

## **Consumer Panel calls for communities excluded from current broadband to leapfrog to fast next generation**

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The Ofcom Consumer Panel has today called on policy-makers to tackle the digital divide by thinking about how to give consumers, excluded from first generation broadband, the potential to leapfrog straight to next generation access (NGA). Anna Bradley, Consumer Panel Chair, said: "We already know that the economic case for next generation access will not stack up in some areas and we can predict which areas that will be. So let's address these issues alongside commercial roll-out, not after it."

Next generation broadband will give speeds of up to 100m/bits, and deliver new services and products across the UK that will bring huge benefits to consumers and citizens. In a document published today, *What is the value of next generation broadband?*, the Consumer Panel sets out a number of recommendations for helping to ensure that all consumers benefit and without deepening the existing digital divide

The Consumer Panel recommends a mapping to show the likely geographic patterns of exclusion that could follow from different roll-out models, and work to identify the costs and benefits of tackling the issues that are identified.

"If we are imaginative and use a mix of private and public business models, we could provide a way for consumers who are excluded from first generation broadband to leapfrog straight to the next generation," Anna Bradley said.

The Consumer Panel believes that the delivery of public services has the potential to change radically in a next generation broadband world. The Panel would like to see policy-makers looking at the potential for savings by using fast broadband to deliver to those who are otherwise difficult to reach. The Panel points to such things as NHS telemedicine, the delivery of specialist services from a central hub for disabled consumers and the provision of education for marginalised communities.

"The UK is making some critical decisions about the delivery of next generation broadband in the UK. Consumers and citizens stand to gain a great deal, but the decisions need to be informed by a proper sense of the value next generation networks can deliver, not just to companies and consumers, but to the economy and society as a whole," Anna Bradley said.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS AND CSEs

1. The Consumer Panel was established to advise Ofcom on the consumer interest in the markets it regulates. The Panel is independent and sets its own agenda. Visit [www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk) for more information.

2. The Consumer Panel document *What is the value of next generation broadband?* can be downloaded from the website [www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk](http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk)

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