

Minutes of the Cross Party Group on Digital Communications

Tuesday 29 September 2015 6.00pm

Chair: Russell George AM

Members Present:

Alun Ffred Jones AM (Arfon)

Keith Davies AM (Llanelli)

Suzy Davies AM (South Wales West)

David Rees AM (Aberavon)

Janet Haworth AM (North Wales)

Aled Roberts AM (North Wales)

Representatives:

Rhodri Williams – Director, Wales – Ofcom

Elinor Williams – Regulatory Affairs Manager – Ofcom

Nia Thomas – Regulatory Affairs Advisor – Ofcom

Russell George AM, Chairman of the Group, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted that Ofcom would be leading the evening's meeting and would present some of the key findings from both the Wales and UK 2015 Communications Market Report (CMR).

Rhodri Williams, Director, Ofcom Wales, gave a presentation on the key findings of the Wales CMR report, and noted that Wales is leading the way in the availability of superfast broadband - nearly four in five (79%) premises in Wales are now capable of receiving superfast broadband at speeds of 30Mbit/s, an increase of 24 percentage points from 2014 (at 55%). The latest figures with regard to mobile coverage of 2G, 3G and 4G in Wales were also shared with the Group as well as some of the recent trends in television and radio.

Jane Rumble, Director of Market Intelligence, discussed some of the UK headlines, comparing and contrasting them with the Wales findings. She emphasised the dramatic increase across the UK in ownership of mobiles and smartphones and noted that the number of hours spent online has almost doubled during the last decade. She informed the Group that post remains an important form of communication in Wales and that more people are sending post in Wales than in the UK as a whole.

Following the presentations, Russell George invited those in attendance to participate in a question and answer session. There was a discussion on the Superfast Cymru project and concerns were shared about poor broadband availability in some rural parts of Wales. The Group was interested to know the latest figures on take-up of superfast broadband across Wales and one attendee expressed his concerns regarding availability in schools. Russell George AM added that Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology Julie James AM as well as Superfast Cymru Programme Director Ed Hunt and

BT Director Wales Alwen Williams would be attending the next Cross-Party Group on Digital Communications on 24 November to discuss broadband in a wider context and that Members should raise their concerns directly with them at the next meeting.

Other matters discussed included the availability of 4G coverage in Wales and the problems for businesses in rural Wales, as well as issues on internet safety. In response to a question on whether Ofcom has received any direction on regulation from Westminster, Jane Rumble noted that the Communications Market Report is a statistical reference tool, not policy. She emphasised Ofcom's commitment to its research on media literacy as well as its work on identifying barriers for take-up of communications services in our communities.

Russell George AM thanked everyone for attending and encouraged the Group to attend the next meeting on broadband.

Meeting closed at 7.30pm