



Press Release

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Panel calls on Ofcom to use spectrum auction as once-in-a-generation opportunity to increase mobile coverage

The Communications Consumer Panel is calling on Ofcom to use the spectrum auction as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to extend mobile coverage in the UK.

Poor or non-existent coverage is creating significant problems for small businesses, as well as the three million people living in not-spots, the people passing through them and passengers on the rail and London tube networks.

To tackle the problem, the Panel is asking Ofcom to consider setting coverage obligations for each of the UK nations and some English regions, or for money to be retained from the spectrum auction and a reverse auction run to upgrade rural coverage. Operators that successfully bid for this should be required to provide roaming for these areas.

Panel Chair, Bob Warner said: "This is a critical moment, and we have a unique opportunity to resolve the persistent problem of inadequate mobile coverage. Most places that were mobile coverage not-spots ten years ago are still not-spots today, and the spectrum auction presents perhaps the only chance we have in the next decade to improve coverage in the nations and for rural communities."

The Panel argues that a pure market-oriented approach to delivering coverage for 2G voice services has reached its economic limit. It says that 3G and new 4G services are unlikely to extend beyond existing 2G coverage, and it doubts that consumer and small business needs will be met.

"Effective mobile communication is essential for the growth of rural communities and businesses, and we now need an intervention to improve rural services. The potential significant windfall to the Treasury from the spectrum auction presents us with the opportunity to do something about it," Bob Warner concluded.

Ends

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Communications 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.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk for more information.

To read the Communications Consumer Panel's response to the spectrum auction go to <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Spectrum%20auction%20CCP%20response%202011.pdf>