

Minutes of the 102nd meeting of the Advisory Committee for Scotland

Hybrid meeting in person and virtually over Microsoft
Teams on 2 December 2025

Present

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

In attendance

Helen Froud	Communications Consumer Panel (CCP) (Online)
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Sital Patel	Ofcom's Next Generation NED Observer
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Glenn Preston	Ofcom Scotland
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Stefan Webster	Ofcom Scotland
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Ross Hamilton	Ofcom Scotland
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Lyndsey Scott	Ofcom Scotland
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Simran Badan	Ofcom Scotland
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Debbie Hughes	Ofcom Scotland
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Michael Logan	Channel 4 – Agenda Items 13-16 only
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Kevin Blacoe	Channel 4 – Agenda Items 13-16 only
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Jo Street	Channel 4 – Agenda Items 13-16 only (Online)
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Other Ofcom colleagues	
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Welcome, introductions, conflicts, and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Bob Downes, Peter MacMahon and Polly Tolley. The Chair also welcomed new member, Mathew Springford, to the Committee.

Minutes of the 101st meeting held on 10 September 2025

2. The minutes of the 101st meeting were APPROVED by the Committee. In the discussion of actions which arose from the June meeting, it was NOTED that:

- The Committee's Annual Report has been shared with both Ofcom's CEO and Board. It was advised that this had been added to their Diligent platform. It was also advised that the Ofcom Scotland team hoped to have a meeting in the diary for the Advisory Committee Chairs to meet with both Ofcom's Chief Executive and Ofcom's Chair.
- It was NOTED that the full details of the research undertaken by the Communications Consumer Panel (CCP) that spoke to individuals' experiences with resilience, will be shared with the Committee once the commissioning process is completed.

Director's Report / Public Policy update

3. The following key points from the Directors' Report were NOTED:

- Ofcom published its BBC Annual Report on 28 November 2025 with discussions focussing on the availability and quality of Scotland-specific data, commissioning trends, and the impact on Scottish independent production companies. It was agreed that a meeting will be set-up with relevant members to review the various BBC reports and data sources in detail. This will ensure that all outstanding questions are addressed and that members are fully briefed on the available evidence.
- The publication of the UK green paper for the BBC Charter is not expected until the New Year. It was advised to have a further discussion with the members and the Ofcom Scotland team once this has been published.
- The members discussed Consumer Scotland's recent evidence session at Scottish Parliament on 29 October 2025, the extent of its advocacy powers in telecoms, and the implications for Ofcom's engagement and consumer representation in Scotland. It was agreed that the members will continue to meet with Consumer Scotland and follow up on specific actions, such as post and affordability, while monitoring Consumer Scotland's evolving approach.
- It was agreed that telecoms resilience will be a priority for the future work of the Committee, following the recent subsea cable outages in Shetland and the Hebrides. The members plan to meet to discuss the resilience issues; agree their priorities for the next quarter and engage with Stakeholders. They also agreed to contribute to the Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry on digital connectivity, focussing on resilience by the 12 December deadline.

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

- The updated Regulatory Action Plan Announcement was published in October with a focus on a stronger growth duty that "ensures regulators must consider and promote growth" and aim to reduce the annual admin burden of regulation.
- A Regulators Council is to be set-up with key regulators to attend including Ofcom's CEO, Dame Melanie Dawes. The first meeting will be held in January 2026.

- There is a new call for evidence asking businesses to provide direct feedback on regulatory burdens. The deadline for responses is 16 December 2025.
- The National Audit Office (NAO) is undertaking a review on regulation in water, energy and broadband. NAO are doing several workshops and teach-ins with Ofcom to assess whether regulation in the broadband market is working effectively for consumer protection. This review is expected to run until January/February 2026.
- The Cyber Resilience Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 12 November, and it was advised that there is a proposal for Ofcom to be the regulator for the security and resilience of data centres (racks and the building).
- Ofcom published its updated annual Regulatory Roadmap on 12 November which lays out the upcoming publishing timelines for Online Safety over the next 18 months.
- Ofcom's Annual report on Online Safety implementation is due to be published within the next couple of weeks.

Verbal updates

5. A member advised that they had discussions with Consumer Scotland on the Calls for input - pricing and affordability. There are digital services and affordability concerns, and slower performance for some consumers. It was advised that consumers in the Highlands and Islands should also be included.
6. A member advised that satellite is a reasonable telecoms option for consumers living in rural locations where is no service provided by traditional comms.
7. Amazon has moved beyond the test and development stage of Amazon LEO. The initial focus will be on enterprise customers, with the potential to expand into the consumer market to provide competition in low-Earth-orbit telecoms.
8. A member raised concerns regarding the BBC Panorama scandal, and it was advised that this should be monitored as tighter editorial guidelines could impact Scottish commissions and independent producers.
9. Members discussed the findings of the recent independent review of Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland with particular consideration given to potential structural reforms, funding implications, and the need for increased flexibility and engagement with emerging and evolving sectors.
10. A member highlighted the publication of the UK Financial Inclusion Strategy and its links to the Digital Inclusion Action Plan, noting the role of digital inclusion in enabling economic participation, financial capability, and individual independence.
11. A member highlighted the new Connections Project, working to ensure everyone in the UK can thrive in the digital world. This Group brings together banks, telecoms companies, broadcasters and civil society. The Ofcom Scotland Director advised that Ofcom's former Interim Strategy & Research Group Director now works for this new Group and that a meeting can be organised for him to come and speak to the Committee within the new few months.
12. The CCP Chair outlined the team's main priorities; Postal USO implementation and its impact on affordability, Online Safety from a consumer perspective, the links between affordability, digital exclusion and technical change. They also advised that they are working on Alternative Dispute Resolution, which is currently under review.
13. The Chair thanked the Ofcom Scotland team for hosting the Safer Internet Day Event in the Edinburgh office on 25 November.

Women & Girls Online Safety Guidance

14. An Ofcom Scotland team member provided an update on the recently published guidance and outlined engagement which had taken place in Scotland during the consultation process.

Channel 4

15. Channel 4 attended the ACS meeting to present on their presence in Scotland and some of their key achievements from 2025. They discussed their commissioning strategy and highlighted that 54% of their spend had been outside of London this year.

16. They additionally discussed their internal recruitment strategy, which includes location agnostic recruitment, increasing their presence in Glasgow. They further discussed their engagement with the indie sector in Scotland and their 4Skills programme which works to increase access to TV production careers. They highlighted that their work experience and apprentice programmes have been active in Glasgow and they have longstanding relationships with skills development companies in Glasgow (TLC).

17. A member asked if any genres of television content are particularly challenging to make in Scotland. A Channel 4 colleague advised reality and entertainment are but noted that these are the hardest genres to 'crack' broadly across the industry.

18. A member further asks about Scotland-specific challenges, and a Channel 4 colleague highlighted supporting mid and senior level talent to continue developing in their careers here, which is something Channel 4 is actively working on.

Media Act Programme & Part 5 Local news update

19. Ofcom colleagues provided an overview of the recent consultation around local news on commercial radio within the context of a wider deregulation that was a result of the Media Act. Colleagues summarised the key points that came from the consultation responses, highlighting that some stations in Scotland are particularly impacted by the proposals in relation to the proposed turnover provisions. During questions, a Committee Member asked about audiences and the interest in local news at the weekend.

20. Ofcom colleagues then provided an update on the wider Media Act programme with a look ahead to implementation work that will take place across 2026.

Consultation on STV licence changes

21. An Ofcom Scotland colleague provided an update on STV's recent request to modify regional news licence conditions in response to financial pressures, detailing the evolution of proposals, regulatory considerations, stakeholder reactions, and the planned public consultation.

22. It was NOTED that Ofcom will launch its Consultation on 16 December until 9 February 2026.

Future of Wireless Connectivity

23. Ofcom colleagues delivered a presentation on The Future of Wireless connectivity. This project aimed to develop a vision of the delivery of wireless connectivity in 10 years' time and ensuring consumers have reliable connectivity.

24. A member asked what the gaps are between today's sector and the 10 year vision. An Ofcom colleague responded that further engagement with consumer focus groups and a wider range of stakeholders was planned to better understand needs. Ofcom's Map Your Mobile tool may also be better used to see connectivity and to map digital disadvantages.

25. A discussion followed around how consumers that face geographical and rural disadvantages should be considered, as well as those that are digitally disadvantaged, or eligible for social tariffs.

Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD update

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

Ofcom Contact Centre Information

27. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' paper with Scotland's data and the Committee NOTED its content.

Any Other Business

28. The Ofcom Scotland Director advised that the recruitment for the new Ofcom Scotland Board member is making good progress. Following recent interviews, a recommendation will be sent to the Scottish Ministers who will write to the UK Government.

29. It was advised that there will hopefully be news of the new Scotland member of the Communications Consumer Panel over the coming weeks.

30. Ofcom's NGN observer, Sital Patel, advised that this was their last meeting, and it was advised that it was also Lyndsey Scott's (Ofcom Scotland team) last meeting as she is moving to another team within Ofcom in January 2026.

Date of the Next Meeting

31. The next scheduled Committee meeting would be on 24 February 2026.