

Ofcom Board minutes 19 November 2025

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and twenty-ninth meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 19 November 2025 at Quatermile, One, 15 Lauriston Place, EH3 9EP and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Tamara Ingram	Deputy Chair (Items 1-10)
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
Kate Davies	Group Director Strategy and Research (Items 6-8)
Iqbal Marikkar	Corporate Strategy Director (Items 6-7) (via Teams)
Melissa Tatton	Group Director Corporate (Item 7)
Richard Hornby	Finance Director (Item 7)
Atif Moghal	Head of Strategic Finance and Funding (Item 7) (via Teams)
Glenn Preston	Scotland Director (Item 8)
Ross Hamilton	Senior Regulatory Affairs Manager (Item 8)
Nihal Newman	Director, Network Security & Resilience Policy (Item 9) (via Teams)
Gerry McQuaid	Director, Telecoms and Internet Security (Item 9)
George Lusty	Enforcement Director (Item 9) (via Teams)
Ben Willis	Principal Technology Advisor (Item 9) (via Teams)
Paul Phillips	Legal Director (Item 9) (via Teams)
Mark Bunting	Online Safety Strategy Delivery Director (Items 10-11) (via Teams)

In attendance

Andrew Park	Online Safety Strategy Principal (Items 10-11)
Jess Zucker	Online Safety Policy Development Director (Item 11) (via Teams)
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Group Director Broadcasting and Media (Item 11)
Anthony Szykaruk	Content Policy Director (Item 11)
Gwen Morgan	Legal Director (Item 11) (via Teams)
Simeon Thornton	Economics Director (Item 11)

	Action
Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members' interests 1. No new declarations of interest were raised.	
Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 – 328(25) and matters arising. 2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 15 October 2025 were APPROVED as a correct record. 3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED .	
Item 3: Chair's report 4. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities. He said the process for appointing his successor had begun and that Ben Verwaayen's appointment to the Board had been renewed until September 2026. On 20 November he would be interviewing candidates for the Board member for Scotland role. They would join the Board following the conclusion of Bob Downes' second term. He said he had attended a senior-level meeting to discuss the potential Sky/ITV transaction. 5. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 98(25) 6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 98(25) on her activities. She noted that the Board had been briefed on the current issues relating to the BBC at a prior event, and updated the Board on discussions with the Government, including the new Secretary of State for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. 7. There had been media coverage over the previous weekend on concerns held by the Molly Rose Foundation over Ofcom's approach to the implementation of the Online Safety Act. The Comms team had engaged with journalists and had been able to set out Ofcom's position. 8. Ofcom's guidance on women and girls' online safety would be published shortly. There was considerable media interest in this. 9. Ofcom was following the reports of the potential merger between ITV and Sky and noted the various policy implications of the proposal.	

10. The Telecoms Access Review (TAR) was proceeding as planned, with industry bodies making the cases for their preferred outcomes. There was activity in the altnet market with some consolidation seeming possible. The Board would receive a briefing on the TAR at the next meeting. 11. The recent announcement by VM02 about its mid-contract price rises had received significant negative comment among consumer groups and the signals were that other operators would not pursue the same approach. Ofcom would continue to monitor this. 12. The Board noted that Ofcom had resumed its enforcement activity against a well-known suicide site following it being made accessible again in the UK for a brief period under a different domain name. Ofcom had been informed of the reactivation of the site by a third party and welcomed support from partners in this area. 13. The Board discussed the fine imposed on Royal Mail for failing to meet its 2024/25 delivery targets and noted that Royal Mail had not yet agreed the delivery of the revised USO with its workforce. It was hoped that the next few months would see an improvement in progress towards implementing those revisions, in order both to realise the anticipated savings in this financial year and see some improvement in quality of service. The fine demonstrated Ofcom's commitment to stand up for consumers and to press for delivery of the quality of service targets. 14. The Board noted the recent letter from Meta on aspects of Ofcom's decision relating to the online safety fees regime. 15. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 5: People Committee update 16. Tamara Ingram updated the Board on the meeting of the People Committee of 30 October 2025. She said the Committee had discussed the findings of the annual colleague survey and the results had been very positive, with good scores for engagement, strategy and ownership of decisions. The main area of focus arising from the survey was on career progression and the People, Culture and Workplace Director was working on ways to offer growth and development for colleagues in addition to those offered through formal promotion. It was agreed that the paper on the colleague survey would be circulated to Board members. 17. The Board NOTED the update.	Corp Sec
Item 6: Mid-year review 2025/26 – Board 99(25) 18. Kate Davies presented paper 99(25) on the mid-year review against the Plan of Work (PoW). The Board noted that the majority of projects in the Plan of Work had been successfully delivered, with two experiencing a delay of more than three months. These were the publication of a consultation on categorised services under the Online Safety Act, which had been delayed by external factors, and the publication of a consultation on prominence under the Media Act, where the consultation itself would be broadly on time but the	

statement may be later as a result of the complexity of policy development. 19. The Board discussed the allocation of resources to deliver the PoW and noted that although there had been some flexibility to respond to reactive demands, overall the shape of the teams had been broadly as expected. The Spectrum Group had not benefitted from the flexibility arising from taking on new duties and work on the Three-Year Business Plan was in hand to ensure it was adequately resourced, including for capital investment. 20. The Board NOTED paper.	
Item 7: Refresh of Three-Year Business Plan, 2026/27 Plan of Work and approach to budget – Board 100(25) 21. Kate Davies and Melissa Tatton presented paper 100(25) on the refresh of the Three-Year Business Plan and the approach to the next Plan of Work and budget. The budget would balance the allocation of resources for policy delivery and investment for the future and would be presented for Board approval in March. 22. The Board noted the importance of making efficiencies where possible to reduce the cost of delivering statutory duties and derisk future spending settlements. The proposals for allocating the headroom were noted, with the approval process including ongoing discussions with the Senior Management Team, PMB and Risk and Audit Committee before the March Board approval. 23. The Board noted that the budget and work programme were kept under continual review and that opportunities to withdraw from workstreams were taken where possible, such as the recent decision to discontinue the application-to-person SMS termination market review. Ofcom also worked with other regulators to share experiences and learnings. 24. The Board NOTED the paper, including the next steps towards publishing the policy priorities and the delegation of final sign-off for the Plan of Work consultation to the Chief Executive and Group Directors.	
Item 8: Scotland update – Board 101(25) 25. Glenn Preston presented paper 101(25) on Ofcom issues particularly affecting Scotland. He said priorities in the next period included those in the broadcast and media area, with STV's request for licence changes and the BBC Charter renewal process having implications for regional news and the independent production sector. Levels of Parliamentary scrutiny on Ofcom had increased recently in both the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures with local content provision, connectivity in rural and remote areas and resilience of digital infrastructure being areas of focus. 26. The forthcoming elections in Scotland and Wales may generate increased interest in issues such as misinformation, disinformation, media literacy and electoral interference. Ofcom was working with broadcasters on their obligations around the election and would put out its own comms on media literacy but it would be important to be clear on the extent of Ofcom's powers in these areas.	

27. The Board noted that the recent prolonged internet outage affecting island communities was unacceptable and Ofcom should be clear on this publicly. Ofcom was reviewing the obligations of telecom providers to report outages to ensure they were fit for purpose. This included exploring whether obligations to report may be based on the duration of an outage and the potentially disproportionate impact on rural and remote communities where alternative communications options may not be available, as opposed to current requirements which largely related to the numbers of people affected. 28. It was noted that the loss of connectivity for a prolonged period would be seriously detrimental for small businesses and consumers who had an expectation that they would be able to connect online. There was a case for considering whether providers should be required to make consumers aware of whether their operators had backup provision in the event of an outage so they were able to make an informed choice of provider. 29. It was noted that work under the Telecoms Security Act may help improve resilience across the network, including on islands, but Ofcom's duties and powers on resilience were generally narrow. 30. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 9: Telecoms Security Framework – update and report to DSIT Secretary of State – Board 102(25) 31. Natalie Black presented paper 101(25) on the Telecoms Security Framework. She said the Telecoms Security Act required providers to report significant security compromises, however as few cyber incidents had been reported we had reminded operators of their reporting obligations and encouraged them to inform us of incidents even if they did not meet reporting thresholds. Alongside this we would be consulting on updated incident reporting thresholds early next year. To ensure we had improved visibility of live incidents operators face we would be investing in monitoring tools. 32. The Board noted that the government-led Code of Practice for providers listed around 280 measures to implement by 2028 and that Ofcom would have to consider how to handle any failings by providers to meet the deadline. Ofcom was instituting a regular industry forum including regulated companies, security services and government to ensure learnings were spread widely. 33. The Board discussed the engagement levels of regulated companies and noted that dialogue had improved since the high profile cyber attacks on Marks and Spencer and Jaguar Land Rover. 34. The Board discussed the resources that would be needed to support this programme. It was challenging to identify and secure the expertise necessary to carry out the work, both in external recruitment and the retention and growth of graduates internally. Some of the powers in the Act would be resource-intensive to implement at scale and would benefit from the cooperation of providers, which could take some time to establish. 35. The Board noted progress with international cooperation on security.	

36. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 10: Online Safety: 2025 Online Safety Report – Board 103(25) 37. Mark Bunting presented paper 103(25) on the 2025 Online Safety Report. The Board noted that the report should take a positive tone, highlighting the progress that had been made since the duties came into force and the activity that would be coming next, while recognising the substantial further work required by industry. The report should note that the full extent of progress would not be known until all elements of the Act were implemented and operational. 38. It was likely that the report would be of interest to stakeholders including industry, government and civil society and it would be important to ensure it showed a positive path for the future, including Ofcom’s ambition for compliance across the industry. It may be helpful to include a reminder of the scale of the roadmap and the external factors that had impacted on delivery. Some important changes driven by Ofcom needed to remain confidential but could be explained in broad terms in the report. 39. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 11: Online Information Advisory Committee – Advice Note 1 – Board 104(25) 40. Richard Allan presented paper 104(25) on the Online Information Advisory Committee’s (OIAC) advice note on understanding financial harm online. He said the OIAC was establishing its relationships and working together well. The advice note was its first piece of work and this and the literature review had been resource intensive to produce, with the process for future advice notes being reviewed. The committee aimed to focus on areas where it would add value to Ofcom’s work. 41. The Board noted that the OIAC’s minutes and advice notes would be published, alongside Ofcom’s literature review. The Board noted that online fraud was an important and high profile area and welcomed the work of the OIAC. 42. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 12: Media Act Part 2 – availability and prominence of PSB content – Board 105(25) 43. Cristina Nicolotti Squires presented paper 105(25) on the new online availability and prominence regime introduced in the Media Act. The Board noted that Ofcom had been granted new dispute resolution powers under the Act and that this would be a potentially challenging aspect of the regime. 44. The Board noted the proposals for a code and guidance implementing the regime and that the proposals would be subject to consultation in early 2026. The Board discussed the potential implementation timetable and the likely preferences of industry on adoption. 45. The Board NOTED the paper.	

Item 13: Advisory Committee for Scotland appointments – Board 106(25) 46. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Matthew Springford to the Advisory Committee for Scotland for a period of 3 years from 1 December 2025 to 30 November 2028 inclusive and the reappointment of Polly Tolley to the ACS for a second term for a period of 3 years from 1 March 2026 to 28 February 2029 inclusive.	
Item 15: Guidance: A safer life online for women and girls – Board 108(25) 47. The Board NOTED the paper on women and girls’ online safety.	
Item 16: Technology notices: Advice to the DSIT Secretary of State – Board 109(25) 48. The Board NOTED the paper on advice to the Secretary of State on Technology Notices to deal with terrorism or child sexual abuse material.	
Item 17: Annual update on formal inquiries and investigations – Board 110(25) 49. The Board NOTED the paper on formal inquiries and investigations.	
Item 18: Results of the auction of mmWave spectrum – Board 111(25) 50. The Board NOTED the paper on the results of the auction of mmWave spectrum.	
Items 19-22: Standing items 51. The Board NOTED the following information items: • Non-executive member updates – paper 112(25) • Monthly performance update – paper 113(25) • Board work programme – paper 114(25) and publication schedule – paper 115(25) • Minutes of the Advisory Committee for Scotland of 10 September 2025, Communications Consumer Panel of 17 September 2025, Content Board of 30 September 2025, Advisory Committee for Wales of 1 October 2025, Online Information Advisory Committee of 3 October 2025 and Advisory Committee for England of 9 October 2025.	
Item 23: Any other business 52. There was no other business.	
Item 24: Date of the next meeting 53. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 17 December 2025. 54. The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm.	

Approved: _____

Chair