

It's Here! A Comms Review Paper, Plus a Media Pluralism Consultation



Those of you who are not on holiday at the moment might have noticed that there has suddenly been some movement in the Communications Review process that started over two years ago. On 30 July DCMS released a “strategy paper” called **Connectivity, Content and Consumers: Britain’s digital platform for growth** as a response to this long period of consultation. This is not exactly a white paper, but among the descriptions of initiatives already under way and planned investments and other activities there are a number of intended legislative changes mentioned. This list might not be exhaustive, but here is what my reading found as areas in which the document promises legislative changes will be made:

- To improve spectrum management by allowing dynamic spectrum use, incentives for surrendering unused spectrum, aligning MUX operator and PSB licenses, and allowing Ofcom to impose monetary penalties instead of revoking licenses;
- To amend the Electronic Communications Code in order to make it easier for communications companies to use land for broadband infrastructure;
- To legislate to ensure EPG prominence for PSB channels and apply no fees obligations on operators to carry these (i.e. BSkyB will not be able to charge the BBC, nor BBC charge BSyB for using its content);
- To amend Ofcom’s duties as per the proposals made in the **recent consultation** to remove obligatory reviews of PSB and PSB reports to Ofcom, and to give it the duty to ensure effective consumer switching between communications services;
- To make it easier for Ofcom to share information with the ICO and the Insolvency Service on nuisance calls and possibly revise the conditions for such calls (something also called for in our recent **policy brief on nuisance calls**);
- To create a Consumer Rights Bill that will specifically address digital content use.

In addition to these there are two issue on which the Government intends to review legislation and make changes following on-going consultations. Parallel to the release of this strategy paper, DCMS launched a **consultation on media ownership and plurality** aimed at addressing Leveson’s recommendation that policymakers find better ways to measure and regulate on **media pluralism**. The strategy paper refers to this consultation in the context of the potential for revising ex ante competition rules in light of media convergence. The consultation specifically seeks input on a new measurement framework in term of:

- *“the types of media it should include;*
- *the genres it should cover;*
- *the types of organisation and services to which it should apply;*
- *the inclusion of the BBC; and,*
- *the audiences with which it should be concerned.”*

Another on-going consultation to which the strategy paper refers is the one launched by BIS in June on **Regulatory Competition and Appeals**. The government aims to reduce the length and level of scrutiny of appeals in the communications sector. This one closes on 11 September, so it might be worth taking it to the beach with you. The strategy paper mentions other consultations to come in the autumn, such as one on the discoverability of television channels and content with public service functions. After the long silence it seems there is the possibility of an interesting autumn.



The post gives the views of the author, and does not represent the position of the LSE Media Policy Project blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

July 31st, 2013 | [Communications Review](#), [Media Plurality and Ownership](#), [Press Regulation](#), [Public](#)

[Service Broadcasting/Media](#) | [0 Comments](#)

⋮

