

Minutes of the 76th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Wales held at Ofcom Wales on 11 March 2020

Present

Hywel Wiliam	Chair
Andrew Board	Member
Peter Trott	Member
Rem Noormohamed	Member
Robert Andrews	Member
Ruth McElroy	Member

In attendance

David Jones	Ofcom Board Member for Wales (items 1-10)
Aled Eirug	Content Board Member for Wales
Rick Hill	Chair, Communications Consumer Panel Member (in the absence of Wales member)
Fiona Lennox	Executive Director, Communications Consumer Panel
Eleanor Marks	Ofcom Director Wales
Elinor Williams	Regulatory Affairs Principal, Ofcom Wales
Joanna Davies	Senior Welsh Language Advisor, Ofcom Wales (items 1-10)
Meleri Evans	Regulatory Affairs Manager, Ofcom Wales
Emma McFadyen	Public Policy Principal
Liz Nash	Regulatory Affairs Assistant, Ofcom Wales
Other Ofcom colleagues	

Colleagues from Channel 4

Agenda items

Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed attendees to the 76th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Wales.

Declaration of Members' Interests – oral

2. David Jones – Member of the Technology Connected Council (formally ESTnet)

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019 and matters arising – Minutes ACW 76(3)

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019 were **APPROVED** subject to minor amendments.

4. Matters arising -

- Item 8 (9) - Members received an update regarding the recent investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner. Ofcom colleagues advised a paper was due to be submitted to Ofcom's Policy Management Board at May's meeting highlighting current risks. An update was received regarding the recent review of the Ofcom Wales office. Ofcom staff advised the Wales office would be closed for 2 weeks from 16th March due to expansion and refurbishment works. All staff would be working remotely and available as usual.
- Item 8 (10) – Due to time restraints the Committee had been unable to respond to the NGA consultation but would feedback when the Statement was published.
- Item 8 (12) – No further update at present.

- Item 9 (13) – A member advised no invitation had been received to attend the CCP Wales Hub meetings. Ofcom staff would follow up.
- Item 9 (14) – Research findings would be presented later in meeting under item 11 (CCP Update).
- Item 14 (25) – Ofcom Wales staff advised that following advice from London all events had been postponed due to the current Coronavirus outbreak including the planned follow up Small Screen Big Debate event in Carmarthen in April.

Chairman’s Report – oral

5. The Chairman gave an oral update of his activities since the last meeting including:

- On-going work around Business Parks and broadband connectivity and meeting with Welsh Government officials.
- Peter Trott attended the National Spectrum Centre event in London (background notes to be circulated).
- Continuing work on PSB Review (Members’ internal discussion to follow).
- Feedback received following Ofcom’s Plan of Work event.
- Attendance at Creative Wales event.
- A request had been received from the Culture & Welsh Language Committee to take part in a debate around Devolution of Broadcasting. It was suggested that initially the Chairman and Content Board Member for Wales could meet with Helen Mary Jones AM, who was currently chairing the Committee.
- Update on attendance at WISP (Wales Internet Safety Partnership). The Board Member for Wales requested to attend the next meeting on 29 April.
- Planned attendance at the VLV conference on 30 April.
- Update on the IWA Media Audit report (in conjunction with Ruth McElroy). Members and Ofcom Wales would consider hosting an event pre or post Easter (possibly an on-line event in view of the current ‘freeze’ on public events).

Update: Ofcom Board Member for Wales – oral

6. The Committee was updated on recent topics discussed by the Ofcom Board. Areas covered included Broadband; mobile; PSB review; BBC. Members received a press release on the appointment of Ofcom’s new Chief Executive, Melanie Dawes which included a resumé of her background and experience.

7. Members discussed the implications of the Government’s intention to be minded to appoint Ofcom as the Online Harms regulator and the impact of this additional responsibility. A final decision was expected end of May/June.

8. Members were advised about Ofcom’s plans to execute a ‘test day’ on 17th March when all employees would be asked to work from home to test the capacity and capability of the organisation’s IT infrastructure. Members discussed the implications.

Update: Ofcom Content Board Member for Wales

9. An update paper had previously been received which highlighted matters being considered by the Content Board which included regulations on online content; plans for interim regulation of video sharing platforms; proposed changes to the Broadcasting Code to include special protection for children and the requirement for platforms to remove illegal content. Members also discussed the on-going BBC public interest test into studios and the future of the licence fee. The visit to the new BBC headquarters was noted as highly successful and appreciated by those who attended.

Channel 4 – annual presentation

10. The Chairman welcomed colleagues from Channel 4 who gave a comprehensive presentation on current activities and fielded questions from Members. Topics included the main priorities outlined by the Chief Executive in 2018 being: ‘to be totally relevant in the digital age’; ‘be attractive to younger audiences’ and ‘be more diverse’.

11. The team gave an overview for 2020 and outlined the vision for the UK. C4 had three areas of commitment: increasing out of London content spend; creating additional jobs in the nations and regions with new out of London hubs (including Bristol) and increasing C4 regional representation with three Channel 4 News bureaux in Leeds, Glasgow and Cardiff.

12. The Chairman thanked Channel 4 colleagues for joining the meeting and Ofcom Wales staff agreed to circulate contact details to Members and Ofcom colleagues.

Report – Public Policy

13. An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and Members had received a paper which provided an update on the key UK Government and Parliamentary developments since the last meeting. Issues noted included: the Government's commitment to £5bn spend on infrastructure; the Government reshuffle and appointment of Oliver Dowden as Secretary of State for DCMS; update on Shared Rural Network negotiations; online regulation and Ofcom's new duties on VSPs.

Report – Wales Recent Developments

14. Members noted the contents of an update paper previously circulated. The Director Wales drew out certain highlights including:

- An Ofcom colleague attended the launch of Channel 4's Creative Hub in Bristol.
- PSTN switch off roundtable discussion and colleagues' meetings with Welsh Government officials to plan a future cross public sector event. In response to a Member's query on how Ofcom planned to engage with sectors, the Board Member for Wales confirmed Ofcom was in discussion with Welsh Water, Welsh Government and health boards. Switch off was scheduled for 2025. Members requested an update from Ofcom colleagues at the next ACW meeting in June.
- Successful visit to BBC headquarters.
- The Director reported planned meetings: Small Screen: Big Debate in Carmarthen and the children's media event had been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak. Ofcom was currently in the process of assessing its attendance at events and stakeholder interaction. Members discussed the possibility of going ahead with events but via an online portal and making use of the newly established website for SS:BD.
- Update on recruitment of Communications Consumer Panel member for Wales – this was currently awaiting DCMS approval.
- The Director reminded Members to regularly check their Ofcom email accounts and to let local IT support know if they needed assistance.

15. There was a lengthy discussion about the Six Nations Rugby events being listed as a B and not an A event. Members felt strongly that DCMS should be made aware of the Committee's dissatisfaction as they were aware Government was disinclined to review the classification. A member cited the Lions tour in New Zealand as a case in point. The Committee wanted the letter about Six Nations to go to Ofcom then DCMS, cc SoS Wales and Welsh Government Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport.

Universality Analysis – oral update

16. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and gave an oral update on the USO. Highlights included:

- The vast majority of currently eligible premises would receive delivery within 12 months.
- BT was posting correspondence to every eligible home and reaching out to local authorities.
- The team provided data relating to Wales. The number of eligible premises in Wales was just under 15,000, of which 13,000 were in rural locations and 1500 in urban. Ofcom was due to publish technical analysis in April. The team advised

that some data supplied by BT for Ofcom's Connected Nations report had to be re-run due to a data error.

- Members discussed the possibility of households' ability to combine cost thresholds of £3,400. BT would carry out a survey to assess flexibility of the proposal.

Communications Consumer Panel Update

17. Members had received a previously provided update report.

18. A CCP colleague presented the results of its "Don't Cut me Off" research into the customer service experiences of communications consumers living in low income households in the UK. A link to the published research would be circulated to Members.

19. Members discussed the Report's recommendations and how it had been received at CCP stakeholder hubs. High levels of commitment were agreed last year and were now being expanded via its Consumer Charter.

Public Service Broadcasting – Members' discussion

20. The Chairman presented his thoughts on the current situation which was followed by a lively discussion. Slides would be circulated to Members.

21. The Committee agreed a way forward drawing out the impacts and relevance to Wales. The Chairman and a nominated Member would circulate a draft outline to Members for them to populate as a basis for further discussion

22. Ofcom Wales colleagues noted the content of the discussion.

Any Other Business and future agenda items

23. It was noted that some Members' terms of membership were due to come to an end. Ofcom colleagues would discuss with those Members regarding possible extension/termination. A recruitment process would be put in place as soon as practicable.

24. Future agenda items: PSTN switch off
DJ to contact Lee Waters to propose that an inventory of PSTN dial-up services across the public sector be made compulsory.

Items for information - Noted

Chair

[remove for published minutes]

Date: _____