



e-newsletter October 2009

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Latest news...

'Try before you buy' solution to mobile coverage problems attracts industry and consumer interest

The Panel's mobile coverage research, published at the beginning of October, attracted attention from industry, consumers and small businesses, and stimulated a great deal of debate in the media. Our research showed that around a third of consumers and small businesses regularly experience coverage problems – and that what consumers want is clear: better quality reception. Talking to consumers we heard that what they find most frustrating is to have no reception in their own homes, while small business users told the Panel that they need good coverage particularly where they work. As Northern Ireland Panel Member Maureen Edmondson says: "Let's hope this new research data energises providers, regulators and consumers to do more to get the service improved".

The Panel called on Ofcom and industry to work together to use the research findings to improve coverage for calls and texts, including coverage at home and on the move. The Panel also thinks that the networks could do more to offer accurate coverage information so consumers can make an informed choice about which network to choose. Panel Chair Anna Bradley also said that:

"It's essential that consumers aren't trapped into contracts that don't give them the coverage they need. We would like to see providers offering consumers a 'try before you buy' clause that allows them to use their mobile and, if they don't get coverage, take it back."

See Londoners talking about their experiences with mobile coverage, the problems they have had and what they've done to try and resolve them by watching the video on our home page:

www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk

If you'd like to read our consumer and small business research reports *Mobile coverage: a consumer/small business perspective* go to:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/research/mobile-coverage>

And you can read Maureen Edmondson's blog *Consumer frustrations get aired at last!* at:

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

Panel updates progress on local next generation access projects and new schemes across the UK

Local initiatives on next generation access in the UK: an update is the Consumer Panel's updated review of local super-fast fibre broadband networks. It found an extensive and growing network of over 40 community-led fast broadband schemes across the UK. Panel member Roger Darlington, who carried out the review, said that the schemes "collectively represent a range of funding and business models and technical delivery options". He believes that they will make a significant contribution to the national debate on the timing and form of NGA roll-out in the UK.

The Panel would welcome further information about new initiatives, or updates on the projects mentioned in the report. Contact the Consumer Panel's Secretary Nicola Ebdon at: nicola.ebdon@communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk or ring her on 020 7783 4021.

You can find a copy a copy of the Panel's report at:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Local%20initiatives%20on%20NGA%20in%20UK%20update%20oct09.pdf>

Post i2010: priorities for a new strategy for the European information society

A new European digital agenda must prioritise the provision of infrastructure and support for people in a way that allows them to participate fully in society, the Consumer Panel has told the EU in its response to the consultation *Post i2010: priorities for a new strategy for the European information society*. The Panel went on to stress that measures to combat illegal file sharing must be developed in the interests of both consumers and content owners. Addressing the issue of mobile coverage and its increasing importance to internet access, the Panel called on mobile operators, regulators and Governments to work together to improve coverage.

You can view a copy of our response by clicking on the link below:

http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/CCP_response_post_i2010_consultation.pdf

Panel member sees into the future

The future can be found in Fibrecity, a show house in a Bournemouth housing scheme. H2O Networks is laying optical fibre in the sewers to take next generation broadband direct to people's homes. The company plans to have 85,000 homes connected by early 2011. Panel member Roger Darlington describes his visit to the scheme in his blog *I have seen the future*, which you can read at

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

The future for mobile?

Panel member Colin Browne writes in his blog about the Westminster eForum on the Future of Mobile that there was "a general sense of optimism - and quite a lot of excitement". Talking in the session on regulation, Colin raised consumer concerns about mobile coverage – more reliable coverage, better information, better complaints handling, and a better process for porting numbers. Regulation was about protecting consumers, he said: "...while delivering the competition and innovation that is ultimately in their best interests".

Read Colin Browne's blog at:

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

Representing the interests of consumers across all four nations – is the Panel getting it right?

Trying to ensure that the Panel is properly representing the interests of consumers and citizens in all four nations of the UK was a focus of the Panel's October meeting. Writing in her blog about the meeting, Consumer Panel Chair Anna Bradley said that the most important thing to come out of the discussion was just how important rural, low income and small business issues are to each of the three devolved nations. Also, a member of Martha Lane-Fox's (Digital Inclusion Champion) team talked to the Panel about the launch of the Race Online 2012 campaign: <http://raceonline2012.org/>. And Panel members discussed a number of issues with Ofcom such as access and inclusion and digital participation.

Read Anna Bradley's blog about the work of the Panel at its October meeting in full at:

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

Don't forget the Panel blog

Read about the latest on slamming in Panel member Fiona Ballantyne's blog, and check out what other Panel members are saying and doing by going to our home page and click on the Blog link at:

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