

## **Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Digital Communication**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

Chair: Russell George AM (Montgomeryshire)

Members Present:

Andrew R.T. Davies AM (South Wales Central)  
Antoinette Sandbach AM (North Wales)  
Nick Ramsay AM (Monmouth)  
Keith Davies AM (Llanelli)

Representatives:

John Davies, Chairman - Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales  
Rhodri Williams, Director Wales - Ofcom  
Alex Williams, Regulatory Affairs Advisor, Wales - Ofcom

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### **Item 1: Chairman's Welcome & Introduction**

1. The Chairman, Russell George AM, welcomed Members and representatives from Ofcom to the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Assembly Cross Party Group on Digital Communication.

### **Item 2: Apologies for Absence**

2. Apologies were received from David Rees AM (Aberavon); Aled Roberts AM (North Wales); Alun Ffred Jones AM (Arfon); Bethan Jenkins AM (South Wales West); Simon Thomas AM (Mid & West Wales); and David Melding AM (South Wales Central).

### **Item 3: Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Digital Communication**

3. The Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Cross Party Group on Digital Communication were reviewed and approved as a true and correct record of proceedings.

### **Item 4: Matters Arising**

4. Actions were reviewed and matters arising were as follows:-
5. Mandatory Mobile Roaming: the Cross Party Group has made representations to Ofcom to urge it to mandate roaming for all operators as a way to address any total and partial mobile not-spots which remain following the implementation of the Mobile Infrastructure Project.  
**ACTION - Ofcom Wales to facilitate a reply**
6. Mobile Infrastructure Project Implementation: all AMs who attended the Arqiva presentation and those who gave formal apologies received details of the nominal implementation plan.
7. Welsh Government Mobile Support Scheme: The Cross Party Group has written to Edwina Hart AM, the Welsh Government BETS Minister, to urge the Welsh Government to consider

a “Mobile Support Scheme” to assist those areas not covered by MIP. **ACTION - awaiting a reply from Welsh Government**

#### **Item 5: Annual General Meeting**

8. The Chair asked the Secretary (Alex Williams) to invite nominations for the position of Chair of the Cross Party Group.
9. Russell George AM indicated his willingness to be re-elected as Chair and there being no further nominations, Russell George AM was duly elected as Chair of the National Assembly Cross Party Group on Digital Communication.
10. The Chair invited those who wish to act as secretariat of the group to indicate their intentions. Ofcom indicated its willingness to act as secretariat and there being no further nominations, Ofcom was duly confirmed as secretariat of the National Assembly Cross Party Group on Digital Communication.
11. The Chair also proposed that the three other sponsoring Assembly Members (David Rees AM (Labour); Alun Ffred Jones AM (Plaid Cymru) and Aled Roberts AM (Liberal Democrats) are confirmed as Vice-Chairmen of the Cross Party Group. This proposal was confirmed by Members present.

#### **Item 6: Presentation by Ofcom on the Future of Radio in Wales**

12. Rhodri Williams (Director, Wales - Ofcom) delivered a presentation on radio in Wales which highlighted: the importance of radio in people’s lives; how radio is delivered (AM, FM, DAB); the different types of radio stations which are available in Wales (BBC, Local Commercial, Community); and statistics on share of listening, before going on to discuss the potential benefits of digital radio and the prospects for a future digital radio upgrade.
13. A Member asked about the timescale of the launch of Radio Beca, one of the four community radio stations licensed by Ofcom in 2012. It was confirmed that Radio Beca hoped to be on air later this year.
14. There was also a discussion around the sustainability of the community radio sector in the future following the end of the Welsh Government’s Community Radio Fund. Rhodri Williams referred to an imminent DCMS consultation which will contain proposals to change the regulatory framework in which community radio stations operate including the potential relaxation of the rules regarding community radio stations’ ability to raise revenue from advertising and sponsorship. **ACTION - Group to respond to consultation in support of allowing community radio stations to become financially sustainable by raising revenue through advertising and sponsorship.**
15. The Group also expressed their concern at any prospect of a DAB radio upgrade in the near future on the grounds that Wales has one of the lowest level of existing DAB provision in the UK; take-up is static and adoption in vehicles is low.
16. Members expressed the view that FM and AM in Wales will be crucial for the foreseeable future, particularly for motorists and the elderly, and urged the UK Government to explore other means of delivering or streaming radio by exploiting future mobile broadband

technologies rather than pursuing DAB. **ACTION - Group to write to Ed Vaizey, UK Government Minister**

17. There was also a wide ranging discussion on competition in the radio sector including the impact of Global Radio's recent acquisition of Real Radio and the dominance of the BBC.

#### **Item 7: Conclusions & Proposed Actions**

**ACTION - Group to respond to forthcoming consultation in support of allowing community radio stations to become financially sustainable by raising revenue through advertising and sponsorship.**

**ACTION - Group to write to Ed Vaizey, UK Government Minister to outline concerns relating to DAB.**

#### **Date of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March - 6.30pm, Conference Rooms C&D on Broadcasting Content & Standards