



30 September 2009

Rachel Clark  
Communications and Content Industries  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
UG28-30  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1 0ET

Dear Ms Clark,

**Response to consultation on Ofcom's duties**

The Communications Consumer Panel was established under the Communications Act 2003 as an independent advisory body. Its role is to influence Ofcom, Government, the EU, and service and equipment providers, so that the communications interests of consumers and citizens are protected and promoted.

The Panel supports the proposed duty on Ofcom to report on the state of the UK's communications infrastructure. This fits with Ofcom's role in providing independent expert advice to Government, in the same way as it reports regularly on public service broadcasting.

The Panel agrees that the report should cover the general areas specified in the consultation document. It would be particularly useful for Ofcom to produce a regular report on the availability and coverage of communications networks and services.

The Panel thinks that it would be useful for there to be further consultation on the specific areas that the report should cover. But this should not just be "consultation between Ofcom and industry". Consumer representatives, including the Communications Consumer Panel, should also be consulted.

The proposal that Ofcom should produce a report every two years strikes a reasonable balance between maintaining an up-to-date picture of the UK's communications infrastructure and avoiding adding too much to Ofcom's workload.

The Panel also supports the proposed Ofcom power to obtain information from operators in order to compile the report. For example, this would make it possible to gather more granular and comparable information about mobile coverage.

The Panel notes the proposal that Ofcom's biennial report to Government should not be published on the basis that it, "may contain sensitive and/or confidential information." We note as well that the Government is planning to publish the "headline details", but would like to understand what this is likely to mean in practice. Some of the information included in report would be very useful for consumers. For example, consumers would welcome more precise, localised information about mobile coverage. So the Panel would be in favour of publishing as much information that would benefit consumers as possible.

The Panel also believes that Government should consider including provision for Ofcom to be able to separately publish information gathered in order to produce the report if that would enable consumers to make more informed decisions about, for example, which mobile provider would give them the best coverage at home.

If you would like to discuss the Panel's response, please contact Alistair Bridge:  
[alistair.bridge@communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk](mailto:alistair.bridge@communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk), 020 7783 4195.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Bradley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Anna Bradley**

**Chair**