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Ofcom appoints Consumer Panel members

Ofcom today announced the appointment of members to the Consumer Panel. The eight appointments follow the announcement on 9 December 2003 of the appointment of Colette Bowe as Consumer Panel Chairman.

The Consumer Panel is an independent body set up under the Communications Act 2003 to advise Ofcom on consumer interests in the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors.

The Panel will function as a “critical friend” to Ofcom to help inform its decisions. It will have access to a substantial research budget to ensure that the advice it provides to Ofcom is based on an accurate and independent understanding of the consumer interest.

Lord Currie, Chairman of Ofcom, said: “The Consumer Panel will perform a key role in providing Ofcom with independent and objective guidance on important issues affecting consumers throughout the UK. Collectively the members’ diverse experience and links with a wealth of communities place them in an ideal position to represent their interests to Ofcom.”

Colette Bowe, Chairman of the Consumer Panel, said: “Every member has been recruited for his or her ability to understand and appreciate the range of consumer interests and to represent them effectively to Ofcom and the wider world.”

The Consumer Panel will meet for the first time during February and will have its own website at www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk.

Further members will be appointed in due course.

The members are:

Fiona Ballantyne, is managing director of a marketing development consultancy and was a member of the Secretary of State’s Expert Panel on the Media in lead up to the first Scottish Parliament, will represent the interests and opinions of people in Scotland.

Roger Darlington, part-time Chair of the Internet Watch Foundation and strategy adviser at the Communication Workers Union, will represent the interests and opinions of those living in England.

Ruth Evans has extensive experience on consumer issues and was Director of the National Consumer Council for seven years until 1998. She is a lay member of the General Medical Council and a Non-Executive Director of the Nationwide Building Society and holds a number of other public appointments.

Simon Gibson OBE, is a venture capitalist, a member of the Welsh Development Agency Board and a founding member of the Welsh Electronic

Forum. He has extensive experience within the high technology sector. He will represent the interests and opinions of people in Wales.

Graham Mather is President of the European Policy Forum and a member of the Competition Appeal Tribunal. He has wide experience in both telecoms and broadcasting issues, both on a national and European level.

Kevin McLaughlin is a development worker for the Magherafelt Disability Forum and will represent the interests and opinions of people living in Northern Ireland.

Kate O'Rourke is a solicitor and Deputy Chair of the London Regional Council of Arts Council England.

Bob Twitchin brings a wealth of experience in telecommunications and advising on issues affecting disabled and older people.

Colette Bowe, with the agreement of Lord Currie, has invited Ruth Evans to become the Deputy Chairman of the Consumer Panel.

Notes to editors

1. Ofcom is the independent regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services.

Our duties include:

- The promotion of choice, quality and value in electronic communications services, where appropriate by encouraging competition between the providers of those services
- Ensuring the most efficient use of the radiocommunications spectrum – the airwaves used for the transmission of all non-military wireless communications services
- Ensuring a wide range of electronic communications services, including broadband, is available across the UK
- Ensuring a wide range of TV and radio programmes of high quality and wide appeal
- Maintaining plurality in the media by ensuring a sufficiently broad range of ownership
- The protection of audiences against offensive or harmful material, unfairness or the infringement of privacy on TV and radio

For further details please visit www.ofcom.org.uk.

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