

76th Meeting of the Ofcom Advisory Committee for Scotland held at the Ofcom Scotland Offices, 125 Princes Street, Edinburgh

Wednesday 4 December – 11.30-16.15

Present:

Liz Leonard – Chair ACS
 David Connolly – ACS
 Laura Anderson – ACS (until Agenda Item 7)
 Stephen Speirs - ACS
 Carmel Teusner – ACS (by Teams from Agenda Item 8)
 Maggie Cunningham – Content Board Member for Scotland
 Bob Downes – Ofcom Board Member for Scotland (until Agenda Item 8)
 Amanda Britain – Communications Consumer Panel

Katie Pettifer - Ofcom
 Glenn Preston – Ofcom
 Jonathan Ruff – Ofcom
 Stefan Webster – Ofcom
 Debbie Hughes – Ofcom
 Emma McFadyen – Ofcom (via Teams)

		Action
1.	Welcome and apologies	
1.1	LL noted that Julie Pirone had resigned from the Committee due to a conflict of interest. The process to advertise for a replacement would start in January 2020.	
1.2	Carmel Teusner was unable to attend the meeting in person and would join via Teams for the afternoon session.	
2.	Members' interests	
2.1	None	
3.	Minutes of previous meeting of 26 September, 2019	
3.1	LL advised that the minutes were now on Diligent and that a few of the Committee's Responses to consultations had also been uploaded. DH confirmed that this was work in progress and the remaining documents would be made available shortly.	
3.2	The minutes of the Committee meeting in September were approved with minor amendments.	
4.	Matters arising	
4.1	None	
5.	Members' updates	
5.1	LL noted this was a new, standing agenda item and asked if anyone had anything to share. DC noted he had attended an STV sponsored Advertising Association event	

	in November where the focus had been on trust (and rebuilding trust) in advertising.	
5.2	BD advised that the November meeting of the Ofcom Board had taken place in Cardiff with a focus on the upcoming election, Ofcom's draft Plan of Work (Annual Plan), the Spectrum auction, 5G and Video Sharing Platforms.	
5.3	LL advised that the Advisory Committee Chairs for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England had met with the Ofcom CEO and Chairman in November. The discussion was wide-ranging covering the MNO and UK Government proposals for a Shared Rural Network and the remit for Small Screen: Big Screen Debate (Ofcom's programme of work on the future of Public Service Broadcasting). LL also noted she had attended the launch of the new Channel 4 Hub in Glasgow.	
6.	Director's Report, Glenn Preston	
6.1	GP advised that the meeting between Fiona Hyslop, MSP (the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism & External Affairs) and Bob Downes had been postponed and would now take place in January.	
6.2	GP updated the Committee that he and SW met with Daniel Cass of That's TV in October/November. SW provided an update on the key points of discussion from trips to the That's offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow.	
6.3	GP noted the significant developments in relation to the Scottish Government's Reaching 100% programme with BT having been announced as the preferred bidder for the Central and South Scotland areas. JR then provided an update on recent engagement with BT, Openreach and Consumer Scotland.	
6.4	GP went on to highlight developments on MG Alba Recruitment, where Ofcom had been carrying out interviews for up to 4 new non-executive members of the MG ALBA Board. At the time of the meeting, the team were still waiting for approval from the Deputy First Minister to the Panel's recommendations. MG ALBA would also be submitting their Operational Plan before Christmas and the Ofcom Scotland team would be engaging with the Content Board member for Scotland and ACS Chair on the substance of the Plan.	
6.5	GP confirmed to the Committee that Item 5: 'Business Body round up' was new to the Director's Report, with a couple of the rep bodies in Scotland having offered commentary on the UK Government/ MNO Shared Rural Network deal. During discussion SS suggested that the FSB would be worth hearing from at a future meeting and AB recommended the National Farmers Union for Scotland would also be a useful stakeholder to engage.	
6.7	GP advised that he and SW would be presenting findings from our most recent News Consumption Survey to the Scottish Government on 16 December.	
7.	General policy/political update, Katie Pettifer	

7.1	KP noted the announcement of the upcoming UK General Election and the manifesto commitments relevant to Ofcom's sectors, including fixed broadband and mobile investment and infrastructure nationalisation.	
7.2	KP then provided members with an overview of latest developments on the Shared Rural Network (SRN) between the UK Government and the mobile network operators. This included an overview of the latest timescales for final sign-off, negotiations over enforcement of coverage obligations and Ofcom's role.	
7.3	There was a short discussion about the wider constitutional implications for Scotland arising from the outcome of the Westminster General Election.	
8.	STV Presentation	
8.1	<p>Simon Pitts (Chief Executive) and Bobby Hain (Managing Director, Broadcast) provided members with an update on STV's recent performance and plans for 2020. Particular areas of focus included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the new STV Productions drama 'Elizabeth is Missing' (which started on BBC One on 8 December); their advertising growth fund which has opened up TV advertising to new businesses; and the STV Player now being available on Sky and Virgin in Scotland, with additional content from the likes of Hopster and Premier Sport. <p>STV were keen to be involved with Ofcom's next PSB review and had already been engaging with colleagues leading Ofcom's work on prominence.</p>	
9.	Small Screen: Big Debate	
9.1	LL reflected on the recent Small Screen: Big Debate (SSBD) event held in Edinburgh, noting the session was positive but with limited discussion about the wider 'public purposes' of public service broadcasting, partly due to the lack of academic participation (committee members noted the academic strike that had coincided with the event). DC and CT agreed with this assessment.	
9.2	There was a short discussion about the main challengers to public service broadcasters, such as the major streaming platforms. Committee members agreed it would be helpful to ask a representative of one of these companies to attend a future ACS meeting.	GP/ LL/ SW
9.3	Members also agreed with the Ofcom Scotland team's proposals to hold a number of events in different locations in early 2020 (suggesting something should be held in the North East of Scotland). LL encouraged ACS members' attendance at these as this would help inform the Committee's own conclusions/assessment of public service broadcasting and its internal advice to Ofcom.	ACS
9.4	GP suggested that the Communications Consumer Panel might wish to consider its own contribution to the broader debate and AB agreed to consider this.	AB
9.5	There was a short discussion about wider political impacts on public service broadcasting, including the ongoing debate about the TV licence fee for over 75s.	

10.	Brexit update	
10.1	GP highlighted the recently published Scottish Government analysis of the UK Government's Withdrawal Agreement, noting some of the potential implications for the areas Ofcom regulates.	
10.2	AB raised concerns about the potential impact on vulnerable consumers; citing research about risk to rural consumers in particular. JR advised of the different methodologies used by various governments in the UK to define 'rurality' and agreed to share recent work on this topic.	JR
10.3	There was a short discussion about the impact on wider sectors of the Scottish economy, such as the video games industry.	
10.4	Members also discussed possible replacements for European Union funding (such as the European Regional Development Fund which has contributed to some Scottish Government infrastructure initiatives), with GP noting that the UK Government had previously committed to the creation of a "UK Shared Prosperity Fund" to replace EU funding but that the detail of this was currently not known.	
	The committee agreed to revisit these issues at the next ACS meeting in February.	GP
11.	Connected Nations update	
11.1	JR provided an update on this year's report, including highlighting the key figures as they related to Scotland.	JR
11.2	JR explained that there has been a methodology change in the way Ofcom defined premises, which would have the effect of showing no year-on-year increase in premises with access to fixed broadband in Scotland. SS recommended this should be clearly explained in the report and publishing comparable figures to show the year-on-year trend.	JR
11.3	There was concern over the lack of SME figures in this year's report, given the large proportion of businesses in Scotland that are SMEs. LL asked for JR to explore reintroducing these figures in future reports.	JR
11.4	JR then ran through key trends from the UK report and Ofcom's approach to defining rural/remote rural classifications and agreed to share Ofcom's analysis of these classifications	JR
11.5	The item closed with a general discussion around the shared rural network targets and their relationship with the 4G coverage by at least one operator in Scotland	
12.	Content Board update, Maggie Cunningham	
12.1	MC advised that the main focus of the last meeting was the future of PSB, including discussion covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was important for Ofcom to ensure that the right questions were being asked in the consultation (of the public rather than of broadcasters and Ofcom); 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential challenges that the Standards Team were going to face in dealing with a large volume of complaints as Ofcom took on new responsibilities (e.g. for VSPs). 	
13.	Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD update, Amanda Britain	
13.1	AB provided a verbal update on the first Communications Consumer Hub that had been held at the end of November. This had been attended from a wide range of stakeholder organisations, including; Local Government, Citizen’s Advice Scotland and Citizen’s Advice Direct, the National Farmers Union for Scotland, the Carnegie Trust, the Health & Care Alliance, Which? and Competition Markets Authority.	
13.2	There had been a shared view that communications services are essential tools for many aspects of consumer life, but those attending also highlighted many barriers that consumers encountered: connectivity, scams, digital inclusion, vulnerability and affordability. Stakeholders were keen to have regular Hub meetings in Scotland.	
13.3	The Scotland Hub was the first of the consumer hubs to take place – inaugural meetings in Wales, England and Northern Ireland would be held during December and January. Initial thinking is that there will be 4 meetings of each of the nation hubs each year that will focus on different topical issues.	
14	AOB	
14.1	No additional items were raised by Committee members.	