



Annual Plan Team  
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26<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Response to Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan 2016/17**

We are pleased to be able to offer comments on Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan for 2016/17.

The Consumer Council has a statutory remit to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers and have specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport, food and postal services. Therefore, we are pleased to be able to offer comments on Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan as the statutory representative for Northern Ireland (NI) consumers.

We believe the draft Annual Plan demonstrates a comprehensive approach with exceptional clarity of purpose.

We are particularly keen to provide specific mention on two key projects, which we feel could be of mutual benefit through closer working and sharing of information.

#### **(1) Reviewing the regulation of Royal Mail**

The Consumer Council welcomes Ofcom's work in ensuring the provision of an efficient and sustainable Universal Service Obligation. With the Consumer Council's on-going work in the area of online parcel surcharging and delivery we are particularly encouraged that Ofcom has committed to include the parcel market and parcel surcharging in NI

and the Scottish Highlands and Islands within its focus. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how Ofcom will be approaching this work and are keen to work together on this important issue.

(2) Monitoring price increases and providing advice and information on pricing, and making sure all consumers receive value from their communication providers.

Over the next 4 years the Consumer Council plans to undertake a number of key projects on the needs of vulnerable NI consumers, covering both general consumer issues and industries over which we have a statutory remit. Our draft Forward Work Programme for 2016/17 outlines that we will focus on disabled, chronically sick and low income consumers specifically. We are aware these consumers typically pay more as they are not as engaged in market developments as frequent users, or they are unaware or don't feel confident to switch suppliers or tariffs. We feel this work may be of benefit to Ofcom and are happy to discuss this in more depth.

We look forward to continuing to working well with our Ofcom colleagues both locally and nationally in the year ahead.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. French', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

**John French**  
**Chief Executive Officer**