

Minutes of the 90th meeting of
The Advisory Committee for Wales
Hybrid meeting on 4 October June 2023

Present

Robert Andrews	Chair
Tom Crick	Member
Angharad Evans	Member
Aled Eirug	Member

In attendance

Eleanor Marks	Director, Ofcom Wales
Elinor Williams	Regulatory Affairs Principal, Wales, Ofcom
Meleri Evans	Regulatory Affairs Manager, Wales, Ofcom
David Jones	Board Member for Wales
Ruth McElroy	Content Board Member

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Agenda items	Action
1. Introduction The Chairman welcomed attendees to the 90 th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Wales. Apologies were received from Ruth McElroy for the morning part of the meeting alongside Elinor Williams, Eleanor Marks and Kate Biggs who were attending the evidence sessions on Broadcasting at the Senedd.	
2. Declaration of Members' Interests – verbal A Member, DJ, noted that they had set up a not-for-profit organisation giving cyber security advice to individuals.	
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 and matters arising The minutes were APPROVED, with one point of clarification from Aled Eirug who was noted as absent from the meeting when he was present.	Correct ion needed

Agenda items	Action
<p>4. Chairman's Report – verbal</p> <p>The Chairman noted that this was his first meeting as Chair and thanked all Committee Members and Ofcom Wales staff for their support. The Chair also thanked the previous Chair for his work.</p> <p>The Chair noted that this could be an opportunity for the Committee to refocus their attention adding that there were two vacant spaces on the Committee that needed to be filled and recruitment was already underway to appoint a new Board Member for Wales.</p> <p>Members agreed to hold a separate session to clarify their ways of working as a Committee so that it could provide the best advice to Ofcom.</p>	
<p>5. Update: Ofcom Board Member for Wales</p> <p>The Board Member gave an update on the Board's priorities which included the revised structures within the UK Government departments and its impact on Ofcom.</p> <p>The Member noted the rapid increase of interest in AI, including the forthcoming paper by the Secretary of State and the upcoming AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park. Committee Members discussed the impact of AI in Wales and its potential impact on the sectors we regulate.</p> <p>The Member also reported that the Board were also preparing for the Online Safety Bill to receive Royal Assent</p>	
<p>6. Update - Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales</p> <p>The Chair of the Communications Consumer Panel and Member for Northern Ireland had submitted a paper in advance and drew attention to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He thanked Sian Phipps, the Panel Member for Wales whose term had ended in June. He noted that recruitment was ongoing but that he would be shadowing on Welsh issues • On the PSTN switch off, the Chair noted that the communications around the issue was still not as good as it could be. He noted that he had met with Dr James Davies MP (Cons, Vale of Clwyd and Junior Minister in the Wales Office). He said that a TV campaign such as the one held in Australia (Checked, Select, Connect) or the one around Digital Switchover led by Digital UK might be a good idea. Committee Members discussed how best to inform consumers, including those with a landline and other devices. • The Panel is continuing to focus on affordability and debt with further reports in the pipeline. <p>Committee Members were minded to invite representative from the telecoms sector to a future meeting to discuss VOIP.</p>	
<p>7. Update: Public Policy</p> <p>Committee Members were updated on a number of Parliamentary developments and policy areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Darke introduced himself as the new Policy Lead on Broadcasting 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Conference Season had passed with no great references to Ofcom, although the Secretary of State made references to the Online Safety Bill and AI • Ofcom's decision on the COSTA Ad minutage, which was welcomed by Committee Members • Committee Members asked if we'd done any analysis of consumer preparedness around the PSTN switch off as discussed above. Stephen Darke promised to inquire and respond to the Committee. <p>RESPONSE: 'Call providers will write to consumers when it is their turn to migrate. BT has stated that customers are contacted at least four weeks in advance before making the switch. Another way in which BT is explaining the steps required to make the migration is through local and regional media and advertising campaigns. BT has also said it will have a high street presence to answer customer questions in person.</p> <p>The schedule for BT's new home and phone service Digital Voice has been published and says that BT are set to make the switch over in Wales in Spring 2024.'</p>	
<p>8. Report: Wales Recent Developments</p> <p>Eleanor Marks, Director Wales, highlighted the following from her written report that had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We held a successful stakeholder event highlighting our Media Nations Report, with an expert panel answering questions from the floor • In summer 2023 the BBC opened a Public Interest Test on its proposals to extend the number of hours offered by BBC Radio Cymru so that it becomes a new Public Service in its own right. The proposal is now subject to a Competition Assessment by Ofcom, which will close in October, and we will publish a further consultation in due course. • Members discussed the rollout of superfast Broadband. Members also queried the sample size of the data in the Media Nations report arguing that some sample sizes were small. • We have launched an Instagram Cymraeg account <p>Members raised the importance of stakeholder engagement and communications around the implementation of the Online Safety Bill across Wales.</p>	
<p>9. Future of TV Distribution</p> <p>Colleagues explained that Ofcom has launched a call for evidence on the future of TV distribution. Following the short consultation, we will formally give our advice to Government next year.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the importance of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) for Wales, and how audiences will continue to receive good services in the future. Members raised concerns over the availability of broadband in Wales and the need for specific Welsh content to remain available in future.</p>	

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Committee Members recognised the increasing shift by viewers to ip, and the introduction of Freely by the PSBs.	
<p>10. Proposed Plan of Work 2024/25</p> <p>We will shortly publish our draft Plan of Work for the financial year 2024/25. The four priority areas will remain the same:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet we can rely on • Media we trust and value • We live a safer life online • Enabling wireless services in the wider economy <p>This year we will focus on how we will deliver on our priority areas and the impact of our work on stakeholders. As part of our consultation, we will hold a stakeholder event followed by a final statement in the spring.</p> <p>Committee Members discussed how best to reflect what Ofcom Wales does in the context of the Plan of Work, bearing in mind that almost all of Ofcom’s work has an impact in Wales</p> <p>Committee Members were keen to engage in the process and to exchange views and felt that the stakeholder event is a good platform for this.</p> <p>Committee Members suggested that the Future of DTT was an important issue for stakeholders in Wales, as well as the take-up and access to a decent broadband connection. The impact of the Media Bill is also of interest to Committee Members and audiences in Wales.</p>	
<p>11. BBC Annual Report and BBC Audiences Review</p> <p>Colleagues explained that we are due to publish our annual report on the BBC later this year. This year we are undertaking a new thematic approach and giving greater prominence for the Nations. As in previous years the report will provide an assessment of the BBC’s performance against each Public Purpose. We are also undertaking research into socio-economic groups DE and their satisfaction with the BBC</p> <p>Committee Members welcomed the deeper focus on the Nations, and the inclusion of different themes, including on Commissioning in the Nations. Members also noted the importance of the research into under-served groups.</p> <p>Committee Members stressed the importance of being able to find Welsh content on BBC iplayer and BBC Sounds and the ability to personalise their viewing and listening. In terms of the research, local programming and representation on screen were key issues identified by the focus groups.</p> <p>Members were keen to see how Wales compares to the other UK nations in key comparative areas.</p>	
<p>12. Connected Nations 2023 to note.</p> <p>Colleagues gave an insight into the content of the Connected Nations report due to be published in December. The hope was to make the document a relevant and interesting read for audiences. The overarching themes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of new networks • Full fibre and 5G take up as well as rollout. • PSTN and 2G/3G switch off. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite Broadband <p>There would also be a case study in the document.</p>	
<p>13 Update: Content Board Member for Wales</p> <p>The Content Board Member gave a verbal update following the Content Board meeting held earlier in the week. She highlighted key issues that the Content Board were discussing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources for the Online Safety Bill, its implementation once it receives Royal Assent and managing stakeholder expectations Ofcom's role in implementing the Broadcast Code and the need to ensure that the integrity of the process is maintained at all times The Media Bill and the parliamentary process The Content Board had received a presentation on the deregulation and its impact on listeners, including Welsh-language requirements. 	
<p>14 Discussion Way of Working</p> <p>A discussion on the way in which the Committee works was postponed and re-arranged as a separate meeting scheduled for Tuesday 17 October 2023 9:30am-10:30am.</p>	
<p>Any Other Business and future agenda items</p> <p>None</p> <p>Future meeting dates confirmed as:</p> <p>28 November 2023</p>	

Date: _____

Chair
[remove for published minutes]

