

Ofcom Board minutes 4 February 2026

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and thirty first meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 4 February 2026 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Tamara Ingram	Deputy Chair
Richard Allan	Non-Executive Member (from Item 4)
Karen Baxter	Non-Executive Member
Natalie Black	Executive Member and Group Director, Infrastructure & Connectivity
Melanie Dawes	Executive Member and Chief Executive
Angela Dean	Non-Executive Member
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member (from Item 6) (via Teams)

In attendance

Martin Ballantyne	General Counsel
Veronica Branton	Corporation Secretary
Sharon Malley	Governance Manager
Jamie Mordue	Governance Manager (via Teams)
Neil Alderton	Lintstock (Item 5) (via Teams)
Valerie Marsh	Lintstock (Item 5) (via Teams)
Richard Sheath	Independent Audit (Item 6) (via Teams)
Rachael Gardner	Independent Audit (Item 6) (via Teams)
Melissa Tatton	Group Director Corporate (Item 7)
Jo Curtis	Transformation Programme Director (Item 7)
Kate Davies	Group Director Strategy and Research (Items 8-9)
Sharmini Selvarajah	Public Policy Director (Items 8-9)
Sarah Murray	Public Policy Principal (Item 8)
Oliver Griffiths	Online Safety Group Director (Item 9)
Mark Bunting	Online Safety Strategy Delivery Director (Item 9)
David Chaplin	Communications Director (Item 9)
Jessica Hill	People, Culture and Workplace Director (Item 9) (via Teams)
Caitlin Muir	Strategy Delivery Principal (Item 9) (via Teams)

	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 17 December 2025 – 330(25) and matters arising 2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 17 December 2025 were APPROVED as a correct record subject to corrections relating to the Enforcement update and the Spectrum update. 3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED.	
Item 3: Chair's report and Board appointment 4. The Chair recommended the appointment of Oliver Griffiths, Online Safety Group Director, as a third executive member of the Ofcom Board. The Board noted there had been three executive members until recently and this appointment provided the input the Board needed while maintaining a clear majority of non-executive members. 5. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Oliver Griffiths as an executive member of the Ofcom Board with effect from Monday 9 February 2026. 6. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities. He said appointments to the Board of Channel 4 would be forthcoming and would be led by Ofcom's Deputy Chair as they would extend beyond the Chair's term of appointment. 7. Karen Baxter's term had been extended by one year. The appointment of a new Board member for Scotland had now been approved by the Scotland Government and by DSIT and he would hopefully be in post by the next meeting. 8. The Corporation Secretary reported that the process for the appointment of the new Ofcom Chair was on track. 9. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 01(26) 10. Melanie Dawes presented paper 01(25) on her activities. She said there had been an increase in debate around online safety in the last few weeks, including some criticism, and this would be discussed further in the online safety item later on the agenda. She updated the Board on relationships with ministers and how Ofcom was responding. The Board noted the importance of being clear in public on Ofcom's powers and limitations, what Ofcom had already achieved and the role of regulation in delivering change. It would also be helpful to note that Ofcom was improving its efficiency and processes through its transformation programme to address any concerns among stakeholders about the regulatory burden.	

11. On broadcasting, Ofcom had published its consultation on prominence under the Media Act and the Government had published a Green Paper on the future of the BBC. Work to implement changes set out in the 2024 Mid-Term Review of the BBC would now proceed following the Government and BBC's publication of the updated Framework Agreement in December 2025. 12. In telecoms, the major piece of Ofcom work continued to be the Telecoms Access Review. There were reports of some possible consolidation in the altnet market which Ofcom was monitoring. 13. The Board discussed Royal Mail and noted the difficulty it was experiencing in delivering its updated business plan. The Board noted the forthcoming postal pricing review and agreed that a substantive discussion on this at a future Board may be needed. 14. The Board NOTED the report.	Natalie Black/ Corp Sec
Item 5: Ofcom stakeholder review 2025 – Board 02(26) 15. Neil Alderton and Valerie Marshal of Lintstock presented paper 02(26) on the Ofcom stakeholder review 2025. 16. The Board discussed the review and noted that some stakeholders were calling for increased boldness and speed but were also concerned that Ofcom decisions should be evidence based and there was some tension between these ambitions. 17. Some stakeholders had suggested Ofcom needed to innovate more. Neil Alderton said this was in line with a general view across industry that all organisations needed to be more innovative and the responses were a reflection of that rather than specifically critical of Ofcom. In general the tone of the feedback on Ofcom had been constructive. 18. The Board noted that some of the issues raised by stakeholders relating to efficiency were being addressed by the One Ofcom transformation programme. Concerns such as Ofcom becoming less led by evidence or being too narrow in areas such as Royal Mail required a thoughtful response. 19. The Board noted that some of the concern and frustration felt by stakeholders. 20. The Board NOTED the review. It was agreed that PMB would review the findings of the research and report back.	Corp Sec
Item 6: Review of effectiveness of the Board and Committees 2026 – Board 03(26) 21. Richard Sheath and Rachael Gardner of Independent Audit presented paper 03(26) on the review of effectiveness of the Board and Committees 2026. The Chair noted that the report would be helpful for the new Chair, when appointed. 22. The Board welcomed the suggestion of an “oversight universe” to capture the scope of Ofcom’s responsibilities, their associated risks and their relative importance, and the offer of assistance in developing one.	

23. The Board discussed suggestions to improve the format of meeting papers to make them easier to navigate and noted that the need for papers to be a comprehensive historical record limited the scope for creativity. 24. The Board discussed suggestions relating to Ofcom's KPIs, the need for Ofcom to continue to have good commercial understanding of its regulated sectors, and the diversity of the Ofcom Board and possible options to respond to these points. 25. The Board NOTED the review.	
Item 7: One Ofcom – transformation programme – Board 04(26) 26. Melissa Tatton presented paper 04(26) on the One Ofcom transformation programme and updated the Board on progress made since the previous report. She noted that the current risk assessment rated all five strands of the programme as Green as they were at a very early stage but she expected this to change as the programme developed. The programme level risk did not currently include a RAG rating but when this was assessed it would need to reflect the scale of the ambition and the cultural barriers to delivery. 27. The Board noted that the agile policy making, project management and portfolio management workstreams aimed to introduce more rigour into working practices and increase accountability in decision making. The data strand would develop a secure and robust data platform with well-governed and high quality data while the AI workstream would promote the deployment of safe and ethical AI across the organisation. 28. The Board noted the workstreams and the benefits and measures associated with each. The use of pilots, champions and support programmes to help embed change across Ofcom was welcomed. It would be important that colleagues understood the urgency of the programme and supported its aims and objectives. 29. The Board discussed progress with the use of AI within Ofcom and noted the need to ensure that colleagues were able to safely use the AI tools that were most suitable for them and to access to more powerful functionality in copilot but with the appropriate guardrails to ensure data was kept safe. 30. The Board discussed the measures of success and noted the need for clarity in order to understand what progress had been made. Some of the workstreams more easily lent themselves to measurable outcomes but some were more qualitative and cultural. The nature of Ofcom's work meant that measures would need to be flexible enough to relate to different types of projects in different groups and could not be too prescriptive. 31. The Board NOTED the paper, including the programme structure, progress to date and benefits and measures of success.	
Item 8: Growth and regulatory reform – Board 05(26) 32. Kate Davies presented paper 05(26) on the Government's growth and regulatory reform agenda. She said Ofcom had carried out a range of activity to reduce burdens on businesses and to introduce policies that enabled	

growth and this had been brought together in a letter for the Prime Minister and Chancellor. This work had also been highlighted by the Chief Executive at a recent Select Committee appearance. 33. The Board noted that growth and regulatory reform continued to be a high profile area for the Government and that Ofcom was deregulating where possible but also implementing new legislation in areas such as cyber security. These new regulations would support growth through enabling resilience and certainty for industry. It was noted that Ofcom's duties since foundation were compatible with economic growth. 34. The Board discussed the importance of continuing to implement independent regulation to promote the interests of consumers and to resist any in appropriate external pressures. The Board noted that as well as growth, stakeholders prioritised efficient processes, for example on the collection of data, and the transformation programme was working on this. 35. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 9: Online Safety: 2026/27 programme of work – Board 06(26) 36. Oliver Griffiths presented paper 06(26) on the 2026/27 online safety programme and the current operating environment. He said Ofcom had opened an investigation into the use of the Grok AI chatbot on X to share sexual deepfakes of real people. Some users had targeted female Ofcom colleagues in response to the announcement that Ofcom was scrutinising the service. The Board held a wide-ranging discussion on the emerging threats and pace of change in the online safety environment, and the speed of Ofcom's response. The Board noted the steps that had been taken to safeguard colleagues and the lessons that would be applied to any future incidents. The Board acknowledged the distress this caused to colleagues in the course of their duties and noted the policies that were in place to support them. An internal audit report on readiness in this area would be brought to a future Risk and Audit Committee meeting. It was agreed it would be helpful for Richard Allan to review and advise on the current arrangements and for the Board to receive updates as necessary. 37. The Board discussed the changes in the online safety landscape since the previous Board meeting, including the Australian under-16s social media ban and the Grok deepfakes, and noted that they had led to high profile discussions on how to tackle online safety and Ofcom's role in this. 38. The Board discussed Ofcom's approach to implementing the Online Safety Act and noted that it may be necessary for Ofcom to be prepared to comment publicly on any gaps that prevented it from acting, providing these were factual in nature. 39. The Board discussed the recent media coverage of online safety, the hostility being directed towards Ofcom and its senior leaders by some, and the challenge this presented for the executive. They expressed their support for what the executive was doing to achieve progress in an extremely difficult and highly politicised environment when Ofcom was not always able to respond. Having said this, Ofcom's public posture on online safety needed to keep	Jess Hill/ Richard Allan

adapting to the new landscape and to be confident when voicing its position. When issues arose Ofcom should be ready to make public statements quickly and should be willing to address criticism and to correct inaccuracies as necessary. 40. The Board noted that despite the concerns being expressed in public, significant progress had been made on implementing the Online Safety Act and that Ofcom's response to X had been swift. Over the next six months Ofcom would be able to point to an even stronger position on compliance, as our implementation continued. It may be helpful to be more explicit about work done at the supervision stage to achieve compliance although this would require sensitive handling to ensure it did not compromise the outcomes. 41. The Board noted the nature of the companies in the online safety sector was different from other Ofcom-regulated sectors and many had a different culture towards compliance. Ofcom would need to continue to adapt in order to achieve the objectives of the Online Safety Act. 42. It was noted that the forthcoming budget paper should ensure adequate resource was allocated to online safety to respond to the changed environment. 43. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 10: Work programme of the Content Board 2026/27 – Board 07(26) 44. The Board APPROVED the Content Board's work programme for 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.	
Item 11: Communications Consumer Panel/Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People – Board 08(26) 45. The Board APPROVED a recommendation being made to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology for the reappointment of the following Members of the CCP/ACOD for a second three-year term on the corresponding dates below: • Professor Judith Clifton (General Member) from 1 August 2026 until 31 July 2029 • Lenna Cumberbatch (General Member) from 1 August 2026 until 31 July 2029 • Dr Michelle Goddard from (General Member) from 1 August 2026 until 31 July 2029 • Rachel Burr (Member for Wales) from 1 January 2027 until 31 December 2029.	
Item 12: Advisory Committee for Wales appointments – Board 09(26) 46. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Ruth Mullineux-Morgan and Shayoni Lynn for a three-year term from 1 March 2026; and, subject to acceptance of a conditional offer, APPROVED the appointment of Laura Taylor-Williams for a three-year term from 1 March 2026.	
Item 13: Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland appointment – Board 10(26)	

47. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Maeve Connolly for a three-year term, from 1 March 2026.	
Item 14: MG ALBA reappointment – Board 11(26)	
48. The Board APPROVED the reappointment of Calum MacLeod to the Board of MG ALBA for a term of four years from 15 May 2026 and noted that, in line with the provisions of the Scotland Act 2016, the appointment was subject to final approval by Scottish Ministers.	
Items 15-18: Standing items	
49. The Board NOTED the following information items: • Non-executive member updates – Board 12(26) • Monthly performance update – Board 13(26) • Board work programme – Board 14(26) and publication schedule – Board 15(26) • Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 13 November 2025, Advisory Committee for England of 25 November 2025, Risk & Audit Committee of 26 November 2025, Content Board of 2 December 2025, Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland of 4 December 2025, Online Information Advisory Committee of 5 December 2025, Advisory Committee for Wales of 9 December 2025 and Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 18 December 2025.	
Item 19: Any other business	
50. It was noted that a candidate to be the new Board member for Scotland had now received Government approval and would join the Board shortly.	
Item 20: Date of the next meeting	
51. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 11 March 2026.	
52. The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.	

Approved: _____

Chair