



## *e-newsletter* February 2010

### Latest news...

#### **Watch out for Consumer Panel Work Plan consultation**

We want to know what you think about our draft workplan for 2010/11. So the Consumer Panel will be holding a three-week consultation following the plan's publication in the first week of March. You'll be able to find it on our website:

[www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk)

#### **Panel calls on Government to protect low income consumers from the 50 pence landline tax**

The Communications Consumer Panel has called on the Government and industry to ensure that low-income consumers with landlines know that they will be exempt from paying the proposed 50p per month landline tax if they sign up for a social tariff. Responding to the Treasury's consultation on the implementation of the landline tax, Panel Chair Anna Bradley said: "Although fixed-line customers on a social tariff won't have to pay the landline tax, only 850,000 are currently signed up but another 3 to 4 million would qualify. The Panel would like to see Government working with industry to raise awareness of social tariffs so that people on low incomes are not disadvantaged."

For a copy of the Consumer Panel's response to the HM Treasury consultation *Implementing a landline duty* go to:

[www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/next-generation-networks/implementing-a-landline-duty](http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/next-generation-networks/implementing-a-landline-duty)

#### **February Panel meeting**

Representatives from Digital UK and the Help Scheme came to the February Panel meeting to discuss progress with Digital TV Switchover, particularly in the light of switchover in the Granada region. They said that there is a small segment of the population who do not realise that they will be affected by switchover until after the event. To reach this segment the Help Scheme ran a communications campaign in Granada after switchover had taken place and will continue to develop their approach to reaching this segment.

The Panel also discussed the difficulties that consumers have with retuning their set-top boxes. The Panel welcomed the Help Scheme's role in promoting the supply of boxes that retune automatically. This is a very useful feature, especially for more vulnerable consumers and those who live in areas where TV regions overlap. All boxes supplied by the Help Scheme now have this feature.

Panel Members also discussed Ofcom's consultation on complaints-handling, welcoming the fact that, in developing a draft code of practice, Ofcom had taken on board many of the points which the Panel had previously made. The Panel will be submitting a formal response to the consultation shortly

Minutes from Panel meetings are published on the Panel's website. They have to be approved by the Panel before publication, which means that they are normally published about a month after the relevant meeting.

To read minutes from previous meetings go to:

[www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk)

## **Panel response to Ofcom Draft Annual Plan**

In responding to Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan 2010/11, the Panel recognised that it had taken on board many of the important consumer issues that it had highlighted, including mobile and broadband not-spots and the need for improved switching processes. However, the Panel said that there are two areas of importance to consumers that the Panel would like Ofcom to consider further: what consumers expect from the internet in the way of protections and freedoms; and consumer decision-making and the role of information.

You can read the response to the Ofcom draft annual plan in full at

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/ofcoms-work-priorities-and-plans/annual-plan>

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

Read about the latest news from Panel members by going to our home page and click on the Blog link at:

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

## **Are you on our mailing list?**

If you'd like to receive the Communications Consumer Panel 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)