infrastructure had been confirmed through the recent Spending Review. The date for completion has been pushed back from 2030 to 2032 with the focus on achieving greater coverage in Scotland and delivering to 'harder to reach' areas.
- STV are to create a new commercial radio station which will be presented from Scotland for Scottish audiences.
- The Ofcom Scotland team will be engaging with the Scottish Government on their Online Safety Taskforce work where the focus will be on protecting children and young people. The Scotland team had been invited to present at an SG strategy session on the work that Ofcom is undertaking in this space.

12. Moving to the Public Policy update, a colleague from the Public Policy team highlighted a few key points noting:

- There will be an increase in spending and funding for the devolved governments following the recent UK Government's Spending Review. There will also be a focus on digital, tech and creative industries with the upcoming Industrial Strategy and Sector plans.
- The importance of Ofcom's Telecoms Access Review Consultation, which aims to set regulations for the period from April 2026 to March 2031. It was highlighted that this review will help drive competition and investment in networks.
- The Public Service Media Review is currently being drafted and is due to be published in July 2025.
- Ofcom's web checker is currently being updated to give a more accurate impression of the Internet connections that people are experiencing.
- Ofcom opened an investigation in May into Royal Mail's compliance with its quality of service performance targets.
- An investigation will be carried out into 4Chan for not complying with its duty to do risk assessments and for not providing the information required.

- Ofcom have recently published their protection of children statement and a Consultation on draft guidance for Safer lives online for women and girls. The final guidance is due to be published by the end of this year.

## Scottish Futures Trust

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13. Representatives from the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) presented on their work on digital connectivity trials within Scotland. They emphasised the importance of collaboration with various partners and the need for innovative solutions to address connectivity issues in rural areas.
14. They provided an overview of ongoing SFT trials, including projects with ScotRail, VM 02, and Wave Mobile. They highlighted the benefits of these trials in improving connectivity and the importance of learning from these experiences to inform future interventions. It was advised that they would share the data from the Wave Mobile trials with Ofcom to support improvement to coverage checker data.
15. They advised on the challenges and their future plans in scaling up trials, and the need for different funding models and collaboration to address connectivity issues. They emphasised the importance of a consistent and accurate data source to measure and manage connectivity.

## Media Nations Scotland Report

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16. The Ofcom Media Nations (MN) team gave an overview of what Media Nations report is, including the relevant reports on each of the Nations and the online, interactive dashboard that supplies data splits for each of the nations. They noted that it is due for publication on 30th July.
17. The MN team stated that the approach would be broadly similar to that taken last year with some adjustments such as additional context in the introduction section including discussion on video sharing platforms, with a particular focus on YouTube. They highlighted some of the key points they expect in the data, which including trends around PSBs, higher than average use of YouTube and other VSPs in Scotland, declining satisfaction numbers with BBC Scotland, and the recent strategy change by STV.
18. A member asked about whether the document would cover 'media diet' (i.e. the total suite of media content being consumed by a household) and how public service media is accessed through all formats, not just TV streaming/viewing, and the impact of the Media Act. The MN team responded that these are things that will be covered in the UK report, alongside trends and consumption of content and its origins. The 'Media in Context' chapter of this year's version of Media Nations will be an important part of the report for outlining trends like the changing nature of apps and consumption, how they market themselves, and the tensions/competition/convergence in the contemporary media landscape.
19. Another member questioned if the report would look at satisfaction with the BBC and the extent to which it would look at news consumption habits. An Ofcom colleague stated that the report will touch on individual BBC services, but our Annual Report of the BBC would look at broader perceptions of the BBC, while the latest findings from Ofcom's news consumption survey would also feature in the Media Nations report.
20. A member asked about the comparative satisfaction ratings between SVOD and BVOD and whether we knew about the differing satisfaction levels between the different services. The MN said that they did not have data on this, but that SVOD satisfaction can be noted in data from subscription information (e.g., growing/decline numbers). They also acknowledged that information on subscription hopping could be an area of interest later down the line.

## BBC Annual Report / Periodic Review

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21. Ofcom colleagues provided an update on the BBC Annual Report and Periodic Review, highlighting the focus on data analysis, developments in Scotland, and the challenges faced by the BBC. Colleagues highlighted that the Scotland page of the Annual Report would focus on changes to the BBC's peak time news output, investment in Gaelic language television, and the production of radio and audio content in Scotland. The Committee were invited to provide views on this page.
22. A member asked regarding comparisons between the BBC's performance in Scotland and Wales. An Ofcom colleague outlined that there was slightly lower satisfaction with the BBC in Scotland, while there were similar trends on production and commissioning and reflecting local content sufficiently. The Scotland Director highlighted that there was a BBC Director for Nations and Regions who looked across these trends, while the BBC's Annual Report would consider these further.
23. A member asked whether the report would consider data on the recent changes to news programming on the BBC Scotland Channel and its impact on viewers. An Ofcom colleague outlined that this report would have limited data given the changes had only been made in January, while a Scotland team member outlined the wider package of changes to BBC Scotland's news output (including a new podcast) would need considered as well.
24. The Chair and a member provided feedback on the Scotland page and infographic, asking if it could summarise the overall experience of BBC services as a nation and reflect the challenges. An Ofcom colleague welcomed these suggestions which would be fed into the designers, while highlighting the resource limitations on infographic design.
25. An Ofcom colleague highlighted some of the five-year trends which would be considered as part of the Periodic Review, which feeds into the Government's Charter Renewal process. A member suggested a focus on trends of genres of production as Scotland was regarded as documentary/factual heavy, while another member highlighted the constrained budgets for Gaelic broadcasting and challenges for Gaelic production companies to receive commissions.

## Committee's Strategy for 2025

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26. The Chair provided an overview of the Committee's strategy for the year ahead, highlighting the following three areas as being central to the renewed approach:
- **Scotland-focus:** Ensure the work of the ACS has sufficient information about the Scottish experience/impact/perspective across all communities, and that it is given the earliest opportunity to engage in policy developments that affect Scotland.
  - **Outcome-focus:** Consider direct and cumulative impacts on communities when all areas of Ofcom regulation (post, digital connectivity, TV and radio, online safety) are taken into account. For example, rural vs urban communities, or young families vs older people.
  - **Digital-focus:** Recognise the needs of both digitally-excluded communities and communities that primarily access services and information online. Ensure the ACS keeps abreast of the evolving impact of digital technologies.
27. The Chair set out the Committee's aspiration to use these focus areas to shape and sharpen its activities, consultation responses and agenda items. There was discussion on the challenge of getting the balance right in ensuring that reports and presentations to the Committee are sufficiently contextualised for Scotland, without adding significant burden on project teams, who would also be engaging on the same topics with the other three nation Committees.

## Digital Regulation Cooperation Form (DRCF)

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28. An attendee from the DCRF presented on the purpose of the DRCF, their focus on innovation and their presence in Scotland.
29. A Committee member asked a question on areas of commonality between DRCF members, noting online choice architecture as an example.
30. An Ofcom Scotland colleague asked about the future of the DRCF's AI and Digital Hub, noting the previous event held in the Edinburgh office last year.
31. The attendee from DCRF advised that the plans were not confirmed yet, but they viewed a continuing hub to be part of their wider strategy for engagement and not a temporary scheme.

## Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD update

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32. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' written paper and the Committee NOTED its content.

## Ofcom Contact Centre Information

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33. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' paper with Scotland's data and the Committee NOTED its content. There was a short discussion on the contents of the Report, and it was NOTED that reflections would be made after the Summer.

## Draft Annual Report 2025

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34. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' written paper and the Committee NOTED its content.

## Any Other Business

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35. An Ofcom colleague advised that dates for the 2026 meetings had been sent out and asked members to advise if there were any issues or clashes.

## Date of the Next Meeting

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36. The next scheduled Committee meeting would be on 10 September 2025.