



## *e-newsletter April 2009*

### **Welcome**

Welcome to the April 2009 issue of the Communications Consumer Panel e-newsletter. If you'd like to receive our monthly newsletter and you're not on our mailing list, it's easy to join – just go onto our website at: [www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk)

### **Latest news...**

#### **Consumers support broadband for all, Consumer Panel tells Communications Minister Lord Carter**

In a letter to Lord Carter the Communications Consumer Panel has told the Communications Minister, that new research by the Panel (due for publication in May) reveals that there is strong support among consumers for the planned universal service commitment for broadband.

But Panel Chair Anna Bradley said that: "Government must make it clear what services and activities people will and will not be able to do with a broadband speed of 2Mb/s. For example, it will not support interactive public services like telemedicine."

The headline findings of the research have been fed into Digital Britain and will inform the contents of the final Digital Britain report. It will examine the extent to which it is becoming essential to have broadband at home and identify what services consumers think everyone should have access to.

Read the letter to Lord Carter at:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/digital-inclusion/letter-to-lord-carter>

#### **A summit and a budget commitment to universal broadband – all to the good for consumers**

At the Digital Britain summit in London there were four Ministers and the Prime Minister Gordon Brown - similar events were held in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but without the pizzazz. Communications Consumer Panel Chair

Anna Bradley, who went to the event, said that this left little doubt about the Government's commitment to advancing the digital agenda. This was closely followed by the Budget commitment to universal 2Mb/s broadband by 2012, a policy initiative that the Panel's soon-to-be-published consumer research strongly supports.

The final Digital Britain report has not yet been published, but there is a big question about how the momentum can be maintained beyond that final report. At the summit Anna Bradley used the opportunity to ask Lord Carter what next. He agreed that the work was far from complete and suggested that there might be a need for not just a Bill, but also for a dedicated Government department to maintain the momentum that has been achieved to date.

The following link takes you to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform press release on the Budget '09 and Digital Britain:  
<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=399352&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=True>

## A digital Europe fit for consumers

European Union Consumer Affairs Commissioner, Commissioner Kuneva, restated the vision for a digital Europe fit for consumers at the recent summit that she had called on *Consumer Trust in the Digital Market Place*. Taking part in the summit Consumer Panel Chair Anna Bradley reported that Commissioner Kuneva addressed findings from a recent report showing that consumers are not yet purchasing cross-border. "The Commissioner spent the rest of her speech talking about the need to build consumer trust to support cross-border trade," Anna Bradley said, adding that related concerns about "online advertising and privacy was picked up by all the speakers."

Commenting on the issue of online behavioural advertising, Anna Bradley said that: "There is no question that consumers see a benefit in this type of targeting. The Panel's recent research *No one should miss out* found that consumers valued the way their data could be used to deliver relevant material and exclude unwanted or intrusive offerings. "But if policy-makers, regulators and even companies see fit to design solutions to these problems without reference to consumers and citizens themselves, we are far less likely to find them fit for purpose," Anna Bradley said.

The event web page can be found at: <http://www.european-consumer-summit.eu/>

*No one should miss out* can be found at:  
[http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/No%20one%20should%20miss%20out\\_digital%20future%20research%20report.pdf](http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/No%20one%20should%20miss%20out_digital%20future%20research%20report.pdf)

## and in brief.....

### Meeting the Minister

Communications Consumer Panel Chair Anna Bradley and Alistair Bridge Principal Adviser to the Panel have met Paul Murphy MP, the Secretary of State for Wales and Minister for Digital Inclusion. The briefing session included bringing

the Minister up-to-date with the Panel's thinking on digital inclusion, and to ask how he sees the Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan fitting with the Digital Britain commitment to universal access to broadband. The Minister was told that the Panel supported a joined-up, strategic approach in order to link together the two developments. We await the appointment of the Government's Digital Inclusion Champion, which will be followed by the appointment of a Taskforce to advise the Champion and Government

### **Panel attracts European interest**

There is growing interest around Europe in the work of the Communications Consumer Panel. Panel member Roger Darlington recently talked about the Panel's work at an event hosted by the Portuguese regulator for telecommunications and posts, ANACOM. There was considerable interest in the impact of functional separation in the UK and the processes for handling consumer complaints in the UK. ANACOM is responsible for investigating consumer complaints, which are around 3,000-4,000 a month. The regulator wants to publish complaint data so that consumers are better informed.

Roger Darlington's presentation can be found by following this link:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/news-and-media/speeches-and-presentations>

Principal Advisor Alistair Bridge also recently spoke about the Panel at a training event run by the Hungarian telecommunications regulator. Read his account of this event on the Panel's Blog and his presentation:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/news-and-media/speeches-and-presentations>

### **New research....coming soon**

Watch out for publication of the Panel's Work Plan shortly. This will set out our priorities for the year ahead and reflect the comments made by stakeholders at the event we held in March.

Watch out too for the publication in May of our new research, which reveals among other things strong support for the universal service broadband commitment.

### **Don't forget the Panel blog**

Our latest blogs talk about the Panel's letter to Lord Carter highlighting key findings from our new consumer research, and the Digital Britain summits in London and Edinburgh.

The Communications Consumer Panel blog site has the latest news on what Panel members are saying and doing. Go to our home page and click on the Blog link at <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/>