

Ofcom Board minutes 14 May 2025

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and twenty-fourth meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 14 May 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Tamara Ingram	Deputy Chair
Richard Allan	Non-Executive Member
Karen Baxter	Non-Executive Member
Natalie Black	Executive Member and Group Director, Networks & Communications
Melanie Dawes	Executive Member and Chief Executive
Angela Dean	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member (via Teams)

In attendance

Martin Ballantyne	General Counsel
Veronica Branton	Corporation Secretary
Francesca Carter	Deputy Corporation Secretary (via Teams)
Sharon Malley	Governance Manager
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Group Director, Broadcasting and Media (Items 6 and 7)
Anthony Szykaruk	Content Policy Director (Item 6)
Gwen Morgan	Legal Director (Item 6)
Simeon Thornton	Economics Director (Items 6 and 7)
Garreth Lodge	Content Policy Senior Associate (Item 6) (via Teams)
Siobhan Walsh	Director of Policy Development (Item 7)
Vikki Cook	Content Media Policy Director (Item 7)
Iqbal Marikkar	Interim Director, Corporate Strategy (Item 8)
Ed Leighton	Interim GD, Strategy and Research (Item 8)

	Action
<p>Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members' interests</p> <p>1. No new declarations of interest were noted.</p>	
<p>Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2025 – 323(25) and matters arising.</p> <p>2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 2 April 2025 were APPROVED as a correct record.</p> <p>3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED.</p>	
<p>Item 3: Chair's report</p> <p>4. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities, including meetings with the Chair of the BBC and with officials at DSIT and DCMS.</p> <p>5. The Board NOTED the verbal report.</p>	
<p>Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 38(25)</p> <p>6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 38(25) on her activities and said Ofcom was in the process of presenting to six Parliamentary committees over the course of six weeks, including the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, the Standards Committee and the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee as well as the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee and the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.</p> <p>7. In online safety, the Protection of Children codes of practice had been published within the statutory 18 month deadline and enforcement activity had begun in relation to a number of small platforms who did not appear to have responded to the new regime. Work to review the risk assessments provided by larger platforms was also underway.</p> <p>8. The Board discussed the threshold for categorised services under the Online Safety Act, noted that the Government's regulations in this regard were being judicially reviewed and that this may impact on Ofcom's programme in this area.</p> <p>9. The Board noted that Ofcom was working on improvements to its mobile coverage checker, to introduce a new threshold that would more realistically show the availability of data coverage. This had been developed by Ofcom with the involvement of the mobile providers and would be launched in the summer. The Board noted the importance of reliable coverage checkers in rural areas and devolved nations and the need for Government and the operators to work together to improve coverage, where levers to affect this sat with Government.</p> <p>10. The Board welcomed the upgrade of the spectrum licensing platform, which aimed to be easier for stakeholders to use and more efficient for Ofcom. The new rules on Global Titles, closing a loophole to minimise abuse by rogue operators, were also welcomed.</p>	

<p>understand how audiences navigated through home pages and to try to ensure that regulations would continue to be effective in the future.</p> <p>21. It was agreed it would be helpful to see an overarching summary of how Ofcom’s regulation applied to broadcast and streamed content on all devices and platforms.</p> <p>22. The Board discussed listed events and noted the importance of achieving the right balance between ensuring that culturally important events were available to all and enabling an appropriate commercial return for the rights holders.</p> <p>23. It was noted that Ofcom had received additional funding to implement the Media Act and that colleagues across Ofcom were involved in the delivery. The most significant challenge was likely to be the need to hire people with specific technical skills in the future.</p> <p>24. The Board NOTED the paper.</p>	<p>CNS</p>
<p>Item 7: Public Service Media Review – Board 40(25)</p> <p>25. Siobhan Walsh presented paper 40(25) on Ofcom’s Public Service Media Review (PSMR). She said the paper set out some of the challenges being faced by UK PSBs in providing the full breadth of public service content, especially news coverage with UK values. Much of the policy and funding in this area would be set by Government but Ofcom would need to set out the options and their implications, noting particularly that commercial PSBs were under considerable pressure and this could lead to a reduction in their number and consequential reduction in access to reliable news and culturally relevant content. It was noted that Government may need to consider the future of digital terrestrial television alongside the PSMR and that prominence alone was unlikely to be sufficient to secure the future of public service broadcasting.</p> <p>26. The Board discussed the paper and noted the need for Ofcom to be clear on its overall aims for the sector and how these might differ from a sector left for the market to shape. Change could happen quickly and Ofcom and the Government, including in the devolved nations, needed to be prepared.</p> <p>27. Ofcom’s starting point was to ensure that audiences continued to have access to culturally relevant content, including reliable news, in ways and places they wished to consume it. The Board noted the business model challenges being faced by the commercial PSBs and the threat to their long term viability, as well as the challenges faced by the BBC. PSBs may need to focus on creativity and innovation as regulation alone would not be sufficient.</p> <p>28. The Board noted the need for national and devolved politicians to focus on the purpose of PSBs and the implications for audiences of the threat to them. For example, a reduction in S4C could lead to conversations about the prominence of the Welsh language.</p> <p>29. The Board discussed news and noted that Ofcom had gathered significant evidence of how viewers consumed news. PSBs needed to be in touch with</p>	

<p>their audiences to find ways of connecting with them, adapting their output on different platforms and for different audiences. It would be important to be clear that news services were unlikely to be profitable on their own and for the provision of reliable news to be addressed in public policy terms. It would be helpful to set out a picture of how the UK broadcasting environment might look in the absence of a plurality of PSBs.</p> <p>30. Ofcom had evidence that prominence of news on social media did drive engagement but the quality of the content being accessed may not always be reliable. PSBs may need to work harder to engage people who had begun to get news from unreliable sources.</p> <p>31. The Board noted the importance of Ofcom being clear on its own positions when raising these issues externally. Power had switched significantly from PSBs to streamers and regulation may not be able to rebalance this. Some audiences were not concerned by media fragmentation. The BBC remained the most trusted news brand, but YouTube was an increasingly important source of news and entertainment in the UK and should be included in the conversation, along with a full review of the role and shape of the BBC and other PSBs.</p> <p>32. The Board APPROVED the policy positions set out in the paper.</p>	
<p>Item 8: Full-year review 2024/25 – Board 41(25)</p> <p>33. Iqbal Marikkar presented paper 41(25) on the review of Ofcom’s work over 2024/25. He said the paper set out how Ofcom had delivered its Plan of Work alongside a review of external factors that had affected the programme, including the earlier than anticipated UK general election.</p> <p>34. The Board noted that the Plan of Work for 2024/25 had been delivered and that clear explanations had been provided where there had been delays. It would be helpful for the Board to understand whether Ofcom was becoming more efficient in delivery. The 2025/26 Agility programme continued work in this area, including the investment of resource in project management and commercial capability.</p> <p>35. The Board NOTED the paper.</p>	
<p>Item 9: People Committee terms of reference – Board 42(25)</p> <p>36. The Board APPROVED the updated terms of reference for the Ofcom People Committee.</p>	
<p>Item 10: National Advisory Committee for Scotland appointment – Board 43(25)</p> <p>37. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Stephen O’Donnell to the Advisory Committee for Scotland (ACS) for a period of three years from 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2028.</p>	
<p>Item 11: Ofcom/ASA deed for the regulation of broadcast advertising update – Board 44(25)</p>	

38. The Board NOTED the paper.	
<p>Items 12-15: Standing items</p> <p>39. The Board NOTED the following information items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-executive member updates – paper 45(25). • Quarterly performance report – paper 46(25). • Board work programme – paper 47(25) and publication schedule – paper 48(25) • Minutes of the Advisory Committee for Scotland of 25 February 2025, Advisory Committee for England of 27 February 2025, Advisory Committee for Wales of 6 March 2025, Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland of 13 March 2025, Communications Consumer Panel of 13 March 2025 and Content Board of 18 March 2025. 	
<p>Item 16: Any other business</p> <p>40. Richard Allan said that the Online Information Advisory Committee would hold its inaugural meeting on 16 May 2025.</p>	
<p>Item 17: Date of the next meeting</p> <p>41. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 18 June 2025.</p> <p>42. The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm.</p>	

Approved: _____
Chair