

December 2011

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Panel newsletter

Seasonal greetings from the Consumer Panel

In short...

Make mobiles easier to use - Panel Chair tells Consumer Experience launch

Speaking at the launch of the Ofcom 2011 *Consumer Experience* report, Panel Chair Bob Warner said making simple improvements to mobiles could benefit all users...

Superfast broadband is a significant prize for local communities

When superfast broadband is rolled out across the UK, communities will have a significant prize within their grasp, Panel member Chris Holland reports...

Panel looks at how Ofcom consults consumers

Panel member Roger Darlington has been discussing how Ofcom consults consumers...

Significant barriers to wider internet use in Scotland

Scotland member Fiona Ballantyne has given oral evidence to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's review of the broadband infrastructure. Read the full report in the next issue...

Helping the communications markets work for consumers - Ofcom priority for next year

Panel set to respond to Ofcom's draft *Annual Plan* for 2012/13 early in New Year...

UK consumers are a nation of online shoppers

Ofcom's latest International Communications Market report into the global communications market looks at take-up, availability and use of broadband, landlines, mobiles, TV and radio in 17 countries...

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/cmr11/international/>

Parents' guide to technology

The UK Safer Internet Centre has published a new guide responding to questions it receives about particular devices that children are using or asking for...

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide>

Panel meetings...

To read minutes from previous meetings go to:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/angenda-and-minutes/2011>

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Latest news...

Make mobiles easier to use - Panel Chair tells Ofcom Consumer Experience launch

Bob Warner, Panel Chair, said that simple improvements to mobiles could make them easier for all consumers to use, when he spoke at the recent launch of Ofcom's 2011 *Consumer Experience* report. He also stressed the vital role to be played by informed sales staff: "The key is to get the right information into the hands of the right customers."

He went on to highlight the Panel's continuing campaign to improve mobile coverage, its work on online personal data and the forthcoming study on digital participation.

Ofcom's annual *Consumer Experience* report looks at how the communications market delivers benefits, and how its work has helped consumers over the past 12 months. It found that fewer consumers are experiencing harm from silent or abandoned calls because of the regulator's action against companies. The research also showed increased consumer awareness about the problem. <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/consumer-experience-reports/consumer-experience/>

Superfast broadband is a significant prize for local communities

When superfast broadband is rolled out across the UK, communities will have a significant prize within their grasp, Panel member Chris Holland has said. Reporting back from the *Local growth through broadband* conference, organised by the Broadband Stakeholder Group, he reported a clear commitment from the conference to have the best superfast broadband in Europe by 2015 but noted that "As access to more and more public services will depend on broadband, the issues of both availability and take-up are of concern".

Chris said that BT Chairman Sir Mike Rake had explained how, in his view, broadband had moved from being a luxury to being regarded as a utility: "He said that government and industry have a responsibility to consumers to keep up the pace and remove obstacles to access."

For more information about the *Local growth through broadband* conference: <http://www.intellectuk.org/local-growth-through-broadband-2011-home>

Panel looks at how Ofcom consults consumers

Panel member Roger Darlington has recently contributed to a discussion about how Ofcom consults consumers: "I was part of a small team looking at how to enhance how Ofcom consults consumers and ensures citizens' interests are represented in its work," Roger explained.

The group came up with a range of ideas from carrying out quick surveys or conducting a consumer impact assessment to encouraging consumers to make submissions. Ofcom consultation guidelines can be found at: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/how-will-ofcom-consult>

Helping communications markets work for consumers - Ofcom priority for next year

The Consumer Panel will be responding early in the New Year to the publication of Ofcom's draft annual plan for 2012. Ofcom has already consulted the Panel about what its priorities for consumers should be for the coming year, and made presentations to members.

The regulator plans to make helping communications markets work for consumers a priority. This involves "ensuring all communications providers supply clear information so that broadband customers can make informed choices and enable consumers to switch providers easily". Other work includes assessing the provision of communications services in each of the UK nations.

Ofcom is holding public consultation events on its draft *Annual Plan* across the UK. The consultation

closes on 17 February 2012.

<http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2011/12/ofcom-publishes-draft-annual-plan-2/>

New website helps parents report unsuitable media content

ParentPort, launched in October, makes it easier for parents to complain about unsuitable content in the media, communications and retail industries. It provides simple information on what they can do if they have seen or heard something inappropriate for their children.

The website has been jointly developed by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD), the BBC Trust, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), Ofcom, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) and the Video Standards Council (VSC)/Pan-European Game Information (PEGI).

www.parentport.org.uk

December Panel meeting

This month's Panel meeting included:

- Discussion around the privacy and security of mobile apps
- A presentation on Ofcom's work on non-geographic numbers
- Discussion of mobile e-commerce and its implications for consumers and citizens.

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