

Press release: Mobile and Broadband Boost for UK Consumers

The measures will be instrumental in helping to deliver the Government's commitment to nationwide full fibre broadband coverage by 2033 and increasing geographic mobile coverage to 95% of the UK by 2022.

Consumers rely more than ever on fixed and mobile connectivity in their everyday lives. However, concerns around mobile coverage, availability of high speed, reliable broadband, and unfair business practices in some areas, has led to lower customer satisfaction than in other sectors.

In a consultation being published today, Government has set out its strategic priorities for Ofcom which will improve digital infrastructure and customer satisfaction, including:

- Ofcom's planned 700 MHz spectrum auction to materially improve mobile coverage across the UK, particularly in rural areas and on the UK's major roads
- Tackling the "loyalty penalty" which sees loyal customers who do not shop around typically pay higher prices than more savvy consumers. The combined effect of the loyalty penalty incurred by customers of broadband and mobile is £1.3 billion per year. Ofcom should address this, and Government will consider new legislation if the regulator believes it does not have sufficient powers.
- Examining the costs and benefits of options to introduce mobile roaming in rural areas in a bid to improve consumer choice and tackle partial not-spots (areas where at least one operator is present, but all four are not)
- Ensuring that regulation supports investment in reliable, gigabit-capable broadband networks across the country

DCMS Secretary of State, Jeremy Wright, said:

As the UK's telecoms regulator, Ofcom has a critical role in realising our shared connectivity aspirations for the UK. As well as ensuring the necessary improvements to broadband and mobile services, consumers must also be protected. I urge Ofcom to tackle harmful business practices and remove barriers to switching.

As set out in the Digital Economy Act in 2017, Ofcom will be required to take account of the Government's new Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) when carrying out its regulatory duties. This will bring the legislative framework for Ofcom into line with other sectors such as energy and water for the first time.

The SSP follows the publication of the Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) in July 2018 and reflects the conclusions of

that review. The FTIR set out a national, long-term strategy for digital infrastructure in the UK, with the aim of securing world-class connectivity that is gigabit-capable, reliable, secure and widely available.

The SSP sets out Government priorities in four areas that Ofcom will now have to reflect in their work going forward:

- World-class digital infrastructure: Building world-class digital infrastructure for the UK, reflecting the conclusions of the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review
- Furthering the interests of telecoms consumers: Safeguarding the interests of telecoms consumers, including the vulnerable and less engaged, by ensuring they are better informed and protected
- Secure and resilient telecoms infrastructure: Ensuring the UK's telecoms networks and services are secure and resilient
- Postal services: Protecting a universal postal service and making sure industry and Ofcom to work together to secure the long-term sustainability of the sector

The [consultation](#) closes on Wednesday 27 March 2019.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Government has set out clear, ambitious targets for the availability of new digital networks in the UK. Those targets include: Making gigabit-capable networks available to 15 million premises by 2025, with nationwide coverage by 2033; increasing geographic mobile coverage to 95% of the UK by 2022 to address 'not-spots' and improving the connectivity on the UK's main roads and railways; and becoming a world leader in the next generation of 5G mobile technology, with deployment to the majority of the country by 2027.
2. The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) set out the changes that need to be made to the UK telecoms market and policy framework to help secure world-class digital infrastructure. The review's conclusions support the UK Digital Strategy's ambition for this country to be the world's best place to start and grow a digital business. They also underpin the UK's modern Industrial Strategy, which set out four Grand Challenges in areas where the UK can lead the global technological revolution.
3. The FTIR's recommendations form the basis of this Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) for telecommunications and the management of radio spectrum. The SSP also sets out the Government's strategic priorities and outcomes in relation to safeguarding the interests of telecoms consumers, the security and resilience of telecoms networks, and postal services. In relation to consumers, the Government is determined to work with Ofcom, industry and other stakeholders to improve the quality of consumer experience in the sector.
4. The power for the Government to designate an SSP for telecommunications, spectrum and post was introduced in the Digital Economy Act 2017. This is the first time the Government is exercising this power.
5. Ofcom must have regard to the statement when exercising its regulatory functions. The introduction of this power brings the legislative

framework for Ofcom into line with other sectors such as energy and water, where the Government also has the power to designate a Statement of Strategic Priorities.

6. If Ofcom is unable to consider regulatory options that would contribute to achieving the strategic priorities set out in this SSP due to the existing statutory framework, the Government will consider legislation to allow it to do so.